Dear Councillor \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

One of the stated priorities in Kingston’s Strategic Plan 2019-2022 is to “provide better support to community-led initiatives that support local food production”. We heartily endorse that objective and ask that you consider our proposals.

With hundreds of would-be food growers on waitlists for community garden plots, it is imperative that the city remove barriers to expanding community gardens as soon as possible. Here are some of those barriers:

* Inadequate funding for the community garden grants budget.
* Costly liability-insurance premiums that still leave individual volunteers on the hook for the deductible.
* A raised-bed requirement, even where there is no evidence of soil contamination.

To help the City of Kingston achieve its stated priority of supporting local food production, and addressing the listed barriers, we suggest the following solutions:

* Increase funding for community garden grants from $5000 to $50,000 annually. (The City of Victoria — population 92,000, compared to Kingston’s 137,000 — maintains annual funds of $160,000 for community garden start-up and volunteer coordination grants).
* Cover the cost of the $2 million liability insurance, required under the Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy, for all community gardens operating on city-land.
* Adjust the Community Gardens Development and Operations Policy to allow in-ground, as opposed to only raised bed gardens, where appropriate and proven safe.

Thank you for considering our ideas.  We look forward to any additional suggestions you may have, and to hearing that you support a program that helps build friendly, co-operative communities, while providing fresh vegetables to both the growers, and the recipients of their in-kind donations.

Warm regards,

