

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When the City of Toronto released the map of COVID-19 cases at the end of May, it showed that some of the most affected neighbourhoods in our city were located in the same areas as North York Harvest's busiest agencies.

That was not a coincidence when you consider that low-wage workers are less likely to have the luxury of working from home, thus increasing their exposure to the virus. To compound the issue, many of the measures that have been recommended to protect ourselves from infection, such as shopping less frequently and stockpiling extra food are most burdensome for those struggling with low incomes.

When schools, community centres and places of worship were closed in mid-March, many of our member agencies were forced to shut down. This forced closure combined with the increased demand presented North York Harvest an unprecedented challenge. With a strong infrastructure already in place, we were able to focus on maintaining our available service capacity. We made immediate adjustments to our operations, reinforced our safety standards and ensured adequate staffing to support our programs. At the same time, we began working closely with the City of Toronto, the Toronto Public Library and other community organizations to re-maintain food support in neighbourhoods with some of the highest rates of poverty across the city.

The journey thus far has given us many valuable lessons and brought to light complex issues that our community has long struggled with. We can't lose sight of the fact that before the pandemic, we were already experiencing year over year increase in food bank usage in the same neighbourhoods that COVID-19 is hitting the hardest.



50+%

of our network closed at the start of the pandemic in March



22,640

Families, children and seniors used the food bank during this two-month period



1 in 13

Food bank users were new clients

Food hampers distributed in just two months

16,026

≈ 70%

Increase in monthly food bank visits

* All data from April - May 2020

Reduced capacity to serve

4,200
Equivalent volunteer hours lost

=

14
FTE in lost workforce

“the journey ahead will be a challenging one...”

In April and May, our reduced network served more than 22,000 individuals. It's safe to say that without the dedication of our staff, the generosity of our supporters, the synergy among like-minded organizations and the active involvement by all levels of government, this would not have been possible. If we truly believe that everyone deserves the right to food, then addressing food security will indeed require collaboration on an ongoing basis and significant reform of our food, economic and social service systems.

As we continue to provide emergency food for those in need, we must also address the root causes of poverty. To actively work towards a long-term solution, North York Harvest is committed to working collaboratively in the communities that we serve and to use our resources to amplify the voices of those who have been marginalized and who call for a more just society.



Whether it's the second wave of COVID or the economic recovery, the journey ahead will be a challenging one. We are, however, undaunted as our organization has the commitment, tools and resilience – the very qualities our supporters like you helped build – to continue to serve our community.

Sincerely,

Ryan Noble
Executive Director



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please visit our website to make a monetary donation, which will allow us to purchase food in large quantities and quickly re-distribute to those in need.

Food donations can be dropped off at our warehouse at the east side of the complex on weekdays between **9:30am - 3pm**.

Visit our website northyorkharvest.com to learn more!

