

Foodscares Bus Tour Brief

Purpose: Organized in partnership with the Mayor's Officer, the Foodscares Bus Tour brought together HRM Councillors, HRM staff, and community food champions to raise awareness of current success stories in our local food system and build support for the Halifax Food Charter and the development of a Municipal Food Action Plan.

The Tour

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The tour took place at a particularly busy time as a result of hurricane Dorian. Nevertheless, 24 people, including elected officials, government staff, community workers, and researchers joined together to collectively reflect on how events such as hurricanes affect people living in our communities. Hurricanes exacerbate existing vulnerabilities such as weather dependency for producers or healthy and affordable food accessibility for low-income consumers.



Across Canada and around the world, municipalities are working alongside government and non-government stakeholders to lead food systems change. We all have a role to play in the development of a thriving local food system and the HalifaxFood Action Plan is a pathway to help get us there.

Where did we visit and what did we learn?

The first stop was the Northwood Halifax Campus, which offers services for seniors, a specific at-risk demographic with heightened difficulty accessing healthy and affordable food. Along with the range of services, Northwood helps to ensure healthy diets for seniors and collaborates with the Mobile Food Market, offering clients fresh produce, dried goods, baked goods, among other wholesome foods.

The second location that was visited was BEEA Honey with Heart in Dartmouth that provided a direct look at youth-led social enterprise helping to increase food production and food literacy on a local scale. BEEA Honey with Heart embraces the curiosity and creativity of youth and demonstrates how local supply-chains, from production to sale to consumption, can emerge from community collaboration. Seen along the way was the Dartmouth North Community Centre and neighbouring community garden, which is a bustling example of food education and

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distribution made possible by collaborations between local community members, municipal government, and the private sector.

The third and final stop was the Sackville Public Library, where attendees learned about the history of community struggle that led to a life-changing collaboration. The Sackville Public Library obtained a grant from the Cobequid Community Health Board to build a community kitchen that is now used to teach residents of all ages new food skills and also helps to address accessibility issues for low-income residents.

Between site presentations, Bus Tour attendees also heard stories about food in rural communities. Amy Hockin of the Prospect Road Community Centre and Denise VanWychen of the Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Community Health Board shared stories about food in their rural communities and challenges for sustaining their programs.

Why do we need a Food Action Plan?

Bus tour attendees observed how many communities are leading the path forward with innovative solutions to bring healthy food to their communities. In doing so they are demonstrating how food can be a driver of positive change, promoting youth entrepreneurship, social inclusion (particularly for vulnerable groups), and community-based economic development. As we continue to build on this momentum, we also see the need for better coordination; and ways in which we can monitor progress on common food system goals.

When developed and resourced, a Food Action Plan will provide opportunities to:

- **Build on Momentum** to amplify existing solutions and successes.
- **Coordinate Policy & Action** across sectors and issues.
- **Support Diverse Participation** particularly among underrepresented voices.
- **Maximize Resources** within and across community, business and local government.
- **Share Responsibility** for food systems planning and development.
- **Track Progress** on food common food system goals.



Through a Food Action Plan, we will be able to expand and build on these innovative, community-led programs, by ensuring supportive policies are in place and resources are more accessible to help ensure their sustainability.

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What are the Next Steps?

A staff report on The Municipal Role in the Promotion of Food Security is slated for the November 19th Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee, likely proceeding to Regional Council shortly after. This is a clear example of the continued support and leadership of HRM in working together to improve food security and strengthen the local food system.

Our hope is that through the Food Action Plan, we can continue to spark new interest and ideas around how we can work within and across sectors to take our collective action to the next level. We need to generate commitment and investment in the development of a Halifax Food Action Plan that will allow us to identify common goals and monitor progress of these goals over time.

The development of a Food Action Plan continues to be supported by hard work within HRM and supportive messaging such as [an Op-Ed written by Mayor Savage](#).

Thanks very much to our co-organizers, speakers, site hosts, and attendees. Please visit our website halifaxfoodpolicy.ca for more information and stay tuned for future updates.

