
For Information

REPORT TITLE: Update on Brampton Food Banks Data Project

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update to Regional Council on the Brampton food banks data project and food bank usage in Brampton.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On January 9, 2020, Meghan Nicolls, Executive Director of The Mississauga Food Bank, presented the findings of the *Who's Hungry* report, a profile of hunger and poverty in Toronto Region (including the geographic area of Peel), to Regional Council.
 - Regional Council requested that work commence with City of Brampton staff and Brampton food banks, on a plan to obtain data (Resolutions 2020-12 and 2020-13). Staff undertook to report back on the plan in the fall of 2020.
 - Staff began working with Brampton food banks in February 2020; the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the plans and timelines.
 - In September 2020, the United Way Greater Toronto announced financial support for this project; funding will be used to build the capacity of Brampton food organizations to collect and analyze data, document what is working well and identify gaps in order to improve the reach and efficiency of the system.
 - Staff worked with Regeneration Outreach Community and Knights Table to create a Brampton Emergency Food System Map that visually depicts how Brampton food organizations work together to share food and ensure residents are served.
 - Food insecurity remains a priority throughout Peel Region; the Peel Hunger Relief Network, comprised of more than 80 organizations and agencies continues to work collectively to address food insecurity in Peel.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

On January 9, 2020, Meghan Nicolls, Executive Directive of The Mississauga Food Bank, presented the findings of the *Who's Hungry* report, a qualitative and quantitative profile of hunger and poverty in Toronto Region, to Peel Regional Council. It was noted that the *Who's Hungry* report included data from Toronto and Mississauga only. Since data from Brampton or Caledon was not included, the extent of food insecurity in these municipalities is unclear. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the reach of the system and to identify and address any potential gaps.

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Regional Council requested that work commence with staff from the City of Brampton and Brampton food banks on a plan to obtain data (Resolutions 2020-12 and 2020-13). Staff undertook to report back on the plan in the fall of 2020.

In February 2020, staff convened a meeting of Brampton emergency food providers to discuss: Regional Council direction, opportunities to work together on data collection, documentation what is working well and identification of system gaps. Participants at that meeting considered leveraging the HungerCount questionnaire administered annually by Food Banks Canada to pilot a point-in-time data collection in March 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic halted plans to participate in the 2020 HungerCount as well as overall planning for this project.

The pandemic put significant pressure on emergency food organizations to support residents in traditional and non-traditional ways. It also paused some of their services, particularly those that rely heavily on volunteers. The pandemic highlighted the important role that food organizations play in meeting the primary needs of residents. Many of the Brampton food organizations were engaged in the City of Brampton's Social Support COVID-19 Taskforce. They also participate in the Region of Peel's Community Response Table (CRT) and work collectively with other organizations in the sector to ensure resident needs are met.

From May to June, staff contacted Brampton emergency food providers to discuss their current program status, support for the community, challenges and needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents noted an increase in partnerships and collaboration, changes in hours of operation and how services are provided (delivery vs pick-up). In late August, staff reconvened the data collection planning process with Brampton food organizations, City of Brampton staff and United Way Greater Toronto.

Key considerations and concerns raised by the organizations were:

- Valuable data is already being collected by some organizations.
- Data collection is challenging but important to 'tell Brampton's story' and demonstrate 'collective impact'.
- Data collection can be 'invasive' - it is important to build trust, ensure dignity through the process, and recognize the 'right to not participate'.
- Challenges with data collection include staffing capacity, time, resources and technology.
- The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented pressure and stress on agencies, their staff, and volunteers.
- There is overall uncertainty around timelines due to the day-to-day demands and a "second wave" of the pandemic.

Notwithstanding the challenges noted, Brampton food banks have expressed support for working together to document their collective impact. In discussions with the various food organizations, it was affirmed that Brampton's emergency food banks are a diverse range of local food providers that distribute food through various programs and services. The sector is dynamic and ever evolving to address the food security needs of Brampton residents.

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When asked how the Brampton food system is unique, partners cited the diversity of residents and service providers; a history of working together (Brampton Food Sharing Network, Peel Hunger Relief Network); that services are diverse in size, formal and informal; and, the important role that faith groups play.

To address the concern about capacity, the United Way of Greater Toronto announced funding for a consultant/specialist to work with the partners to co-create a survey, provide data collection training, and support the data analysis. The Request for Proposal was released at the beginning of November 2020.

2. Data Collection Plan and Process

To achieve a collaborative process of collecting data, identify system gaps, and document what is working well, the partners have agreed to the following high-level plan for this project over the course of eight to ten months:

Key Activities	Description
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group includes representation from: Brampton food providers, the Region of Peel, the City of Brampton and the United Way Greater Toronto Establish a sub-group to lead the design of the questionnaire
Current State Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess type of data currently collected by Brampton food providers Build on current knowledge of what providers are collecting Food providers to share copies of data collection tools Series of individual meetings with food providers. (organizational profiles; type of data and data collection method/frequency; capacity; supporting resources) Analysis of collected data; assessment of ‘common data points’
Questionnaire Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify type of data to collect Develop draft and final questionnaire
Data Collection & Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect data, analyze data and prepare a summary report
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review key findings Assess overall experience with data collection/lessons learned Map out the recommended approach for moving forward
Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to identify and engage additional food providers
Share Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report to Regional Council and other Stakeholders - Fall 2021

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3. Brampton Emergency Food System Map

In 2019, Regional staff began working with emergency food providers to document the food system in Brampton. The purpose of the Brampton Emergency Food System Map (Appendix I) is to demonstrate at a high-level how emergency food is distributed to the Brampton community and capture key partnerships and food sharing relationships among the food providers. A glossary of terms can be found in Appendix II. This map does not replace or duplicate the Peel Food Map which is used by residents and agencies to find local food banks and programs. Rather, this system map outlines the following key levels of supports to illustrate that a system of supply and distribution exists in Brampton.

Components of this system map include:

- **Supply:** The main source of food that is streamed into the Brampton food system. The Supply level includes distribution centres, individual donations, agricultural sector (e.g. farms), and fundraising initiatives.
- **Distribution Hubs:** Knights Table and Regeneration Outreach Community are the main Distribution Hubs in Brampton. The hubs obtain large quantities of food from the Supply level to distribute more locally to Food Providers.
- **Food Providers:** In Brampton, many food providers receive most of their food from the Distribution Hubs level, while some receive directly from the Supply level. There are also food providers that receive both from the Supply Level and the Distribution Hubs.
- **Programs and Services:** Residents receive food through the programs and services delivered by Food Providers. Some programs and services include food banks, meal delivery, breakfast programs, and community gardens.

4. Broader Emergency Food System

While the Food Bank Data Summary project work with Brampton food providers, the Region of Peel, City of Brampton and United Way Greater Toronto continues, so too does the work of the Peel Hunger Relief Network. Many of the Brampton food providers are members of the Peel Hunger Relief Network, working collectively as part of a broader emergency food system.

The Peel Hunger Relief Network, co-chaired by The Mississauga Food Bank and Knights Table has over 80 agencies and organizations working together to achieve the following:

- Ensure inclusive, coordinated, and effective collaboration among all relevant stakeholders involved in the collection and distribution of food to those experiencing hunger in Peel.
- Provide a platform to address the sector's needs and priorities as they evolve.
- Create efficiencies, share food, best practices, information, and identify gaps to provide the best services to their clients.

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It is important to note that there is no service system manager for the emergency food sector. To fulfil their mandate, organizations rely on funding from individual and corporate donors; funders, including the Region of Peel's Community Investment Program funds; and volunteers. Region of Peel staff continue to provide various levels of support to the Peel Hunger Relief Network and Peel Food Action Council in order to build their individual and collective capacity and ensure they meet the increasing needs of residents.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact the ability of Brampton emergency food providers to participate in this data collection project; as a result, they have suggested an eight to ten-month timeline to complete this project.

CONCLUSION

Emergency food banks provide important support to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. Brampton food providers represent a diverse mix of formal, informal, faith based, and grassroots organizations committed to feeding Brampton's most vulnerable. Staff will continue to work with food providers, City of Brampton staff, and the United Way Greater Toronto to advance the data collection project, to quantify their contribution, identify gaps in the system, and highlight the importance of the progress being made. Staff will provide the findings in a report to Council in the Fall of 2021.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Brampton Emergency Food System Map

Appendix II - Brampton Emergency Food System Map Glossary

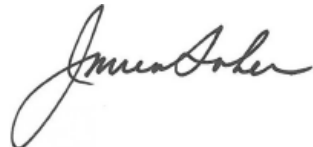
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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



J. Baker, Chief Administrative Officer