

Summary of interview with Mr. Gary Beamish

Candidate, Green Party of Ontario - Monday, September 19, 2011

What will you do to support local food and farm enterprise?

Mr. Gary Beamish has a deep understanding and concern for the health of the family farm. Born and raised on a mixed family farm, Mr. Beamish can relate to the difficulties associated with trying to survive on a farm income. The Green Party Platform has five points which focus on sustainability. Mr. Beamish feels that supporting sustainable agriculture would support a stronger economy and healthier family farms. He also stated that he would support the decriminalization of marijuana as a way to support a more robust national economy by diverting black market revenue and providing a lucrative farm crop for farmers to produce.

What will you do to make healthy eating a priority?

Mr. Beamish stated that he would support the building of a healthy buoyant economy which would reduce the cost of healthy food for all. He believes that through building strong infrastructure relationships with the greenhouse growers of Ontario, the cost of healthy fruits and vegetables can become more affordable for all.

What will you do to protect farmland and the environment?

“All you have to do is make farming profitable!” Mr. Beamish stated in response. Understanding the difficulty in operating a family farm, Mr. Beamish will support the growth of the sustainable agriculture sector as he believes in the strength in this growing sector in both environmental sustainability and economic profitability. Mr. Beamish will also support farm subsidies to those farmers facing financial difficulties.

What will you do to get healthy food into schools and the curriculum?

Plainly stating, “[You] cannot legislate common sense!” Mr. Beamish believes kids will eat what they are most familiar with, and if families cannot afford healthy food, kids will only be comfortable eating the cheap, highly processed foods commonly available. To curb this epidemic, Mr. Beamish would support small businesses, artisan food processors and farmers, to grow and expand in our community, making healthy food more available.

What will you do to support access to healthy food in every neighbourhood by everyone?

As an avid wild crafter, Mr. Beamish would offer free seminars and training to those interested across the city, on the art of wild crafting and its importance. Wild crafting is the term used for harvesting plants and fruits that grow naturally or wild in unmaintained areas of cities and forests. “We should be harvesting all that is available on the roadways and throughout the cities green corridor.” In support of gleaning programs and initiatives such as Second Harvest, Mr. Beamish feels it is a priority to divert food that is going to waste on farms and in our grocery stores into the hands and mouths of those in need.

Summary of interview with MPP Jeff Leal

Candidate, Ontario Liberal Party - Monday, September 19, 2011

What will you do to support local food and farm enterprise?

MPP Jeff Leal has been a strong supporter of Kawartha Choice branding to promote local food products and is committed to this initiative. He reports that the Premier McGuinty government has been unwavering in its support of the supply managed agricultural sector (dairy and poultry) and that they have introduced a risk management program that will support and protect the non-supply managed sector (beef, pork, grains and seeds, fruits and vegetables).

What will you do to make healthy eating a priority?

MPP Leal has partnered with the Peterborough County-City Health Unit in addressing food security by advocating for provincial funding to pilot the five initiatives that comprised the Community Food Security Project. He has worked with both the present and past Medical Officer of Health to find the funding to get food to those who need it most and believes that food security is a key determinant of health.

What will you do to protect farmland and the environment?

Premier McGuinty's government has built on the work done by previous governments to protect a substantial part of Ontario land for future farming and that has resulted in the green belt that stretches from Niagara to Northumberland County. He recognizes that supporting agriculture is key, as it vies for first or second place with the car industry as a leading employer in the province. He also pointed to the legislation that has been introduced to protect source water and ban cosmetic use of pesticides as examples of how he is committed to improving water quality.

What will you do to get healthy food into schools and the curriculum?

Despite some resistance, the McGuinty government has successfully banned junk food in schools. The next step will be a "local food act" to promote access to local foods in schools, hospitals and long-term care homes.

What will you do to support access to healthy food in every neighbourhood by everyone?

Mr. Leal supports the expansion of community gardens and believes that gardens are a "good way for communities to come together and to get to know their neighbours." He supports farmers markets as an opportunity for communities to purchase local food. He is happy to have seen local food innovations, such as the ever-bearing strawberries at McLean's Berry Farm, which means that local strawberries are available all summer long. He feels that Peterborough is a leader in food security and should be recognized as such.

Summary of interview with Dr. Ken Ranney Candidate, Socialist Party of Ontario - Friday, September 23, 2011

What will you do to support local food and farm enterprise?

The Socialist Party will provide a guaranteed annual income of \$18,849 per adult and extra for children. This will take care of many of the food acquisition problems.

It will also encourage local farming and food production – saving greenhouse gases to benefit the environment as well as optimizing the quality of food.

Dr. Ranney is planning to introduce a resolution that would provide rationed amounts of basic food items free – for example, bread, milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs and meat.

What will you do to make healthy eating a priority?

Dr. Ranney would advertise to encourage healthy food consumption and discourage the consumption of junk foods. There would be more discussion on healthy eating. The Party would be willing to receive resolutions regarding this.

What will you do to protect farmland and the environment?

Dr. Ranney would like to ban the use of insecticides and genetically modified crops. He believes that there is a right way to manage crops, e.g. rotation of land, diversity of crop; organic practices as much as possible. It is fact that local farmers confront a great deal of competition from outside the area, resulting in pressure to maximize crop yield and so forth, whatever the cost to the consumer. He hopes that farmers would accept the invitation to join his party to recommend ways by which they could be supported by a socialist government in this regard.

What will you do to get healthy food into schools and the curriculum?

Conclude the process by which junk food is being removed from schools; also, fund school lunches while providing a better quality of food for students.

With respect to the school curriculum, health teachers must have well laid out programs focusing on healthy food as integral parts of the curriculum.

What will you do to support access to healthy food in every neighbourhood by everyone?

Dr. Ranney replied that like the right to a home, healthy food is an essential of life. The basic level should be made available to all. That is why he would make that basic level free.

Access to healthy food for all also requires establishing free public transportation.

Summary of interview with Mr. Dave Nickle

Candidate, Ontario New Democratic Party (NDP) - Monday, September 26, 2011

What will you do to support local food and farm enterprise?

An NDP government in Ontario will ensure that the local family farm is an operation that can continue to provide food for public consumption while also making a good living for farm families. It will spend more to support local food production and lessen the present emphasis on “fast food”.

It will also support legislation to invest in local marketing, including expanding the number of locations where local food is available to benefit all local citizens. An NDP government would develop a provincial food and nutrition policy that would include risk management for the non-supply regulated sectors (like beef, pork and produce) including honey, as this sector has come under threat.

The NDP food security policy also involves cutting “red tape” by removing the regulations that put local farmers at a disadvantage – and would provide relief from restrictions that currently discourage on-farm processing.

Mr. Nickle stressed that working in partnership with Ontario farmers is a priority.

What will you do to make healthy eating a priority?

An NDP government in Ontario would focus on public education, especially in schools. This would include information on genetically modified food and on organic foods. Public education must make knowledge of the true costs of consuming less healthy food widely available.

There must be a focus on emphasizing and developing the means of helping the poor access organic food given that its current cost is usually prohibitive; of ensuring that hospitals and long-term care facilities return to producing food from their own kitchens rather than heating up pre-packaged food; that proper home care becomes available, including healthy meals.

What will you do to protect farmland and the environment?

Mr. Nickle would make it easier for farmers to do the right thing for the public good, by providing direct assistance and help through incentives. This would include real partnerships, such as hands-on assistance in conserving critical habitats and protecting source water.

What will you do to get healthy food into schools and the curriculum?

Mr. Nickle, recently retired from many years as a high school teacher, remembered the lifelong effect on him of a food program that was part of the curriculum when he was in Grade 8: it followed the food from the ground to the table, including students cooking some meals “from scratch”. He believes that healthy food in schools should be universal and free. He would support universal lunch programs rather than the current patchwork of breakfast programs. But he would also ensure that families earn a healthy income, have access to affordable housing, accessible daycare and mental health services to that they could afford to purchase healthy foods for their children.

What will you do to support access to healthy food in every neighbourhood and by everyone?

Mr. Nickle would encourage community gardens and more importantly, create the infrastructure to make local farmers mainstream. He acknowledged the need for increased storage facilities. He would like to see all grocery stores selling local produce. He would like to see better labelling so that consumers could know whether food was organic, local or genetically modified. Mr. Nickle concluded by emphasizing the necessity of INVESTMENT: “we cannot afford not to do it”. He promises that he would consult extensively with the community.