



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT - 2024

INTRODUCTION

This second annual report of the President of St. Joseph's Community Food bank, provides an overview of our activities and our experience over the period January 1st, 2024 to December 31st, 2024. Our Food Bank was incorporated in 1985 as a non-profit corporation, established through the efforts of individuals, charities, community groups and churches who realized that many of the food needs of individuals and families were not being satisfied through existing support systems. It has evolved from an organization operated by small volunteer teams made up primarily of members of various local churches, to a much larger operation with weekly teams of volunteers who come from a wider spectrum of the community. At this point, our workforce is made up of 55 volunteers.

In 2021, we became a member of Feed Ontario, a provincial organization affiliated with Food Banks Canada. One of the conditions of membership was that affiliated food banks could not do means testing to determine whether clients needed food assistance. This eliminated the cumbersome process of verifying incomes and recording client information manually. Our entire client database is now computerized, thereby reducing wait times and improving client service.

In common with most food banks across the country, our costs and our client volumes have increased dramatically over the course of the year. Although we have struggled with the economic situation, our supporters in Pembroke and area have continued their tradition of generosity which has sustained our operations for the past 40 years. Our limited warehouse space continues to be problematic, but a solution is planned that should provide the relief we need for the foreseeable future.

WAREHOUSE EXPANSION PROJECT

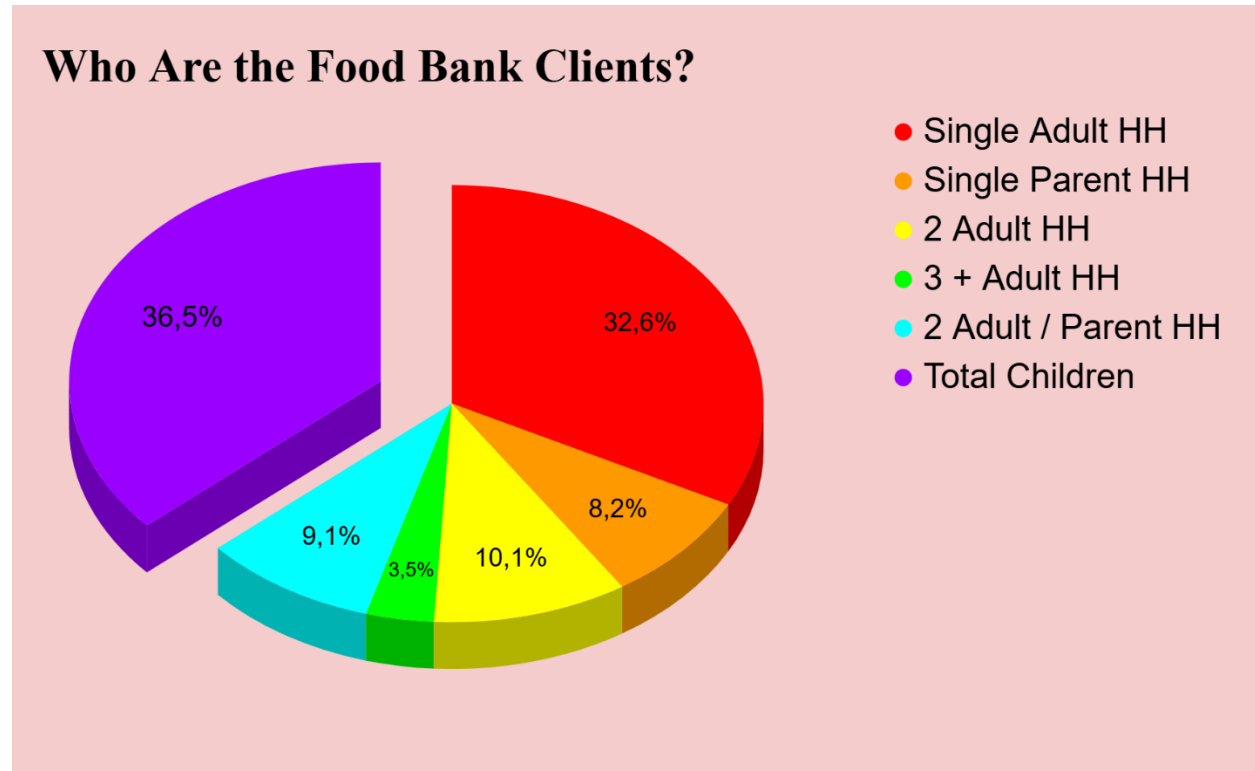
St. Joseph's Community Food Bank has operated out of the Holy Name Church Annex for 40 years. The Church has been a valuable partner in these years. However, one of the biggest problems facing the Food Bank has been the shortage of warehouse space and the limitations of working within a leased facility that was not designed to satisfy the needs of an organization such as a Food Bank.

After considering a variety of options including the construction of a new building or the purchase and renovation of an existing one, negotiations were undertaken with Holy Name Church with a view towards buying and renovating the Holy Name Annex. We are very excited that a purchase agreement has been signed.

If the parties are successful in getting City approval for the severing of the property, the building will be turned over to the Food Bank in mid 2025. The Church and the Food Bank will continue to be partners as we share access to the building, parking and some services such as snow removal. Renovations are expected to begin with the installation of stand-alone heating and electrical systems by the Fall of 2025.

WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS?

Our clients fall into 6 categories. The largest group is children who make up 36.5% of the clients we serve. Single adults are the second largest group at over 32% as shown in the table below. We currently have **1,782 registered clients**. The proportion of children in our client population has increased by over 7% since 2023 making it the most food insecure group in our area. This situation is expected to continue as we experience the upward spiral of inflation and unemployment. The chart below shows the breakdown of our household (HH) population.

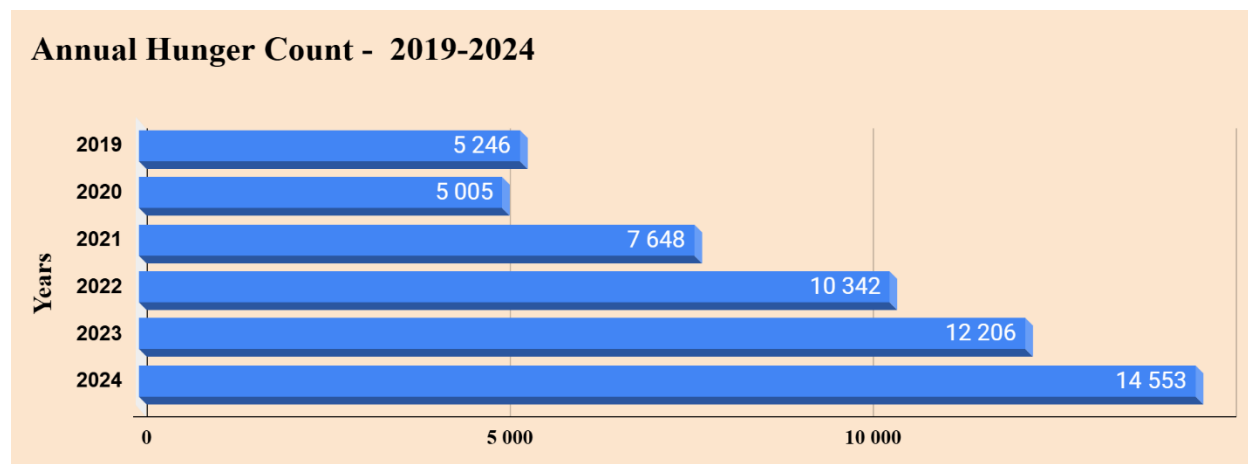


2024 FOOD DEMAND

The Food Bank has approximately 1,782 registered clients in the system at any one time. In 2024, a total of 7,299 clients visited the Food bank to pick up food for themselves and their dependents during our normal twice weekly operating sessions. Of the 7,299 visits, a total of 219 were new clients. The proportion of new clients has not increased from previous years, but the steady influx of new registrations adds to the growing client population and puts additional stress on our finances.

Clients can pick up food from the Food Bank twice a month for themselves and their families. The number of times food is provided to each member of the family is tracked and the cumulative annual total is called the "Hunger Count". Although 7,299 client visits occurred in 2024, (an average of 143 per week), many of these clients picked up food for entire families. For 2024 the hunger count was 14,553. Over the same period in 2023, the

number was 12,206. This 19% increase over the course of one year is part of a consistent growth pattern over the past 5 years as shown below:



CHRISTMAS PROGRAM – 2024

The Christmas hamper program for 2024 continued the practice of providing clients with gift cards roughly equal to the value of hampers in previous years and allowing clients to do their own shopping. This continues to be a popular approach with clients.

The 2024 Christmas program followed in the steps of our experience of the previous year. A total of 386 households received gift cards. This fed 828 individuals. In comparison, 368 households received hampers in 2023, feeding 804 individuals.

Some concern has been expressed by volunteers and members of the Executive that the program may be losing its focus. Some feel that the program, designed specifically to meet the needs of clients who use the Food Bank's resources over the course of the year to satisfy their basic need for food, may now be attracting many people who see the program as a gift which can be claimed regardless of their actual need. Since we do not do means testing, this has resulted in more and more people coming to our doors once a year to receive a gift card. This may make the program unaffordable over the long term. A committee has been established to review the eligibility criteria and the sustainability of the overall program in preparation for the 2025 implementation.

SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENTS IN 2024

A number of fund-raising events occurred in 2024. The Food Bank worked closely with a local comedian to arrange a special Yuk Yuks comedy fund raiser at Festival Hall in February. The event was well attended and raised over \$10,000.

A number of first-time events helped the Food Bank to raise funds including the first ever Emergency and Protective Services United Event in Petawawa in September. Renfrew County Ribfest was held at the Pembroke waterfront in late September which resulted in significant donations to the Food Bank. Wayne Rostad's Christmas in the Valley was held in December and the Food Bank was a major beneficiary. We are very grateful to the

organizers of special events as they are becoming an important element of our fundraising efforts.

COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVES

The Food Bank also depends heavily on community food drives to satisfy the need for groceries to feed our clients. We have not run any of our own food drives for some time. However, the food insecurity issue in Canada is a highly visible and perennial problem. The tradition of caring in our area means that individuals and organizations across the community are constantly motivated to help organizations like the Food Bank.

A comprehensive list of community food drives from which we have benefitted is shown in **Appendix “A”**. One of the most successful food drives run by an outside organization is the OPP Auxiliary Food Drive which is pictured below:



OUR FINANCES

The financial statements for 2023/24 prepared by the accounting firm of Scott, Rosien, Black and Locke, showed a deficit for the first time in many years. Our expenses for all items including food, were \$431,790. Our revenues, donated entirely by the public and

not including the physical donation of food, totalled \$394,066. This left us with a deficit of \$37,724. However, our expenses also included payment for a van used to pick up groceries. The van was actually paid from funds held in a capital reserve, so, it did not reduce the funds in our operating account.

Our revenues have generally increased from year to year since 2019. This trend continued in 2024 with a revenue increase of over \$9,000. We are pleased that community support continues to make the operation viable. This pattern is expected to continue for the upcoming year.

THE MONETARY VALUE OF THE FOOD WE PROVIDE

The Food Bank, over the course of 40 years, has continuously evolved its practices to adapt to the realities of the day and to take into account the lessons we have learned about what works best in our environment. The ideal scenario for providing food would be for clients to simply pick their food themselves, within a set limit for the size of the family. This could be done in a warehouse environment with food displayed in such a way that choices could be easily made.

That arrangement is not viable for St. Joseph's due to the limitations of our building. Until we have that flexibility, we have settled on a method for providing food that we believe is fair and equitable for all clients, allowing for some choice in situations where allergies or health concerns do not permit clients to consume the standard offerings. The Food Bank was not established to satisfy 100% of client food needs; rather it was always intended to supplement what can be purchased within the client's existing resources.

We also provide lunches for school aged children registered as dependents. The total value of the 2,973 lunch bags provided in 2024 was approximately \$23,000. Not all the food provided each year is purchased with cash. Much of the food is donated, otherwise it would not be possible to continue to provide the range, or volume of food that is currently provided to clients. We spent almost \$304,000 on food in 2024.

CONCLUSION

St. Joseph's Community Food Bank has been a long-term success in Pembroke due to two factors. The first factor is a strong base of community support in the area we serve. This has been the case since the Food Bank's inception in 1985 when the community recognized a need to help those who could not satisfy this basic human need within the resources available to them. A group of concerned citizens and helping groups developed a viable food bank that has endured for 40 years.

The second factor contributing to our success, is a strong volunteer base averaging about 55 volunteers at any one time. This group has a solid commitment to helping those in need. Their compassion and concern for the welfare of clients has contributed to what we consider to be a positive reputation in the community.

Our biggest challenges in the future are improving our infrastructure so that we have adequate and safe warehouse space, evolving our practises to keep up with ever increasing client demand and continuing to achieve success in a very competitive fund-raising environment.

APPENDIX “A”

Community Food Drives - Pembroke and Area

Churches and Church Groups

All Saints Anglican Church	Grace Lutheran Church	Holy Name Church
Mount Zion United Church	St. Jean Baptiste Church	Knights of Columbus
Wesley United Church	Resurrection Lutheran	Zion Lutheran
St Luke’s Anglican	Our Lady of Lourdes	First Presbyterian
St. Timothy’s Lutheran	Greenwood W. I.	St. Peter’s Lutheran
Holy Trinity Anglican	St. George’s Church	First Baptist Church
Our Lady of Lourdes		

Schools and School Groups

Our Lady of Lourdes	Jean Lajoie School	Girl’s basketball Fellowes
Fellowes High	Ecole Equinox	Highview Builders Club
Renfrew Cty. School Board	Champlain Discovery	

Businesses

Metro	No Frills	Walmart
Food Basics	Kentucky Fried Chicken	White Pine Yoga
Integrated Health	Law and Order Rest.	M & M Meats
Northern Credit Union	My FM Radio	Home Depot
Miramichi Lodge	Manitoulin Transport	Weight Watchers
Making Seasons Bright	Frasers Men’s Wear	Planet Fitness
Eterna Tattoos	JP2G Consultants	Germania Club
Kristkindmarkt	Northern Credit Union	Renfrew Cty. Ribfest
Renfrew Cty. Real Est. Board	Giant Tiger	Chartwell Homes

Clubs/Services/Individuals

Krista Cliche	Wayne Rostad Xmas	OPP Auxiliary
RCD Health Unit	Pem. Fire Department	Kiwanis Club
Pemb. Firefighters Assoc.	Alice & Fraser Recreation	OSPCA
Laurentian Valley Trail	Ghost Town Cryers	Yoga in the Park
City Of Pembroke	Pembroke Regional Hosp.	Pembroke Library
RC Dental Society	RC Clerks/Treasurers	Civitan Club
Swing/Swallows Dancing	Rotary Club	Supple’s Landing Seniors