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INSIDE CITY HALL: PROPOSAL BEFORE COUNCIL

An apple a day is core mantra for group supporting buy-local policy

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An apple a day keeps the doctor away, they say, but also makes for a good dose of healthy politics at Toronto city hall today.

In a publicity stunt by the Toronto Environmental Alliance to prod city councillors to adopt a local food-buying policy - the proposal is before council's government management committee tomorrow - children (and their parents) will deliver locally grown apples this morning to politicians' offices at the clam shell.

"Torontonians understand that buying local food makes sense for the environment and the economy," says Jamie Kirkpatrick, a campaigner for TEA. "It helps keep farmers working as farmers."

Over the summer, TEA activists turned up at area farmers' markets, using postcards of jet-lagged apples to spark customer support for a policy to buy local produce for city-run day cares, shelters and seniors homes.

"This is the fruit of that work," said Mr. Kirkpatrick, with one apple for every signature collected.

A staff report to the government management committee recommends a modest phase-in, until officials get a firmer grip on the full cost implications of a buy-local policy. If local farmers are used to supply 10 per cent of the city's annual food budget for daycares, seniors homes and city-run facilities, the overall bill could rise by \$165,000 a year.

That's money well spent, argues Mr. Kirkpatrick. "We like where the [proposed] policy is going, but we have a few suggestions for improvements."