



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number: ED2026-010
Meeting Date: April 7, 2026
Title: **Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030**
Description: A community-wide action plan to support growth and development of agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes
Author and Title: Kelly Maloney, Economic Development Officer - Agriculture

Recommendations:

That Report ED2026-010, **Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030**, be received;

That the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030, substantially in the form attached as Appendix A, be approved; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Council Meeting of April 8, 2025, Council adopted the following resolution:

CR2025-104

Moved By Councillor Warren

Seconded By Deputy Mayor McDonald

That the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 8, 2025 be received and the recommendations, included in Section 9.3 of the Agenda, save and except for Items 9.3.3, 9.3.4, 9.3.6, 9.3.7, 9.3.14, 9.3.16, 9.3.17 and 9.3.23, be adopted.

This included the adoption of resolution **CW2025-078, to receive ED2025-005, Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020 to 2024 Report** which was a final report on activities undertaken within that action plan.

Agriculture and food are a cornerstone of Kawartha Lakes' economy, landscape, and identity. The municipality is home to over 1,100 farms operating across approximately 278,000 acres of farmland, making it one of the largest agricultural areas in East-Central Ontario.

Since amalgamation in 2001, Kawartha Lakes has demonstrated leadership in agricultural economic development through the establishment of an Agricultural Development Advisory Committee and one of Ontario's first dedicated Agriculture Development Officer roles.

Following the report on the fourth agriculture and food action plan in 2025, work began on the creation of a fifth action plan since amalgamation. This Plan builds on previous Agriculture and Food Action Plans, and continues a long-standing, collaborative approach to supporting the sector. The Plan provides a clear, community-wide, coordinated framework to support the growth, resilience, and long-term success of the agriculture and food sector in Kawartha Lakes.

The purpose of this report is to present the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030 for Council's consideration.

Rationale:

The agriculture and food system in Kawartha Lakes is a connected value chain that includes primary production, agri-business supply and services, processing, distribution, and local food experiences. In 2024, the sector generated over \$216 million in farm receipts and contributes more than \$426 million of GDP to the provincial economy, supporting thousands of jobs.

The sector is diverse and resilient and while under pressure, has clear opportunities for growth. Kawartha Lakes has a strong and diverse agricultural production base, a well-established network of agri-businesses and services, and a growing interest in value-added production, local food, and agri-tourism. At the same time, the sector is facing real challenges, including farmland loss, labour shortages, limited processing capacity, infrastructure constraints, and complex development processes.

Engagement

What was heard through engagement was clear. **Producers and businesses are ready to invest, grow, and diversify, but they need the right conditions to do so.** They can benefit from greater clarity and understanding of the approval processes, requirements and timing. Continued improvement of development application timelines, access to three-phase hydro, improved cellular and broadband services, and a well-maintained road infrastructure are aspects that can support sector businesses. Efforts to develop a stronger workforce pipeline, and increase connections between producers and local food through a wholesale value chain can address chronic limiting factors. They also value the interest of the municipality in understand the realities of agriculture and working together to enable growth.

The Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030 is grounded in input from producers, agri-businesses, organizations, and community partners through surveys, in-person meetings, and targeted small group discussions.

What we heard from the input:

- Resilient and diverse agricultural sector exists
- Importance of sector promotion and community awareness
- Opportunities to grow through diversification, innovation, and local food promotion
- Need to protect farmland from development pressures
- Importance of the agricultural support ecosystem
- Importance of continued agricultural land stewardship and importance of climate mitigation

- Need to strengthen the local agri-food value chain
- Gaps in local processing and value-added capacity
- Challenges navigating regulatory and approval processes
- Workforce shortages and succession concerns
- Infrastructure limitations, including connectivity and servicing
- Long-term risks to sector viability

This Action Plan responds directly to that message. It builds on a strong history of agricultural economic development in Kawartha Lakes and reflects a coordinated, practical, community-based approach to supporting the sector over the next five years. It aligns with provincial policy, the Kawartha Lakes 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, and the 2025-2029 Economic Development Strategy, where agriculture and food are identified as a priority sector.

The Plan focuses effort where it will have the greatest impact. It is designed to improve the business environment, strengthen the agricultural system, and position Kawartha Lakes as a leading centre for agriculture and agri-business in east-central Ontario.

Goals

The strategic direction is organized around **five (5) goals**:

1. **Enable agri-business growth and investment**
2. **Support business development and value-added growth**
3. **Build a skilled and sustainable workforce**
4. **Invest in places that support agriculture**
5. **Elevate and support the agriculture and food sector**

These Goals focus on removing barriers, strengthening existing assets, and creating the conditions needed for long-term success. They are practical and achievable, leading to the vision which was developed from survey input and vetted within industry engagement meetings and discussions.

Vision

The vision for 2030 is: **Kawartha Lakes is a place where agriculture and food businesses invest and grow with confidence, supported by protected farmland, strong infrastructure, clear rules, and a connected local food system that sustains farms today and supports the next generation.**

Outcomes

The outcomes are equally clear:

1. Increased investment and business confidence
2. Stronger and more diversified businesses
3. Reliable and skilled workforce pipeline
4. Protected farmland and strong rural infrastructure
5. Recognized, supported, and coordinated sector

This Plan is also realistic. It recognizes that the municipality cannot act alone. Success will depend on strong partnerships with industry, organizations, and other levels of government. However, it also recognizes that municipal leadership is essential. The way the municipality plans, approves, coordinates, and communicates will directly shape the sector's ability to grow.

This Plan's approval sends a clear signal. It shows that Kawartha Lakes is serious about supporting agriculture and food as a priority sector. It demonstrates a commitment to being open for business in practice, not just in policy. It also provides staff, partners, and the industry with a shared direction and a clear set of actions to move forward.

The cost of inaction is also clear. Without coordinated effort, the municipality risks continued farmland loss, missed investment opportunities, and a gradual weakening of the local agricultural system. With action, Kawartha Lakes can strengthen its competitive position, retain more economic value locally, and support a resilient and sustainable sector for the future.

Other Alternatives Considered:

The Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan reflects a shared responsibility between the municipality, industry, organizations, and other levels of government. The Plan presents Council with a clear path to support the agriculture and food sector over the next five years. The Action Plan is the product of an extensive year-long, thorough process including industry review, analysis and community engagement mainly focused during the winter of 2026. No alternatives are proposed.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

This Action Plan directly supports the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan 2024–2027:

- **A Vibrant and Growing Economy:** Supports business growth, investment, and entrepreneurship in agriculture and food
- **A Healthy Environment:** Protects farmland and supports environmental stewardship
- **Good Government:** Strengthens collaboration, communication, and service delivery

The Plan also aligns with the Economic Development Strategy 2025–2029, where agriculture and food are identified as a priority sector, with further detail provided in the strategic context portion of the Plan.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The development of the Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030 was funded through the 2026 operating budget where minimal expense was incurred. Utilizing a twenty-year active role in agriculture economic development for the municipality, all parts of the Plan, including background research, engagement and plan development were undertaken and written by City of Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Officer – Agriculture.

Implementation of the Action Plan will be developed as a guide to activities for the agriculture and food sector supported by many organizations, agencies and private businesses within the community. Where municipal support is provided, activities undertaken will be captured in the Economic Development operating budget. Projects requiring additional funding will be presented through the annual budget process for Council consideration. External funding and partnerships will continue to be leveraged as an important delivery model for this work.

Consultations:

The Action Plan was developed through a comprehensive engagement process, including:

- Agricultural Development Advisory Committee

- A project Wisdom Team of 15 participants, acting in a strategic guidance role, with representation from staff, provincial government, conservation authority, workforce, agricultural organizations, farm production and agri-business.
- Two Public information sessions
- A public survey with 68 responses
- Presentations and group discussion at 11 agricultural organization events involving 349 participants:
 - Victoria Beef Farmers
 - Kawartha Haliburton Maple Syrup Producers Association
 - District 12 Delegates – Grain Farmers of Ontario
 - Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Federation of Agriculture
 - Victoria Soil and Crop Improvement Association
 - Dairy Farmers of Kawartha Lakes
- Small group discussions with sector stakeholders and partners
 - Workforce Development Board
 - Victoria County Career Services
 - St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School Agricultural High Skills Major Program
 - I.E. Weldon Secondary School Agricultural High Skills Major Program
 - Food Processors in Kawartha Lakes
- Staff and organization representative involvement through the Wisdom Team or direct consultation:
 - Director, Development Services
 - Director, Public Works
 - Director, Engineering and Assets
 - Manager, Economic Development
 - Manager, Building and Septic
 - Manager, Development Engineering
 - Manager, Realty Services
 - Manager, Municipal Law Enforcement and Licensing
 - Manager, Roads Operations West
 - Supervisor, Development Planning
 - Supervisor, Plans Review and Inspection, Building
 - Supervisor, Policy Planning
 - Officer, Communications, Advertising and Marketing
 - Resources Planner, Kawartha Conservation
 - Stewardship Coordinator, Kawartha Conservation
 - Rural Planner, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness
 - Economic and Business Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs
 - President, Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Federation of Agriculture
 - Chair and Members of Agricultural Development of Agriculture

Field Representative, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Chief Executive Officer, Workforce Development Board

Attachments:

Appendix A – Kawartha Lakes Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2026 to 2030



Appendix A -
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Department Head email: lbarrie@kawarthalakes.ca

Department Head: Leah Barrie, Director, Development Services