



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 21, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Seniors' Use of Food Banks (HSC19012) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On December 17, 2018, the Healthy and Safe Communities Committee (now the Emergency and Community Services Committee) approved a motion which directed:

“That staff be directed to report back to the Healthy and Safe Communities Committee respecting Senior’s Increased Use of Food Banks.

INFORMATION

In December 2018, the Ontario Association of Food Banks released its annual Hunger Report which provides an analysis of food bank usage across the province. This report indicated that across Ontario the number of seniors accessing food banks has increased by more than 10 percent over the past year, a rate nearly three times greater than the growth of Ontario’s seniors population.

Each December, Hamilton Food Share, an emergency network made up of 12 food banks and 7 hot meal programs, also releases a Hunger Count report that provides an analysis of food bank usage in Hamilton. The Hunger Count 2018 report indicates that on a typical day in Hamilton, 700 people will access a food bank, 33 of which are seniors (65 years or older). In Hamilton, the percentage of food bank users that are seniors has increased by 19.1% since 2017, which is greater than the provincial increase. While the rate is

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

growing faster than the provincial average, the total number of food bank users in Hamilton is lower than across the province. In Hamilton, the number of food bank users showing Old Age Security as their primary source of income is 3% versus 6.3% provincially.

Based on analysis by the Ontario Association of Food Banks and anecdotal information from local community partners, it is believed that the primary reasons for the increase in usage is related to a decline in company pensions, a decline in personal savings, and government benefits that are not keeping pace with inflation. More research is required to further understand any additional factors in Hamilton, such as housing costs or changes to our local economy.

Community partners working with at-risk and vulnerable seniors have also indicated that the number of seniors experiencing food insecurity is higher than portrayed by the food bank utilization data, given that many at-risk seniors experience additional barriers that prevent them from accessing food banks, such as transportation or physical/mental health barriers. Many of these barriers have been identified as priorities in Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly City (Fall 2014).

Although not specifically targeting seniors, the Hamilton Food Strategy, released in August 2016, also identifies access to a healthy, sustainable and just food system as one of the key priorities in the plan.

Currently the City supports a number of food and meal programs targeting seniors. In 2018, the City Enrichment Fund supported 7 community organizations that provided access to food for seniors by bringing food directly to their homes. In total, these organizations received \$174,295 in funding.

City staff will continue to work closely with community partners, including the Hamilton Council on Aging, the Seniors Advisory Committee to Council and the various food banks and meal programs to understand and address the causes and barriers for seniors experiencing food insecurity.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None