



## **Press Release**

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **National Survey Shows Institutions are Buying Into Local**

Vancouver – October 10, 2013 - According to a new report being released today, activity to bring healthy, local and sustainable foods into public agencies is gearing up in almost every province and territory in Canada – and there is a hunger for more.

*Local Foods: Canadian schools, campuses, and health care facilities speak up* is the first pan-Canadian survey of its kind. In all, 239 food and nutrition specialists working within schools, campuses, and healthcare facilities answered questions about efforts to bring local food into their institutions. The responses show that a significant number of public agencies in Canada are working along multiple fronts to put more local foods on patient and student plates.

*“I was surprised to discover that institutional food system transformation is occurring in urban, rural and remote communities right across the country,”* says Joanne Bays, National Manager of Farm to Cafeteria Canada. *“Greenhouses, gardens and farms are sprouting up in schoolyards and on campus and hospital grounds. New food supply chains are being developed resulting in the purchase and delivery of local foods from non-traditional sources such as farmer’s markets and food cooperatives. These foods – from salmon to strawberries – are finding their way to canteens, dining halls, and to the patient’s bedside.”*

The survey also reveals that there is significant variation in the type of activity undertaken by public agencies. The schools and campuses represented in the survey are more likely to provide local food than their healthcare counterparts (76% and 92%, respectively, versus 66% for healthcare facilities). They are also more likely to provide educational activities regarding local food (90% and 86%, respectively, versus 38% for healthcare facilities). Campuses and healthcare facilities are more likely to have local procurement policies or contracts with local providers (33% and 29%, respectively, versus 14% for schools).

Why are public agencies embracing the local food movement? According to the survey, a key motivational factor is “improved quality, freshness, taste or nutrition of the food.”

*“Local food can be an excellent means of providing appealing and healthy food that benefits local communities, rural economies, and the environment. Everyone can feel good about eating local food,”* explains Dr. Mary McKenna, a professor of nutrition at the University of New Brunswick and one of the authors of the report.

What are the barriers to this activity? Top barriers for larger scale operations are “lack of policies that address local food” and “existing contracts that prevent use of local food.”

*“To encourage local procurement in our public institutions, we need more provinces to bring in food policies like the one Quebec brought in this spring. But such policies must have clear incremental targets. If the government sends a clear message to institutions to buy local, producers will organize to offer competitive prices,”* says Isabelle St-Germain, Deputy Director of Equiterre.

The report concludes the time is ripe for Farm to Cafeteria Canada – the national organization devoted to promoting healthy, local and sustainable foods in all Canadian public institutions – to further advance the efforts of local and regional programs. Key strategic directions include conducting further research, sharing information and resources, supporting the replication of promising practices, and advocating supportive policies.

*“We came into this project as individuals representing various groups and organizations, and have come out with not only data to show what institutions are doing to get more local food into their settings, but also with a strengthened national Farm to Cafeteria Canada network and an abundance of ideas and resources that will help to further farm to cafeteria activities in Canada,”* says Roxana Atkinson, a researcher for Farm to Cafeteria Canada.

The report was prepared by researchers Dr. Mary McKenna and Roxana Atkinson (University of New Brunswick), with support from Joanne Bays (Farm to Cafeteria Canada), Dana Lahey (Sierra Youth Coalition), Brendan Wylie Toal (My Sustainable Canada), and Murielle Vrins (Equiterre).

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