

## Unpacking the numbers

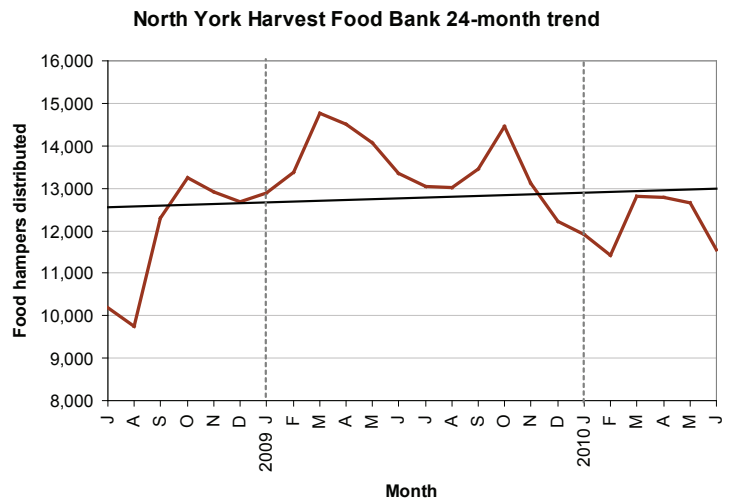
Over the past year, we have shared some of the stories of people who have accessed our food assistance services. You may remember Greg who eventually landed on his feet after he lost his job and found himself at one of our food banks. Or, you might recall Jocelyn who was not receiving her full EI benefit until one of our trained staff helped to connect her with the Ministry of Labour.

For every Greg and Jocelyn, there are many other stories that go untold. Some of them have happy endings while others are still being written. Each year, North York Harvest helps document these stories by participating in Daily Bread Food Bank's annual *Who's Hungry: Profile of Hunger in the GTA* survey. The survey asks food bank participants questions about their household demographics, income supports, expenses, and how they cope with living on a low-income. Each answer isn't quite a story on its own but, taken together, the information presents a snapshot of who uses food banks and the reasons why they turn to them.

For instance, our statistics tell us that, like Greg, 44 per cent of people who use our food banks only turned to them in the last 6 months and that 25 per cent did so due to a job loss. Similarly, of the people accessing food banks in our catchment, Jocelyn is part of the 53 per cent of households with children.

These data also shed light on poverty in North York and how the face of hunger changes as you travel away from the downtown core:

- North York is home to more families so it is not surprising that 68 per cent of people who use food banks come from multi-person households. This is a quarter more than the GTA average.
- North York is a place where new Canadians come to settle, yet food banks are fast becoming an unavoidable pit stop in that process. In North York, 36 per cent of people accessing food banks are new to Canada in the last 5 years.



The graph above shows the number of hampers distributed by month at North York Harvest emergency hamper programs over the last two years. The trend line shows a levelling off since the start of the recession in late 2008; nevertheless, service numbers for the first six months of 2010 are still 10% higher than the same period two years ago, before the recession started.

- With many aging communities, hunger continues to be a problem for retirees in North York. 8 per cent of people using our food banks are over the age of 65, double the GTA average.
- The cost of housing continues to pose the single greatest challenge for people living on low-incomes. The median household income among food bank users in our area is \$1033 per month and the average market rent including utilities is \$829 per month. This leaves households with less than \$7 per day for other living expenses including food.

For further information about hunger statistics in North York or to read more about the personal stories from people in our community, please visit our website at [www.northyorkharvest.com/hunger-statistics](http://www.northyorkharvest.com/hunger-statistics) and stay tuned for upcoming editions of our newsletter.

## Images of summer



**Left:** Tomatoes harvested from the garden at YWCA Beatrice House. Over the past two years, Beatrice House has received garden support from our Harvest to Hand Community Garden program. **Centre:** Employees with the Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation sort food at North York Harvest's distribution centre. In 2009, the foundation selected North York Harvest as one of 13 Partner Charities. **Right:** Strawberries harvested from a pick-your-own farm trip with Fairview Community Health. North York Harvest coordinates these free trips to local area farms. Over 200 people participate in these trips each year.

## York students take on child hunger

About 150 York University students from the Social Interaction and Community class tackled the issue of child hunger this summer by visiting North York Harvest's facilities, collecting food, and raising awareness in their communities.

Professor Peter Dawson, who has a long history working with human rights issues, was recently inspired by the stories in the media about the need for food banks. As part of his class, he worked with his students to understand the implications of food banks and the obligations and duties of community members to help each other in times of need, while spreading awareness about child hunger in Canada.

After learning about the role of North York Harvest in the community, the students continued to plan and implement a food drive, collecting over 4,396 lbs of food through creative food-raising efforts at Union Station, local grocery stores, churches and community centres. The students also conducted a public education campaign among their peers which included collecting signatures for a petition that was sent to government leaders to respond to child hunger nationally. Their petition will be presented to parliament by MP Judy Sgro this fall.

## How NYH helps local agencies

Ever wonder how your food or monetary donation to North York Harvest Food Bank makes a difference?

North York Harvest partners with 42 other agencies in northern Toronto, ranging from shelters for women and youth, to community health centres. These agencies run some 60 programs to help build stronger communities. Your donation allows us to provide food and other supports to these programs, so they can direct their resources to building their capacity.

Here are just some examples of how your contribution makes a difference, in our agencies' own words:

*"All our ex-residents clients come to use the food bank. We are able to set times to meet with clients to discuss other needs and provide supportive counseling. Clients are also able to make the best of their time; they get to speak to staff in person and they can get food in one trip."*  
– Ernestine's Women's Shelter



*"We are a student union with a diverse student body. The food received provides a valuable service to our members in need. Financially it just would not be possible to purchase the amount of food we receive from NYHFB, thus our food program would not be sustainable."*  
– York Federation of Students

*"Tenants who use our food bank due to the recession and hardship of day-to-day. It helps to alleviate the financial burden of families who are struggling to make ends meet."*  
– Trethewey Supplementary Food Program

## Fall Food Drive

Support hungry families and individuals this fall.

North York Harvest is holding its annual fall food drive from **September 17 to October 15**. It's an opportunity for the food bank to re-stock its supplies after a summer of low donations.

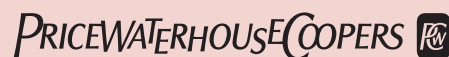
Drop off your donations at local fire halls and grocery stores in the northern Toronto area. Visit our website or call us for more information.



## Be a Harvest Hero

On Sunday, September 26, our "Harvest Heroes" team will be participating in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge. Join us for the 5k walk or the half & full marathons. All participants will receive a free performance running cap.

Visit our website or contact us for more details!



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Please mail your donation to 640 Lawrence Ave. West, Toronto, Ontario, M6A 1B1. North York Harvest respects your privacy. We do not rent, sell or trade our mailing lists. The information we collect is used to process donations, keep our donors informed about our activities, and ask for your support.



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