

BILL ON LOCAL FOOD ACT RE-INTRODUCED

On March 25, 2013, Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario and Minister of Agriculture and Food, reintroduced a Bill proposing the Local Food Act. Wynne noted that the Bill is just one part of a broader strategy to promote local food. Beyond the letter of the legislation, the Provincial government proposes more education on the benefits of local food and financial support for communities and regions working on local food innovation and initiatives.

The purposes of the Local Food Act (the “Act”) are to:

- (1) foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario;
- (2) increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including diversity of local food; and
- (3) encourage the development of new markets for local food.

The proposed Act gives the Minister of Agriculture and Food discretion to establish aspirational goals or targets for local food in order to further the purposes of the Act. In doing so, the Minister must consult with organizations that have an interest in the goals or targets, and must publish the goals and targets on an Ontario Government website.

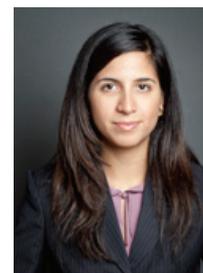
The Act also creates an obligation on the Minister to prepare a report about local food activities at least once every three years which: summarizes the government’s activities in respect of local food; describes the local food goals or targets that have been established; and summarizes the steps that have been taken and the progress that has been made by public sector organizations in respect of the goals and targets.

There appears to be unison between political parties with respect to the social and economic value of promoting and strengthening a local food system. Critiques from other political parties at the first reading focused on the lack of hard targets in the Act, the Act’s failure to address burdensome red tape on the local agri-food business, and proposed timing for Local Food Week, which would either overlap with or replace the current Agriculture Week. Outside the political debates, stakeholders of local food production are calling the Local Food Act a “stepping stone” in the right direction.¹

We will be monitoring and reporting any new economic initiatives that arise in connection with the Government's new local food strategy.



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¹<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/story/2013/03/26/wdr-reaction-ontario-local-food-act-kathleen-wynne.html>