



2018

# TORNADO RELIEF EFFORTS REPORT



**Ottawa Food Bank**  
**La Banque d'Alimentation d'Ottawa**

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On Friday, September 21st, six tornadoes touched down in the National Capital Region, destroying homes, businesses, vehicles and property. Miraculously, no lives were lost in the powerful storms, however, for those who suffered property losses, their lives were changed forever.

The tornadoes also caused widespread power outages across the City of Ottawa, affecting more than 200,000 people at one point, many homes didn't regain power until late Sunday or even early the following week. The power outage caused thousands of families to lose the food in their fridges and freezers, reminiscent of the Ice Storm in 1998.

As the power outage dragged on throughout the weekend, a team from the Ottawa Food Bank met to determine the best course of action to assist families affected by the storm.





# PHASE ONE: URGENT & IMMEDIATE NEEDS

On Sunday, September 23rd, the Ottawa Food Bank began to respond and conducted an initial assessment of the needs in the community. Providing meals to vulnerable families affected by the power outage was the most urgent priority. The Ottawa Food Bank immediately purchased and provided the necessary food for meals in Arlington Woods, Knoxdale, Craig Henry, and Barrhaven. To reach affected residence in these areas, the Ottawa Food Bank partnered with the Salvation Army and set up BBQs at near by parks and community centres.

At this time, many the Ottawa Food Bank's community food banks were still closed, with many program coordinators dealing with power outages both at their centres and their own homes. In total, there were 11 community food banks that lost power for an extended period.

The next day, Monday, September 24th, the Ottawa Food Bank prioritized the West End, around Arlington Woods, as the area with the highest density of affected food bank clients.

The Ottawa Food Bank assisted community food banks without power with their immediate needs, including disposing of spoiled food, replacing lost food, and volunteering during service hours. Members of the Ottawa Food Bank staff were in the community helping with deliveries, setting up remote sites for food access, and assisting food banks with the increased demand.

The Ottawa Food Bank reached out to community food programs including FAMSAC Food Cupboard, Barrhaven Food Cupboard, and West Carleton Food Access Centre (which services the Dunrobin community) to offer help. All indicated at the time that further assistance was not needed. The Ottawa Food Bank continues to reach out to these agencies and are ready to provide support should they need assistance once public support begins to slow down and rebuilding efforts continue.

Recognizing that the ability to prepare meals without power is difficult, the Ottawa Food Bank focused on providing easy to prepare food items such as; bread, peanut butter, tuna, granola bars, apples, and healthy snack food.

When power was restored, the Ottawa Food Bank shifted priority to providing fresh food to replenish what was lost at both the community food bank level and the individual level. To keep up with demand, additional deliveries of staple and fresh foods items were provided to the 11 affected food banks daily.

During the initial two weeks, community food banks were asked to suspend normal food bank service guidelines. This meant families could come as often as they needed to receive food. It was clear that many families were displaced from their homes during this time, so families were able to access any food program that was convenient for them, even if it was outside of their regular catchment area.



Working in partnership with community housing groups in Ottawa, the Ottawa Food Bank delivered food to Ottawa Community Housing and Nepean Community Housing buildings and neighbourhoods to reach further vulnerable families affected by the storm. These deliveries, which are outside of the Ottawa Food Bank's regular operation, continued for four weeks.

## By the Numbers

- The Ottawa Food Bank helped an estimated 9,489 people who visited a food bank in the affected areas (an increase of 33% over the same period last year)
- 10,190 hampers were provided to residences in 22 community housing buildings/neighbourhoods
- In total, 19,679 hampers were delivered to the community, compared to 8,302 hampers over the same period last year (an increase of 137%)
- An additional \$175,000 worth of food was delivered to the affected communities, above and beyond the regular distribution of food and supplies to the Ottawa Food Bank's other community food programs (approximately 100 programs) that were not affected by the storm



An increased and prolonged demand from those affected by the tornado is forecasted. The Ottawa Food Bank has set aside \$100,000 to continue to provide extra food to the 11 community food banks in the affected areas as well as to food banks across the city. Many families and individuals are displaced while buildings are being repaired and it is necessary that people have access to help, wherever they currently reside.

Families and individuals may feel the effects of the power outage and subsequent food loss for months to come. Many families used support cheques to fill their fridges in the days before the tornado, only to lose all fresh food days later. Most received enough to help with the immediate needs - but not nearly enough to cover all losses.

The Ottawa Food Bank expects to see an increase of first-time clients at the 11 community food banks. A catastrophic event like a tornado, job loss, or health crisis can send a stable family into a vulnerable situation. For someone who was already living

paycheque to paycheque, this storm will have a ripple effect on finances for months to come, potentially making it necessary to visit a community food bank for the first time.

The Ottawa Food Bank has also allocated \$100,000 in funds for the 11 community food banks directly affected as well as four programs that are not a part of the Ottawa Food Bank's network, including FAMSAC Food Cupboard, Barrhaven Food Cupboard, Kanata Food Cupboard, and the West Carleton Food Access Centre. These funds will be used by the agencies at their discretion to purchase additional food to meet the increased demand.

The Ottawa Food Bank has also purchased \$200,000 in grocery store gift cards for affected and concerned food programs across the city. The gift cards will be provided to qualified families and individuals through their community food programs. If you wish to qualify for a gift card, please visit your local food bank. You can find your community food bank on the Ottawa Food Bank website at [www.ottawafoodbank.ca/get-help](http://www.ottawafoodbank.ca/get-help).

The prolonged power outage helped identify a risk management issue for the Ottawa Food Bank's warehouse facility: the lack of a back-up generator on site. Had the power outage affected the warehouse directly, the results could have been catastrophic. The Ottawa Food Bank will be purchasing a generator to ensure there is no disruption of service should there be another severe weather event in Ottawa.

The Ottawa Food Bank was one of the first out in the community to provide aid when and where it was needed. This would not have been possible if the warehouse also lost power for an extended period, and as a result, lost millions of dollars of food. This is a risk the Ottawa Food Bank is not willing to take in the future, and the



addition of a generator to their facility will provide the necessary safeguard.

## By the Dollars:

Tornado Relief Expense	Budget
Food purchases, service, and delivery costs	\$ 227,000.00
One-time funding direct to the 15 agencies (includes the four not in our network)	\$ 105,000.00
Gift cards for the 13 agencies to give to clients	\$ 200,000.00
Gift cards to the rest of the network for displaced people	\$ 100,000.00
Future food purchases to support the network	\$ 100,000.00
Generator and installation for the Ottawa Food Bank Warehouse	\$ 66,000.00
Total spent	\$ 798,000.00

## A Time for Thanks

The Ottawa Food Bank would not have been able to act so quickly and for such an extended period if it weren't for the support received from the community.

In the days following the storm, the Ottawa Food Bank received heart-felt support from generous donors across the city ranging from individuals to classrooms, sports teams to church groups, and large corporations to small businesses.

Thank you to Empire Company Limited and Farm Boy for leading the charge and being the very first organization to reach out to see what the Ottawa Food Bank needed. Thank you to the amazing local businesses and supporters like CLV Group and Interrent Holdings, Verdun Windows & Doors, Norton Rose Fulbright Canada LLP and CSL Behring Canada Inc., the Ottawa Senators Foundation, and United Way for offering your incredible support to the community as well.

Also, thank you to the 2,578 individual donors who acted with compassion and donated to the Ottawa Food Bank to help your neighbours. Your help meant, and continues to mean, a lot to the people who have suddenly found themselves in need following the storm.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, thank you to the food programs and community houses across the city who worked tirelessly to ensure your neighbours received assistance.

Emergency food programs opened their doors, worked extra hours, and took on additional clients. They made their community feel safe and cared for in a time of need.



Donors who drove from Newcastle, Ontario (3 hours away) to make a donation on behalf of their Wilmot Creek community