

CONNECTIONS



Coming Together During a Challenging Year

It's easy to get caught up in the planning of festivities that come with the holiday season. The month of December is a cozy yet bustling dream, made up of bright lights, warm meals, laughter, and a beautiful feeling of togetherness.

At North York Harvest, we have seen that feeling of togetherness come alive in our community. Caring supporters who want to spread the warmth they feel at this time of year to our most vulnerable neighbours. Every food drive, every donation, has had an impact. For many families, the holidays can feel like being on the outside looking in at things they're unable to afford – including basic necessities like food.

Our supporters have rallied around their community during what continues to be a challenging time

for many, as more and more people are having to turn to food banks. As outlined in the findings from our 2023 Who's Hungry report below, **1 in 10 Torontonians are now having to turn to a food bank to make ends meet due to the rising cost of living. Last year, that number was 1 in 20.**

Our neighbours should not have to choose between paying rent or buying groceries, but that is the grim reality many face.

Food banks are struggling, daily, to meet this demand. North York Harvest is now serving 30,000 clients each month – up from 24,000 a year ago. As we continue to provide dignified food assistance, we are strongly committed to working toward long-term food solutions to end food insecurity for all.

While we may be closing the most difficult year in North York Harvest's history, we want to end with a reflection of gratitude. Gratitude to our supporters who keep showing up to make sure their neighbours can have access to the healthy food they need every day. Thank you for making a difference.

Your Impact in Action

Over **130** food and fund drives in 2023

+1 million lbs of food donated

A Record-breaking Year for Food Bank Usage in Toronto



How much longer can we continue like this? That was what I thought as I read Who's Hungry 2023, the annual report of food bank usage that North York Harvest compiles with the Daily Bread Food Bank. Over the last year, 1 in 10 Torontonians visited a food bank. Sadly, this includes some of our most vulnerable neighbours: a quarter of food bank clients across Toronto are children; a third have a serious illness or disability.

Who's Hungry 2023 lays out a roadmap of the policy changes needed in order to reduce the number of people who are experiencing food insecurity and turning to food banks for assistance. Please consider reading the report on our [website](https://northyorkharvest.com/whos-hungry-report-2023/) (https://northyorkharvest.com/whos-hungry-report-2023/), helping us to spread the message, and reaching out to your elected representatives to let them know that you support the recommendations. Together we can make our city work better for all of us.

Ryan Noble, Executive Director

The People Behind the Data

The findings in the 2023 Who's Hungry report are all things our community members have been telling us. Including Peter, a retired registered nurse who relies on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). One in three food bank clients have a disability, and

43% rely on ODSP. ***"As it stands, over half of our income goes to paying rent,"*** Peter says.

Because of this, Peter says he and his partner have to shop very carefully for food at the grocery store, especially since they have a teenaged son. He says the food bank has been helping to provide critical food support, but with the soaring cost of living, they are still stretched thin.

"There have been times when the freezer is bare and the cupboards are bare. That is simply the truth. Rent comes first, always."



Who's Hungry 2023



2.53 million food bank visits over the past year



1 in 3 clients have a disability



47% of households have at least one member who is employed



Clients have \$6.67 left per person, per day after paying rent/utilities



Coldest Night of the Year – Save the Date!

For the third year, North York Harvest will be taking part in the Coldest Night of the Year, a family-friendly fundraiser in support of your neighbours who are experiencing food insecurity.

Please join us on February 24 at Oriole Community Centre as we come together for a 5km group walk to shine a light on compassion in North York.

To register, please visit cnoy.org/torontoyorkmills. To support North York Harvest, please select “Toronto York Mills” as your location.

We hope to see you there!



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