

Board Chair Report - Burlington Food Bank

Date: April 18, 2024

Dear Members,

I am delighted to present the Board Chair Report for the Burlington Food Bank, covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2023.

This past year has been marked by significant progress and collaboration, made possible by the dedication of our board members, staff, volunteers, and community partners.

In Burlington, the pressing issue of food security has been increasingly apparent. Based on the most recent Census, approximately 22,000 people in our Burlington Community go to bed hungry every night or wake up without food to start their day. This statistic underscores the magnitude of the challenge facing our community, where many families are forced to make difficult choices between food and other essentials. Despite our efforts, there are still many individuals and families silently grappling with food security, as evidenced by the sharp increase in demand during the COVID-19 crisis, and which continues to increase month after month.

Food banks exist in communities throughout the world out of necessity. However, operating a community food bank is not the solution, but a band-aid to the problem. Unless there are real changes in government focus at all levels, food banks are not going away any time soon. That is why we needed to think differently at the Burlington Food bank and ask ourselves, "Were we really doing enough?"

Out of the 22,000 people who are facing food security concerns, the Burlington Food Bank is reaching ¼ of that segment of the population.

The answer was a resounding "No".

So, change we did! And I am thankful that our Community Partners are seeing that impact of that change. As Feed Halton is now fully underway and focused on driving real change in how we, our partners and Regional Level of government operate with each other, together, we will support all Burlington members facing food security concerns.

Operational Highlights:

1. Service Provision:

- In 2023, the Burlington Food Bank provided support to 4,377 unique individuals, which equated to a total of 25,828 visits. And 1,762 unique households, for a total number of visits of 9,735. We distributed over 775,000 pounds of food throughout the year.
- YTD 2024 we have already serviced more unique individuals than we did in all of 2021.
- Recognizing the need for accessibility, we further expanded our After-Hours Service to assist those who are employed during the day.
- The Burlington Food Bank Staffing Team has grown slightly, back to the pre-covid levels to accommodate the growing needs of the community. We are pleased to have strengthened our leadership, front line staff and maintained our volunteer base with people who have an inherent understanding for respect, empathy and love for our community.

2. Partnerships and Collaborations:

- I am particularly proud of our relationship with Feed Ontario. We have strengthened that relationship, now being recognized as a Large Food Bank. This relationship provided 190,000 pounds of proteins, (poultry, eggs and milk), distributed to our Burlington residents. And through the Establishment of Feed Halton, we have set the Gold Standard for regional distribution centers.
- As active contributors to the Food Security Action table, we continue to collaborate with partners to improve food access in our community.
- Our Community Gardens initiative has flourished. Through several locations including Maple Ave Garden, Mapleview Shopping Centre Rooftop Gardens, and Urban Farm, we can provide fresh, locally grown produce for our clients. Our Garden Coordinator, Samatha LeGrand also provides cooking tips, and how it can be used with meal preparation.

3. Feed Halton Initiatives:

- Since receiving the keys in September 2023, Feed Halton has made significant strides in receiving, sorting, and distributing food to agencies in Burlington and Oakville.
- Progress continues at Feed Halton with regards to refrigeration, installation of racking, and acquisition of equipment.
- Active engagement of volunteers from both Burlington Food Bank and Kerr Street Mission.
- Our food donors are different, and this is one of the many reasons Feed Halton exists. We have hired a procurement specialist, who focuses on large scale food donations, to support all of Halton. Recently, Feed Halton has procured our first large scale donation; a full truck load of tomato products. Something we would not have sought in the past, nor have been in a position to accept just six months ago. It would have bypassed our community.

4. Volunteer Engagement:

- The single most important group of people within our operations. Without their support and dedication, we would never be able to complete the work that we do.
- Over 75 volunteers contributing more than 15,000 hours of service last year, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to our mission.

Financial Update:

- We successfully secured new grants totaling \$122,000, bolstering our operational and programmatic efforts.
- During Covid, agencies such as food banks and those supporting at-risk people living through hardship received record amounts of donations. We decided during that time to put Fundraising Activities on a bit of a hiatus. 2024 will see a return of fundraising activities, targeted to support the Burlington community through the Burlington Food bank and for Halton Region through Feed Halton.
- Through donations from the Rotary Club, we acquire heavy lifting equipment for Feed Halton.
- Recently accessed regional funding from the Halton Region to support the infrastructure and service delivery totalling \$500,000 directly for Feed Halton. This comes with a matching donation from a private philanthropist.
- Proudly, we preform all our magic, maintaining Management and Admin expenses below 7% as a measure of financial donations.

Community Outreach and Awareness:

- Through hosted community food drives, such as The Gift of Giving Back, The Grinch, Flashe Gas owned by Daryl Fowler, and Burlington Helping Burlington, we collected over 200,000 pounds of food and essential items. That equates to over \$700,000 worth of food purchases, based on Food Banks Canada standard of \$3.52/lbs
- By increasing the quality of our social media presence, we continue to and successfully raise the awareness about food security in Burlington.

Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to our board members, staff, volunteers, and community partners for their invaluable support and dedication throughout the year. Together, we have made a tangible difference in the lives of our neighbours and built a more resilient community.

Special Thanks to our many Donors

- Aldershot Lions Club
- Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd
- Burlington Oldtimers Hockey Club
- Burlington Oldtimers Slo-Pitch League
- Burlington Community Foundation
- First Ontario Credit Union
- Fortino's on New Street
- Fortino's on Appleby
- Fortino's on Upper Middle
- Fortino's on Plains Road
- Freshco on Brant
- Food Basics (3 locations in Burlington)
- Gift of Giving Back
- Ladies of the Round Table
- Megaloid Laboratories
- Neelands Group Limited
- Nicholson and Cates
- Port Nelson Church
- The Rotary Clubs of Burlington
- Tim Hortons
- Walmart's of Burlington

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and look ahead to the future, I am confident that our collective efforts will continue to make a meaningful impact. Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to the Burlington Food Bank.

Warm regards,

Maria Nancy Thornton, CPA CGA
Board Chair, Burlington Food Bank