



Ottawa Food Bank
La Banque d'alimentation d'Ottawa

Attn: Ottawa Food Bank network food program visitors
Service Prioritization – Effective October 2025
Frequently Asked Questions

What is changing?

Starting October 1, 2025, how often you can access a food bank in the Ottawa Food Bank network is changing.

Community and emergency food banks are trying to make sure they can serve people who are visiting a food bank for the first time within a month. This means you may be offered less food or turned away from a food bank if you have already visited a food bank that month. This will help everyone who asks for support have a better chance of accessing the food they need.

Why is this changing?

More people than ever need to visit food banks. Food banks hope this change will mean more fairness for people who need to visit a food bank. Feedback about how to manage the increase in visits came from the 71 food programs in the Ottawa Food Bank's network. People with lived experience also informed this decision.

Food banks are charities and non-profits that rely on donations. Because of this, food banks can only offer a certain number of appointments or visits per month. Up until now, residents may have received two food bank services in a month by visiting both a community food bank and an emergency food bank. Sometimes, someone that had not visited a food bank may have been unable to receive food even though they had not visited a single food bank all month.

This change means that all residents who need to visit a food bank will have a fair chance to visit one within a calendar month.

What does this change mean for me?

Unfortunately, if you need to visit more than one food bank per month it may become more difficult to do so. At the same time, it will likely become easier to visit a food bank once a month. Food banks will likely have more food and appointments available each month.

If you visit a food bank for the second time in a month, they may tell you that you need to wait until next month to visit again. Food banks will only serve people a second time in a month if they have enough food and time to do so. This is to make sure everyone who needs to visit for the first time within a month is able to.

For example, say you visit the community food bank that serves your postal code in early January. On your visit, you receive a full service of 3 days of food. Later in January, you visit an emergency food bank. The emergency food bank may not serve you this month because you have already received a full service from a community food bank. They may offer you 1 or 2 days of food if they are able to.

Why are more people visiting food banks?

The cost of living in Ottawa has gone up. Food, housing and other basic necessities cost more than they used to. Income sources like social assistance and employment wages have not kept up. At the same time, many people who could donate to food banks before are no longer able to do so.



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Food banks are not government services. Food banks are charities and non-profits that rely on donations. Some receive a small amount of government funding. Running a food bank costs more than it used to. The price of food, fuel, and staffing has increased. Food banks have to provide less food and/or turn people away because they can't afford to provide more.

What is the difference between a community food bank and an emergency food bank?

Community food banks serve people who live in a set area based on their postal code. Emergency food banks are open to anyone in Ottawa no matter what their postal code is. Both types of food banks typically provide 3-5 days' worth of groceries once per month.

You can find your community food bank using our website: ottawafoodbank.ca/get-help. If you can't visit our website, you can call the Ottawa Food Bank at 613-745-7001.

The emergency food banks affected by this change are Care Centre Ottawa, Sadaqa Food Bank, and Salvation Army - Ottawa Booth Centre.

This change only affects the community and emergency food banks listed here. Other food programs are not a part of this change. If you are not sure if the food program you visit is a part of this change, please talk to their staff or volunteers. You can also call or e-mail the Ottawa Food Bank: 613-745-7001 or feedback@ottawafoodbank.ca.

How can I get more help if I need it?

We know that some people need to visit a food bank more than once per month. The Ottawa Food Bank network is working together to find ways to help people in this situation. In the meantime, please speak to staff or volunteers at your food bank. You can call 2-1-1 to find other help. You can also contact the Ottawa Food Bank's Feedback Line at feedback@ottawafoodbank.ca or at (613) 745-7001.

Whose fault is this, and who can I talk to?

This is not the fault of anyone who has or currently visits a food bank. This is a problem with many causes. People need to visit food banks for lots of different reasons. The high cost of living and a lack of income mean more people than ever need to access food banks.

Food banks across the country are telling the government about this problem. We are asking them for better jobs, better social assistance rates, and more affordable housing. Better policy will mean fewer people need food banks. We encourage you to contact your City Councillor. Tell them how difficult it is to get emergency food because so many people need to visit food banks. This is happening because of government policy decisions. It's important that they hear from people who are directly affected by these decisions.

To find out who your City Councillor is and how to call them, visit ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/mayor-and-city-councillors. The Ottawa Food Bank also regularly has advocacy campaigns you can take part in. Visit our website for more information: ottawafoodbank.ca/advocate.

Will there be more changes to food banks in the future?

Food banks are always adapting to changes in the economy and community needs. We are trying our best to meet the needs of food bank visitors and continue to serve the community. Changes are possible as food banks continue to adapt. We will continue to inform you of any possible changes as early as possible.