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BUY LOCAL: A NIAGARA TREND

Niagara regional council has two agricultural committees: the agricultural subcommittee and the regional chair's agricultural task force.

The agricultural subcommittee reports through the planning and public works committee to regional council. The work of this committee is to comment on actions proposed for agricultural lands or possible impacts of urban development.

In recent years, the establishment of the Greenbelt has significantly reduced our need to meet, as most of the agricultural lands have been protected from development. In addition, the region has removed duplication from the planning process and given responsibility for most planning issues to the local municipalities.

The regional chair's agricultural task force was established originally to allow the 13 different commodity groups to come together, to clearly show the economic impact of agriculture in Niagara and to spearhead initiatives to promote Niagara agriculture.

Reinvestment in the Vineland Research Centre comes in great part through the actions of this task force and the lobbying by regional councillors and agricultural leaders. The task force is working to develop a plan that will provide support for value-added activities that can take place on agricultural lands and make farm activities more economically viable.

My family took part in the Shorthills firefighters' annual strawberry festival at White Mead-



Brian Baty
REGIONAL VIEW

ows Farms this past weekend. The Bering family is to be thanked for their support of the annual firefighters' fundraising event.

Not only does the farm show urban visitors the traditional barns and cattle and the fields of crops, it also provides a great educational experience during the maple syrup harvest.

This farm is a prime example of value-added activities as the development of agritourism has brought people from around the world to visit their property and sample their produce.

The next time you drive out Effingham Street to St. Catharines, stop in at the gift shop and ask to see the world map with pins displayed by visitors from every corner of the planet.

Last week's meeting of the agricultural task force reviewed a proposed local food action plan that will be presented to regional council for approval during the next council meeting.

The plan proposes to link and co-ordinate with individuals and groups supporting "Slow Food," buy local, the 100-Mile Diet, the institutional sector, the Greenbelt Foundation and the Leadership Niagara Project Team.

Economic research suggests that if every Niagara family directed \$10 from their weekly grocery money to buy Niagara produce the economic impact would be \$253 million annually. See you at the market this Thursday.

Buy local – a Niagara brand.

