

Serving Up Local
Case Study 2017



CITY OF HAMILTON

Supporting Local & Sustainable Meats in Long-Term Care

City of Hamilton, Ontario
Wentworth Lodge, Dundas
Macassa Lodge, Hamilton

430 resident beds

Approximately 1,350
meals served per day in 17
dining rooms & community
programs

\$ 180,474.68
local food purchases in 2017

\$147,959.08
local food purchases 2016

22% increase in
local food sales

Food is prepared at each
home using on-site cooking
and prepared items

The City of Hamilton's two municipally-run long-term care homes are leading the charge on local, sustainable meat purchasing and supporting an Ontario farm family along the way.

As part of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA)'s *Serving Up Local* project, the Hamilton homes have been incorporating local substitutions on their menus with great success. Two different approaches were taken. The first was to look at options for increased purchase of Ontario items from current vendors to whom they have obligations through their Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) membership contracts. These substitutions were made in the categories of frozen vegetables, fresh produce, dairy and whole eggs.

Details of the GPO contract were explored further to utilize a second approach - introduce new vendors to the homes. There were no contracts in place with the City of Hamilton homes' GPO for the raw protein category, and it was determined that the frozen entrée category had flexibility due to the saturated market of these items. Cuddy's Ontario Turkey Schnitzel and Appetito's Turkey Chili are new Ontario frozen entrées on the menu. Jiano's Meat Lasagna is a new Ontario dish favoured by residents at both Macassa and Wentworth Lodges.

Review of the fresh proteins category has led to an exciting new Ontario food development. **This category is not mandated under the contracts of the**

homes' GPO and thus offers a unique opportunity for local food purchasing. To learn more, the City of Hamilton's long-term care homes' Food Directors, Anne Kayler and Sandra Denman, joined the other *Serving Up Local* regional teams as they put their boots on and headed out to the VG Meats', or more precisely, the Van Groningen family's, farm and processing facility near Simcoe, Ontario.

At the processing facility they got a behind-the-scenes look at the path the VG Meats' products take before purchase, from butchering, portioning, infusing, smoking and packaging. The tour concluded in the sleek VG Meats on-site retail store. **Highlighted qualities of the VG Meats facility included a unique tenderness testing method - the first, and only used in Canada - and full traceability of information concerning where the animal was raised, its age, and what it was fed.** The team then toured one of the family farms where cattle are raised and prepared for harvesting. **VG Meats' sustainability practices include a hormone-free animal care policy, and crop and herd rotation on their land, allowing a holistic approach to fertilization using compost instead of synthetic or mined materials.** Organic matter delivers nutrients and keeps moisture in the earth, avoiding

The Big Local Food Wins

desertification of the land. Armed with the inside scoop on this unique farm/processing operation, the long-term care home teams were ready to discuss options to offer more of this Ontario product to their residents. **The VG Meats products are higher in protein per gram of meat than some imported alternatives used in healthcare** – a valuable ratio when working with \$9.00 per day per resident and attempting to meet targets for high nutrition.

When making their decisions about purchasing from VG Meats, Anne and Sandra remarked that, "The VG Meats team is definitely customer-focused and eager and willing to meet the needs of each long-term care facility. Our impression of the family operation during the VG Farm and Processing Tour was that they appear to genuinely care about the environment, treatment of the livestock, food safety and providing a quality product."

Back at the homes, sampling of the VG Meats products was a success and the **City of Hamilton long-term care homes are now purchasing mushroom meatloaf, cottage roll, beef crumble and sliced roast pork from VG Meats.**

Through greater discussions between the homes and VG Meats, a new product was listed with the home's distributor, Gordon Food Services – a pork cottage roll that is very popular with residents. Anne and Sandra agree, "The VG cottage roll is really good!"

The development of the cottage roll is a direct result of the farm trip and discussions between long-term care Food Directors and an entrepreneurial farm business. These meal options

are now offered on resident menus and identified as Ontario products to show how long-term care residents are directly supporting local farmers.

Kyle Van Groningen, who oversees VG Meats' retail and communications, was a key champion, easing the increased purchases of fresh proteins in long-term care. "One of the biggest challenges is finding a common product suitable for multiple long-term care homes so that we can produce what they need and have enough purchases to be listed with the food distributor. The field trip that the LTC food staff took to our farm and processing facility was key to overcoming that challenge. We became an open book, showing our operations, and answering questions about food safety and animal health. It increased confidence in our system and allowed for the dialogue to find common products that are desirable in an LTC setting." When asked about further potential for VG Meats in the LTC market, Kyle was enthusiastic, saying, **"We've only just scratched the surface on fresh proteins. We just need to continue the dialogue."**

The Hamilton homes are keen to do just that. They aim to add VG Meats roast beef and diced beef to the menu with an ultimate goal to help move the VG Meats products onto the consistently available list through their distributor.

City of Hamilton's long-term care Food Directors Anne Kayler (L) and Sandy Denman (R), visiting the VG Meats farm in Simcoe, Ontario

1 New relationship with an Ontario Farm and Processor, VG Meats, yielding new sustainable meat options on the menu: Cottage roll, mushroom meatloaf, beef crumble and sliced roast pork

2 Fresh vegetables now coming regularly from Ontario: apples, cucumbers, potatoes, Spanish onions

3 Frozen vegetables now coming regularly from Ontario: corn, green beans, yellow beans, turnip, butternut squash

4 Local food purchases were increased without a significant negative impact on the food budget



Serving Up Local is a partnership between Durham and Halton Regions, the City of Hamilton and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) to increase the amount of local foods offered in their facilities with a special focus on long-term care homes. We use the purchasing power of public institutions to strengthen Ontario's agricultural sector and appeal to our residents seeking local food offerings. This project is made possible with financial support from the Government of Ontario, in partnership with the Greenbelt Fund. For more information: www.foodandfarming.ca



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