



# Ross Memorial Hospital decreases ecological footprint with wholesome, nutritious local food

Ross Memorial Hospital (RMH) is a 175 bed community hospital located in Lindsay, Ontario, serving more than 80,000 local residents and seasonal visitors. RMH has already received attention for its notable energy reduction campaigns but now they have turned their attention to greening the hospital's food services. (See: [www.greenhealthcare.ca/ross.pdf](http://www.greenhealthcare.ca/ross.pdf))

One of the unique characteristics of RMH is that the Nutrition Services Department still cooks patient meals from scratch, using fresh, whole foods. This practice is in stark contrast to most general hospitals in Ontario, which rely on outsourced foods and rarely cook any meals from scratch. Using fresh food allows RMH to create high quality meals for its patients, and it also allows for more flexibility when trying to buy local.

In 2011, RMH was awarded a grant from the *Broader Public Sector Investment Fund* to be a pilot site for a local food project. In collaboration with Sysco Canada, the City of Kawartha Lakes, My Sustainable Canada, and the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care, the hospital's nutrition team looked at its current purchasing to identify opportunities to increase

the amount of Ontario food being prepared in the kitchen and served to patients.

The team began by determining the origin of more than sixty-five foods on its menu, including meats, dairy products, eggs, and produce. It was discovered that less than 20% of their food was local. This information was then used by the team to target five non-local menu items with an eye towards increasing the amount of local food it purchased.

Step one in sourcing new local foods was to examine what was available locally, both within the region of the City of Kawartha Lakes, and more broadly from within Ontario. In the end, the five foods chosen were beef stew, roast turkey, frozen vegetables, potatoes, and apples. The second step was to find local vendors who could supply these foods.

At the outset, there were concerns from hospital administrators that using more whole foods would increase labour and operating costs, but this has not been the case. There were also concerns that the new local food items would be more expensive.



The Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care is Canada's premier integrated green health care resource network; a national voice and catalyst for environmental change.

# Everyone wins with local, nutritious local food

Fortunately, this too was not necessarily true. Many of the local meat products and vegetables that were sourced for this project were either less expensive, cost neutral, or only slightly more expensive than the imported items.

Sourcing food locally means RMH has decreased its carbon footprint by cutting the distance food must travel from field to plate. At the same time, the team has reinvested its public food dollars into Ontario's agricultural economy. The annual value of the five new local foods being served at RMH is estimated to be \$20,000.

Ross Memorial Hospital continues to explore opportunities to bring more wholesome and nutritious Ontario food to the patient tray. The next steps include finding sources of local pork, cheese, and yogurt, along with more local produce, such as onions, peppers, and celery. Another challenge the team hopes to take on is to find a local supplier of single-serve apple juices, since the apples used for the current variety are flown in from China. The Nutrition Services department is committed to the continuous expansion of its Ontario food offerings as it cultivates a culture of local purchasing at Ross Memorial Hospital.



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The Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care  
Coalition canadienne pour un système de santé écologique



My Sustainable Canada  
Avenir durable Canada

As national not-for-profit organisations, My Sustainable Canada and the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care are committed to increasing the sustainability and resilience of our food systems through collaborative partnerships.



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