

Food Bank Use Hits Record High in Ontario

Over 412,000 Ontarians accessing Food Banks every month.

TORONTO, December 3rd, 2012 – A new report released today by the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) revealed alarming new data: food bank use in Ontario has hit an all-time high, with over 412,000 Ontarians accessing food support and hunger-relief programs every month.

“The face of hunger is changing,” says Bill Laidlaw, Executive Director of the OAFB. “The largest group of food bank users are children, with 160,000 kids accessing food banks monthly. What’s more, some of the largest growing groups of food bank users are single parent households, the working poor, senior citizens, university students, and recent graduates.”

There are many issues that have contributed to this spike in food bank use, which is up from 395,000 in 2011 and 374,000 during the 2008 recession. “The challenges we’ve had in agriculture this year, rising food and living costs, the flooding in Northern Ontario, plant closures and layoffs, and funding cuts to social assistance programs have all played a role in the increased need for food assistance,” says Laidlaw.

Details of the report’s findings include:

- 412,998 individuals, including 159,918 children, accessed Ontario’s food banks in March 2012 alone
- 174,618 households accessed food banks, this year, for the first time in their lives
- 19% of food banks in Ontario do not have adequate supplies to address the growing need in their community

The Ontario Association of Food Banks is continuing to pursue the recommendations for change that it made in its 2011 Hunger Report, including: increased access to affordable healthy food, advocating for a housing benefit for low income individuals, a tax credit for farmers, and a push for the Ontario government to address the root causes of hunger by implementing policy changes that will lead to long-term sustainable solutions, and ultimately make food banks unnecessary.

“Every day there are children going to school without breakfast, adults working through the day without lunch, and seniors going to bed without dinner, simply because they cannot afford food to eat,” says Laidlaw. “It is our hope that you will help us by speaking to your local MPPs and asking them to put hunger on the agenda, as well as by supporting your local food bank. In this province, and in this country, hunger and access to healthy food should not be an issue.”

The Ontario Hunger Report is a compilation of data collected through the annual HungerCount report of Food Banks Canada. The full report is available online at www.OAFB.ca.

About Ontario Association of Food Banks

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is a network of 120 food banks and over 1,100 hunger relief programs and agencies across the province. Together, we serve 412,000 individuals, including

160,000 children, every month. The OAFB is committed to reducing hunger through sustainable solutions that ensure the long-term health and success of communities across the province.

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