2026 Ottawa Hunger Report

A City Built Without Food Security

Ottawa Food Bank



How food banks have become essential infrastructure, and what Ottawa needs to build next

We acknowledge that the Ottawa Food Bank operates on the traditional, unceded, and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation, whose relationship with this land and its waters extends back countless generations.

For Indigenous Peoples, food is deeply connected to land, culture, identity, and community. These relationships, sustained through generations of knowledge and traditional practices, have been profoundly disrupted by colonialism. Displacement from traditional territories and restrictions on access to land and resources have undermined Indigenous food systems, with impacts that continue today. Alongside persistent systemic inequities, these injustices contribute to the disproportionate food insecurity experienced by Indigenous Peoples.

We recognize that addressing food insecurity requires more than responding to immediate needs. It also means confronting the ongoing impacts of colonialism and respecting the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to shape their own food systems and futures. Meaningful reconciliation calls on us to listen, build respectful relationships, and support Indigenous-led efforts to advance food sovereignty.

Building More Than a Response

Ottawa's food banking network has become essential community infrastructure.

When we think about what makes a city work, we often picture the roads we travel, the services we rely on, and the systems that support our daily lives. Over more than four decades, Ottawa has built another kind of infrastructure—one shaped by community action and sustained by collective commitment. Today, the Ottawa Food Bank network of 67 member agencies connects people across the city with food and vital support.

While this network is a testament to what our community can accomplish together, it also reflects a troubling reality: more and more people are relying on emergency food support to make ends meet.

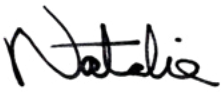
The findings in this year's Ottawa Hunger Report bring that reality into sharp focus. In 2025, one in five Ottawa households experienced food insecurity,[1] as rising costs left too little for groceries. Across the city, network members face difficult decisions about how much food they can provide and how often, all while responding to needs that increasingly extend beyond food.

The network's frontline experience shows what deeper, more meaningful support can look like. Through programs like the Wrap-Around Support Initiative, people can connect with services and resources that help them navigate challenges affecting their financial stability and well-being. This work recognizes that food insecurity rarely exists in isolation, and that lasting change depends on the strength of the systems surrounding people.

As Ottawa enters a new term of municipal government, food security must be central to the decisions shaping the city's future. Housing affordability, public services, and community investment all influence whether people can afford to put food on the table. These are not separate challenges. They are connected conditions that determine whether people can live with stability and dignity.

Ottawa has shown what is possible when a community comes together. We have built a network that responds with care, determination, and an unwavering commitment to our neighbours. The opportunity now is to bring that same resolve to addressing the root causes of food insecurity and creating a city where everyone can thrive.

What we have built together matters. What we choose to build next matters even more.



Natalie Spooner
Chief Executive Officer
Ottawa Food Bank



What We Do

The Ottawa Food Bank supports a network of 67 member agencies, operating 92 food programs across the city. Together, these community organizations provide emergency groceries, meals, snacks, and connections to essential services for Ottawa residents experiencing food insecurity.

For more than 40 years, this network has grown to become an essential part of Ottawa's community infrastructure, connecting local organizations, volunteers, facilities, and partnerships to reach people where they live.

Food insecurity happens when people don't have enough money to consistently access the food they need. It can mean worrying about groceries running out, compromising the quality or variety of food, skipping meals, or going without eating altogether. Its effects reach well beyond the dinner table, taking a toll on people's physical and mental health.[2]

While the Ottawa Food Bank network has evolved to respond to growing community needs, addressing the underlying causes of poverty and food insecurity requires action beyond the network alone.

THE NETWORK

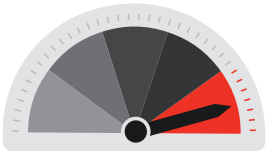


67 member agencies

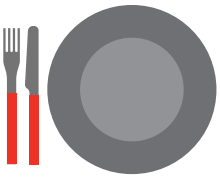


92 food programs

THE RESPONSE



591,686 visits within the network



2.4M meals and snacks served

Annual totals refer to the Ottawa Food Bank's 2025–26 fiscal year.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

life in Ottawa has gotten more expensive lately and many of my neighbours are struggling to make ends meet.



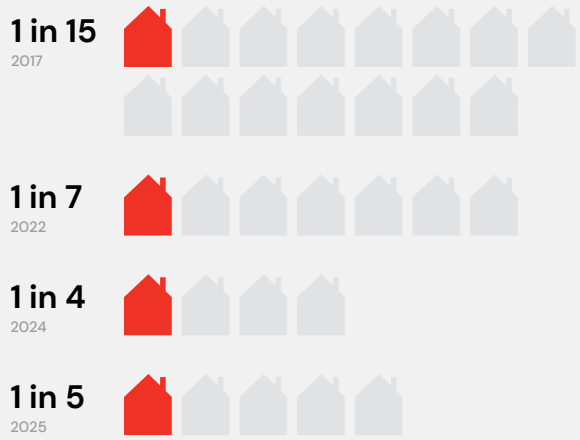
Food Insecurity In Ottawa

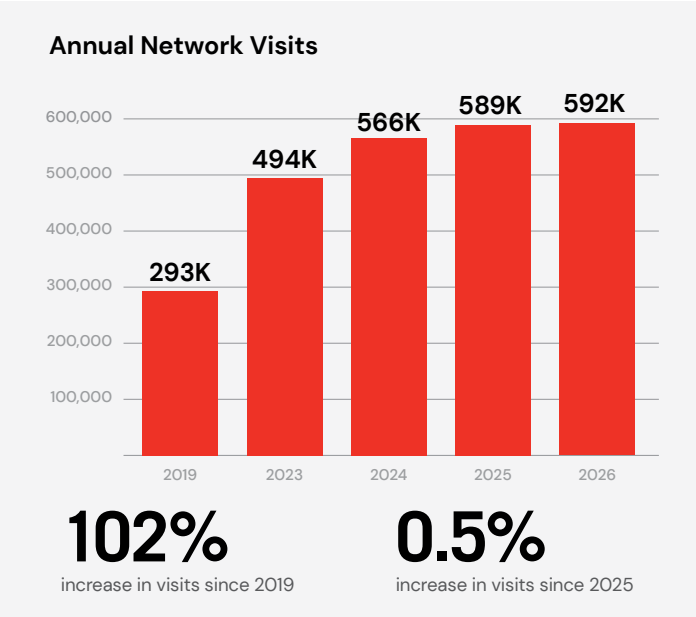
1 in 5 Ottawa households experienced food insecurity in 2025.

An estimated 20.7% of Ottawa households experienced food insecurity in 2025, down from 25.5% in 2024.[3] While the rate appears to have decreased, the difference is not statistically significant—meaning it could reflect normal year-to-year variation rather than a meaningful decline in food insecurity. After years of rising rates, it is too soon to call this meaningful progress as food insecurity remains widespread across Ottawa.

One in five is still too many—no household should have to wonder how they will afford their next meal.

Public Health Ontario, 2018–2025 Household Food Insecurity Snapshot.[4] →





Annual network visit data from 2020-2022 unavailable.

Food bank visits hit new highs—and still don't capture the full extent of need.

In 2025–26, the Ottawa Food Bank network recorded 591,686 visits—0.5% more than the previous year. While small, this increase looks very different when we consider the long-term trend in food bank use. Since 2019, recorded visits have increased by 102%, placing growing pressure on the network's response to local food insecurity.

Because visit counts only show how often people are able to access food support, they do not capture everyone in Ottawa who needs it. Strained resources and capacity have forced some members to limit how often neighbours can access food programs—or turn people away altogether. These barriers affect who gets counted in the data, leaving real community needs unseen.

The Limits of the Network

25%
of network members had to turn people away or close early because they did not have enough food to meet community needs

29%
of network members had to reduce how often people could access food support because of limited resources

Who's Experiencing Food Insecurity in Ottawa?

Across Ottawa, people are turning to food banks while working, raising families, living on fixed incomes, and building new lives in Canada. Their circumstances may differ, but they share the same reality. They are simply trying to make ends meet in a city that has become too expensive for too many.



36%
of visitors are children under 18

Children and Families

Every child deserves to grow up with enough food, and every parent deserves the security of knowing they can provide it. Yet for parents and caregivers struggling to make ends meet, putting food on the table can mean eating less themselves, stretching groceries further, or going without other necessities.

In 2025, nearly one in three children in Canada lived in a household that struggled to afford enough food,[5] with consequences reaching far beyond missed meals.

Ontario research has linked childhood food insecurity to greater use of mental health services and higher healthcare costs.[6],[7] These are not simply short-term hardships. Not having enough to eat can affect children's health, development, and opportunities well beyond childhood. No child's future should be put at risk because their family cannot afford the basics.

Households Accessing Food Support

Food insecurity affects households of all sizes. Families with children account for a substantial share of those accessing food banks, but single adults are also a significant part of the network's visitor population.

41%
are single adults

16%
are single-parent families

26%
are two-parent families

Household types recorded in the Ottawa Food Bank's March 2026 HungerCount. Percentages represent recorded household types, rather than individual visitors.



When a Paycheque Isn't Enough

22%
of visitors report their primary source of income as employment

Having a job should provide a measure of financial security. But more and more, a paycheque isn't stretching far enough to cover the cost of living.

Across Canada, this challenge extends well beyond temporary or part-time work. Research found that 89% of food-insecure households relying on employment income had a main income earner working in a permanent, full-time job.[8]

Employment remains a crucial source of stability, but earning an income is not the same as earning enough to live on. When wages fall short of essential expenses, households can be left with little room to save, manage unexpected costs, or plan for the future. This finding challenges the assumption that employment alone protects people from financial hardship. Work can provide stability, but that security is difficult to maintain when earnings are not enough to cover basic needs.



Building a New Life in Canada

33%
of visitors are newcomers, having immigrated to Canada within the past 10 years

Building a new life should not mean struggling to afford food. In March 2026, 33% of visitors to food banks had arrived in Canada within the previous 10 years. Their experiences and resources vary, but access to adequate income, affordable housing, and essential services all play a fundamental role in establishing food security.

For some newcomers, the challenge is not simply whether support exists, but whether they can access it. Language barriers, eligibility requirements, delays in obtaining documentation, and difficulties navigating government programs can prevent people from receiving assistance when they need it. These barriers have been identified through consultations with newcomers and service providers across Canada.[9] Changes introduced in 2026 also placed time limits on access to federally funded settlement services for permanent residents, further highlighting how eligibility rules shape access to support.[10] Food security depends on more than individual efforts to establish a new life. It requires accessible services, adequate income supports, and opportunities to build financial stability.

The Wider Impact

The consequences of food insecurity reach beyond individual households, affecting physical and mental health, challenges to children's development, and barriers to participating in school and work.[11] These impacts extend across our community, placing additional pressure on healthcare, social services, and essential community infrastructure like food banks. At the same time, access to affordable housing, public transit, and community services play an important role in helping people meet their basic needs.

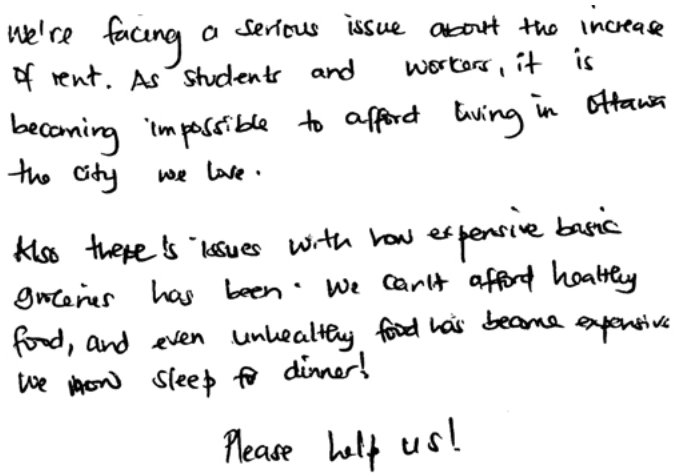
Understanding food insecurity means looking beyond food bank visits to the realities of what it costs to live in Ottawa. Poverty, inadequate incomes, and the rising cost of living shape whether residents can afford to meet their basic needs.

The Infrastructure Behind Making Ends Meet

Food insecurity is about more than the cost of groceries. It is shaped by whether people have enough income to meet their needs, can afford housing, and have access to essential public services. Government decisions about income supports, employment, housing, and transportation all influence whether people can afford food. When these systems fall short, food banks and the communities they serve feel the consequences.

Understanding Ottawa's food insecurity emergency means looking beyond the cost of living to the public policies and investments that shape people's financial security.

LIVED EXPERIENCE



Poverty Trends in Ottawa

Poverty remains a major driver of food insecurity in Ottawa. While income supports and public policies have helped reduce poverty at different points over the past decade, those gains have not been consistent.

In 2024, 9.8% of Ottawa–Gatineau residents lived below Canada's official poverty line, compared with 12.5% across Ontario and 11% nationally.[12]

Canada's official poverty line is based on the Market Basket Measure, which estimates the cost of a modest, basic standard of living. But living above that threshold does not guarantee that a household can comfortably afford housing, nutritious food, transportation, and other essentials.

To better understand these pressures, we need to look beyond poverty rates and examine how household incomes and public supports compare with the actual cost of living in Ottawa.

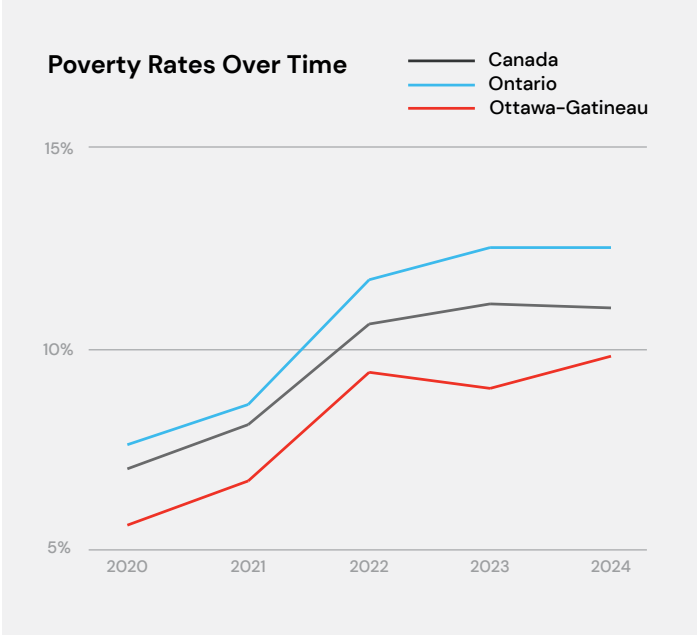


Figure 1: Poverty Rates over time, Ottawa–Gatineau, Ontario, and Canada (2020–2024)[13]

Income, Employment, and Social Supports

Having a source of income does not always guarantee food security. In 2026, 47% of food bank visitors with a disclosed primary household income source reported social assistance or disability-related benefits, while 22% reported employment income. These findings highlight the importance of adequate income in ensuring people can meet their basic needs.

Ontario's minimum wage increased to $17.95 per hour in October 2026.[14] However, it remains well below Ottawa's living wage, which reflects the local cost of essentials such as housing, food, transportation, and childcare. Low wages, unpredictable hours, and limited benefits can leave working households struggling to make ends meet.

For people receiving Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), benefit levels are often insufficient to cover basic living costs. Program rules can also significantly limit opportunities to improve financial security. Under OW, eligible recipients can earn just $200 per month before their benefits begin to be reduced, a threshold that has not increased since 2013.[15] Feed Ontario has recommended raising this exemption to $600, allowing recipients to keep more of their earnings as they move into employment.[16]

Whether through employment or public income supports, the income available to households must be enough to cover the necessities of everyday life.

$17.95
Minimum Wage

$24.10
Ottawa's Living Wage[17]

Defining a living wage

The hourly income a person requires to afford basic expenses like groceries, housing, transportation, childcare, healthcare, and savings for emergencies.[18]

Everyday Expenses

Inflation has slowed, but everyday life has not become more affordable. Across Canada, grocery prices were 33% higher in September 2026 than in September 2020, even though they increased by just 1.7% over the previous year.[19] Slower price increases do little to reverse the financial pressures households have faced over the past several years, and groceries are only one part of a household budget.

These pressures are being felt across Ottawa, and food banks are not immune. As more households struggle to afford groceries, food banks are increasingly having to purchase food to fill the gap left by a decrease in donations. In 2026, 60% of Ottawa Food Bank network members reported purchasing more food than the previous year to keep pace with growing need.

+33%
Grocery prices in Canada since September 2020[20]

$1,273
Monthly cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four

WHAT DOES NUTRITIOUS FOOD COST IN OTTAWA?

Ottawa Public Health's 2026 Nutritious Food Basket findings put these financial pressures into perspective. This research measures the local cost of a nutritious diet and compares household incomes with estimated housing and food expenses.

In 2026, a nutritious diet for a family of four costs approximately $1,273 per month.[21] By comparing household incomes with estimated rent and food expenses, the findings reveal the financial shortfalls facing people who receive social assistance, and how little may remain for those earning minimum wage.

What's left after rent & nutritious food?

-$913
Single adult receiving Ontario Works

-$487
Family of four receiving Ontario Works

-$27
Single adult receiving ODSP

$515
Single adult working 30hrs/ week at minimum wage

And that's before other necessities.

Housing Costs



Across Ontario, the housing crisis continues to deepen. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario warns that homelessness could more than double by 2035 without significant intervention, underscoring the need for coordinated action from all levels of government.[22]

There is a strong connection between food insecurity and housing: Canadian research has found that more than 60% of people entering emergency shelters for the first time had previously used a food bank, with food bank use increasing as they approached homelessness.[23] These findings suggest that food insecurity can be an early warning sign of a much deeper crisis.

In Ottawa, this connection is reflected across the Ottawa Food Bank network. As residents turn to food banks while navigating housing challenges, network members are increasingly helping people connect with other community supports. These connections demonstrate the important role food banks play within a broader community response, alongside the need for coordinated action to address housing affordability and income insecurity.

OTTAWA'S HOUSING PRESSURES

Food insecurity can be an early warning sign of homelessness.

70%
of network members identified housing as one of the top non-food needs of people accessing their services

4,569
people were identified as experiencing homelessness in Ottawa's 2025 enumeration[24]

16,347
households were on the City's Social Housing Registry waiting list at the end of 2025[25]

5-8 years
average wait time on the chronological waiting list, depending on household composition[26]

1,017
households were housed from the City's Centralized Wait List in 2025[27]

Municipal Infrastructure

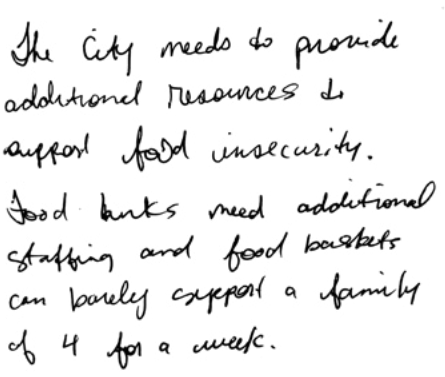


Food security is shaped by more than household income and housing costs. The way Ottawa plans neighbourhoods, invests in public transit, and supports community services influences whether residents can access the essentials of everyday life.

For residents relying on public transit, reaching a food program can mean additional travel expenses, multiple connections, and carrying groceries long distances. These challenges can be especially difficult for people with mobility limitations or caregiving responsibilities.

Affordable transit, accessible community spaces, and neighbourhoods connected to grocery stores, healthcare, and other services are all part of the infrastructure that supports food security. When these systems are difficult to access, community organizations often become important points of connection for residents navigating multiple needs.

LIVED EXPERIENCE



Food banking infrastructure is shaped by the city around it.

47%
of network members identified transportation as the top barrier to accessing food support in 2026

Infrastructure of Community Support

When someone turns to a food bank, groceries may be only one of the things they need. They may also be seeking housing, income, employment, or other essential services. Across Ottawa, food banks have become important points of connection to a wider network of community supports. Their role extends beyond distributing food to helping residents access services that can make a meaningful difference.

This work relies on trusted relationships, skilled staff, and partnerships between organizations that understand their communities.

The Ottawa Food Bank's Wrap-Around Support Initiative (WASI) builds on this approach. Developed through years of collaboration across the network, WASI connects residents with trained workers who help identify goals, navigate services, and access benefits. More than 80% of surveyed WASI participants accessed new supports or benefits they previously didn't know they were eligible for.

In 2026, WASI introduced an expanded framework allowing organizations to participate according to their capacity and community needs. By July, 19 community partners had selected a level of participation.

These efforts demonstrate the importance of connected community infrastructure, where organizations work together to help people access the support they need.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES BEYOND FOOD

59% of network members offer service navigation or referrals

47% offer income tax clinics or financial literacy support

45% offer employment or income-related support

45% offer housing or utilities-related support

STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

Caldwell Family Centre

At Caldwell Family Centre, a visit to the food bank can open the door to much more than groceries. For residents struggling to pay rent, access healthcare, find childcare, or make ends meet, it can also be an opportunity to connect with people and services that can help them navigate some of life's most difficult obstacles.

Through the Ottawa Food Bank's Wrap-Around Support Initiative, Caldwell partners with Carlington Community Health Centre to connect residents with health, housing, legal, and other community supports. Rather than leaving someone to navigate an unfamiliar system on their own, staff can make a personal introduction to a support worker, sometimes just down the hall. That connection can make a meaningful difference for someone already carrying the weight of financial hardship.

For Eugene Williams, Executive Director of Caldwell Family Centre, the goal is to build "a circle of support that's wrapped around them—not just at our centre—but in the broader community."

That means looking beyond someone's immediate needs and helping them establish relationships they can continue to rely on. As Williams explains, "we want our clients to develop those relationships with other community services, so that they have a network of support."

Caldwell's approach reflects a changing reality for food banks across Ottawa. Increasingly, they are becoming important points of connection to a broader network of community services, helping residents access support that extends well beyond food. These relationships can make a meaningful difference in people's lives, but they also speak to the growing responsibilities being placed on organizations originally established to provide emergency food assistance.

While this work helps people navigate the challenges they face today, it cannot resolve the poverty, inadequate incomes, and systemic barriers that bring so many people to food banks in the first place. Caldwell's experience illustrates both the value of a connected, community-based response and why lasting food security requires action on the conditions creating the need for that support.



Making Room for What's Next

Responding to food insecurity across Ottawa takes care, coordination, and investment. Behind the food on someone's table is a network of delivery routes, neighbourhood programs, warehouses, staff, and volunteers.

Over more than four decades, Ottawa has built an extensive network of community organizations, programs, and partnerships that residents increasingly depend on—but the physical infrastructure supporting that network has not always kept pace with its expanding responsibilities and community needs.

55%
of network members reported inadequate permanent space for food programming

7%
had no permanent space at all

STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

Britannia Woods Community Services

For decades, Britannia Woods Community Services has been adapting alongside the community it serves. What began with a request from local parents for after-school support has evolved into a trusted community hub offering food assistance, youth and family programs, mental health supports, employment services, and opportunities for community connection across Ottawa's west end.

For Diana Belghali of Britannia Woods, the organization's strength lies in the trust built with residents over generations.

"When something happens in our community, people know they can turn to us. We've built those relationships over many years, and that trust is what allows us to respond when people need us most."



Today, Britannia Woods serves more than 1,000 people monthly through a food bank operating from the living room of a four-bedroom Ottawa Community Housing unit. As the need has grown, food assistance has increasingly occupied space and time once available for other neighbourhood programs. Strengthening the physical space available to the organization is an important part of protecting its broader community role.

"We want to remain rooted in the heart of our community while creating spaces that better reflect the needs of the people we serve today. Our goal is to offer more choice, more dignity, and greater opportunities to connect people with the supports they need, all in one place." — Diana Belghali, Britannia Woods

That vision goes beyond Britannia Woods itself. Through partnerships with the Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses, the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative, and grassroots organizations, Britannia Woods contributes to shared learning, community-led initiatives, and the development of emerging organizations, including through Ontario Trillium Foundation-funded projects.

Britannia Woods demonstrates that community infrastructure is more than the physical spaces where services are delivered. It is also the relationships, partnerships, and local knowledge built over decades. Strengthening that infrastructure means ensuring community organizations have the space, resources, and connections to continue responding to the people who rely on them.

Building What Comes Next

Food banks have become essential community infrastructure in Ottawa—but to reduce food insecurity, we need to address the reasons people can't afford food in the first place. Members of the Ottawa Food Bank network have identified three policy priorities they believe are especially important.

The Network's Shared Priorities for Reducing Food Insecurity



Increasing the supply of affordable housing

96%

of network members rated this as very or extremely important



Increasing mental health supports

92%

of network members rated this as very or extremely important



Increasing social assistance benefit levels

88%

of network members rated this as very or extremely important

From Shared Priorities to Action

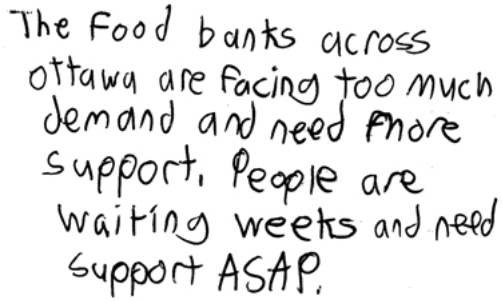
These priorities point to what Ottawa needs to build next: a city where people have access to affordable housing, adequate incomes, and the public services they need.

Ottawa has important commitments to build on. The City's 2025–2029 Poverty Reduction Strategy identifies food security as a priority, while its 2026–2035 Housing and Homelessness Plan sets out a path to improve housing stability and access to services.

As a new term of City Council begins, there's opportunity to turn these commitments into meaningful action through sustained investment, collaboration and accountability.

Municipal governments cannot solve food insecurity alone, but their decisions matter. From affordable housing and public transit to investments in community infrastructure, municipalities can help build the conditions for food security while calling on provincial and federal governments to do their part.

LIVED EXPERIENCE



We Call on the Municipal Government To:

Sustainably fund the Ottawa Food Bank network.

Increase municipal investment in community and emergency food programs, while improving access to the City's Sustainability Funding stream. 48% of network members reported that fundraising was insufficient to meet their needs, highlighting the importance of stable, long-term funding that reflects the real costs of delivering food programs. Funding opportunities must also be accessible to smaller agencies, with eligibility criteria and application processes that reflect their limited resources.

Invest in the community spaces and infrastructure residents rely on.

Work with community organizations to improve facilities where food support is provided, particularly in neighbourhoods where existing spaces can no longer meet growing needs. Expand access to municipal spaces and support opportunities for agencies to share resources. Municipal investment should strengthen the infrastructure communities have already built, rather than leaving individual organizations to address these challenges alone.

Protect and expand deeply affordable housing.

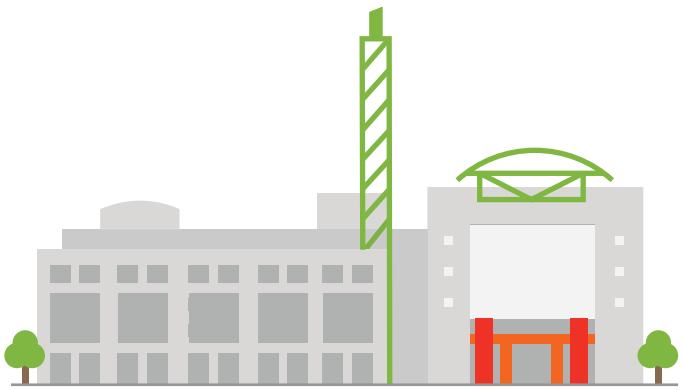
Deliver on the commitments in the 2026–2035 Housing and Homelessness Plan through dedicated funding and measurable targets, including efforts to protect existing affordable housing. Ottawa Public Health's 2026 Nutritious Food Basket findings highlight the impact of housing costs on food affordability.

Deliver on the City's food security commitments.

Turn the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy into a funded action plan with clear responsibilities and public reporting. People experiencing food insecurity must help shape the decisions that affect them.

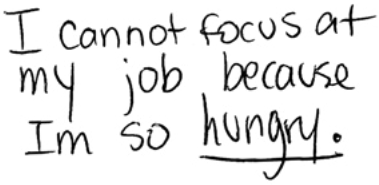
Improve the affordability and reliability of public transit.

Ensure residents can affordably and reliably reach essential services, particularly in underserved neighbourhoods. Transportation was identified as a barrier to accessing food support by 47% of network members. Improving transit affordability and connections to community services can help remove barriers for people already facing financial hardship.



Provincial governments make decisions that directly affect what people earn, what they can afford, and the supports they can access. By strengthening social assistance, setting fair employment standards, and investing in healthcare, housing, and community services, provinces can help address the conditions that drive food insecurity.

LIVED EXPERIENCE



We Call on the Provincial Government To:

Increase social assistance rates to meet basic needs.

Ensure OW and ODSP benefits reflect the cost of living and provide enough income to cover essential expenses. Ottawa Public Health's Nutritious Food Basket findings show that a single adult receiving OW faces a $913 monthly shortfall after accounting for rent and nutritious food alone. Social assistance should provide people with the financial security to meet their basic needs without turning to food banks for support.

Reduce clawbacks on employment income.

Increase the OW monthly earnings exemption from $200 to $600, as recommended by Feed Ontario. The exemption has remained unchanged since 2013, despite rising living costs. Raising the limit would allow people receiving OW to keep more of their earnings without reducing the financial support they need to meet their basic needs.

Protect shelter benefits when people experience homelessness.

Establish a Shelter Allowance Reserve Fund, as recommended by Daily Bread Food Bank, to preserve shelter benefits for people receiving OW or ODSP who lose their housing. Their monthly shelter allowances would be held in escrow until they secure housing, then released to cover first and last month's rent and essential move-in costs, helping remove financial barriers to finding a stable home.

Expand deeply affordable housing and strengthen tenant protections.

Increase provincial investment in social and affordable housing, while expanding rent supports for households with low incomes. Strengthen protections against unlawful evictions and excessive rent increases to preserve existing affordable rental homes and prevent displacement. Stable, affordable housing is essential to ensuring people have enough income left for food and other basic needs.

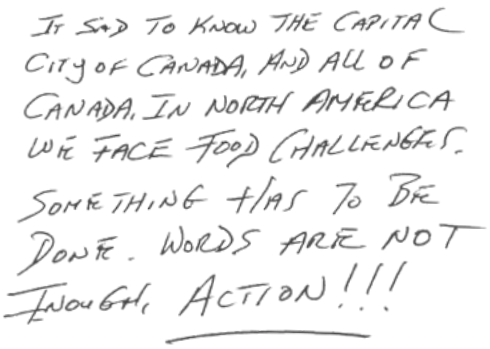
Strengthen employment standards and income security for workers.

Improve protections for workers facing unpredictable hours and limited benefits, while supporting wages that reflect the cost of living. With 22% of food bank visitors in Ottawa reporting employment income, having a job does not always protect against food insecurity.



The federal government shapes the broader economic conditions that affect food security across Canada. Through national income benefits, tax policy, employment insurance, and investments in affordable housing, it can help reduce poverty and ensure more people have the financial security to afford their basic needs.

LIVED EXPERIENCE



We Call on the Federal Government To:

Set and report on a national target to reduce food insecurity.

Establish a measurable target to reduce household food insecurity, with clear deadlines and annual public reporting on progress. Build on Canada's National Food Security Strategy by addressing the inadequate incomes and high housing costs that contribute to food insecurity.

Strengthen federal income benefits to help people meet basic needs.

Build on recent increases to the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit by improving the adequacy of ongoing income supports, including the Canada Disability Benefit and Canada Workers Benefit. Ensure benefits are accessible, reflect the cost of living, and do not result in reductions to other essential supports.

Provide direct rent support and build more affordable housing.

Introduce a permanent rental benefit for people with low incomes, building on Maytree's proposed Canada Renters Credit. Increase funding to build and protect non-profit, cooperative, and supportive housing so more people can afford a stable home without cutting back on food.

Expand Employment Insurance to cover more workers.

Modernize EI by establishing a national eligibility threshold of 420 insurable hours, as recommended by Food Banks Canada. Improve benefit amounts and expand access for part-time, seasonal, and gig workers so more people can receive financial support when they lose employment.

Provide long-term funding for community food infrastructure.

Build on recent federal investments by establishing reliable, ongoing funding for the facilities, vehicles, refrigeration, storage, and distribution systems that food banks and community food programs depend on. Funding should cover ongoing maintenance and operating costs, with accessible opportunities for smaller community organizations.



How You Can Help

Be a Local Advocate

Share this report.

Help more people understand the realities of food insecurity in Ottawa. Share the findings with friends, family, colleagues, and your community. Use the report to start conversations about why food insecurity persists and what needs to change.

Challenge the myths.

Food insecurity isn't caused by poor budgeting or individual choices. It's driven by inadequate incomes, unaffordable housing, and gaps in public supports. Help shift the conversation toward the conditions that leave people unable to afford food.

Raise your voice.

Call, email, or meet with your city councillor, Member of Provincial Parliament, or Member of Parliament. Ask what they're doing to reduce food insecurity. Will they support policies that improve incomes, expand affordable housing, and strengthen the services people depend on?

Support Community Solutions

Volunteer or donate.

Support local food programs and community organizations providing essential services to Ottawa residents. Your time and contributions help make this work possible.

Back systemic change.

Support organizations working to address the root causes of food insecurity, including those advocating for affordable housing, adequate incomes, and stronger community services.

Check in with people around you.

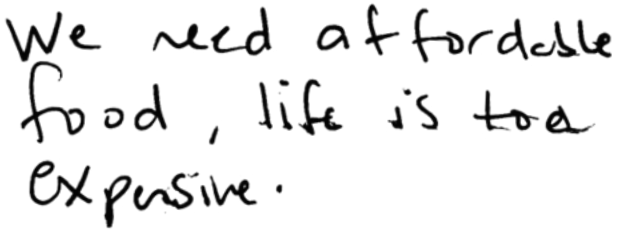
Food insecurity isn't always visible. It could affect a neighbour, colleague, friend, or family member. Reach out, listen without judgment, and offer support where you can.

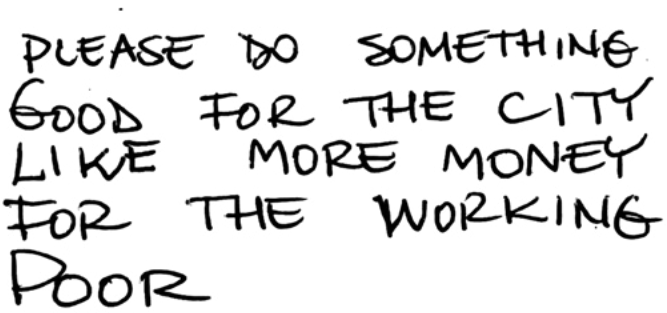
LIVED EXPERIENCE

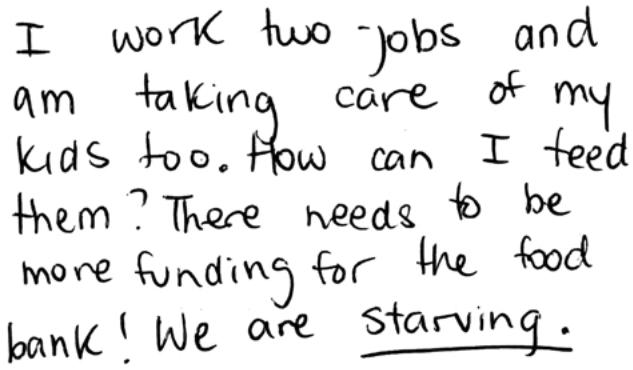
Hunger is a serious and growing problem and we need your help to solve it. If we all work together as community, I truly believe that we can make a difference.

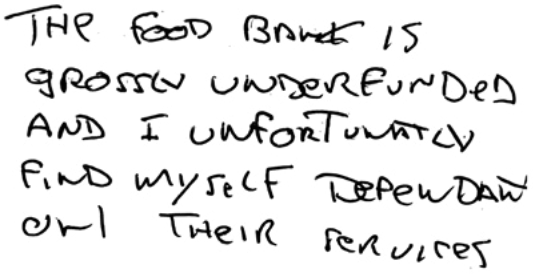


LIVED EXPERIENCE









ENDNOTES

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METHODOLOGY

Every March, the Ottawa Food Bank network participates in HungerCount, a national survey led by Food Banks Canada. The survey collects information about people accessing food banks, including their household circumstances and sources of income. March is selected as a representative month because it generally falls outside predictable periods of unusually high or low food bank use.

Unless otherwise indicated, demographic information in this report reflects March 2026. Annual food bank visits and other operational figures reflect the Ottawa Food Bank's 2025–2026 fiscal year, from October 1, 2025, to September 30, 2026. Additional statistics and research are attributed to their respective sources.

Client information is collected through Link2Feed, a secure database used by the Ottawa Food Bank network. Only trained and authorized staff and volunteers can access client records. When calculating income-related percentages, responses recorded as "No income" or "Undisclosed" were excluded from the denominator.

In June 2025, the Ottawa Food Bank network transitioned from a closed Link2Feed network to an open network, changing how client information is recorded and shared across participating agencies. This shift provides a more complete picture of food bank use and helps improve data accuracy. However, year-over-year comparisons must be interpreted with caution, as changes in reported figures may reflect improvements in data collection and network coverage rather than changes in food bank use alone.

Together, these findings provide a snapshot of food insecurity in Ottawa and the scale of the community response. They also highlight the pressures facing the food bank network and help inform the policies and investments needed to build a more food-secure city.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ottawa Hunger Report is made possible through the collective efforts of the Ottawa Food Bank network and the many people who contribute to its work.

We extend our sincere thanks to our member agencies, whose dedication and firsthand knowledge of their communities are essential to this report. Their experiences help us better understand the realities of food insecurity in Ottawa and the challenges facing the network.

We are grateful to the volunteers, donors, and supporters whose generosity helps sustain food programs and essential community services across our city. Their continued commitment strengthens the network and its ability to respond to community needs.

Special thanks to the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health, Feed Ontario, and Food Banks Canada for their research, collaboration, and ongoing support. Their contributions help ground this report in local evidence while connecting Ottawa's experiences to broader provincial and national trends.

Above all, we thank the people who have shared their experiences of food insecurity. Your voices bring meaning to the findings in this report and remind us that every statistic represents people whose experiences deserve to be heard.

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There’s no Ottawa Food Bank without Ottawa.

ottawafoodbank.ca