



Food Security Community Action Plan

Executive Summary

On March 25, 2025, Brantford City Council officially declared a Food Insecurity Emergency in the City of Brantford, which highlighted how increasing economic and social pressures have caused inflation to outpace incomes and compound barriers to accessing food, housing, and other basic needs.

In response, the City of Brantford partnered with the Brant Food System Coalition to host the Food Security Forum – Starting Conversations to enhance collaboration, identify gaps, and inform the development of a Food Security Community Action Plan. The forum engaged over 50 leaders across our local food system in discussions on how to enhance collaboration to address the core driving factors of food insecurity, as well as support community members currently struggling to meet their basic needs.

This Action Plan contains 4 Paths that will focus on building the local capacity necessary to develop a dedicated Brantford Food Strategy that will guide the work of the municipality and its community partners to ensure that food security measures are incorporated into all policies, programs, and initiatives to ensure a thriving local food system.

What is Food Insecurity?

Food insecurity refers to the inability to obtain sufficient nutritious food due to financial constraints or other barriers. It poses serious public health risk due to its association with higher rates of diseases and chronic health conditions.¹

According to the 2024 Vital Signs Report, 1 in 6 Brantford area households experienced food insecurity in 2023, with the primary cause being lack of sufficient income to obtain the appropriate quantity and/or adequate quality food and other basic necessities of life.² The number of individuals using the Brantford Food Bank has increased by 86% over the past four years, from 5,543 unique individuals in 2021, to 10,332 unique individuals in 2024, with 34% of those supported being children. While food banks and nutrition support programs were once thought to be a temporary measure to help people experiencing financial difficulties, they are now an ongoing part of the social safety net for many families.

86%

Increase in
Local Food
Bank Usage

\$733
\$1,408

Max Individual
OW and ODSP
Monthly
Rates

7,990

Individuals
Making Minimum
Wage
(\$17.20)

\$20.90

Living Wage
in Brantford

1. Health Canada. (n.d). Household Food Insecurity in Canada: an Overview. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview.html>

2. Brant Community Foundation. (November 2024). Brant's Vital Signs 2024. Retrieved from <https://brantcommunityfoundation.ca/vitalsigns/>



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Driving Factors of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is not simply a matter of availability. It is largely driven by inadequate incomes stemming from the decline of stable employment options and reduced investment in social support systems.³ Food insecurity in Canada is also primarily being driven by the lack of competition in our grocery industry.⁴

Common misconceptions about food insecurity include the belief that it is the result of a lack of food supply, that individuals simply need to work harder, and that improving budgeting, gardening, or cooking skills can resolve the issue. In order to address the root causes of food insecurity, sustainable solutions are dependent on long-term policy changes that support fair wages, livable incomes, grocery market competition, and access to affordable housing. Canadian families with a single income earner who is female, disabled, Indigenous, and/or racialized are more likely to experience food insecurity.⁵

Summary of Food Security Forum Discussions

Representatives from over 50 local institutions, organizations, and community groups came together during the Food Security Forum – Starting Conversations hosted on June 5, 2025 by the Brant Food System Coalition and the City of Brantford.

During breakout discussion groups, participants explored what was working well across the local food system, where there is room to grow, ongoing barriers to collaboration, and actions needed to overcome those barriers and guide next steps.



3 Feed Ontario. (April 16, 2025). Your Questions About Food Security Answered. Retrieved from: <https://feedontario.ca/story/your-questions-about-food-insecurity-answered/>

4 Competition Bureau Canada. (June 27, 2023). Canada Needs More Grocery Store Competition: Competition Bureau Retail Grocery Market Study Report. Retrieved from: [2023 CB Retail Grocery Market Study Report](https://www.competitionbureau.ca/en/2023-06-27/canada-needs-more-grocery-store-competition).

5 Uppal, S. (November 13, 2023). Food Insecurity Among Canadian Families. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>



Food Security Community Action Plan

What is Working Well:

- Local organizations feed thousands of people per week (monthly Community Meal Calendar)
- Community members, local businesses, and even big institutions and companies want to get involved (through volunteerism, food rescue, donations, etc.).
- Successful pop-up markets.
- Engagement of community leaders and partners in development of Food Charter and Toolkit.
- Creation of Brantford Food Forest
- Support for “Made in Canada” advocacy.
- Requirement for Agricultural Impact Studies.
- Local food security organizations engage with local farmers and food producers.
- Launch and growth of Little Free Pantries.
- Expansion of School Breakfast programs.
- Local Food Security Forums and Conversation Series (2015, 2018, and 2025).
- Completion of Woodman Park Community Garden and Greenhouse.





Food Security Community Action Plan

Forum Feedback: Where there is Room to Grow:

Food Insecurity and Access



Large-scale storing and distribution capabilities for perishable food donations



Hands-on meal preparation programming



Accommodating medical, cultural and religious-specific diets

Food Production and Distribution



Continued investment in growth of local food manufacturing sector



Hands-on education and engagement of young people in agriculture



Barriers to volunteers being able to distribute perishable food donations

Food Waste



Education on benefits of participating in the local green bin program



Communication on where/how unused food can be donated



Barriers to gleaning and redistributing unharvested local crops

Food Procurement



Duplication of services amongst existing organizations and emerging groups



Encouragement and incentives for incorporating food security into development plans



Organizational policies to prioritize local food for events and programs



Incorporation of small-scale food production on public and private land



Growing local Community Food Share Network



Advocacy for regulations that mandate green infrastructure features

Land Use Development and Sprawl



Action Plan

Path 1: Advocacy for System and Policy Changes

Action 1.1

Advocate to the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada to take direct action against food insecurity by implementing policies and programs that improve the financial conditions of low-income households and reduce reliance on the non-profit sector to regularly provide for basic needs, including increased income support program rates, basic guaranteed income, living wages, and affordable housing options

Action 1.2

Collaboratively advocate with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Ontario Municipalities, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Big City Mayors' Caucus, and other public sector advocacy bodies for increases in direct funding rates to nonprofit organizations providing food and other basic needs support to individuals and families.

Action 1.3

Collaboratively advocate with local school boards and social service organizations for increases in long-term guaranteed funding for school nutrition programs to accommodate increasing student enrollments and offer higher qualities and more varieties of food options.

Action 1.4

Collaboratively advocate with local school boards and local food producers for an expanded curriculum on food and nutrition, inclusive of local food production and local food systems.

Action 1.5

Pursue the addition of specific food security measures within the scope of the City's Official Plan, to lay the policy framework for development planning and land use measures dedicated to protecting and increasing local food security (ex. dedicated community garden space, grocer retail space, community kitchens, green infrastructure requirements, soil rehabilitation, etc.)

Action 1.6

Engage local food stakeholders in investigating what local policy, by-law, or other regulatory changes could have a positive impact on the availability, affordability, and accessibility of local food.



Action Plan

Path 2: Community Awareness and Education

Action 2.1

Enhance communication to dispel myths and reduce stigma surrounding food insecurity, as well as sharing more broadly and consistently what work is already in progress to address local food insecurity and increase engagement by:

- Engaging the community in reviewing and updating the [Brant Food Charter](#), and its associated resources, inclusive of how the community wants its local food system to work..
- Educating the community about evidence-based solutions to reduce household food insecurity and how to access local food security resources (ex. through the [Feed Brant webpage](#)).

Action 2.2

Increase collaboration across local food security-focused non-profit organizations to increase awareness about the services, programs, and resources that are already available in the community (including but not limited to the existing meal, pantry, and education services and programming).

Action 2.3

Engage community members with lived experience of food insecurity to ensure efforts for increased understanding and awareness, advocacy for policy change, and the development of support programs are reflective of local realities and inclusive of diverse perspectives.

Action 2.4

Collaborate across the local food system to develop coordinated communications to consistently keep the community updated on the food security resources available (including but not limited to regular meal/pantry programs, food education resources, volunteer opportunities, engagement events, etc.).



Action Plan

Path 3: Supporting Collaboration

Action 3.1

Establish a formal governance structure to drive the development and implementation of a longer-term Brantford Food Strategy that defines the roles that local municipal, institutional, non-profit, and private sector entities will play in advancing food security.

Action 3.2

Map out persistent barriers that hinder the ability of the Community Food Share Network to engage representatives across our entire local food system (including but not limited to local farmers, food manufacturers and distributors, grocers, etc.) to be able to collaboratively receive, transport, store, distribute, and increase access to more rescued food from a variety of sources.

Action 3.3

Expand partnerships across our entire local food system to reduce competition for resources and collaborate on funding opportunities to expand consistent and coordinated access to food through the Community Food Share Network.

Action 3.4

Collaborate with local volunteer organizations to reduce barriers to volunteerism and create a more streamlined approach for volunteer engagement in local food security initiatives (including but not limited to gleaning, food rescue and distribution, community gardens, etc.).

Action 3.5

Build off the work of the Brant Food System Coalition's feasibility study and support the development of a Brantford Food Hub, including obtaining necessary capital and annual operational funding.

