



Harvest Share Community Food Programs Annual General Meeting for 2025

Report from the Executive Director

Good Evening!

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to our Annual General Meeting tonight.

Harvest Share strives to meet our Mission Statement: To improve access to healthy, nutritious food for individuals and families to experience food insecurity in the District of Parry Sound.

As food needs of our community increase, Harvest Share rises to the challenge of meeting these needs in a non-judgemental, inclusive, compassionate manner. At Harvest Share we offer a hand up to those in need, not a handout. Our amazing team of staff and volunteers work diligently to ensure our visitors feel safe, welcomed and cared for.

The successes we have experienced this past year are as follows:

Standards of Excellence – Accreditation through Food Banks Canada

The management team with Cori Empringham in a lead role, have worked diligently over the past year to align our services, policies and practices to address and meet 72 standards in 6 categories as outlined by Food Banks Canada.

The six categories are:

1. Governance and Administration
2. People Management
3. Financial and Legal
4. Client Service and Care
5. Public Engagement and Fund Raising
6. Food Operations and Food Safety

Becoming accredited through the Food Banks Canada Standards of Excellence will give Harvest Share a baseline set of best practices, allowing for continuous improvements, accountability, and the establish of clear benchmarks for future performance improvements. This in turn will help to reduce risks, create enhanced opportunities to recruit and retain board members and volunteers, and differentiate our food bank as a network leader.

Guiding Principles of the Standards of Excellence are: setting industry standards, celebrating diversity, continuous improvement and innovation, adaptability, accountability and consistency.

The goal is to have the majority of food banks in Canada to be accredited by March of 2026.

Harvest Share Community Food Programs has completed the work required to obtain accreditation and will be submitting our application to Food Banks Canada within the next few weeks. Once accreditation has been received, we will be accredited for the next five years and will be required to submit an annual self-review.

We are very proud to have completed this process and look forward to promoting accreditation to our clients, stakeholders and media, so stay tuned!

Development of a Two Year Strategic Plan

In consultation with the broader community, our Board of Directors closely examined the role Harvest Share plays in combating food insecurity in the Parry Sound area. In general, the feedback highlighted many areas of strength at the organization and an appreciation for the work that is already being done. During this process, several participants (board directors, staff, volunteers) expressed their desire for more collaborative relationships in the community which would enable even greater impact.

To activate this higher level of impact, Harvest Share chose four strategic priorities:

Strategic Priorities

1. Secure a single, central facility
2. Expand existing programs
3. Enhance resource development
4. Increase advocacy efforts

Critical Success Factors

- Ability to secure funding to cover operating costs
- Continuous monitoring of plan against actuals
- Ability to alter course quickly
- Ability to utilize volunteers to assist in ongoing operations
- Have an ongoing stream of Board leadership in place

Restructuring of Staff and Development of a Management Team

In order to best meet the goals and objectives as outlined in our Strategic Plan and for implementation of the Standards of Excellence, the staff team went through a restructuring to best address the area of :

Visitors Experience and Services, Food Acquisition and Fresh Food Procurement, Donor Engagement and Retention, Volunteer Recruitment and Retention, Community Engagement and Leadership.

Our staff consists of 4 Full time positions – Executive Director, Operations Manager, Communications Officer/Executive Assistant, Front Desk Co-ordinator. 2 Part time contract positions: 2 Food Rescue Assistants.

Our Management Team consists of three staff – myself the Executive Director, Rob Wood, Operations Manager and Cori Empringham – Communications Officer/Executive Assistant.

Other members of our amazing team are:

Carla David – Front Desk Co-ordinator

Tara Killingbeck – Food Rescue Assistant

Cherity Barnes – Food Rescue Assistant

Our staff team along with 70 volunteers provide this essential service to our most vulnerable community members. Volunteers play a critical role in the delivery of our services and we would find it hard to function without this group of dedicated, compassionate, motivated individuals.

Challenges we have experienced over the past year:

Due to the increase in food needs of our community , acquiring food, especially fresh food, to meet the growing need has become challenging to say the least.

Currently we address the needs of the community through partnerships with community businesses, restaurants, grocery stores, camps, service groups, other Food Banks, Churches, Schools, Feed Ontario Allocations, promotion of our Mosted Needed Items on social media and the generous support of community members who donate food, money and gift cards, conduct food drives in their work place, at school and among families and friends for special occasions to help their neighbours struggling with food insecurity. It is truly amazing to see the Community step up time and time again to help Harvest Share, help others. We also purchase food weekly for our Fresh Food Program hampers and purchase meat in bulk from local butchers and grocery stores.

Space – even though we are grateful to have the two sites, 93 James Street, and now 70 Isabella Street to delivery our services from, working from two locations has its challenges. It is a dream of our staff and volunteers to have our operations streamlined and more efficiently housed under one roof in the future and this has been set as a priority in our Strategic Plan for 2025-27.

Even with the challenges we face, Harvest Share continues to meet food needs. maintaining quality and variety to meet the diverse food needs of our community. Food Diversity is offered for special dietary needs such as: clients that have health issues ie. diabetes, gluten intolerance, individuals under treatment for cancer and for newcomers to our Country.

Statistics to Share for 2024

In 2024 we provided a total of 109,155 meals to our community

We were able to reach 1,227 Unique Individuals.

Food donations received from the community, and

Food Rescue totalled 207,821lbs (Value of \$731,529)

Through our Outreach Program, we were able to share

20,983lbs (Value of \$73,860) of our rescued food with our community partners.

Volunteers donate nearly 7,000 hours annually in order to continue providing our various services.

Sincerely,

Wendy Pegahmagabow

Executive Director