



January 22, 2025

To: Toronto City Council

Re: In a food insecurity emergency our drop-ins and shelters need more not less

Last month the City of Toronto declared food insecurity an emergency. This is an important first step in recognizing the crisis levels that our meal programs and food banks are facing today, but we urgently need to put food in the budget.

At North York Harvest Food Bank, our network of community organizations is seeing up to 30,000 visits every month. This is more than a 100% increase in visits since before the pandemic. While we applaud City Council's commitment to expanding the student nutrition program in our schools, we are writing today as emergency meal programs to request increased support to Creating Health Plus funding, **so agencies can at least continue to operate with the same level of food support from the City of Toronto as we could count on last year.** In particular:

- Additional \$530,000 to the Creating Health Plus budget to renew one-time funding provided last year to every agency
- Embed this funding into the Creating Health Plus budget for future years, adjusted to the cost of living.

The Creating Health Plus program of the City of Toronto provides drop-ins and shelters with essential food items to make meal programs possible. Every week our members receive milk, eggs, yogurt and produce that they turn into meals for the people in our community who need them most.

Last year, Creating Health Plus received additional one-time funding, which injected nearly \$12,000 of additional food into each program. This could not have come at a more crucial time. Our members were so relieved to learn that on top of their regular allocation of food staples through Creating Health Plus, they received a voucher to purchase additional food. This meant that they could choose the specific ingredients they needed to improve their meal planning in a way that addresses the cultural and dietary needs of the clients they serve.

As an additional bonus, since the food purchasing voucher was through FoodReach – a social enterprise with North York Harvest Food Bank – every dollar spent helped increase the collective purchasing power of the entire nonprofit sector, helping to lower food costs and stretch dollars further get more affordable food into the communities who need it most all over the city.

Unfortunately, as the city budget stands right now, Creating Health Plus agencies are receiving less funding than they did in 2024. **This means that, while in a state of emergency, we'll have to serve more meals with less.**

On top of the increasing food insecurity trends we're already seeing, with the provincial government's decision to close several supervised consumption sites in Toronto, we expect to see a further increase to the number of people accessing our drop-in services.

We, the undersigned agencies, are asking our City Council to commit an additional **\$530,000** to the Creating Health Plus Budget so that in this time of emergency, we can at least operate with the same level of food support from the City of Toronto as we could count on last year.

This request forms part of the **Toronto Drop-In Network's proposed \$3 million increase** to the current drop-in budget so that drop-ins like ours are able to adequately respond to the increasing homelessness and food insecurity crises that we're seeing in our city.

Sincerely,

North York Harvest Food Bank
PARC
Pieces to Pathways at Breakaway Community Services
Falstaff Food 4 You
Weston King Neighbourhood Centre
Unison Health and Community Services - Keele-Rogers
Progress Place
Church of St Stephen, Saint's Cafe
The Stop Community Food Centre
Our Place Community of Hope - St. Michael's Homes
Sistering
Evangel Hall Mission
Niiwin Wendaanimak Indigenous Wellness Program
St. Felix Centre
Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre
Fort York Food Bank
Yonge Street Mission
Wychwood Open Door
The 519
All Saints Church Community Centre
Out of the Cold Meal Program at Saint Luke's
Margaret's Housing & Community Services Inc.
Maggie's Toronto
Dixon Hall
Good Neighbours (Haven)

Ward 1,2,5,6,7,8,9,15,16,17 & 18.
Ward 4 - Parkdale High Park
Ward 4 - Parkdale High Park
Ward 5 - York South-Weston
Ward 5 - York South-Weston
Ward 5 - York South-Weston
Ward 5 - York South-Weston
Ward 6 - York Centre
Ward 9 - Davenport
Ward 9 - Davenport
Ward 9 - Davenport
Ward 10 - Spadina Fort York
Ward 10 - Spadina Fort York
Ward 10 - Spadina Fort York
Ward 11 - University-Rosedale
Ward 11 - University-Rosedale
Ward 11 - University-Rosedale
Ward 12 - Toronto St. Pauls
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 13 - Toronto Centre

Good Shepherd Ministries
St John the Compassionate
Cummer Avenue Drop-Inn
Harmony Hall
Warden Woods
Agincourt Community Services - North
East Scarborough Storefront
St. John's Mission
Agincourt Community Services - South

Ward 13 - Toronto Centre
Ward 14 - Toronto-Danforth
Ward 18 - Willowdale
Ward 19 - Beaches East York
Ward 20 - Scarborough-Southwest
Ward 22 - Scarborough Agincourt
Ward 24 - Scarborough Guildwood
Ward 24 - Scarborough Guildwood
Ward 24 - Scarborough Guildwood