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For Immediate Release

Holland Marsh 'goes local' with Greenbelt Foundation Funding

Jamie Kennedy celebrates the return of Ontario's largest source of fresh vegetables

(Toronto) — After decades of exporting vegetables grown in one of Ontario's most productive agricultural regions, Holland Marsh farmers are seizing the opportunity to sell their products in the local marketplace.

Today the Holland Marsh Growers Association announced that it received a \$400,000 grant from the *Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation*. "The Holland Marsh is the Olympics of farming," says *Foundation* President Burkhard Mausberg. "The sheer volume of vegetables coming from the Greenbelt's Holland Marsh deserves a gold medal. And this grant continues our staunch support for Greenbelt farmers."

Renowned Toronto chef and local food advocate Jamie Kennedy has tossed up a new salad to mark this announcement using ingredients picked entirely from the Holland Marsh. "The salad showcases the taste, freshness and variety of vegetables that are growing in the Marsh," says Kennedy. "It is rewarding to create a salad with such high quality fresh vegetables: harvested in the morning and on your plate at noon."

Kennedy has selected artichoke hearts and romaine lettuce, complemented by coloured carrots, radishes, Italian parsley and celery root, topped with roasted beefsteak tomatoes and shallot vinaigrette. The salads are being hand-delivered to Premier Dalton McGuinty, and local MPP Julia Munro, representing the Holland Marsh.

The Holland Marsh is located in the protected Greenbelt and is home to some of the richest soils in the country. Farmer and Chair of the Holland Marsh Growers Association Alex Makarenko says, "for decades, the Holland Marsh has been considered the crown jewel for agricultural production: it is our very own 'salad bowl' with over 150 Marsh farmers on nearly 10,000 acres. With the might of the Marsh behind the local food movement, we anticipate a significant shift in choices for consumers."

"I want to thank Mr. Kennedy for developing a salad that reflects the diversity and quality the Marsh is renowned for," added Makarenko. "We want consumers asking for products of the Holland Marsh everywhere they go – because our products have the quality, taste, and freshness they want, and come with the assurance that what we do is environmentally friendly as well."

Vegetables will not only be grown within the Holland Marsh, but stored, processed and packaged as well, shortening the entire distribution chain, and strengthening the local economy. Local food reduces greenhouse gases, addresses the growing unease over food ripening as it spends weeks in storage and meets high food safety standards. The Association will also work with farmers to become certified by Local Food Plus, creating a distinct Holland Marsh-Local Food Plus brand.

In the past, Holland Marsh farmers have focused mostly on growing carrots, onions and celery. The new program builds on efforts that are underway to diversify crop production to meet the wider demand across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Marsh farmers are already growing more than 40 different vegetables ranging from red and green leaf lettuce, endive, celery and spinach to bok choy, Asian radishes and kohlrabi.

Other grants recently made by the *Greenbelt Foundation* range from supporting species restoration, to restaurant purchasing of local food, and children's educational programming. Total amount of the recent grants, including to the Holland Marsh Growers Association, is \$2,268,000. A full list is at the end of the media release and posted on the *Foundation* website (www.ourgreenbelt.ca).

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For further information please contact:

Jamie Reaume, Executive Director, Holland Marsh Growers' Association at (905) 251-6786, jreaume@rogers.com

Meredith Davis, *Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation* at (416) 960-0001 ext. 308, mdavis@ourgreenbelt.ca

Diana Crosbie, Crosbie Communications at (416) 360-6625, diana@crosbie.on.ca

Jodi McBurney for Jamie Kennedy at (416) 362-1957 ext. 380

Contact information for Holland Marsh farmers available for interviews:

Alex Makarenko, Chair, Holland Marsh Growers Association at (905) 836-3202 (mobile)

Roman Dyriw, Board Member, Holland Marsh Growers Association at (905) 960-6467 (mobile)

John Gorzo, Holland Marsh Farmer who provided vegetables for the salad at (905) 252-2822

Photos of the Holland Marsh are available on the *Greenbelt Foundation* website (www.ourgreenbelt.ca). Additional photos of Jamie Kennedy preparing the salad will be posted on the website by 1 pm.

The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation began its work in June 2005 as an independent, charitable foundation with a mandate to promote and sustain our Greenbelt as a beneficial, valuable, and permanent feature, enhancing the quality of life for all residents of Ontario.

Recent grants made by the *Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation*

Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (Niagara Escarpment Commission)
Escarpment of Adventure

\$150,000

The Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association and the Niagara Escarpment Commission will collaborate to produce a high-definition television program and interactive website to promote awareness and exploration of the ecological connectivity, culinary and agricultural life, and healthy recreational opportunities in the Niagara Escarpment – a World Biosphere Reserve in Ontario's Greenbelt.

Country Heritage Experience Inc.
Master Development Plan for Country Heritage Park

\$25,000

A review of Country Heritage Park's land-use management and development policies will bring them into conformity with regional planning requirements and a program review will develop guidelines that ensure future activities showcase the Park's mandate.

EcoSource
Local Food Program in Peel Region Schools

\$380,000

Peel will be the first school board in Ontario to offer local and sustainable food to its students and staff, including Elementary, High School and Culinary Arts Schools. The project opens up a new market for Greenbelt farmers. Combined with a classroom and practical learning program, the project fosters a connection to local food for a whole new generation.

Evergreen
The Greenbelt Depot at the Brick Works

\$75,000

The first-of-its-kind Greenbelt Depot at the Don Valley Brick Works fills a distribution gap in the local food system by establishing a weekly wholesale market where Greenbelt farmers and Toronto chefs can do business.

FoodShare
Building a Local Food Culture

\$100,000

In order to teach young people about all aspects of their food system, the Greenbelt, and eating local foods, students will visit Everdale farm and explore the FoodShare warehouse to enhance food skills, taste the bounty of local products, and learn about the important role that farmers play in feeding cities.

Grape Growers of Ontario
Canadian Vitis Certification Program

\$25,000

A feasibility study will determine the viability of creating a domestic supply of grape vines in order to avoid disease-related and other risks associated with importing materials propagated abroad. The project contributes to a sustainable domestic wine industry in the Greenbelt.

Holland Marsh Growers' Association
Holland Marsh Greenbelt Sustainability Program

\$400,000

Holland Marsh farmers, in collaboration with local packers and processors, will shift fresh vegetable production in this Specialty Crop Area from a largely export market to the local market. They will also diversify crop production and implement more sustainable growing practices through Local Food Plus certification and other changes.

Kawartha Heritage Conservancy

A Farming Future for the Eastern Greenbelt – Phase II

\$84,000

The Kawartha Heritage Conservancy will work with its partners, FarmStart and the Ontario Farmland Trust, to create and launch a FarmLink Program that connects new farmers with available agricultural land through long-term leases with landowners.

Milton Chamber of Commerce

Escarpment Country – in the Heart of Ontario's Greenbelt

\$25,000

A new marketing campaign increases awareness of Milton's Niagara Escarpment lands. Co-branding of the Niagara Escarpment with the Greenbelt will unify the landscapes and deepen the sense of pride that Ontarians feel for the scenic and ecologically-valuable natural heritage features in the Greenbelt.

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

Atlantic Salmon Classroom Hatchery Program

\$84,000

The Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program's wildly popular classroom hatchery program expands into 30 new classrooms in Greenbelt and neighbouring cities. Salmon fry are released each spring into nearby rivers and streams, helping to re-establish a locally extinct fish population.

Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, coordinated by Environmental Defence

Strengthening the Greenbelt

\$375,000

The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance and the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt will continue to monitor the implementation of the *Greenbelt Act* and *Plan* and engage their constituents and decision-makers in appreciating, enhancing and growing the Greenbelt.

Ottawa Street Farmers' Market in Hamilton

\$15,000

Hamilton's farmers' market is relocating and expanding. Recruitment of local farmers and a marketing campaign attract new customers and community support that will make this market a lasting success.

Sierra Club of Canada, Ontario Chapter

Helping Communities Defend the Greenbelt

\$80,000

Using resources such as a Greenbelt tool-kit, residents in urban communities adjacent to the Greenbelt are informed about how their land use decisions impact the Greenbelt and how their city can support and benefit from the Greenbelt.

TVO

The Ontario Greenbelt Adventure

\$440,000

Children and their parents around Ontario will experience the Greenbelt through multimedia programming on the popular and educational TVOKids show and website. Short video vignettes introduce Greenbelt treasures and interactive components such as special events like tree-planting and a treasure hunt bring families out to experience the Greenbelt – physically and virtually.

Wabash Building Society

\$10,000

A new farmers' market at Sorarens Park in Toronto's Roncesvalles and Parkdale neighbourhoods draws more Greenbelt farmers to market and showcases locally-grown ethno-cultural crops to residents of this diverse community.