

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, November 8, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Kathryn Lockyer, Director, Legislative and Property Services

RE: LEASE RENEWAL AKACHI FARMS
9788 Pine Valley Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality
of York, Humber River Watershed (CFN 44640)

KEY ISSUE

Seek authority to renew the urban-agricultural lease with Akachi Farms on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA)-owned land at the Kortright Centre for Conservation, located south of Major Mackenzie Drive and west of Pine Valley Drive, municipally known as 9788 Pine Valley Drive, in the City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Humber River watershed (CFN 44640).

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT pursuant to an urban-agricultural lease agreement Akachi Farms is the current tenant of these TRCA-owned lands (hereinafter the “Land”);

AND FURTHER THAT TRCA is in receipt of a request from Akachi Farms for a lease agreement for urban-agricultural use of certain TRCA lands, located within Kortright Centre for Conservation, south of Major Mackenzie Drive and west of Pine Valley Drive, municipally known as 9788 Pine Valley Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Humber River watershed;

AND WHEREAS it is in the opinion of TRCA that it is in the best interest of TRCA in furthering its objectives, as set out in Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act, to cooperate with Akachi Farms in this instance;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA enter into a lease with Akachi Farms for the use of 4.85 hectares (12 acres), more or less, said land being Part of Lots 19-20, Concession 7, municipally known as 9788 Pine Valley Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York;

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THAT the lease with Akachi Farms be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (i) that the term of the lease be for 5 years;**
- (ii) that consideration be \$1,800 per annum throughout the term of the lease, plus HST;**
- (iii) that Akachi Farms will provide \$5 million in commercial general liability insurance;**
- (iv) that Akachi Farms will be responsible for all utility expenses;**
- (v) that Akachi Farms be responsible for all approvals required for construction and operation of the urban- agricultural operation;**
- (vi) that Akachi Farms be responsible for all costs associated with the development and operation of the urban-agricultural operation;**
- (vii) that Akachi Farms be solely responsible for all costs associated with the removal of any fixtures/infrastructure on the lands under lease, at the end of the term, and to the satisfaction of TRCA;**
- (viii) that Akachi Farms be required to consult and collaborate with the Education department at the Kortright Centre for Conservation for any overarching operations and programming;**
- (ix) that Akachi Farms be required to obtain at their sole cost, all necessary licenses and permits, and comply will all applicable by-laws, rules, regulations, and laws governing the conduct and operation of the urban-farm operation or anything in connection therewith;**
- (x) any other terms and conditions deemed appropriate by the TRCA staff and solicitor;**

All legal, appraisal survey and other costs incurred to be paid by Akachi Farms;

THAT an archaeological review be completed if required, at the expense of Akachi Farms with any mitigative measures being carried out to the satisfaction of TRCA;

AND FURTHER THAT authorized TRCA staff be directed to take the necessary action to finalize the transaction, including obtaining any necessary approvals and the signing and execution of documents.

BACKGROUND

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is in receipt of a request from Akachi Farms to enter into a lease agreement for the continued operation of the urban farm located at the Kortright Centre for Conservation, south of Major Mackenzie Drive and west of Pine Valley Drive, municipally known as 9788 Pine Valley Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Humber River watershed.

In November 2013, TRCA issued a Request for Expression of Interest to lease approximately 12 acres in total for the operation of an urban farm at the Kortright Centre for Conservation. The 12-acre parcel was inclusive of seven acres of farmland, a greenhouse, animal enclosures and an orchard, with the objective to showcase biointensive farming models, increase the supply of fresh, local food to local residents, and collaborate with the Kortright Centre for Conservation's diverse educational programming and workshops.

Through the Request for Expression of Interest process, Akachi Farms - an African-Canadian farm growing organic traditional African and market vegetables - was selected as the successful proponent. As a pilot, to determine if Akachi Farms was a good fit, a Permission to Enter was granted to Akachi Farms to operate on a portion of the 12-acre parcel for the 2014 season. Given the success of the first season, staff recommended that TRCA enter into a five-year lease agreement with Akachi Farms for the 12-acre parcel at the Kortright Centre for Conservation (RES. #B110/14).

Akachi Farms is owned by Buchi Onakufe who has a BSc in Microbiology. Farming since 2011, Buchi has been passionate about introducing unique produce to Canadians, selling her large variety of produce and farm products, to consumers throughout TRCA's jurisdiction, both directly to community members via a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, as well as at local markets.

Since TRCA's Board Endorsement, Akachi Farms' operating budget has increased from approximately \$12,000 in 2015, to \$68,000 in 2023. Last year, Akachi Farms had successfully organized and implemented ten community engagement events, including their 6th Annual Harvest Festival as well as their Junior Gardner's program, collaborated with the Kortright Centre for Conservation team to deliver educational programming to

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visiting school groups, and supplied and distributed over 4,500 lbs of fresh, locally grown produce, and animal products and by-products.

Attachment 1 is an orthophoto illustrating the location of the subject lands. Attachment 2 is a site plan illustrating the location of the subject lands.

RATIONALE

TRCA supports agriculture on its properties, where appropriate, and aligns its work in agriculture and urban agriculture with partners, to improve the health of watersheds and communities. Located within the Kortright Centre for Conservation, Akachi Farms would continue to prompt social equity, health and food security in the Vaughan community by providing opportunities for increased accessibility to fresh, healthy and affordable foods. Furthermore, renewing the lease agreement with Akachi Farms would provide education, skill development, training, and leadership opportunities. It will continue to build connections between the community and TRCA programs and facilities offered at the Kortright Centre for Conservation.

The terms and conditions of the lease and the governance of this farm operation would continue to be in accordance with TRCA's *Agricultural Land Use Policy* (Attachment 3). As per the Policy, the Environmental Farm Plan will be reviewed regularly, and the lease will be structured to allow for updates within the term of the lease to incorporate any revisions to current Best Management Practices as may be appropriate.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars, and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.2 A culture of diversity, equity and inclusion contributing to community well-being

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.3 Informed citizens are conservation champions

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FINANCIAL DETAILS

As per TRCA's *Agricultural Land Use Policy*, TRCA will establish and maintain fair market rent for agricultural land under lease within TRCA's management portfolio and will complete a fair market assessment by an independent appraisal company every five years.

The most recent fair market assessment was completed at the end of 2022 and has recommended a rental rate of \$150 per acre.

The annual revenue generated from this lease will be applied towards the management of TRCA's lands and assets.

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Date: August 14, 2024

Attachments: 3

Attachment 1: Orthophoto 9788 Pine Valley Drive, Vaughan

Attachment 2: Site Plan 9788 Pine Valley Drive, Vaughan

Attachment 3: Agricultural Land Use Policy