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### **Halifax Seaport Market**

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The administration of the Halifax Seaport Market has decided to move several food vendors to the mezzanine floor starting in the summer of 2015. This decision was made based on the belief that the floor of the market should be reserved for primary producers (farmers) rather than prepared food vendors. The move to the Mezzanine Floor will result in a dramatic drop in sales for these vendors. Currently, the Mezzanine Floor is not full, whereas the main floor is almost always full. No vendor would willingly relocate to the Mezzanine Floor because many customers at the market are older and less mobile and there is only one elevator in the building.

Unfortunately, most of the people who will be moved up to the mezzanine floor fall under the category of ethnic food vendors. Many of them were brought to the market by previous administrators to diversify the offerings at the market and bring in new customers. The current administration of the Halifax Seaport Market has stated that it is not their intention to relocate any vendor based on ethnicity, but the result of the move will mean that one corner of the Mezzanine Floor will become an ethnic food court.

The vendors who will be moved have often stated their disapproval, but rarely as a group. It is simply too dangerous for them to protest because they do not have contracts with the market and their spaces can be taken away from them for any minor violation. Two vendors of ethnic food have already been dismissed from the market based on minor violations (allegedly due to food safety violations). Additionally, Frank Magazine reported that "exotic" vendors at the Seaport Market were not part of the core mandate of the business. This report was refuted by the administration, but it has made vendors fearful of protesting against the will of administrators.

The ethnic food vendors feel that they are not peripheral to the operation of the Halifax Seaport Market and should not be relegated to the Mezzanine Floor. They argue that they stuck with the market during difficult times and have always paid their rent. They take fewer vacations than permanent vendors and readily attend special events that many farmers and permanent vendors shun. They buy meats and vegetables from farmers every week to prepare their foods. They also bring in new Canadians to the market, who may not otherwise feel comfortable in a place that tends to be dominated by white farmers and vendors. In sum, they feel they are at the core of the Halifax market experience, not at the periphery.



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We therefore ask the administration of the Halifax Seaport Market to leave the vendors where they are and allow them to continue to play a central role in the market experience.

Sincerely,

George Katsriku,  
President

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