

DUNDALK FOOD BANK – SPRING 2021 REPORT

APRIL 15TH, 2021

As already reported, at Christmas 2020, the Dundalk Food Bank served 100 unique households, amounting to a total of 246 people, including 110 children. This figure provides a fair cross-section of the community need at that time. We do our best to reach out to people in need, for example, through our local schools, so that they are aware of our services. But there are doubtless many other people struggling to make ends meet who may not approach the food bank.

Many people choose not to access the food bank, because there is a stigma associated with doing so. We strive to get to know those who come, so that we meet them as neighbours, not just as clients. For many people, talking with us on the phone can be chance to tell their stories and to share their burdens. 2020 has changed the in-person experience as we have adopted COVID-19 protocols from the Grey Bruce Public Health Unity. It means a lot to us when people tell us how much they appreciate speaking with us – it's about much more than just the food.

The 2020 need was greatly affected by the fluctuating burden on marginalized households. A certain number of people qualified for the CERB, and therefore were in a better position financially than they had been prior to this benefit.

One indication of this is that Grey County reported a 20% reduction in people accessing social assistance in 2020, as increased federal benefits were provided. Grey County forecasts a surge in 2021, anticipating a 21% increase in need, returning to 2019 levels.

From January 14th to April 15th 2021, the Dundalk Food Bank served 70 unique households, representing 198 people. In this three-month period we gave out a total of 116 food boxes, with a total of 299 people. This represents an average of approximately 39 food boxes, and 100 people served per month. (There are typically fewer people requesting help in the first two weeks of January following the Christmas hamper distribution.)

With the end of the CERB benefits available in 2020, we are starting to see a number of households, both individuals and families, who are struggling to pay both rent and food. From Christmas 2020 to the present we have seen 28 new

households, that is, 112 people, seeking help. In general, we see families at Christmas who are able to get by during the year but can't do the extras for their children at Christmas.

Amongst the causes of the new need, people report to us rise in rents and lack of access to attainable housing, and loss of work due to industry shut downs. We are meeting more individuals, and even parents and children, living in "rooming houses" – renting rooms where previously they might have rented apartments. We are also aware of more multi-generational households, and of single mothers with larger families. The profile of our community is certainly changing.

The Dundalk Food Bank wants to remain accountable to the community that supports us. We are so grateful for all of the amazing support we received at Christmas 2020. We recently received a report from the local Foodland that contributions matched by parent-company Sobeys's, resulted in a \$4,300 credit for 2021. We benefitted from Bruce Power's one time donations of \$11,000 in April and May of 2020. We also note a great, recent donation of over 250 boxes of cereal collected by Proton Community School.

The Township of Southgate has provided a great location for people who use the Food Bank for over ten years. Every individual, school, service group, church, and business matters to us! You are making a difference. We count on your ongoing support through the year.

We want to mention that we are a community-based group, which is complementary to other services, e.g., Grey County, the South East Grey Community Health Centre. We are one piece of the puzzle helping to make ours a caring place to live, helping marginal people, including many children.

As a community group, we are able to operate with no overhead, and no staff salaries. We can ensure all donations, time and energy go directly to getting food to people in need. However, the people whom we help also need to find decent, attainable housing, to find work, to deal with mental health, parenting, food preparation. They need the additional services which other groups offer.

Thanks for being part of the Dundalk Food Bank's effort to support our neighbours in need!