



Queen's University on the Hunt for Ontario Meat

The 3P Mentorship Program cultivates local and sustainable food champions who use the buying power of public institutions to transform the food system. Queen's University bringing the local, sustainable food conversation to Kingston and is encouraging big businesses to get behind Ontario meat. **FEBRUARY 2015**



Joli Manson wants to see her institutional town be a leader in the food movement.

To say that Joli Manson wears many hats would be an understatement. She is the Queen's University Hospitality Services General Manager, an employee of food service giant Sodexo, and an active member of the National Farmer's Union. In her spare time Joli grows organic garlic for sale to the local market. Joli joined the 3P Mentorship Program with a vision to bring the local, sustainable food conversation to her institutional town in Eastern Ontario. She also set out to tackle the challenge of sourcing more provincially inspected meat for her students.

Early on, Joli identified protein as the food category with the most potential for growth in local purchasing. Across all other food categories, efforts have been made to keep the local food content high and the university's food service boasted a 63% local food service. **The campus features numerous varieties of local apples, pears, and storage vegetables in their menus throughout the winter months of the year. Joli also takes advantage of Ontario's supply managed poultry and dairy industries, and features almost entirely local chicken, yogurt, butter, and eggs all year round. But local protein was the juggernaut.**

"Ontario only has one federally inspected red meat plant. Sodexo warrants to their customers that all

proteins on offer are federally inspected," explains Joli. Consequently, provincially-inspected Ontario protein is out of reach. Queen's is not alone in this challenge. National and global food service companies are struggling to reconcile their business models with the demand for food grown and processed close to home.

Across Ontario there is a pervasive myth that federally inspected meat, which is widely available through mainline distributors and food service companies, is superior and safer than provincially inspected meat. Provincially inspected meat plants are inspected by OMAFRA and process meat to a high quality standard.



Joli with 3P Program mentors Wendy Smith and Hayley Lapalme, flipping through the Queen's Journal for a story on local food efforts on campus.

University in
**Kingston,
Ontario**

3P Cohort Member:
Joli Manson
General Manager
Hospitality Services

Sodexo
Food Service Operator

\$8 million
annual food budget

\$2.9 million
in local purchases this year

1 million
residence meals served per
academic year

20 retail locations

150 staff engaged
throughout the program

3 Field to Fork
events featuring seasonal
menus

Strawberries
in season are Joli's favourite
food. Intense flavour and
brilliant as they are or all
dressed up



Above: The Canadian Grilling Company offers Ontario beef, lamb, bison, and other local game.

Below: Most of the cohort sits down to enjoy a local spread in the Queen's cafeteria during the 3P end of year retreat.



"In my exploration of this subject there does not appear to be a substantive difference between provincial inspected and federally inspected meat from a health and safety perspective," says Joli. The two systems serve different jurisdictions and purposes, but **both the federal and provincial governments have systems in place to make sure the food coming from their meat processing plants is safe.** An increasing number of Ontario institutions have debunked this myth and are calling their food service partners to make provincially inspected meat available to them.

Introducing provincially inspected meat to their listings is something that Sodexo may be willing to

do, but it means a change in business as usual. "This is a big project because it isn't just changing Queen's. The minute that a change happens it really opens the door in the Sodexo universe, which is global, and that decision will be made in [the headquarters in] France. So it's a complicated piece of business. The goal was to open that door this year, and I would say although we haven't got it open, I think we have our toe in it."

While Joli continues to nudge the door open, she is ensuring foods she can source locally make it onto her campus. **"When Pizza Pizza told me they could source cheaper cheese from the US, we insisted on 100% Ontario Mozzarella.** [It was] not the brand standard. But the same thing can be done on other

sites." Queen's customers now comment that the on-campus Pizza Pizza is far superior to the brand's pizza elsewhere in town.

Queen's has also opened a traceable, local, sustainable restaurant known as The Canadian Grilling Company. The restaurant's menu is loaded with local options including beef, lamb, bison, and other game sourced locally. It is one of the most successful retail sites on the campus.

A major goal of the 3P Program has been to build partnerships both across institutions and within them to align food service goals with institutional goals. Joli wanted to liberate food from the solitary domain of food service and encourage other campus players to get involved in the conversation around sustainable food systems. She reached out to the **Queen's School of Business** by making a connection to the role business innovation is playing in food. The School of Business quickly came on board in co-hosting a workshop with My Sustainable Canada on local sustainable food. Joli's goal is still to get more public sector institutions in Kingston on board with the local, sustainable procurement project. She has her sights set on **Kingston General Hospital** as an ally with whom she would next like to work.

Reflecting on the year with 3P, Joli emphasized the patience and focus on systems change needed for sourcing local food. "When you're dealing with enormous businesses you really see that change is glacial. It takes a long time." Her words echo from one of the earlier bits of insight she shared with the program: **"Begin with one small step, which creates a successful outcome.** From there move forward one step at a time. Eventually there will be a significant shift in the entire landscape of your purchasing policy. I think that our goals at Queen's were ambitious in that the change required to achieve the increase is going to take longer than the timeline of the project." With a toe in the door and a lot of eyes on it across the program, we are optimistic that students at Queen's and eateries across Ontario will soon enjoy more Ontario meat.

The 3P Mentorship Program is lead by Hayley Lapalme and Wendy Smith. To get involved in the community of sustainable food purchasers, check out the program at mentorship.mysustainablecanada.org, apply to be in the next cohort, or contact hayley@mysuscan.org.