



June 3, 2020

To: The North York Harvest Food Bank Community

Our community is suffering and facing an overwhelming sense of grief. In the midst of a global pandemic, we are mourning the death of Regis Korchinski-Paquet here in Toronto, George Floyd in Minnesota and the countless other Black individuals who have either died in the presence of or have been killed by police. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, a Black person in Toronto is almost twenty times more likely than a White person to be involved in a fatal police shooting.

We are living through unprecedented times, but sadly the connection between excessive policing, anti-Black and other forms of racism to poverty, food insecurity and public health outcomes has been long and well-established. In 2018, the Canadian Public Health Association clearly recognized racism as a public health issue that caused racialized and Indigenous populations to suffer inequities in their access to quality health care, as well as lowered economic and personal health outcomes. Through our own work, we know that racialized communities are disproportionately represented at food banks. In 2019, the percentage of food bank users who identified as Black was three times higher than that of the overall population in Toronto. For those who identified as Indigenous, the rate was five times higher.

At North York Harvest Food Bank, we hold “access and inclusion” as one of our core organizational values and “strive to ensure that diverse members of our community have full, fair and unbiased access to our services and are included in decision-making”. We acknowledge that we need to do more to clearly highlight the connections between racism and poverty and to highlight how biased policing manifests as food insecurity at individual and systemic levels. We condemn racist practices here in Toronto and across the world. We commit to using our resources to promote the voices of those who are marginalized in our society and to working with other organizations to address the impacts of racism and other forms of oppression in the communities that we serve.

North York Harvest Food Bank’s vision where “all community members are able to meet their food needs” cannot be realized until we truly address structural inequality and dismantle the systems that foster discrimination.

We stand in solidarity with all those who fight against anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and other forms of racism and oppression and with all those demanding racial justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Noble', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ryan Noble
Executive Director