



Tuesday June 23, 2015

To Paul Chapin, Chair HHS Board of Directors; Rob MacIsaac HHS President & CEO; Fred Eisenberger, Hamilton Mayor; To Whom It May Concern,

I, Chef Nancy Henley, am 100 percent opposed to eliminating local preparation of fresh, nourishing foods in our Hamilton hospitals.

After twenty-plus years in the food and hospitality management business and thousands of hours educating those interested in preparing nutritious meals, I can say with certainty that connecting people to handmade food and its whole preparation improves health and well-being. Eating local foods that are caringly made and responsibly sourced is an unquantifiable experience that nourishes each person and whole communities. Engaging all senses in an enjoyable food experience and metabolizing fresh, naturally ripened, caringly made local foods from our farms and backyards has indisputable health benefits. It is a momentous occasion capable of changing gene structure (called nutriepigenetics/nutriepigenomics) for the better!

It saddens me to see that we are taking steps backward in this way: away from engaging in simple connections with our community that also strengthen our province; away from responsible food sourcing and eating; away from the most nutritious meals possible for patients young and old at a most vulnerable time.

I understand the many constraints the hospital system is under and that the proposed new food systems have their benefits. I hear the promises to source Ontario foods but eliminating 100 percent the option of fresh, local, nutritious, short-ingredient-list-foods, cooked in-house, is leading us down a slippery slope of disconnected eating.

We as a community are making many strides forward to strategize and optimize whole foods education in helping people become more food literate! For instance, locally the Hamilton Food Strategy is a city initiative focusing "on how our local food system helps achieve our social, environmental, economic, cultural and health goals." Please see: <http://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/strategies-actions/hamiltonfood-strategy>.

Many citizens and food experts in this community are modelling a sustainable, best-food action plan for the long term viability of bodies, minds and the environment. Are we not trying to keep people out of hospitals? How is this choice to sign a 10 year contract with a giant multinational company going to be interpreted going forward by our engaged community when there is a rising consciousness about the health benefits of knowing what is in our food, knowing where our food comes from, and how to prepare it?

Provincially, Goal # 3 of the Food Literacy Goals of The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is to "increase the number of Ontarians who prepare local food meals for family and friends, and make local food more available through food service providers." Further, "The Ontario government aims to not only increase food literacy among Ontarians, but also encourage increased collaboration and an ongoing food literacy conversation among government, industry and the public."

Please see: Local Food Literacy Goals: www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/about/foodliteracygoals.htm



chef NANCY HENLEY

In this context, eliminating all the established systems of in-house hospital kitchens in this community makes no sense.

I believe it is my right as a tax-paying citizen to dig more deeply into this issue, as it affects not only patients but us all. I fully intend to do so. My preference is that the Hamilton Health Sciences board's decision to vote for a long-term contract with a multinational food company for 100 percent out-sourced meal services for patients be slowed down to allow for evaluation of other options.

I believe that the decision to eliminate Hamilton Health Sciences' in-house kitchens sends a disturbing message and it saddens me. I am asking: Are our heads and hearts in the right place? I know from experience that the more we move away from knowing where our food comes from, the more we move away from the source of all of our strength.

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