



Scaling Up Local Food Procurement in Greater Vancouver Schools: Recommendations following an analysis of programs, policy and practice

**Prepared for
Public Health Association of BC**

**Prepared by
Darren Stott, Greenchain Consulting**

Erin Nichols

April 8, 2013

Acknowledgements

Farm to School Greater Vancouver is guided by a 12-member steering committee comprised of representatives from the health, education, and farming sectors in Greater Vancouver. The initiative is administered by the **Public Health Association of BC** with Funding from **Vancity enviroFund**.

In 2012 the **Vancity enviroFund™** granting program supported initiatives focused on building an ecologically sound, viable, and resilient local food system. In August \$750,000 was awarded to 12 organizations. In June 2012 Vancity also distributed \$250,000 in enviroFund grants to support 21 farmers' markets.

The logo for Vancity, featuring the word "Vancity" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

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1.0 Background

Farm to School Greater Vancouver is a 12-member steering committee comprised of representatives from the health, education, and farming sectors in Greater Vancouver. They have worked over the past three years to connect schools with farms in order to bring local, nutritious, and sustainably produced foods into schools. Their experience in helping to initiate and support 6 Farm to School programs left them questioning how to scale up Farm to School both at individual schools, but also across school districts. Vancity enviroFund provided funding in 2012 to research sustainable, local procurement models and their applicability for Greater Vancouver. This research contract is administered by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC).

Opportunities

This report is the second of two reports that explores models for incorporating local, sustainable food into district-wide procurement practices and particularly their potential applicability in school districts in Greater Vancouver. This involves identifying various models of local procurement, including those successfully operating in other jurisdictions and public institutions in BC. It also involves engaging in dialogue with several Greater Vancouver school districts to identify their challenges and opportunities for procuring local, sustainable food through any of the potential models.

The analysis and recommendations in this report serve as a vital resource for moving healthy, local, sustainable food procurement forward in Greater Vancouver and identify primary opportunities for implementation in school districts. These reports:

- Focus on food procurement and how to integrate local, sustainable foods into district-wide food procurement practices
- Explore various models from other jurisdictions and their applicability
- Analyze barriers to and facilitators of local, sustainable procurement within public institutions
- Identify options and opportunities to address barriers

2.0 Overview of 3 Greater Vancouver School Districts and their Food Procurement Practices

The following research was to identify the challenges and opportunities for procuring local, sustainable food within 3 Greater Vancouver school districts. School districts selected were based on having a connection to the Farm to School (F2S) steering committee and/or having a different model of procuring food than other districts, in order to give different representations of how school districts work. Richmond School District has a decentralized system, so McNair Secondary School in Richmond was used for the research.

Table .1. Overview of 3 Greater Vancouver School Districts

	Vancouver School District	Surrey School District	Richmond School District (McNair Secondary School)
Contact	Ian Wind, Manager Purchasing and Administrative Services Jennifer Cook, Supervisor Food Services	Julie Stephenson Manager, Food and Nutrition Services	Ray Young McNair Secondary School Teaching Kitchen Chef
Number and type of schools	92 Elementary 18 Secondary	99 Elementary 20 Secondary	41 Elementary 9 Secondary
No. of pupils	56,500	63,000	22,500
Meal types served	Breakfast and lunch	Breakfast and lunch	Lunch (McNair school)
Meal budget	~\$1.4 million for teaching cafeterias ~\$1.4m for canteen kitchens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded Breakfast program \$1/meal for elementary and \$1.50/meal for secondary Funded Lunch program \$4/meal (\$1m budget) 11 teaching kitchens \$800k/annum 8 contracted cafeterias (unknown budget) 	McNair School Teaching Kitchen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$100,000/annum \$700/week on produce
Meal program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 subsidised Elementary school lunch programs (4,300 kids) 12 Elementary school breakfast programs (charity funded) 8 teaching cafeterias (Secondary schools) 7 canteen kitchens (Secondary) 3 VSB-staffed cafeterias (Secondary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded breakfast program in 14 elementary and 1 secondary school. 500 kids and 12 months old program. Funded lunch program in 32 locations for 3,500 kids (2,700 in elementary), managed by Compass. 	McNair School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot food cafeteria
Meal prices	Varies	Varies	Varies

	Vancouver School District	Surrey School District	Richmond School District (McNair Secondary School)
Standard Food ordering & distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary schools prepare their own food • Food is ordered and delivered mainly through distributors (GFS) • ~10% of food is bought by staff at local retailers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast program – dairy delivered by Dairyland & Branded Distribution. Remaining groceries bought by volunteer at local store. • Funded lunch program prepared and delivered by Compass. • Teaching kitchens contracted to buy from GFS (mostly) • Contracted cafeterias managed by Canuel Caterers. 	<p>Schools order their own food</p> <p>McNair School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orders from various suppliers
Local, sustainable food initiative	F2S programs By default by some local product e.g. bread and dairy	F2S programs By default by some local product e.g. bread and dairy	F2S programs By default by some local product e.g. bread and dairy

3.0 Barriers to and Facilitators of Local, Sustainable Food Procurement within 3 Greater Vancouver School Districts

Vancouver School District (Vancouver School Board - VSB)

People

VSB has a very motivated Board to execute sustainable initiatives within the district. The Board is publicly elected and most are from Vision Vancouver, the same party that most of the councilors and the mayor at the City of Vancouver represent. City of Vancouver has stated it wants to be the greenest city in the world by 2020 and VSB has also stated a similar mission to align itself with the City.

“Our goal is to be the greenest, most sustainable school district in North America.”¹

There is a significant push from schools to procure more local food, as well as grow their own food on site. VSB has 2 key staff members who oversee the procurement, Ian Wind and Jennifer Cook, who both want to investigate the possibility of procuring more local food. VSB also has a sustainability coordinator, Kevin Millsip.

Policies and Contracts

The VSB has a number of policies in place that relate and could support the increase of procurement of local, sustainable food, namely:

- Climate Action Charter² (as signed by the Board in March 2009 with the Province of BC)
- The Sustainability Framework³ (as approved by the Board in September 2010)
- The 2011-2016 Strategic Plan⁴ “Develop green initiatives for and with schools”

Unfortunately, none of the documents explicitly states the district will increase the procurement of local, sustainable food.

VSB contracts 90% of the food used within schools to various suppliers. Currently there are several contracts including those for dairy, groceries (food and cleaning materials) and hot meals. Contracts are managed by the Food Services department at VSB and awarded through

¹ <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/SUSTAINABILITY%20FRAMEWORK%202.pdf>

² <http://www.toolkit.bc.ca/resource/climate-action-charter>

³ <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/SUSTAINABILITY%20FRAMEWORK%202.pdf>

⁴ http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/publication-files/VSB_StrategicPlanandgoalsJan302012.pdf

an RFP process. Contracts tend to last for around 5 years. Each school has a direct relationship with the distributors and handles the ordering and receiving of the products at their location. All invoices are co-ordinated by the Food Services department. The RFP is developed in conjunction with the schools and during the contract period VSB is in continuous communication with the procurement personnel at each school.

VSB is renewing their food contract in Spring 2013 and has just released a new RFP. The school board wanted to consolidate its vendors to a prime vendor to reduce hours managing contracts as well as minimizing trucks delivering to each of the schools. As a consequence of this consolidation the new RFP now accounts for a number of food categories, which is a barrier to small/medium sized suppliers. They also have included some language in the RFP to give preference to local food by emphasizing its educational and environmental importance to the district. During the rewrite of the contract parameters, they were challenged by what the official definition of local was and how to define it for their own purposes; there was also an understanding that if suppliers needed to be HACCP⁵ certified (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points), this would again be a significant barrier to small and medium sized suppliers.

Operations and Procedures

As mentioned above, 90% of food is purchased and distributed through major distributors (mainly GFS). The schools are given a budget, a price list from the supplier they need to buy from, and leeway to buy what they want (within health guidelines). The remainder of the food is bought from local retailers. All food bought by the schools is monitored by the Food Services department.

A major challenge for VSB is health and safety, and as a result food traceability. This has been the driving force for VSB to centralize as much of the procurement process as possible and to rely on larger distributors who have certified processes in place to manage food safety e.g. HACCP. There is also concern around growing food on school property and building chicken coops.

Marketing, Education and Training

Currently all secondary schools run a Home Economics course, which VSB Food Services department has no control over. Food, for this course, is bought by the school staff themselves.

The VSB understands the benefits of education around local food and likes the idea of school staff and students visiting farms and processing plants.

A large challenge for some of the schools interested in providing local food on site is that the cafeterias are not attractive and appealing places to eat and/or learn about food.

⁵ <http://haccpcanada.net/>

Financial Support

VSU stated they have a low budget which is under constant pressure to be reduced. There is no additional budget in place to procure local, sustainable food.

Surrey School District (SSD)

People

SSD has a Carbon Neutral Action plan⁶ which is overseen by a Director of Energy Management and Sustainability. However there does not seem to be any directive around other sustainability goals or more specific goals around local, sustainable food.

Food Procurement and menu planning is managed and overseen by Julie Stephenson, who stated that she tries to buy local where possible and that it is a good thing to do. Julie is responsible for the procurement of equipment as well as other commodities for SSD food services, and therefore has a lot to manage. The chefs at the teaching kitchens also have food purchasing responsibilities. Julie regularly checks their purchases and as well as meeting with them twice a year. The chefs do favour buying local and love the Take a Bite of BC program which supplies free local food to the schools.

Policies and Contracts

Surrey School District does not have any buy local policy. Any food policy they have has to follow Health Guidelines, which can be hard to fulfill. From time to time the Ministry of Education asks SSD about the quantities of local, sustainable and organic food that have been purchased (currently it isn't known by who or why). Food is purchased for their funded lunch program, teaching kitchens, and cafeteria. The funded lunch program is contracted for 5 years and is currently with international foodservice group Compass. In the contract SSD has the flexibility to instruct Compass to buy certain items.

The teaching kitchens are contracted with one supplier to supply most of their food for 5 years. Currently this is with Gordon Food Services (GFS). SSD likes GFS because of their health and safety systems, such as farm field inspections and food traceability, which covers SSD if there are any food related issues. SSD has asked GFS to put a symbol on the price list to identify local products. Some items on GFS's price list are identified by where they come from. The food purchased outside of the contract is bought by the chefs on credit card from local stores, but

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https://www.surreyschools.ca/ProgramsAndServices/EMAS/Documents/Final_School%20District%2036%20Surrey_2011_CNAR_Overview.pdf

they cannot buy refrigerated items, as they cannot guarantee it will be kept at the right temperature.

Canuel Caterer runs all of the contracted cafeterias and the contracts last for 5 years. They currently run 47 secondary school kitchens in BC. SSD works with the caterer to decide what food is served and the RFP has some mention of buying local. The food is supplied by GFS.

Like VSB, SSD has a concern of having multiple vendors supplying food to their schools.

Operations and Procedures

Funded breakfast programs serve simple and easy food such as pancakes and eggs, because it is prepared in schools which have small kitchens. Some of the food is donated such as the bread (picked up by a volunteer) and the yoghurt (supplied by Danone). Eggs and milk are purchased from Dairyland and delivered every week.

Julie's assistant is in charge of setting the menu for the funded lunch program, including the nutritional specifications such as, juices need to be 100% and milk is to be served 3 times a week. As not all of the schools are able to serve hot food, meals are served cold in individually wrapped packages that are delivered to schools in Coleman coolers with ice packs. Examples of meals suited for this program are sandwiches and salads.

In contrast, cafeterias cook most of the food from scratch on site and provide hot food options. However the kitchens are small and have limited equipment. The meal sales at the cafeterias are 3 times that of the teaching kitchens while also doing a good job meeting nutritional guidelines.

Marketing, Education and Training

It doesn't appear that there is any marketing or education about local, sustainable food provided in the funded breakfast program and in the cafeterias, as there is with the teaching kitchens and Farm to School programs.

Financial Support

The funded programs have very limited budgets and in some cases SSD relies on donated food. The lunch program is funded by Ministry of Education and in part through parent contributions. The cafeteria kitchens have a "revenue contract" where SSD receives a portion of the sales in lieu of rent of the cafeteria space. Julie recognizes that currently there is little to no extra money to buy local food over and above what is currently being bought.

Richmond School District (RSD)

People

RSD does have an Environmental Stewardship Policy⁷, which was developed by staff and students and officially adopted by the Board in 2011. The policy does not seem to have any goals around the procurement of local, sustainable food, even though it does have green procurement goals.

Chef Ray Young (McNair Secondary School, the sample used in the RSD) would consider buying local food as it is fresher and supports local producers, but hasn't as he has little time to source it. He also tries to take the students out to farms to meet farmers and see what happens on the farm.

McNair School has not been supportive of some in-school initiatives such as composting and recycling. However, Chef Ray is happy doing a pilot program to purchase more local, sustainable food.

Policies and Contracts

McNair School has no purchasing policy in place and the chef can buy what he likes, from whatever source as long as the food meets nutritional guidelines.

Operations and Procedures

Chef Ray buys from a number of suppliers, including GFS, Sysco, and a small beverage supplier, as well as receiving free food from the Take a Bite BC program. Chef Ray has not asked GFS and Sysco about carrying more local items, as they are large distributors and have strict policies (HACCP) around which growers they use. He didn't feel local was something that Sysco/GFS promoted or identified on their price lists.

He has had challenges with small local suppliers due to transportation, sourcing, consistency and seasonality issues.

Marketing, Education and Training

Chef Ray uses farm trips and Take a Bite of BC to teach about local food as well as flavour and freshness profiles.

Financial Support

Chef Ray has a set budget he has to work with each year from the school district.

⁷ <http://www2.sd38.bc.ca/sdweb/envstew/>

4.0 Barriers to and Facilitators of Local, Sustainable Food Procurement within BC Public Institutions

A number of BC public institutions were also interviewed to find out how they were sourcing and/or supporting the use of local, sustainable food:

Organisation	Contact	Position
BC Agriculture in the Classroom⁸ (BCAIC)	Lindsay Babineau	Executive Director
Farm to School⁹ (F2S)	Brenda Kent	BC Coordinator
BC Ministry of Agriculture	Grant Thompson	Director of Policy and Legislation
BC Ministry of Education	Caroline Ponsford	Director of Accountability & Business Intelligence
BC Ministry of Health	Meghan Day	Director of Healthy Schools, Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Weights
	Melanie Kurrein	Public Health Nutrition Project Manager
University of Victoria (UVic)	Ken Babich	past Director of Purchasing

People

- BC Ag in the Classroom (BCAIC) identified its success with their efforts to work collaboratively with its various partners and keeping the dialogue open and ongoing. They work with a number of partners including farmers, farmer associations, grocery stores, distributors, volunteers, schools and government. With such diversity it was key that all of them were listened too and nurtured. BC Ag in the Classroom distributes close to \$4 million of BC produce per year to over 95% of BC schools and does not own any part of the distribution chain, but solely relies on its partners.

Lindsay Babineau has been instrumental in pursuing the program and growing it from 10 schools to now more than 1,300 BC schools. As well as co-coordinating all the partners and her staff, she has been successful liaising with government staff and MLAs to make sure the program was funded and supported. For her work she was recently awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Support of parent volunteers working in the classrooms has also been key to the success of the program.

⁸ <http://www.aitc.ca/bc/>

⁹⁹ <http://www.farmtocafeteriacanada.ca/>

- Brenda Kent (F2S) identified that having a solid team of farmers, teachers, principals and parents helps the program be sustainable over the long term. A motivation for farmers to be part of the program has been their contribution to the community.
- Ken Babich has been key to the University of Victoria sourcing over 60% of their food locally. Ken was one of the pioneers of sourcing local in BC and had to overcome numerous hurdles that not many other public institutions have encountered before. He persevered through trade agreement issues, supplier issues, kitchen issues to arrive at one of the best procurement policies for sourcing local food in BC. Early on Ken recognized that he also needed the support of food service managers and chefs. Students were already supportive of the initiative and in fact were instigators of it. They became the force behind it and helped rally senior staff. UVic's President, Board and Senior Executive supported local procurement as it aligned with their Strategic Plan and values statements. During the process Ken and his team worked closely with suppliers.

Policies and Contracts

- Procurement for the BCAIC Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional program is awarded through an RFP process and broken down into 30 contracts, which currently are executed by 10 suppliers. Each contract is set at competitive rates so the businesses can earn a profit from the program. BC product is preferred in the RFPs (except for Mandarin oranges). BCAIC, a program funded in part by the BC Ministry of Agriculture¹⁰, has never entertained the thought that their preference for local might challenge any trade agreements. In the RFP process bidders are asked what growing region the item they will supply is from. Wording used in the RFPs include:
 - Preference will be given to **BC GROWN** products.
 - Demonstrated ability to work with the BC agriculture industry.
 - Preference will be given to selecting BC GROWN products.
 - BCAITC is requesting proposals from BC growers and processors.....
- The BC Ministry of Health has School Food Guidelines¹¹ that schools are encouraged to follow. Guidelines are health focused and provide nutrient criteria. There is no mention of a preference of local food in these guidelines, or is it a priority for the Ministry of Health, their priority is supporting a healthy lifestyle. For example the BC Fruit and Vegetable program run by BCAIC was initiated and started by Ministry of Health to help promote the eating of produce by school children. The Ministry also developed a

¹⁰ http://www.aitc.ca/bc/index.php?page=bcs_agriculture

¹¹ http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/healthy_eating/food_guidelines/

recommended list of packaged foods to be purchased through vending machines for schools.

- The BC Ministry of Agriculture is supportive of programs like BCAIC programs and Farm to School. They currently have the Buy Local Program¹² which has support from the industry sector and used to some extent in food retail and food services. They are currently exploring minimum procurement targets for BC product within BC public institutions for 2014.
- The development of UVic's procurement guidelines and policies started when a local group of farmers accused UVic of being unfair when the institution bought food items from elsewhere instead of locally. They encouraged UVic to buy local to generate local food production and therefore local economic development. They also took in to consideration the cost of greenhouse gasses (GHG) in to the total food costs.

The first step to procuring local food was to identify what food items they bought and how much of it. Of the 1002 items, 152 were produce items and of these 22 had to be sourced from Vancouver Island. They defined local in concentric rings beginning with the Vancouver Island peninsula, rest of Vancouver Island, Metro Vancouver, BC, Canada and the rest of the world.

UVic were careful to have a number of RFPs that reflect around 20 different food categories, knowing that numerous suppliers were available to offer sponsorship of other school projects and/or teams. The produce RFP stipulated 22 Vancouver Island produce items in a separate schedule attached to the regular RFP. The RFP also stipulated that distributors had to name specifically, with contact information, those farmers that produced the produce items. The winner of the original RFP actually committed to supplying 53 items from Vancouver Island sources.

UVic Pizza RFP wording

The selected Proponent is required where feasible and practical to use Vancouver Island produced raw materials in the manufacture of pizzas and calzones without price escalation nor quality degradation. Proponents shall identify where ingredients materials are manufactured and/or grown and/or produced by firm name, contact name and contact phone/fax/email.

¹² <http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/buylocal.html>

University of Victoria Purchasing Services Standard Sourcing Clauses

10.6 Local Preference

UVic will make its best and reasonable efforts to acquire products and services from local producers, manufacturer's, service providers, and contractors, however, in doing so, UVic must comply with various Trade Agreements, competitive sourcing requirements, and attain "best-value" on all acquisitions as illustrated in Section 5.7.

UVic does not subscribe to any local preference laws or policy due to our requirement to comply with these trade agreements as noted above. Proponents are required to source and consider supplying products from local producers and manufacturers (Vancouver Island, Lower Mainland, and British Columbia) with no price escalation nor mark-ups.

Because UVic procures food using a public tendering process, their process was open, fair, competitive, and transparent, and deemed not to be "non-compliant" with trade agreements. Further to this;

- Because food items were asked to be identified from Vancouver Island it meant the RFP did not discriminate against non BC suppliers, as long as they could supply the Vancouver Island food items. This non discriminatory clause can be found in New West Partnership Trade Agreement¹³.
- The RFPs were also not in breach of any trade agreements because all of the food UVic procures is for resale to the public. In the Agreement on Internal Trade¹⁴ it states "*article 507, this chapter does not apply to attended goods for resale to the public*".
- RFPs are analysed on a Quadruple Bottom Line (4BL) basis which takes in to consideration people, planet, profit and socio-cultural considerations. This includes the monetary value placed on the carbon footprints of the respective products and or services.

Health and safety was also part of the RFP and all suppliers had to be HACCP certified, no criminal record and had to use fair labour. Interestingly any university mission or vision around the procurement of local food came after the fact.

Operations and Procedures

- Feedback from BCAIC volunteers has been that the program is very easy for them to execute in schools. The produce turns up at the right time in the right amount in very good quality. Behind the scenes, BCAIC manages a complicated supply chain process so that at the end of the chain, it is easy for the teachers and volunteers. BCAIC has developed its own supply chain software to manage the program. A number one priority

¹³ <http://www.international.alberta.ca/documents/NewWestPartnershipTradeAgreement.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.ait-aci.ca/en/ait/ait_en.pdf

for the program is food safety, so the cold chain is managed very carefully, all suppliers have to be HACCP certified and growers Farm Safe¹⁵ certified.

- Health Officers review each school and grower(s) before a Farm to School program is launched. The F2S program has been designed specifically to be flexible to meet the needs of each school, for example they can source direct from a farmer or if one is not suitable can buy local items from a local store. This is particularly important for schools that have a challenge ordering enough produce directly from farms near them, giving them the option to buy local/BC items from the grocery store.
- The Ministry of Health has identified that remote BC schools have challenges accessing fruit and vegetables and are trying to help address this. The Ministry has also identified that a lot of school kitchens aren't well equipped and/or updated. Currently this is not a priority for them, but if it could be proven it is impacting the access of healthy food to school children then it could become a priority for them.
- UVic cooks most of their food from scratch which gives them the flexibility to work with suppliers directly and to change and/or develop their menu. The process to increase the volume of local food was a long and complex one, with the first year being a large learning curve, and the second year seeing some positive results.

Marketing, Education and Training

- The sole purpose of BCAIC is to educate children on eating fruit and vegetables. Teachers are very well supported with training programs, manuals and videos. In addition, some of the produce arrives with educational materials pertaining to the product.
- There is a large focus on training and education as part of the F2S programs. School coordinators are supported with online materials, teleconference sessions a number of times per year, and support from school nutritionists. In the future F2S hopes to partner neighbouring schools together to support each other and their growers.

Pupils are encouraged to take part in F2S programs through in-school materials. In the case of Reynolds Senior Secondary School, F2S is part of the curriculum, and includes composting, gardening and managing a chicken coop.

- The Ministry of Education has a vision document called the BC Education Plan¹⁶ which outlines its core goals. Their direction is focused on addressing the needs of students'

¹⁵ http://www.farsha.bc.ca/resources_training_courses.php

¹⁶ <http://www.bcedplan.ca/>

and giving teachers flexibility in how they teach and engage the students. Core goals are:

- o Key competencies when students graduate.
- o Flexible learning environment.
- o Healthy schools - personalised learning and looking at the whole student.

The Ministry of Education is looking at developing curriculum and educational materials and the support needed at the local level through input from teachers, parents and students. Organisations, such as Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) are allowed to develop teaching materials that can be used in schools. The Ministry of Education recommends such materials are provided directly by PHABC to the schools and teachers, instead of through the school districts or the Ministry itself. The Educational Resources Acquisition Consortium (ERAC)¹⁷ review educational materials for schools. There are 2 people from the Comprehensive School Health Unit who work in schools and would be key to reach out to students.

- The Ministry of Health supports a lot of initiatives in schools to promote healthy eating, programs including Farm to School, Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program, Action Schools BC¹⁸ and Healthy Eating at School¹⁹. The Ministry also has staff, including Community Nutritionists, who work with schools promoting and educating children on healthy eating.

Financial Support

- BCAIC Fruit and Vegetable nutrition program is primarily funded by Ministry of Health, with some support from Ministry of Agriculture. BCAIC receives further support from donations and private funders (including growers) for other programs they run. Each school is awarded a \$250 grant for training and further grants are available for equipment e.g. fridges.
- Most of the money for the F2S program comes from parental and/or Parental Advisory Committee (PAC) contributions. There are some grants available to buy equipment.
- Ministry of Agriculture has very little budget to support the procurement of local, sustainable

Take a Bite BC – is another program run by BC Ag in the Classroom. BC grown and produced food is provided for free to teaching schools direct from the suppliers. Currently 37 schools in Lower Mainland take advantage of the program. Food is delivered through VersaCold once per month, and paid for by BC Ag in classroom. BCAIC informs the schools what they will receive each month, who receive ~1000 lb of food per delivery.

¹⁷ <http://www.bcerac.ca/about/background-info.aspx>

¹⁸ <http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca/>

¹⁹ <http://healthyeatingatschool.ca>

food. The \$2 million Buy Local campaign is industry led and needs private money as well as public money. The BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition program is financed by Ministry of Health and private funders.

- Money is extremely limited from the Ministry of Education, 99% of it goes to the school districts and most of that is for wages.
- The Ministry of Health is a large funder for healthy eating initiatives including those mentioned above. Some money is also directed to organisations such as BC Healthy Living Alliance²⁰ and its members to further promote healthy eating, and in some cases local food. The Ministry is fully aware of the lack of funding for school kitchens and food programs and its impact on the health of children.
- UVic had no additional funds to procure more local food. There was an increase in price, but these were off-set by other factors, such as higher quality, better yields, better taste, quicker delivery, less waste at production, and access to stock in the event of an emergency.

²⁰ <http://www.bchealthyiving.ca/>

5.0 Recommendations

Based on the above research and the research looking at best practices within North American school districts, below are recommendations on how Greater Vancouver School Districts can access more local, sustainable food for their school meal programs.

Recommendation	Case Studies	Objectives	Mechanisms
1. Increase the awareness of local, sustainable food amongst purchasing staff i.e. procurement specialists and chefs	<p>Successful programs have come about by motivated and determined staff such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ken Babich (UVic) over coming trade agreement hurdles • Wendy Weyer (Seattle) managing both menu planning and the supply chain 	<p>Increase local, sustainable food awareness around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and environmental benefits • Taste and health • Education • How to purchase local food; overcoming trade agreements, dealing with suppliers, types of local food, how to do it on a budget, menu planning etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Materials • Website support • Incentives to buy local (e.g. pier support, targets) • Mentorship (e.g. Ken Babich, John Bishop).
2. Increase awareness across the board, from students, parents, staff, principals and trustees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UVic students were the driving force behind senior staff to adopt buy local • The elected VSB trustees are the key proponents of buy local • Peel School District²¹ students needed to be educated on the change to encourage them to embrace local, sustainable food and eat new varieties e.g. turkey pepperoni pizza. 	<p>Increase local, sustainable food awareness around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social and environmental benefits • taste and health • Strengthens enthusiasm for local food procurement from the ground up rather than just from the top down. 	<p>Incorporate awareness in current educational programs such as Action Schools! BC and Healthy Eating in Schools²².</p> <p>Note: any additional new educational program runs the risk of overwhelming teachers, students and procurement staff.</p>

²¹ Peel School district is in Brampton Ontario. References to school authorities outside BC refer to Report 1: Research in to Local Food within School Districts across North America.

²² <http://healthyeatingatschool.ca/>

Recommendation	Case Studies	Objectives	Mechanisms
3. Trade agreement friendly RFPs and contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UVic specifying local products but not local suppliers to help reduce GHG emissions • VSB preferring local for educational reasons • Other examples identified in chapter 6 	Increase options and supply of local food from distributors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change wording in RFPs and contracts • Audit suppliers that food is local
4. Small business friendly RFPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UVic has over 20 different RFPs, including a specific produce RFP that contains a list of local items • BC Fruit and Veg Nutrition program has over 10 RFPs 	Allow smaller businesses (distributors and growers) to bid on contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break up RFPs in to food categories e.g. produce, meat, seafood and bakery. • Identify a preference for local items • Don't include restrictive conditions e.g. HACCP certified • Specify local products to be bought in the contract after the RFP has been awarded
5. Local, sustainable food policies/guidelines	Both Seattle and Portland have buy local policies/guidelines at Federal, State and school district level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a direction for purchasing staff to increase preference for local food • Catalyst to providing additional resources e.g. Buy local guide from Tricia Kovacs at Washington State Dept. of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Districts incorporating buy local policies in their Sustainability policies • BC Ministry of Agriculture legislating public institutions to buy BC produce • BC Ministry of Agriculture provide buy local guidelines and workshops
6. Additional budget tied to	Portland pilot which provided 7 cents extra	Overcome the barrier of higher priced local food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase budgets by a certain % on

Recommendation	Case Studies	Objectives	Mechanisms
local, sustainable food	per meal for local food		<p>condition it is used for local food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase price of cafeteria food • Run pilot projects in schools by funding proper kitchens, cafeterias, staff and food.
7. Design menus around availability of local food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle School District head of procurement is also head of nutrition and meal planning • Oliver School District learned to procure the local food first and then design their menu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce waste • Increase variety of meals • Increase options to buy local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect procurement with menu planning e.g. same role • Liaise with growers and suppliers what is available in advance • Test new menus to see what is popular • Implement initiatives that extend the growing season e.g. freezing and canning
8. Work with distributors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portland School District worked with their distributors to research available local food • UVic “force” suppliers to utilize local products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributors to increase their selection of local produce • Make changes before contracts are up for renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create dialogue with distributors and let them know the districts/schools intentions • Ask distributors to identify local products on price lists as well as increase selection
9. Align program with objectives of key organisations	BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition program aligns with the health goals of BC Ministry of Health while sourcing over 90% of food from BC	Obtain essential resources for buy local program from well funded institutions	Identify current programs that relate to and support buying local food e.g. Act Now BC and Action Schools! BC.
10. Empowered school kitchens	No case studies in this research, however the current trend in school districts is the opposite,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give kitchens autonomy to buy to their needs • Connect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralised procurement structure • Well equipped

Recommendation	Case Studies	Objectives	Mechanisms
	making things more challenging to access local, sustainable food	procurement, menu planning, food prep and eating as close as possible	kitchens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well trained kitchen staff
11. Improve local supply chain	Foodshare program sources 21% of their food direct from local farms	Remove barriers some school districts have to buying local and therefore increase the number of suppliers of local food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small producers and suppliers to obtain business certifications e.g. HACCP, Local Food Plus, Farm Safe. • Build an efficient, safe and convenient local food distribution service that rivals that of GFS and Sysco • Partner with larger distributors through an aggregation service

6.0 Trade Agreement Barriers for the Procurement of Local, Sustainable Food in Public Institutions

Trade agreements are one of the largest barriers to procuring local food for schools and any public institution. International trade agreements such as NAFTA are not an issue, apart from possible issues²³ in the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA)²⁴ that is currently being negotiated. However, New West Partnership Trade Agreement²⁵ (NWPTA) and Agreement on Internal Trade²⁶ (AIT) do have clauses that restrict local procurement.

From the research there does not seem to be a clear direction on how to overcome the barriers in the trade agreements. UVic used GHG emissions and stated a preference for local food over local distributors to avoid vendor discrimination, whereas VSB was not comfortable with this and looked at educational reasons to giving a preference to local food. Other institutions were not aware of the implications or didn't think they were relevant.

This chapter outlines some of the information around these agreements and how other public institutions have and are approaching the challenges. The information provided is to raise the awareness around the challenges and possible opportunities. This report is not in a position to make recommendations on how to skirt trade agreements. It is recommended further research and/or legal advice be sought by school districts before finalising any RFPs or contracts.

Sack Goldblatt Mitchell LLP Lawyers; British Columbia – Municipal Food Procurement Policies, March 4 2009

BC Government and Service Employee's Union sought the advice of SGM Lawyers around local food procurement policies. SGM Lawyers concluded:

In our view, local food procurement policies are entirely consistent with both international and domestic procurement rules. For the most part, these regimes simply do not apply to most local food procurement. Even where domestic procurement rules do apply, buy-local food policies would, if properly crafted, be compliant with these obligations. However, even were this not found to be the case, local food procurement policies would certainly be exempt under domestic trade regimes because they relate to legitimate objectives including environmental protection, public health promotion and food security. In simple terms, neither international nor domestic procurement regimes impose constraints that would prevent a municipality or other local body, such as school board, from adopting and implementing a local food procurement policy.

²³ http://www.civicgovernance.ca/files/uploads/FINAL-Shrybman_CETA_report.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/eu-ue/can-eu.aspx>

²⁵ <http://www.newwestpartnershiptrade.ca/>

²⁶ http://www.ait-aci.ca/index_en.htm

Environmental Law Clinic; Municipal Procurement and Trade Agreements, December 6 2012

My Sustainable Canada sought the advice of Environmental Law Clinic around a “buy local” procurement policy. ELC concluded:

The main barrier to a buy local procurement policy is the AIT, which appears to place considerable limitations on the ability of a municipality to establish a buy local procurement policy, based on the non-discrimination components of Chapter 5 and Annex 502.4. Even if a policy falls under the limited range of exceptions and is phrased very precisely, it could be challenged based on the preference a buy local policy gives to local suppliers.

Sustain Ontario: Backgrounder on Institutional Procurement of Local Food, 31 July 2012

Trade agreements can appear to present barriers to the procurement of local food. However, upon closer examination, exemptions do exist that allow and have allowed public institutions in Ontario to source more food locally. Firstly, though Canada is a signatory to the North American Free Trade Agreement, it does not presently apply to provincial or municipal institutional procurement.

The province is however subject to the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), which stipulates that all Canadian suppliers have the right to bid on public-sector contracts over a certain value. As well, the Discriminatory Business Practices Act prohibits granting preference to suppliers based on geographic location. Additionally, if passed the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) will apply to these jurisdictions. However, where institutions have been able to word their Requests for Proposal strategically, using technical specifications that favour local food, some agreements are still broad enough to allow them to source more food locally, as the University of Toronto and many other jurisdictions have done. For example, the AIT allows for an exception to the procurement rules if a party can demonstrate “that the purpose of the measure is to achieve a legitimate objective” such as protection of the environment, protection of human health or affirmative action programs for disadvantaged groups. Certainly the objective of the procurement of fresh and/or ecologically produced and/or local food fits into this definition.

Provincial Health Services Authority: Trade Agreements and Public Institution Procurement of Local Foods; Deepthi Jayatilaka, Provincial Manager, Food Security, August 2012

According to opinion leaders whose work was reviewed to compile this primer, local food actions supported with public funding could be interpreted as a non-tariff barrier to trade. Yet, as documented in the table above, public policy and funding actions that

promote local food appears to be proliferating across the country and in the US. Opinion leaders draw attention to the many exemptions that are part of trade agreements; many aimed at improving environmental and population health and/or for stimulating local economies. For example, McRae (2011) observes that Canadian governments appear to “have more latitude than typically acknowledged and more substantial drivers can be put in place than currently exist without triggering trade disputes” (p.1). Milne notes that case law has been established for using environmental protection measures in trade agreements. In fact, many of the trade agreements covered in this document exempt actions taken for protecting the environment.

As suggested in the Food Action Framework (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2011), public institutions can play a critical role in boosting local food as a means of ensuring a sustainable supply of healthier food. Ensuring a supply of healthy food locally is important given the threats that are impacting the global food system. As Blouin (2011) concludes, “if local, provincial or federal government wish to adopt public measures to strengthen local food systems, trade agreements should not be seen as an excuse for inaction, but as a factor setting the context for policy making” (PPT slide 8). Sustainable supply of healthy food is important to the health and well-being of British Columbians. Public policies and actions are necessary to make this possible.

My Sustainable Canada: Navigating International Trade Agreements to Support Local & Sustainable Purchasing Policies in Canada. Webinar, March 4 2013

My Sustainable Canada hosted a webinar that highlighted the barriers to local procurement across all categories, not just food. Below are some case studies of the challenges public institutions faced and how they overcame them.

Case Study 1: LED Highway Lighting Retrofit on 100 Series Highways NS Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

- Province: Nova Scotia
- Commodity: RFP to provide and install LED Highway Lighting
- Threshold: Over \$100,000
- Agreements: This project was subject to the AIT
- Approach: A locally manufactured LED product met our needs for the project. The specification for the local product was used as our minimum specification for the lighting in the RFP.
- Outcomes: The local product was successful and 2777 fixtures were purchased and installed. The project will have an estimated payback of 6.7 years. The product has a 10 year warranty and 20 year maintenance free life expectancy. Est. GHG reduction 34,000 tonnes/20 years.

- Related Approaches: Where ever possible, we strive to ensure that our specifications do not contain details or requirements that would exclude a local manufacturer from bidding.

Case Study 2: Health Care Procurement of Local Food Disclosing Origin on RFPs

- Province: Ontario
- Commodity: Food and Nutrition
- Legislative Context: Healthcare facilities fall under the Broader Public Sector (BPS)
- Threshold: \$100,000
- Agreements: Agreement on Internal Trade/Ontario Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive
- Loophole/Exemptions: Request for disclosure of food origin in RFP to gather information on what foods were local, used as tie breaker; Preference for local food can be written into contracts with bid winners, rather than written into the RFP.
- Outcomes: Over \$1,000,000 increase in local food purchases. Forecasted to increase by more than \$300,000 in 2013. Six-fold increase in the number of bids from local food vendors.

Case Study 3: University of BC Garbage Bags

- Province : British Columbia
- Commodity : Garbage Bags
- Agreements: Subject to all trade agreements, environmental audits, UBC climate action plan and Province's Green House Gas reduction targets
- Approach: How do we make an unsustainable product more sustainable?
- Outcome: Source the product from Mfg in Drumheller, Alberta, rather than from China.
- Related Approaches: Include travel miles as part of the evaluation criterion to evaluate sustainable footprint as it relates to our climate action plan.

7.0 Conclusion

School districts and schools within Greater Vancouver are in the infancy of procuring local food. Local food is being bought but not in a targeted way that is led by policies or guidelines. There also does not seem to be any increase in the procurement of local food. If anything, due to budget restraints, the ability to purchase local food may be under threat, not only because there is less money to buy high quality fresh food, but also because procurement staff are under pressure to make their processes as efficient as possible. This is leading to restrictive contracts which only the largest distributors can bid on. However, from the research, there does seem to be interest, and in some cases actual changes, in buying more local, sustainable food. School districts understand that local food can help them meet sustainability goals as well as provide further educational touch points for students.

In BC there is a history of public institutions buying local food. University of Victoria and University of BC are the best examples of the trend towards practices that significantly affect the amount of local food purchased. Both universities have overcome trade agreement barriers, as well as budget restraints and kitchen practices, so that now they have local food policies and targets in place.

BC Ministry of Health, Education and Agriculture have been supportive of buying local over the past few years. Ministry of Agriculture supports the Buy Local campaign as well as the BCAIC programs. Ministry of Health is the largest funder of initiatives within schools such as BCAIC, Action Schools! BC, and Farm to School, which through support for students to eat healthier, also support buying local and sustainable food. Due to the popularity of buying local food and the opportunities it provides to increasing local jobs, the BC Ministry of Agriculture is looking at ways to set targets for public institutions to procure more local food.

Trade agreements established to ensure there is no discrimination between vendors has created uncertainty regarding the specified preference to procure local food within public institutions. However, as shown in this report there are numerous examples how public institutions have worked around these clauses by linking buying local food with their educational, environmental and social goals.

This report shows there is a clear path for Greater Vancouver school districts to procure more local, sustainable foods for their school meal programs. School districts can work with their distributors to provide more local food items, food programs are flexible enough to use local food items and there is a will from students, teachers, trustees and other stakeholders to want to. The first step to achieving this is to increase the awareness of the benefits of local, sustainable food amongst procurement staff and how to overcome barriers to purchase more. Through research with other school districts we have seen that empowered procurement staff can make all the difference to a successful buy local program.