



Ottawa Food Bank  
La Banque d'Alimentation d'Ottawa

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September 13, 2022

## Addressing food insecurity within your election promise

Dear [Municipal Candidate],

Congratulations on your candidacy for Ottawa City Council. Today, I am inviting you to join us in actively addressing the food security crisis in Ottawa alongside our network of 108 member agencies. The Ottawa Food Bank and its network of member agencies and emergency food banks serve over 52,000 people experiencing food insecurity each month. Food insecurity is a lack of access to safe and nutritious food due to limited resources.

We believe that everyone in Ottawa should have access to high-quality, healthy food regardless of income or age. We are extremely concerned about the impacts of poverty on our community - a combination of low income, precarious work and housing, and unaffordability has resulted in a food insecurity crisis in Ottawa.

In order to create a more equitable future for everyone in Ottawa, we need leaders who will prioritize ending food insecurity. Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty and is not solved by more food. We need effective programs and municipal policy that help people access healthy food and supports to address the underlying issues. The Ottawa Food Bank network is moving beyond food to provide more social supports to help people move out of poverty. But we cannot do this work alone.

If elected, you will participate in adding items to the legislative agendas of the Committees to which you have been appointed. We are asking you to champion and prioritize food security in Ottawa. You can do this by supporting the following priorities:

1. **Recognize the Ottawa Food Bank network of member agencies as a critical resource and ensure appropriate funding and support to the emergency food sector.** This critical work cannot be left to the charitable sector and needs leadership and commitment from the City. This includes not only more funding for the network, but also a mandate for city departments to engage in this work, share resources and expertise, and have a proactive open dialogue. The Ottawa Food Bank and its network are fundamental to emergency response. We are uniquely positioned to provide input that reflects the voices of our clients who access food programs and wrap-around support systems, as well as qualitative and quantitative research on the increasing need within our communities.
2. **Champion community-based approaches to end food insecurity in Ottawa, throughout your candidacy and potential tenure.** This can be done by ensuring the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan receives adequate funding for the next fiscal year. The plan is a critical piece to ensuring everyone in Ottawa thrives but needs a dedicated budget to have an impact in our community. We encourage you to read and champion the work being done under this plan.
3. **Dedicated first responders who can improve services required for individuals with mental health needs.** In Ottawa, there is a lack of preventative intervention resources available for individuals experiencing mental health crises. Often, if an individual is not in immediate danger, they are turned away from receiving support. Presently, 48% of member agencies within our



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network offer mental health services and resources to clients accessing food programs. We know first-hand that one of the main reasons a crisis occurs is due to a lack of prevention.

We will be following up with you in the days to come by email to ask you to commit to these priorities should you be elected.

We believe that strong leadership can affect meaningful change. We envision a city where no one is food insecure, and no one is left behind. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input on your campaign's priority setting and welcome the opportunity to work more closely together.

Sincerely,

Rachael Wilson  
CEO, Ottawa Food Bank