

A Year of Crisis & Kindness:

OTTAWA FOOD BANK

COVID-19 REPORT



Vision

Healthy, accessible, sustainable food for all.

Mission

We work in partnership to create a healthier city by empowering people, increasing access to healthy food, and advocating for systemic changes that reduce food insecurity.



Ottawa Food Bank
La Banque d'Alimentation d'Ottawa

Introduction

The Ottawa community was glued to the news and their Twitter feeds in early March when we collectively received word that the Novel Coronavirus had finally and unfortunately reached our city. The nation's capital was officially part of the global pandemic and our everyday way of life was about to change.

Ottawa, the Ottawa Food Bank, and the network of food programs across the city are no strangers to crisis, having gone through recent tornadoes and floods. However, this time was different. This time, the crisis impacted everyone.

The Ottawa Food Bank's main role is to work in partnership with the network of 112 emergency food programs across the city to help them get food and supplies to their clients and community. Throughout the course of the pandemic, that role has stayed true – but with a little more innovation, collaboration, and ingenuity.



Member of the Ottawa Food Bank's operations team getting food orders ready to send to member agency food programs across the city

A Message from the Chair Of The Board

When the Novel Coronavirus reached Ottawa in March and necessary restrictions were put into place, it was unclear for how long these changes would last.

As the months passed, it became clear the changes put in place were not going to be as temporary as we had initially hoped. Unfortunately, there is still much uncertainty ahead.

That said, I have found myself truly inspired time and again throughout this crisis.

I am inspired by the Ottawa Food Bank's network of member agencies who have worked tirelessly to ensure food insecure people in their neighbourhoods do not go without. Food programs across the city have altered their service and operations in various ways to keep everyone safe; hours of operation were adjusted to best suit client needs; and they tackled a myriad of other challenges, both large and small.

I am inspired by the Ottawa community who immediately showed compassion for their neighbours. The support the Ottawa Food Bank received for their crisis response efforts is extraordinary. Support has come in as gifts of time, money, food, and kindness. It takes a special person to donate or volunteer to help a stranger, and it has been wonderful to see the people and organizations who have come forward



Greg Strahl, Chair of the Ottawa Food Bank's Board of Directors

to support families and individuals they have never met.

Finally, I am inspired by the staff at the Ottawa Food Bank. I know they are tired. I know they, like all of us, miss "normal," but I also know they are motivated, encouraged, and just as inspired as I am to forge ahead ensuring no one gets left behind.

Thank you to everyone who has helped the community during this difficult time. The nature of the crisis will no doubt continue to change with periods of greater and lesser disruption, but together we will get through this.

Immediate Response

HOW TO KEEP FOOD BANKING

As it became clear the impact that the pandemic would have on both our operations and the 112 member agencies, we knew it was of vital importance to gather as much information as possible on how to safely continue providing to the community.

We worked with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and our network of member agency food programs to implement their recommendations on how to proceed. Thank you to Marino Francispillai from Ottawa Public Health's School and Community Mental Health & Wellness department for being the initial contact and helping the Ottawa Food Bank network navigate health and safety best practices.

Recommendations for immediate changes within the food banking network included:

- Follow Ottawa Public Health guidelines around masks, hand washing and social distancing
- Manage and control client flow by putting in place an appointment model
- Increase the amount of food provided so individuals can stay home longer
- Switch to a hamper model to further eliminate touch points and face to face time
- Limit the number of people on site at any given time

These changes, while seemingly small on paper, could have been difficult to put in place if not for the incredibly diligent and committed staff and volunteer teams at emergency food programs across the city. At the time of this initial call with Ottawa

Public Health, personal protective equipment (PPE) was not yet recommended. Throughout the course of the pandemic people worldwide continued to adapt as we learned more. Once PPE was recommended, through donations from the community and our own purchases, we were fortunate to be able to provide member agencies with necessary PPE such as masks and shields.

In the first five weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 13-April 22) the Ottawa Food Bank saw a surge in demand for support. In a "normal" month, the Ottawa Food Bank helps member agencies to provide food to approximate 39,000 people across the city. But during that initial period of time, calls coming into the Ottawa Food Bank's front desk requesting food support increased by over 500 per cent.

With the demand increased at the member agency level, "time" was something agencies had little of. Priority was placed on emergency response and not data input. The normal intake process at agencies was put on pause and the database was not used. This means the exact increase in numbers of clients heading to food banks is not fully known – however it was felt and anecdotally reported.

The Ottawa Food Bank and food programs across the city saw a leveling out of client numbers when government supports, most notably the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), kicked in.

Immediate Response

THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF THE NETWORK AND THEIR CLIENTS

It became immediately clear that the needs of our network of member agencies, as well as the needs of the people they serve were similar: more food and home delivery.

INCREASED FOOD QUANTITIES

As people were told to stay in and only leave home for essential trips, the need to provide more food was clear. Typically, a community food bank has the capacity to provide 3-5 days' worth of food for every person in a household. The Ottawa Food Bank worked quickly to increase the amount of food provided so that agencies could provide a weeks' worth of food per person, reducing the number of times people had to venture out for food. This meant agencies were able to order twice as much food and our trucks were on the roads making two, three and sometimes four deliveries a week to an agency. As a result, our food distribution has increased by 34%.

Providing increased quantities of food to programs across the city for their clients cost the Ottawa Food Bank, on average, an extra \$145,000 per month.

HOME DELIVERY

For years we have known the lack of home delivery is a gap in the system and is something that required further examination and resources. This crisis really elevated that need. We needed to

find a way to reach families and individuals who were isolated in their homes for various reasons. Thanks to our incredible member agency partners at the Salvation Army Citadel, who were ready to mobilize with their own vehicles, we were able to develop a plan to quickly start a home delivery program.

The Salvation Army helped with this vital service for the first six weeks of the pandemic. After that period, a group of volunteers from the United Muslims Organizations of Ottawa-Gatineau (UMOOG) helped us continue the delivery program for 18 weeks. We cannot thank both these organizations enough for their support and cooperation.

Since then, we have piloted a delivery program of our own. To date, including the deliveries made with the support of Salvation Army and UMOOG, we have delivered over 1,800 hampers to over 500 households. Wherever possible we connected clients to back to their local food bank to ensure they received additional supports and food they needed in the weeks ahead.

There are a number member agency programs who were able to provide home delivery within their own communities. This was incredibly helpful and well received by their clients.

With the help of our partners, we are successfully reaching some of Ottawa's most vulnerable in their time of need.

Elsa — Office Coordinator, Ottawa Food Bank

"At the earlier stages of us starting to do home delivery, I spoke with an elderly woman who was frantic about not having food in the house and not being able to go to a food bank because she has a compromised immune system. I reassured her that we could deliver a hamper to her home. The next day, she called back early in the afternoon, absolutely giddy. She called to thank us for the delivery. She was so pleased with the quality of food and went on to tell me it was the first time in a very long time she was able to make pasta with actual sauce. She had planned out multiple meals with the food provided. She started crying and explained how comforting it was to fill her apartment once again with the smell of food cooking in her kitchen. She went on to say the sounds and smells of her home cooking reminded her of a time when she used to cook for her family."

Supporting the Network During Increased Times of Need

SUPPORTING THE NETWORK

Food programs across the city who provide a supply of groceries to members of their community were operating at a speed and volume never seen before during the first few weeks and months of the pandemic.

While we have been fortunate to not see a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the Ottawa Food Bank's member agency network, the risk was always present. That became clear when a major community food bank chose to err on the side of caution and close for a two-week period due to possible exposure.

At that time, the Ottawa Food Bank acted quickly to set up and run a temporary pop-up community food bank out of our warehouse facility for that member agency's clients.

Another major community food bank took some time to regroup after an extremely busy period of increased demand, extra protocols, and long hours. The Ottawa Food Bank and surrounding food programs stepped up to ensure this program's clients did not go without.

An increased concern was the well-being of the staff and volunteers at these programs. The Ottawa Food Bank had to put plans in place as to what to do when a program needs to close, and something had to be done in the interim to help alleviate the threat of burn out.

INTERIM ACTION TO ALLEVIATE BURNOUT

Staff and volunteers at community food banks across the city needed time to breathe after a very busy first few weeks. The busyness was not only because of an initial surge in food bank use, but also due to having to adapt their programming, increased and constant cleaning requirements, and decreased volunteer numbers.

The Ottawa Food Bank provided community food banks with gift cards to provide to clients for a short period of time, rather than the regular supply of food. The change slightly sped up the flow of services and gave the teams at programs across the city a little extra time to recover.

This action also allowed for the Ottawa Food Bank's warehouse to restock as the food supply chain at this time was difficult for not only grocery stores and their customers, but for the food banks as well.

The Ottawa Food Bank is a part of the Human Needs Task Force to ensure the needs, concerns, and observations of the food bank network are always a consideration in the City of Ottawa's Emergency Management Plan.

Government Response & Recommendations for Change

Both the federal and provincial governments acted quickly in an effort to not only flatten the curve of COVID-19 cases, but also reduce the economic impact this health crisis could have on families and individuals.

Both levels of government also gave financial support to our provincial and national food bank partners, Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada, to provide their affiliates – including the Ottawa Food Bank – with food hampers and funds to meet the needs in our community. This was unprecedented, as historically food banks across the country do not receive assistance from either level of government.

When supports such as CERB, the Ontario Eviction Moratorium, and the Student Loan Interest Freeze, to name a few, were offered, the Ottawa Food Bank network saw the level of demand return to near normal.

While this is and was positive – it is not without its concerns as well.

First and foremost, once these supports come to an end, we anticipate an increase in food bank demand once again. It has been reported by Statistics Canada that long-term joblessness has soared to heights unseen since the recession in the early 1990s. 448,000 Canadians are out of a job and unemployment rates are rising faster during the current pandemic than during previous recessions.¹

Secondly, we know we live in a caring city full of people who go above and beyond to help one another. We know there have been pop-ups and meal programs temporarily opening to help people during this time of need. As a result, these people aren't turning to their community food bank, which means the need within our communities is not fully known at this time. A calming of demand does not translate into a decrease in need.



Ottawa Food Bank truck filled with government provided hampers, ready for delivery

Government Response & Recommendations for Change

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

In order to see real change in our province, country, and our own back yard we must not turn to food banks but rather turn to all levels of government to address the drivers of poverty. Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty and to eliminate the former we must address the latter.

Our recommendations for change reflect those of our provincial partner, Feed Ontario, from their 2020 Hunger Report.²

1. Provide immediate income support to those most impacted by COVID-19
 - a. Reinstatement of the Emergency Benefit for Social Assistance Recipients. People who state social assistance as their main source of income are living on a very tight budget and make up approximately 60 per cent of clients who visit an emergency food program in Ottawa.
 - b. Provide immediate rent relief to low-income tenants who are facing large rent arrears or the possibility of eviction due to COVID-19. At the time of this report, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Ottawa is \$1,400 per month. With approximately 12,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing in our city, it is clear these prices are largely unaffordable.
2. Overhaul Ontario's social assistance programs to ensure recipients have the means to move out of poverty by aligning rates with the national standard set by the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Social Assistance rates (ODSP and OW) for a single individual fall well below the Market Basket Measure (MBM), and do not meet what the Canadian government has set as the standard for what is required for a Canadian to afford their basic needs (\$2,000 per month).
3. Invest in a strong workforce to ensure working people are able to earn enough to afford today's cost of living. Ontario has the highest proportion of minimum wage workers in the country, and in Ottawa it would take a minimum wage worker 75 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. This is something not realistic for most single parents. Recommendations for change would include developing labour laws and policies to benefit and elevate working individuals, such as:
 - a. Reinstatement of paid sick days
 - b. Equal pay for equal work
 - c. Quality jobs that provide a liveable wage

We Could Not Do It Alone

MEMBER AGENCIES

The member agencies with whom we are fortunate to partner are the front-line heroes of the food bank network. The network of 112 food programs across the city, provide for their communities week in and week out. We cannot thank them enough for their dedication to food security and the health of the people who walk through their doors.

Throughout the duration of the pandemic, these programs have worked exceptionally hard to ensure no one in their community goes without. This has meant adjusting their hours of operation, changing their

flow of service, and increasing their health and safety protocols.

As we all continue to learn more about the virus, the member agency network has shown tremendous resiliency and flexibility. They have adapted again and again in order to keep clients and themselves safe. They have created amazing partnerships with one another and their communities. They have collaborated with their local community health and resource centers to be able to direct clients to holistic wraparound services.



Drive-thru food bank model at Care Centre Ottawa

We Could Not Do It Alone

Some of the most notable changes include:

- Moving to an appointment model from an open hours of operation model
- Reducing touch points by providing pre-assembled hampers of non-perishable and fresh food
- Providing service to clients outdoors
- Providing home deliveries (outside of the deliveries provided by the Ottawa Food Bank)
- Incorporating health and wellness checks as part of their appointment model
- A new drive-thru agency

There have been some programs that have temporarily suspended their service, or a portion of their services, due to the inability to meet health and safety guidelines. These programs stopped operating as they did not want to pose a risk to their participants. This affected agencies including our Summer Lunch Program and several of the After 4 Club programs. It must be noted that while these programs are temporarily closed, their clients are not being left behind – but rather are being reached through other agencies such as the breakfast program offered by the Ottawa Network For Education, and their community food banks.

As of this report, it is encouraging to note that there have not been any confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the food bank network in Ottawa. This shows the dedication of food program employees, volunteers, and clients to ensure all are following important health and safety measures.

Thank you to all of our member agencies for the hard work you do. Thank you for not only meeting the need within your communities, but for stepping up to the challenge that this crisis has presented and surpassing all expectations. You are so important in our community and in the lives of your clients.

Dalhousie Food Cupboard — Ottawa Food Bank Member Agency

“We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Ottawa Food Bank to help with our unique needs at this time. Hampers with increased amounts of food are wonderful – but heavy! We spent the first \$400 of our grant on wheely-carts that we allowed our neighbours to use to help them carry their food home. The first ones we gave out were to our elderly clients. They all seemed overwhelmed with gratitude. It’s the small things, but I was happy to be able to provide them with this kind of extra help.”

We Could Not Do It Alone

OTTAWA'S BEST VOLUNTEERS

We are fortunate to have an incredible network of volunteers who regularly support our efforts. We are also fortunate that so many in the Ottawa community who have never volunteered with the Ottawa Food Bank before, saw this pandemic as chance to help their neighbours.

With safety protocols in place, the volunteer program at the Ottawa Food Bank had to adapt, and we thank our volunteers for being so flexible and able to adapt with it.

Changes included:

- Volunteer Food Sorting in our warehouse
 - o Number of volunteers at one time reduced from 15 to eight
 - o Plexiglass dividers were put in place for each volunteer to have their own safe space
 - o Masks were made mandatory
 - o Frequent hand washing made mandatory
- Community Harvest farm volunteers
 - o Hand washing and tool washing protocols put in place
 - o Group size reduced from 30 to 10
- Truck Assistance & Reception Support
 - o These portions of the volunteer program are suspended for the time being
- Member Agency Support
 - o Requests came from a number of our member agencies for volunteer support at their food programs across the city – we were happy to be able to offer this assistance through our helpful pool of volunteers
 - o As of this report, the Ottawa Food Bank has helped place 75 volunteers, for a total of 184 volunteer hours at member agencies across the city



A few of Ottawa's Best Volunteers in the Ottawa Food Bank warehouse sorting food donations

Jo-Anne Turple, CVA — Volunteer Coordinator

“The COVID-19 pandemic has touched every part of the Ottawa Food Bank’s volunteer program. While some volunteer roles have been suspended and others drastically reduced, we have been very fortunate to be supported by a dedicated core group of volunteers.

Since March, the weekly volunteer force at the Ottawa Food Bank warehouse has been cut by 50 per cent to ensure physical distancing and safe volunteering conditions. Our remaining volunteers have stepped up, taking on extra shifts to ensure donated food continues to be processed for distribution. The volunteer force at the Ottawa Food Bank’s Community Harvest farm has been reduced by over 30% this season, however the dedicated volunteers there have worked to help support an extremely successful harvest season.

Thank you to all who are so giving of their time to help us all get through this. We could not do it without you. We truly are fortunate to have Ottawa’s Best Volunteers!”

We Could Not Do It Alone

DONORS

Thank you to everyone who has donated throughout the course of the pandemic. We would not be able to support the needs of the network if not for every bit of assistance that has come our way.

Donors from near and far responded without delay, and as a result we were able to promptly respond to the initial upswing in need and then continue to support our member agencies and their clients as the pandemic carried on.

You, our donors, made it possible to provide more food. 34% more food to be exact. You made it possible to provide personal protective equipment. You made it possible to provide peace of mind.

There were 24,000 people who had never donated to the Ottawa Food Bank before who recognized the importance of food security at this time. Thank you to those people for becoming first-time donors – you have truly helped to make a difference.

While there were numerous individual, corporate, event, and foundation donations gifted to the Ottawa Food Bank, we would be remiss if we did not pinpoint a few to thank specifically. The amazing donors mentioned in the box below are special donations to us because of the impact, quickness, or awareness they raised.

Special Donors — Impact & Awareness Raised

- 36 Chambers
- Amazon.com Inc
- Evolugen/Brookfield Renewable
- Export Development Canada
- Harley Finkelstein
- Feed Ontario
- Five B Family Foundation
- Food Banks Canada
- Areez Gangji
- In memory of John and Susanne Graham
- KPMG Ottawa
- Lumenum Operation LLC
- Adam Miron
- Nordion (Canada) Inc.
- Ottawa Community Foundation
- Persistent Systems Ltd.
- The Peter Gilgan Foundation
- RBC Foundation
- Rogers Communications
- R.W. Tomlinson Limited
- Sobeys Inc.
- South Nepean Muslim Community Mosque
- Taggart Parkes Foundation
- Daniel and Kim Theriault
- United Way East Ontario

We Could Not Do It Alone

GROCERY STORY PARTNERS

It became immediately clear that as people were being told to stock up on essential items in order to stay home for longer periods of time, the food supply was having a hard time keeping up with demand.

As a result, food donations came to a halt and purchasing in bulk became near impossible. We learned quickly that grocery stores themselves were having a hard time doing their own bulk purchasing because products were just not available as quickly as they were needed.

The first two weeks of the pandemic were difficult as we depleted what was left in our own warehouse and we were not able to purchase enough to adequately restock. Once there was more supply available in the general food system, the team at Loblaws College Square, led by store manager Jeff Brierly, really came through for the Ottawa Food Bank and the community as they helped us navigate how to once again resume bulk purchasing.

This Loblaws location truly looks out for their community in the best and worst of times, and they did all they could to provide us with every option available for bulk purchasing when we needed them the most.

Loblaws College Square recognized early on that donations coming through their

own Ottawa Food Bank red donation cage were significantly lower than usual. Under Jeff's guidance, this location was the first grocery store in Ottawa to see if shoppers would once again respond well to a food drive. They brought their pre-packed donation bags back into circulation and successfully collected 1,365 pounds of food to donate.

Of course, while we highlight Loblaws College Square, we must thank all our amazing grocery store partners who have done so much to ensure people in our city do not go without.



Amazing food drive helper at Loblaws College Square

We Could Not Do It Alone

Some amazing examples include:

- Metro Beechwood and Loblaws College Square donated a pallet of grocery bags, as we needed them to pack fresh items for food hampers
- Costco raised approximately \$90,000 which we then used to purchase nearly 35 pallets of fresh, and non-perishable items from Costco
- Sobeys donated several cases of Heinz products and donated \$50,000
- Various Metro locations began to collect monetary donations for us and raised approximately \$4,500. They also donated \$10,000 in gift cards to help with the holiday purchases
- Walmart extended their annual *Fight Hunger. Spark Change.* campaign by an extra two weeks and continued to push for donations, as a result, they doubled the amount they usually give to the Ottawa Food Bank during this campaign
- During the provincial Loblaws Spring Campaign, the rest of Ontario raised a combined \$3,000 while Ottawa stores raised a combined for \$27,000 the Ottawa Food Bank

Thank you to all our grocery store partners for not only being there for your customers day in and day out, but for also being there for the Ottawa Food Bank, our member agencies, and their clients.

Department Manager — Loblaws Ogilvie

“Last week we had a regular customer come in to do his weekly shopping. He had his list in his hand picking the few things up that he needed. As he slowly walked through the store, he said hello to every colleague and thanked them for working so hard during the pandemic. He then stopped at our courtesy desk to speak with our front-end manager. He wanted to thank us for our hard work at this time. He also spoke of how safe he felt here.

Then he handed her 20 envelopes and told her to please hand them out to the staff. As our front-end manager was telling this story, we opened the envelopes to discover each one had \$40 dollars in it, along with a note of thanks. That’s \$800! We couldn’t believe it! I’m so proud to work for this store because just like that, the amazing team all decided, “why don’t we pay it forward and donate this to the Ottawa Food Bank?!”

By the Numbers

With large thanks to the food and financial support from the community, as well as from our provincial and national partners, Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada, we have been able to keep up with the demand as we continue to work through the pandemic with our network of member agencies.

Thanks to the kindness of our community, the Ottawa Food Bank has raised and spent nearly \$3 million to meet the immediate need in the first seven months following the initial Novel Coronavirus cases in Ottawa.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Ottawa Food Bank and our member agencies. You have made it possible for us to increase our food distribution by 34% at this time. Delivering more food to our member agencies has allowed them to provide more to each visitor, which in turn means clients can stay home and stay safe for longer periods of time.

After Canada's financial crisis of 2008, food bank usage increased dramatically across Canada, but did not reach its full peak until approximately two years later. At that time, food banks across the country saw an increase in usage by over 28%. What's more, food bank usage has not returned to pre-2008 numbers.

As a result, we expect that once the temporary social supports put in place by the provincial and federal governments are phased out, we will once again see an increase in the number of people turning to food banks for assistance. The reality is no one can predict what the need will be

in our community for the next few years as a result of the pandemic. These are truly unprecedented times.

The Ottawa Food Bank has received additional funding to address the long-term economic fall out of the pandemic. This includes funding from the federal government and Food Banks Canada, and food from the provincial government. These funds are earmarked for the future response to the pandemic, both short and long term.

With the funds raised (approximately 53% of our annual operating budget), the Ottawa Food Bank will be ready to address what is to come as well as a prolonged increased usage in food banking, without a disruption in service. The Ottawa Food Bank continues to fundraise to ensure we can provide fresh and healthy food to the tens of thousands who turn to an emergency food program every month.

Breakdown of COVID-19 Expenses (March - October)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Food Purchases: | \$599,117 |
| • Grocery store gift cards: | \$550,000 |
| • Boxes/Packaging for hampers: | \$29,783 |
| • Extra support staffing: | \$81,845 |
| • Member Agency Relief Fund: | \$1,281,000 |
| • Health & Safety measures: | \$173,367 |
| • Miscellaneous: | \$57,671 |
| TOTAL: | \$2,772,783 |

Looking Ahead

As the pandemic carries on, it is difficult to anticipate what is to come. This is not to say that the Ottawa Food Bank is without plan. In fact, the Ottawa Food Bank is working on a series of plans that will determine how to react to various scenarios that will potentially come our way.

Some scenarios involve the immediate future and how we would step in to help the community, while other planning involves more longer-term preparation for a predicted economic downturn.

These economic plans build upon learnings from the 2008 recession. As mentioned, following that recession, food banks across Canada collectively saw an increase of food bank use by 28 per cent, and to date usage across the country has yet to descend back below pre-2008 numbers.

With this in mind, we know we are still at the beginning stages of the impact of the Novel Coronavirus pandemic, and the impact could be felt for years to come.

According to Ottawa Public Health, 19 per cent of Ottawa's residents said they have had difficulty paying for either housing, food, or utilities. This trend is more common among residents with a disability, those living with lower household incomes, and those who have seen a decrease in income since mid-March 2020. It should be noted of those who have observed this decrease in income is 28 per cent.³

Also of note, Ottawa Public Health reported in August that 11 per cent of people in Ottawa are not currently working because of the COVID-19 pandemic⁴ and it is still too early to know how many people in Ottawa will lose their job permanently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent financial impact.

As a result, much of the financial planning being done at the Ottawa Food Bank deals with client hypotheses. For example, how much would the Ottawa Food Bank need to fund and food raise to adequately respond to a 28 per cent increase in food bank usage in our city? Or a 10 per cent increase? And so on.

Meanwhile, the planning for our immediate future looks at possible scenarios for how to respond if one or more of our community food banks needs increased assistance or needs to close down for a period of time for any number of reasons.

This planning is also looking at a series of actions that could proactively be taken to help prevent instances of burnout and exhaustion within the network.

The goal of this planning is to ensure that the Ottawa Food Bank and the network of food programs across the city is prepared for whatever may come our way so that no one goes without food – a basic necessity for life.

A Final Thank You from our Interim CEO

Throughout the course of the pandemic, we have seen countless examples of the community coming together to help one another.

From front line heroes in the emergency food network, at hospitals and COVID centres, and essential workers to the generous individuals who step up to donate, help out, and volunteer their time. Thank you.

Thank you to the people who have recognized that food security is of vital importance at this time. You have made it possible for us to address the immediate needs and plan for what is to come. You have made it possible to show our neighbours in need that the community cares about them.



Rachael Wilson, Interim CEO, Ottawa Food Bank

Thank you to our staff and member agency network for working tirelessly to ensure what needs to get done to continue to provide for the community, gets done. Thank you for adapting and continuing to learn with us as we navigate this health crisis and its local impact.

We will get through this together.

We will come out the other side stronger.

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ENDNOTES

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- 3 Ottawa Public Health. Status of Employment and Income Pressures During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ottawa. Ottawa (ON): Ottawa Public Health 2020
- 4 Ottawa Public Health. Status of Employment and Income Pressures During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ottawa. Ottawa (ON): Ottawa Public Health 2020



Changing how food drives work. Ottawa Food Bank team member accepting donations from a car during the RCMP Drive-Thru Food Drive near the beginning of the pandemic.