Thursday, April 2, 2020

Dear Honourable Catherine Fife,

We are writing with regard to the provincial government closing of [outdoor community gardens](https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-1) in response to COVID-19. As a long-time community garden group, we are deeply concerned about this measure. Just like farms, community gardens are essential in allowing for the production of fresh healthy food for people in this area. Many individuals involved in these gardens fall into lower income brackets and are part of more vulnerable sectors in our community (e.g. new Canadians, elderly), making them less food secure.

While we understand the concern about transmitting the disease, steps can be taken to safeguard gardeners. These include:

* spacing out gardening activities, through time schedules and limiting the number of people present at the community garden at one time;
* cleaning or eliminating the sharing of garden implements; and
* cleaning water taps.

Furthermore, food from community gardens arguably receives less handling, and poses fewer risks, than food from longer supply chains like supermarkets.

With [twenty community gardens](https://sites.google.com/view/community-gardens-ca/gardens/garden-directory?authuser=0) in the City of Waterloo alone, this is a critical issue for your riding. During this time of crisis, we need to strengthen our local food system so that we have resiliency to face the challenges ahead. Knowing you are a long-time supporter of community gardens, we strongly request that you persuade your government to lift this ban.

Appreciate very much your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Alisa McClurg

KW Urban Harvester Coordinator

[http://kwurbanharvester.org](http://kwurbanharvester.org/)