



## HALTON REGION

# Championing Local All Along the Food Value Chain in Long-Term Care

**Halton Region, Ontario**  
Allendale, Milton  
Post Inn Village, Oakville  
Creek Way Village, Burlington

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The majority of food is purchased and prepared in Allendale's production kitchen using on-site cooking and cook-chill system for distribution to the three Halton homes

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**572** resident beds

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Approximately **1,802** meals served per day in 20 dining rooms & community programs

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**\$ 471,536.66** local food purchases 2017

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**\$ 328,699.72** local food purchases in 2016

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**43.5%** increase in local food sales

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Nutrition Services staff in Halton Region have been a local food force, increasing local food purchases by 43.5% over the 20 months of the *Serving Up Local* project!

Marilyn Lo and Alice Martone, Nutrition Services Supervisors at Halton Region are in a special position as they coordinate the purchase and production of the food for Halton's three municipally-run long-term care (LTC) homes: Allendale, Post Inn Village and Creek Way Village. The main production kitchen is located within the Allendale home and provides meals to 572 long-term care residents as well as community programs such as Meals on Wheels and Adult Day Programs.

Early on in the project, the Halton team identified their interest in exploring local protein options for their menus. There was no contract in place with their Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) for raw proteins: hence there was an opportunity to make some movement in a high commodity category. Alice Martone was focused on finding Ontario proteins for the senior community in Halton. **"I wanted to give farm-fresh, clean nutrient dense product. It also gives the residents satisfaction and comfort knowing that they are eating the freshest product possible like they did many years ago," says Alice. "It was very satisfying to let the cooks know that the meat they are cooking is coming from local farms."**

There are many criteria used to determine if a vendor or product is a viable option for LTC homes. Some of the considerations when choosing food products or vendors

are: food safety, regulation and traceability, nutrition and quality standards, suitability for residents of long-term care, consistency and availability of product as well as cost.

Having a food vendor or products listed through a distributor does help to meet the above criteria. From a procurement perspective as a municipally-owned home, food purchasing needs to follow procurement by-laws to ensure transparency. Contracted items do not generally make up 100% of the food purchases, thereby leaving room for new products to be offered in the homes as well.

The Halton food teams have taken full advantage of the resources of their main food distributor to increase their purchases in this category. **Using the Local Ontario List, Marilyn and Alice were able to identify and include more local protein in the 2017 spring/summer menu, including new Ontario turkey and beef offerings.** From Marilyn's perspective, "Our distributor has been great at providing information through their local list and connecting us with vendors."

By igniting the local food dialogue with LTC homes and their distributors, great strides have been made to increase Ontario food purchases. Are there still challenges sourcing local? Marilyn admits that it's a

work in progress. "Different vendors have different definitions of local. We had to dig deeper for some items to see if they were local or not as they weren't consistently labeled as such. There is the issue of vendors that ship nationally not identifying product sourced from Ontario. We had some items we knew were local but were not listed as local: therefore the distributor had to rename their item. We are proud of the end result - revamped menus for residents featuring more local."

Seasonal fruits and vegetables from Ontario were also a top mealtime priority. Laura Richards, Nutrition Services Supervisor in Halton and *Serving Up Local* project team member, said that residents light up when they are offered fresh Ontario produce. **Homes incorporated fresh Ontario peaches, nectarines, corn on the cob, apples, asparagus and tomatoes during the peak growing season.** These offerings were accompanied by the *Serving Up Local* project posters, which feature bright and colourful images of the fresh seasonal produce, as well as the Ontario milk, whole eggs and cucumbers offered year-round. Laura Richards says, "Help with marketing has been huge for me. It's exciting for residents and their families to see the posters identifying seasonal local produce."

**To help sustain the local food purchasing initiative, Halton Region included local food language in their procurement document for food products served in long-term care.** According to Jessica Reid, Halton Region's Shared Services Manager for Services for Seniors, "Our Nutrition Services team wanted to bring the benefits of local food to our residents in long-term care, but we needed the tools

to get us to our goal. The procurement document was, in essence, the first tool where we defined what we needed from a vendor to ensure we reached our goal of increasing local food options for our residents."

The inclusion of strong local food language in various components in the procurement document ensured that successful bidders support Halton Region in its ongoing efforts to increase local food purchasing by 5%.

Making the switch to offering local food options shows residents that food staff are responding to their interests. Preliminary surveying by the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) of 38 residents and their family members in Halton long-term care homes, shows that **71% of respondents felt that being offered local foods made them feel better about the meals served. Common responses from residents are that local food makes them feel "good",** and that they want to support local farmers. Some have happy memories revolving around home-grown or farm-grown food.

The frontline staff who work with residents at meal time are vital to communicating the new local procurement efforts to residents and their families. The personal support workers and dietitians know about each resident's diet, and assist them with mealtime choices. That is why the Halton Region LTC homes have committed to participate in a new proposed GHFFA project – *Serving Up Local* Training Initiative, to highlight and expand upon the local food literacy of long-term care food staff in Halton. Stay tuned for the training project developments!

New local food language in Halton Region's RFP for food products in long-term care

Jiano's Meat Lasagna – "It was a great find and a far superior product!"

VG Meats Pulled Pork and Cottage Rolls

Switching most frozen vegetables to local

Local corn is a new resident favourite

A new local egg blend which is used daily

New revamped menus featuring local and all the marketing and promotional tools consistently placed around the home to show local food successes

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**Revamped daily menu in Halton highlighting Ontario produce**

**Lunch**

**Pastrami Sandwich**  
on Whole Wheat Bread  
Beet & Potato Salad

**OR**

**White Fish Fillet with Lemon Sauce**  
Ontario Grown Potato Wedges  
Broccoli

**Dessert**

Banana Loaf  
Ontario Grown Stewed Rhubarb

**Dinner**

**Cream of Tomato Soup**

**Beef Pie with Gravy**  
Mashed Potatoes  
Ontario Grown Carrot Turnip Puree

**OR**

**Turkey Rice Casserole**  
Ontario Grown Lima Beans with Red Peppers

**Dessert**

Apricots  
Chocolate Pudding

*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](http://www.foodandfarming.ca)



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Food and Farming  
Alliance



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