

Ontario's local food champions

Growing up green

Children in city daycare tend their own garden

In the past, when children attending the Danforth Child Care Centre in Toronto were asked where carrots come from, they used to answer, "From my plate."

Now, they help tend an on-site garden planted with carrots, beets, tomatoes, strawberries and herbs. "We take the water can and pour water on [the plants]," says Asheya, 4. "They grow and then we eat them up."

These children may live in the city centre, but they are well-fed leaders-in-training in the growing local food movement and some of the first to benefit from a nutritious educational pilot program

designed to ensure that while they're at daycare, eventually a large percentage of the food on their plates is produced in Ontario.

According to Lorraine Bellisle, dietary supervisor of Municipal Child Care Services, about 42 per cent of the food fed to 2,850 children in the city's daycares is procured in Ontario.

Previously, about 20 per cent of the department's \$2.2 million food budget was allotted to Ontario groceries.

It began in 2009 with the City of Toronto's 35 childcare centres that serve lunch and snacks cooked on-site; and later, 22 other daycare



THOMAS BOLLMANN

Much of the food that is served to children at the Danforth Child Care Centre is locally grown, some at its on-site city garden.

centres that served catered food. The pilot is among the first to qualify for funding from the new Broader Public Sector Investment Fund, a program run by the Greenbelt Fund to promote local food.

Daycare supervisor Elena Huma

says some children have been so inspired by the garden that they have started gardens at home, with their parents' help.

Visit ontariofresh.ca to learn more about the Greenbelt Fund and its local food initiatives.