



THE STOP'S
 WYCHWOOD OPEN DOOR
 Menu:
 ○ SALMON CAKES
 w/ SQUASH & POTATO
 ○ FRESH MANGO & RED
 PEPPER SALSA
 SPICE w/ PICKLES

Supporting our neighbours post-COVID



your support at work

COVID report 2021-2022



Our Mission

Our mission is to increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds health and community, and challenges inequality. We see food as a catalyst for change and a gateway to address a range of complex social issues.

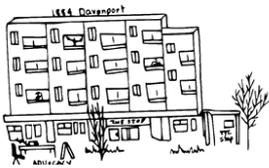
The pandemic has caused extraordinary challenges for The Stop. We continue to meet the growing demand by making thousands of meals, hampers, and phone calls to support people who need it most.

We know that meals alone can't build a community's resilience. Our power comes from our connections and our responsibility to each other. As we continue to ride out the pandemic, The Stop is looking to the future. The Torontonians who struggle with food insecurity will need more support as our country tries to recover from COVID's economic and health impacts and attention moves elsewhere.

We have a significant number of people we are dedicated to helping. The work is ongoing, and we are committed to it.

Thank you for being a part of it.

Our Work



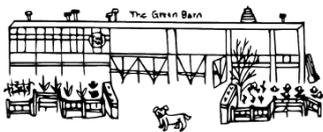
Emergency food access

What we eat, and how we eat it, has a powerful impact on our sense of self. Food is at the heart of all of our work at The Stop. We provide opportunities for people to share a meal, enjoy a taste of home, and foster their sense of community.



Community building

Once we get our community members through the door with a free meal or a food hamper, we can start connecting them to resources they may not know of. We can help them with their birthing plan, their taxes, getting ID, and refer them to other services that may be helpful for them



Urban agriculture

We empower community members to come together, learn how to grow their own food, and spend time in nature at our three community gardens: Earls court, our Mashkikii;aki'ing Indigenous Medicine Wheel Garden, and our Global Roots program.

Illustrations by Hilda Nouri

Post-COVID recovery

Our Board Chair on the impacts of COVID and inflation on our community



Chris Valentine
Board Chair
Acting Executive Director

“ We must treat poverty with the same sense of urgency we did COVID ”

The emergency is far from over.

COVID has most impacted those experiencing poverty, and they will be the last to recover from the significant economic challenges caused by it. In addition, increased inflation has pushed more and more people deeper into poverty.

One in four Torontonians experiences food insecurity. In our community, we're seeing acute inflation in groceries and the housing affordability crisis. Issues our service users face are compounded by precarious work, a mental health emergency, increased social isolation, and deeply inadequate social assistance rates.

The Stop is also experiencing the very concrete reality of inflation across our programs: The cost of a single food bank hamper rose from \$44 in 2021 to \$53 in 2022: an almost 20% increase in just one year. Foodbank visits have also increased and are alarmingly higher now than at some of the most critical stages of the pandemic.

Our neighbours will need consistent support accessing high-quality, nutritious food. They will need support building connections in our city and accessing services. We simply can't do it alone. Our budget is stretched thin, and our work needs to have a wider reach.

Governments, foundations, and individuals must treat poverty with the same sense of urgency we did COVID. We're so grateful for your dedication to the work we do and your role in our community.

In this report, you will find highlights of the past six months of our programming. The immense contributions made by our staff, volunteers, donors, and wider community enabled us to support as many people as possible; people who are struggling with the most profound experiences of social isolation and poverty that we've seen since we were established nearly 40 years ago.

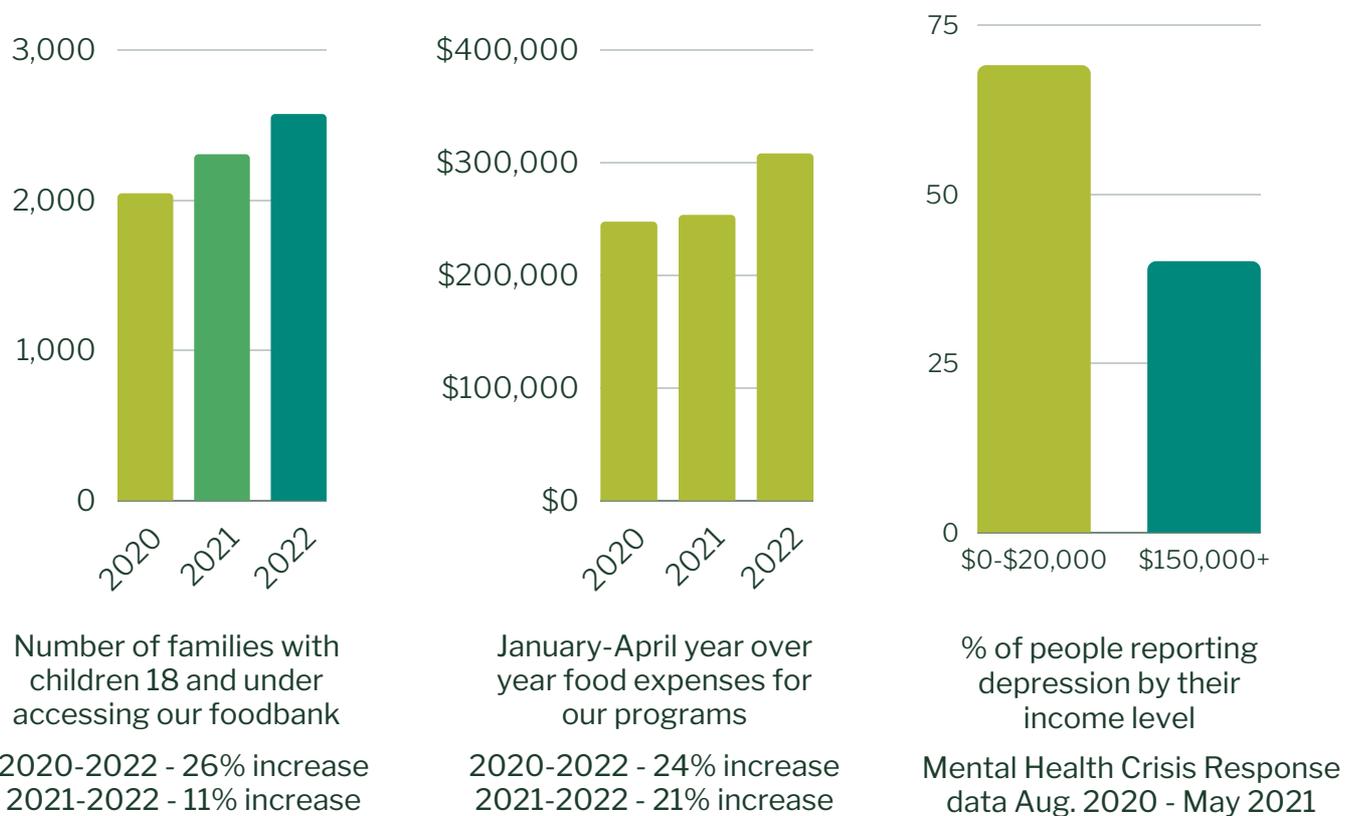
In solidarity,

Chris Valentine

COVID Fall-out

The Stop continues to experience both an unprecedented need for our emergency food access services and a sharp rise in costs in providing our programming.

Stagnant wages and low social assistance wages have pushed more people who are living paycheque to paycheque deeper into poverty; turning to us as a last resort. Low-income Torontonians continue having to choose between paying for rent, transportation, or purchasing food. Mental health is at a crisis level, and foodbank usage across the city is record high.



The unequal impacts of the pandemic underlined the racialization of poverty in Toronto. Low income workers who are more often racialized have not yet recovered their pre-pandemic working hours, and the situation is worse in Toronto than the rest of the country. And for those on social assistance and unable to work, there was no relief. On the other hand, the pandemic was only a blip on the income levels of wealthy and mostly white Canadians, who quickly recovered any lost hours and have seen the value of their stock portfolios and houses soar.

2021 Vital Signs Report, Toronto Foundation

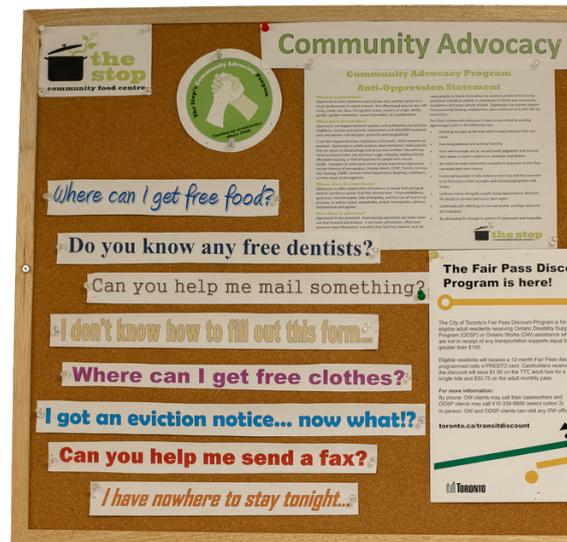
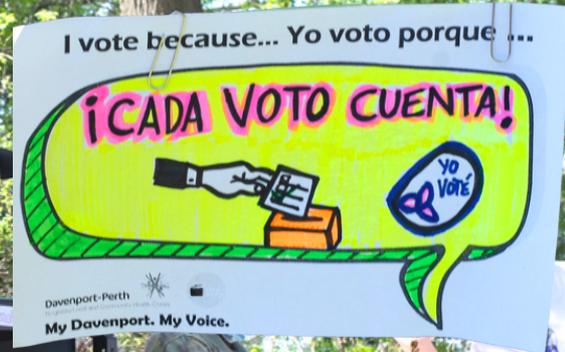


systemic issues

As a front-line organization, The Stop has worked to support our community through the impacts of COVID. There are many things organizations like ours can do to support community members and their immediate needs. We can feed people, we can build community, and we can help community members navigate systems that were not built for them.

However, nonprofits alone cannot meaningfully address the challenges most affecting our community members: low social assistance rates, low wages, high rents, inflation, precarious work, lack of dental care, and more. The Stop cannot change the systemic barriers our community members face every day. Barriers to affordable housing, barriers to full participation in society, and barriers to a dignified life free from poverty, racism, and oppression.

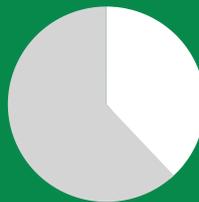
These barriers can be addressed by coming together and voting for a government that will push for significant change. By voting, you are using your democratic powers to effect change in society. You are able to empower a government that will address the systemic issues our neighbors are currently facing. You are saying that people in this and other communities across Ontario deserve to have their needs met.





Top public policy priorities for our community:

- Increased social assistance rates
- Affordable housing
- Free/OHIP paid dental
- Universal Basic Income
- Better transit in the neighbourhood



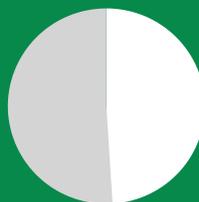
62%

Of our service users spend more than half their income on housing



67%

Of our service users are on social assistance, 52% of those on ODSP



50%

Of our service users access our services at least weekly





emergency food access

Using food as a tool, we aim to improve the mental and physical health of people experiencing poverty or even homelessness. Although we know the answer to poverty and food insecurity is not food – but rather increased income – we are committed to serving our community members and meeting the immediate needs of the 1 in 4 Torontonians who live in food-insecure households.

We provide take-away meals, food hampers, healthy food boxes, discounted produce, food vouchers, gift cards, baby formula, and more. We provide these services at 1884 Davenport Road and at Wychwood Open Door.

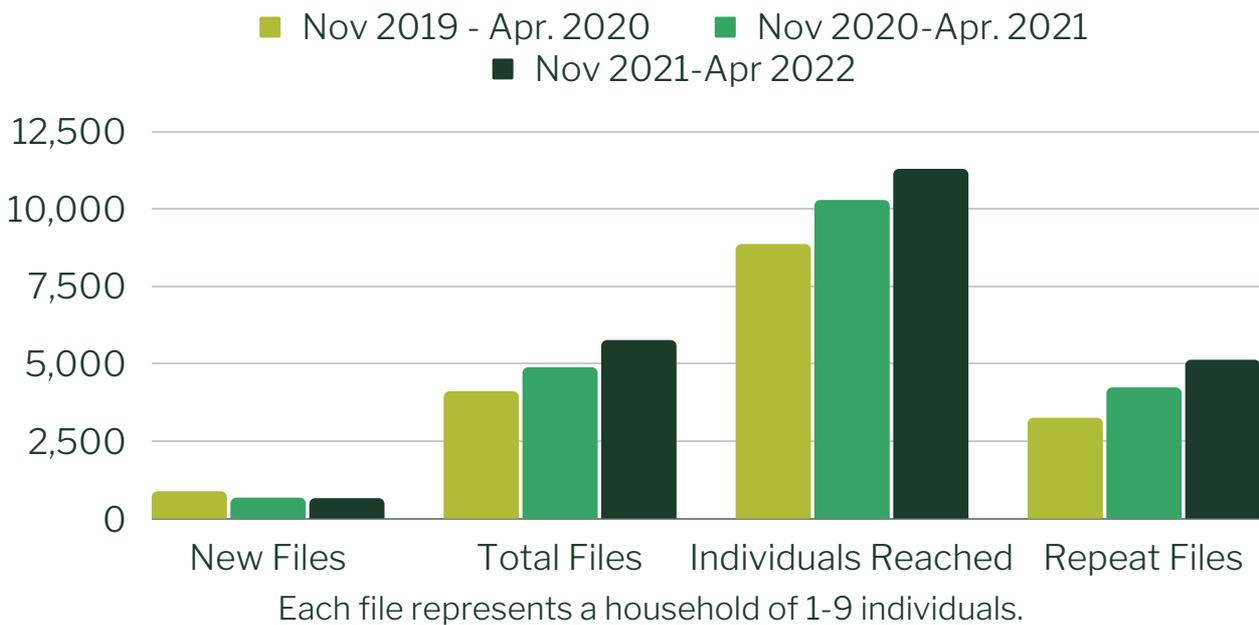
Key Stats

- Over the past two years, we have served 27% more individuals through our food bank and have seen a 40% increase in files. A file represents a household of 1-9.
- Daily Bread's 2021 *Who's Hungry* report showed that 58% of existing food bank clientele missed eating for a full day almost every month. Many miss meals so that other family members are able to eat.
- From Jan 2022-April 2022, The Stop served 25,693 nutritious and culturally-appropriate takeaway meals through our drop-in program.
- Out of our surveyed service users, 67% are on some form of social assistance; 52% of those on social assistance are on ODSP. Since late 2015, OW single rates have increased by just 7.6%, and ODSP single rates by even less at 5.3%.
- From September 2020 to November 2021, the "welfare diet" has increased in cost by 11.3%. Meat (and alternatives) has increased the most (17.3%), followed by vegetables and fruits (16.3%).



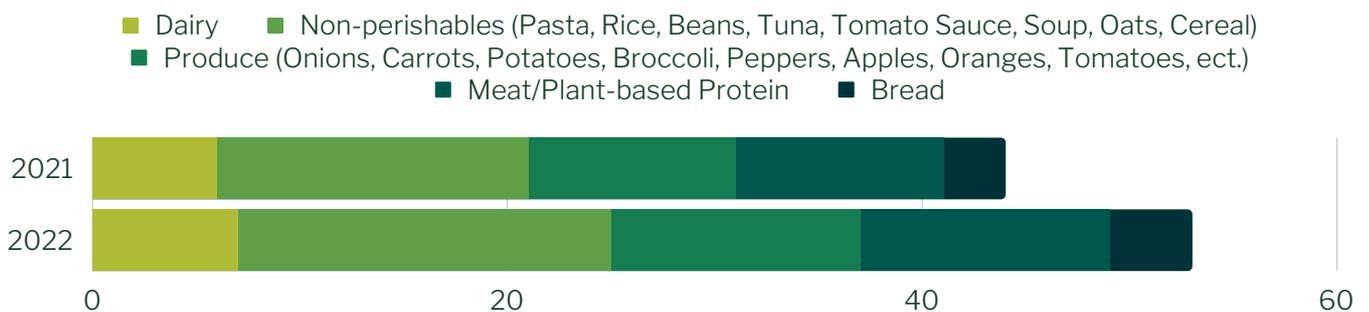
More people are using our food bank

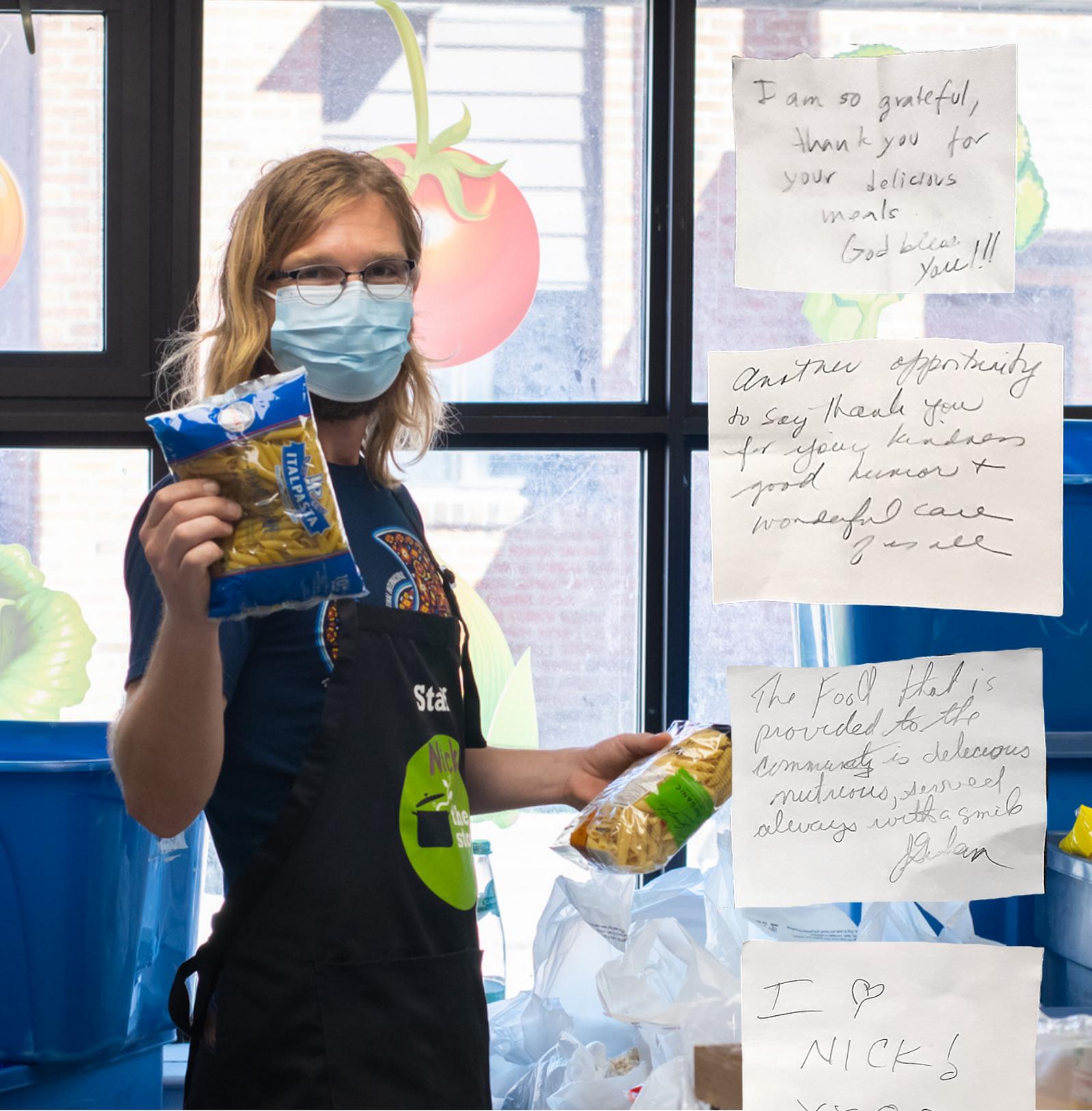
Inflation and stagnant wages are pushing more people deeper into poverty.



The effects of inflation on The Stop's food bank budget

The Stop has done everything we can to keep up with the increased demand for our services but like many organizations in Toronto, we too have had to take a hard look at our budget. **The cost of making a single hamper through our food bank has risen by 20% in just one year, from \$44 to \$53.**





I am so grateful,
thank you for
your delicious
meals.
God bless
you!!!

Another opportunity
to say thank you
for your kindness
good humor +
wonderful care
you all

The Food that is
provided to the
community is delicious
nutritious, served
always with a smile
Julian

I ♡
NICK!
XXOO

A big part of making folks feel welcome at our service is remembering names. If you can remember someone's name, and what they like to drink, it goes a long way. Isolation has always been linked with poverty, and COVID-19 has made that worse... so making these connections with folks is more important than ever.

Nick, Staff and CBC Community Champion



Demand for drop-in meals continues

We are serving lunches, dinners, and breakfasts to community members.

We served over 78,500 meals in 2021, and we expect these numbers to stay at that level or increase as the pandemic's economic and health effects take various forms through lockdowns and future recovery. From Jan 2022-April 2022, The Stop served 25,693 healthy takeaway meals through our drop-in program.

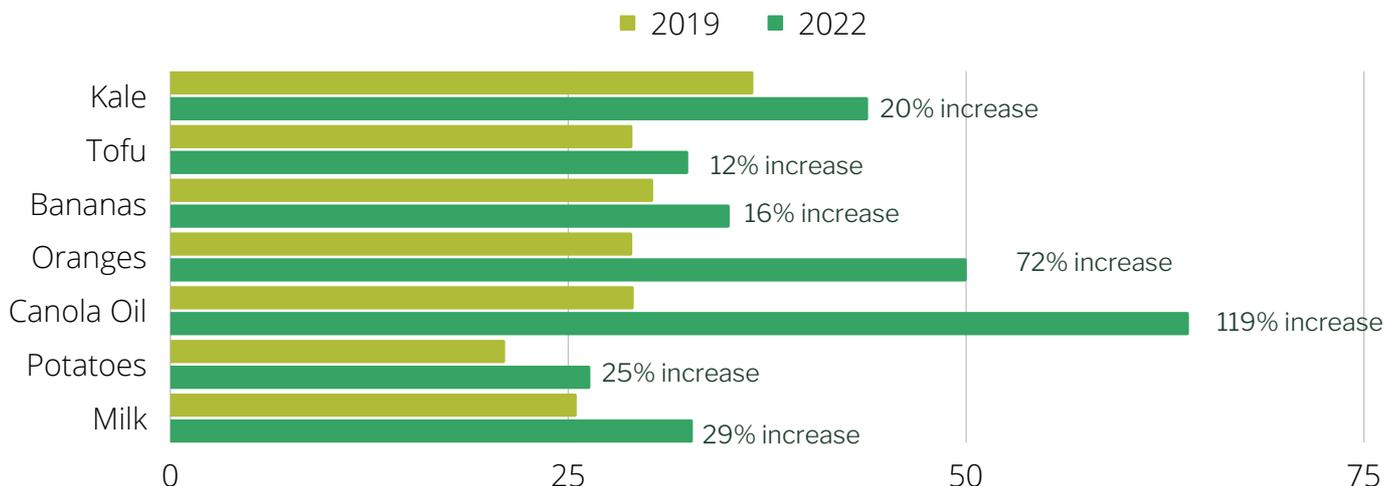


Monica Bettson
Community Chef

I make sure to listen to their food requests (a certain type of ginger cookie, a favorite chicken noodle soup) and include them in upcoming menu plans. I know having a prepared lunch can really help out the seniors in our building; it's one less thing they need to worry about in a day, and really helps out those that are limited in mobility. We've had some tasty celebration meals; a falafel lunch with maamoul, some tasty meals from Holiday time - Kwanza, Christmas and Hanukkah.

The effects of inflation on The Stop's drop-in budget

We buy as many items as we can in bulk and locally. We buy in bulk because that often allows us to access cheaper prices for high-quality products. We compared the costs of various items we use in our drop-in between 2019 and 2022. Many items have drastically increased in price mostly from 20% to almost 120%





Building cooking skills and community

Our meal kits are a huge hit!

Inspired by popular meal kit services on the market, this program makes resources freely accessible to those experiencing food insecurity. We provide all of the ingredients needed to prepare a healthy and nutritious meal at home. Community members can prepare the meal with their friends, family, or roommates. then take a picture of the dish and share the experience with other program participants.

The meal kit aims to:

- Build food skills by educating community members on healthy meal ideas and develop cooking and food handling knowledge.
- Reduce social isolation by creating moderated periods to have short in-person encounters that allow participants to stay connected, have a sense of belonging and receive good food to alleviate food shortages.
- Increase access to healthy food by acquiring tools and resources such as recipes and fresh ingredients.
- Celebrate culturally diverse food, and learn about accessible new ingredients, herbs, and spices, as well as cooking methods and techniques.



Over the winter, we ran seven sessions, provided 465 meal kits that served 3,037 meals, and distributed almost \$10,000 in gift cards to our participants.

Community members learned how to make:

- Balsamic BBC chicken thighs with three sisters orzo pasta salad
- Bibimbap with soy-marinated eggs and rice (Korean)
- Holiday pot pie
- Kisir and Izmir Kofte (Turkish Bulgur salad and Turkish meatballs and potatoes)
- White sauce lasagna with turkey and apple salad
- Mchuzi Wa Samaki with ghee rice pilaf (Tanzanian-style fish curry)
- Jerk chicken legs, cauliflower fried rice, and sweet plantain

I grew up with Bulgar salad and this was like being home again. So healthy, nutritious, and simple to make. Making these recipes is like making art. It is colourful, and has texture and I love working with my hands to roll the kofta balls.

Honey

Meal Kits Program Participant

Community Kitchens Newsletter		
Let's see what's cooking in the meal kit program!		Meal Kit 06 - Feb 24 th & 25 th
 <p>By Hortencia "Muy delicioso este menú !!! Muchas gracias todos muy felices...Nos encantó . Sobre todo muy nutritivo." This menu was very delicious !!! Thank you so much we are all so happy...We loved it. Above all, it is nutritious.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">From the Community Kitchen Team</p> <p>"We'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone for participating in the past meal kit program. It was a joy to see so many familiar faces and also, to meet many new community members who joined. We are grateful for your interest, creativity, and commitment to the program. It gives our team motivation to deliver new ideas each time. We look forward to our next session and having you join us once again."</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>	 
 <p>By Cindy Lara "It was a simple and delicious dish! Thank you!!!"</p>	<p>By Avionne</p> <p>"We had a fantastic one thanks to this delicious meal kit. I had never attempted to make jerk chicken before because I thought I would be disappointed with the results. However, this recipe was so delicious and all the flavours were typical of jerk at a restaurant that I will be making again and have shared the recipe with friends who are also interested in making it."</p> 	<p>By Sirene</p> <p>"The cauliflower rice is dark because I added more soya sauce. But it was definitely delicious! The jerk chicken came out so flavourful since I marinated for 11 hours...And my new favourite treat is fried plantains! It was hard work but I enjoyed every minute of the whole cooking process!"</p>



I'm proud of my work because I know it makes a difference to people. Volunteering through the pandemic made this so clear: the need grew, our lines grew longer, more families were relying on our emergency food services. As a volunteer you can see the impact right away because you're preparing and distributing food to meet an immediate need. It's important work that needs to be done, and I'm proud that The Stop remained open through the pandemic. People need us and it's essential that we are here for them.

Maria, Volunteer



community building

At The Stop, good nutritious food is a gateway to a deeper connection. Most people walk through our door for a meal, but once here, find their lives changed through the empowerment and belonging that arises from extended engagement with others

We are a place where community members can grow and feel supported as they and their circumstances change; a place where they feel important and valued.

We provide a continuum of services and programs that connects community members with what they need where they are at, from basic meals to a stable network. We aim to empower our community members and build responsibility and care for one another.

Key Stats

- More Torontonians than ever are leading more isolated lives: one-third of households are made up of one person.
- Low-income residents in Toronto are far more likely to be socially isolated than higher-income residents, while newcomers often do not have anyone to rely on in an emergency.
- Our Advocacy Program had 672 visits and provided 373 referrals from September 2021-April 2022.
- Through our Healthy Beginnings program, 60 moms were encouraged to learn more about self-care and to take steps toward improving their mental and physical health. They also learn how to make their own Aromatic/Epson bath salts to reduce pain, detox and relax.



Our 2022 Strategy

The Stop's work has a number of planned goals and outcomes, including:

- Increasing access to fresh, culturally-appropriate, nutritious food.
- Removing barriers to full participation in society
- Improved sense of belonging and community
- Improved mental and physical health
- Increased civic engagement and awareness of systemic barriers

Throughout the pandemic, many of our programs shifted or were in higher demand. In 2022, we will be implementing new changes to ensure we can best support our community

Projects	Details	Outcome
Re-opening our spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slowly welcoming 10-15 people per program into our spaces 	Bring normalcy back into our emergency food programs, host fun events like bingo or movie nights
Cross-pollination of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting some programs in our community gardens 	Increase the # of benefits service users gain through 7 cross-pollination sessions
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build on the successes of 2021 	Increased public policy advocacy and support, continue the foodbank hamper delivery pilot, etc



Community building and belonging

Healthy Beginnings: Supporting new parents and babies

Healthy Beginnings is a weekly drop-in program for new and expectant mothers. The women are on a low income and often experience a combination of challenging life circumstances such as single parenting, unaffordable housing, mental health, marginalization, recent migration, and language barriers.

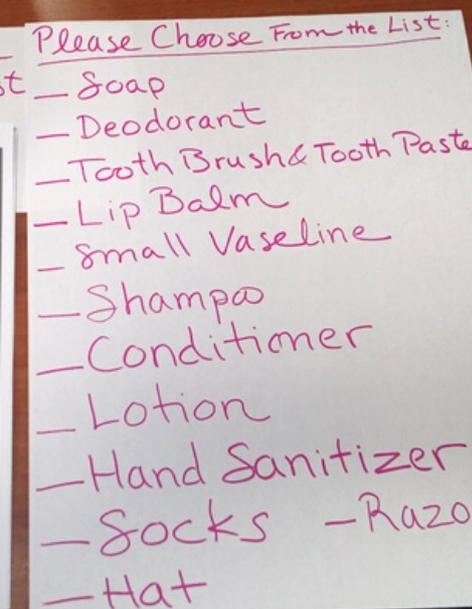
Outputs November 2021-April 2022:

- 1,754 Grocery gift cards were provided (a total of \$17,540)
- 667 meals and 398 food bank hampers were given to participants
- 400 wildflowers seeds bombs
- 50 Buggies with whole chicken and vegetables were provided to families to celebrate Family day on February 2022.

We live on ODSP - it's hard now, baby on the way, I start The Stop this week I hope this will help us. People are so friendly at Stop. Thank you for all the help in first m,eeding
Healthy Beginnings Program Participant

After a successful pilot in 2021, the Healthy Beginnings program will participate in our cross-pollination initiative in our gardens and greenhouse. This will allow our participants to meet in person regularly during the summer, learn more about perinatal nutrition, reduce social isolation, learn how to garden and cook with the garden's produce, keep building community, increase fresh food intake, and learn new recipes/basic cooking skills. Participants will also attend the Financial Empowerment Program's series of workshops to increase financial literacy in our participants. We will welcome back our childminders for these initiatives.



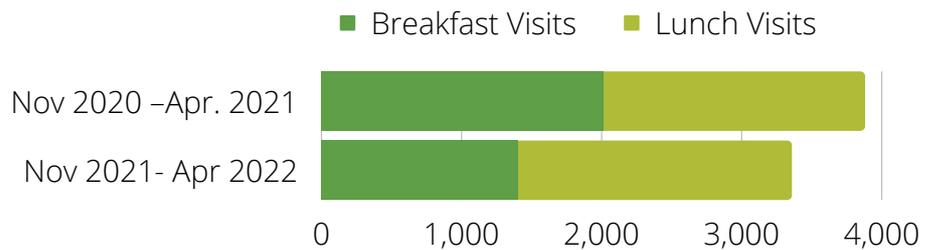


Advocacy

Our advocacy program provides peer support and education on systemic barriers, navigating unfamiliar systems, social assistance applications, and more. We had 672 visits and provided 373 referrals from September 2021-April 2022. We also enlisted six new peer advocates and ran Pizza with the Politicians, an event where community members were able to ask MPP candidates questions about key issues.

Emotional Wellness

Many of our community members are dealing with social isolation and a lack of connection to their community. In response to these findings, we started to distribute activity packages, which included Stop service information, self-care tips, word search puzzles, other games to keep your mind healthy, and disposable masks. Community Members also choose a personal care item, which can include toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, deodorant, razors, water bottles, totes, t-shirts, hats, and gloves.



Volunteer Program

The Stop began as a volunteer-run organization in the 1970s, and volunteers still play a vital role in every aspect of our work. Many volunteers have experience with issues facing our community, such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. This creates a unique sense of community in a non-judgmental and empathetic environment.

Through COVID, the number of volunteers we were safely able to accommodate in our spaces greatly decreased, pushing The Stop to feed more people with less on-site supports.



Volunteers and volunteer hours from January to April of each year



The Stop helped me go through the most difficult time of my life. Both me and my husband stopped working because of COVID and going to the hamper was our point of salvation.

Healthy Beginnings Program Participant



urban agriculture

The Stop's Green Barn at 601 Christie St. is a unique urban agriculture hub in Toronto. It offers a greenhouse, community gardens, a bake oven, a compost demonstration centre, and our year-round Farmers' Market.

Growing plants, spending time with others in a safe and supportive environment, being active outdoors and bringing home healthy produce harvested from the garden can also contribute to positive mental health outcomes and reduce social isolation.

Key Stats

- After some capital improvements, the winter of 2021-2022 was the first year we were able to grow in our greenhouse year-round!
- In comparison to the same period last season, November-April, we harvested 209% more kgs from our greenhouse
- Over 15,600 seedlings have been given away to community members since 2019, with 4,420 being given away in 2022
- We hope to reach over 280 community members through our cross-pollination pilot. These community members already access emergency support and the cross-pollination will help provide additional benefits through urban agriculture.
- We increased the number of urban agriculture sessions, from 110 in 2021 to 157 in 2022. This is an increase of 47 new urban ag sessions in 2022, or a 30% increase.

What's new?

New partnerships

Community Buds

Pilot 3-month program for individuals/groups who identify as Black, Indigenous, or racialized to access our greenhouse for free to grow seedlings and be provided free materials and soil to do so.

We have 10-12 individuals access the space and aim to increase access and connection between racialized farmers, increase locally grown sustainable food, and increasing the exchange of knowledge and skills around growing food

LIMIN

Sherbourne Health Centre partnership to create a 6-week pilot program for individuals identifying as Black and LGBTQ+ to come together and learn and share about Black-centered cooking and food justice.

The pilot was held virtually for 4 weeks and the last 2 weeks were held in person at The Stop. Each week participants were given a food theme and a \$50 grocery gift card and asked to prepare a recipe that fitted that theme and then came together during the session to talk about their recipes and food justice-related topics. We had 15 participants who identify as Black and part of the LGBTQ+ community, made 95 meals, and provided \$3,000 in gift cards.

Outputs:

- increasing social connection and sense of community for Black/Queer individuals
- increase cultural exchange and knowledge of food skills and food histories
- increase in sense of identity and connection to cultural community
- increase in Black-centered ideas and histories of food

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Thanks to capital investment from OTF, we were able to grow in the greenhouse during the winter for the first time ever!





I am a newcomer refugee in Canada, I came through Community Kitchen who referred me. Financial Empowerment connected my wife and I with a number of referrals and services such as language, financial assistance from OW, connection and support with a Case Worker, constant translation services to access my social assistance, ... Ontario works training programs, Emergency Housing Help ... It really impacted my family's financial stability a lot, since arriving in a new country, without language and without knowing the system is really difficult, finding someone who can help you and be that support to take the first steps was great. We were able to start English classes, we were able to access the temporary child tax benefit, and we were able to obtain many benefits

Edgar, Financial Empowerment and Community Kitchens Program Participant



What's back?

Cross-Pollination

Our cross-pollination strategy focuses on food security, sustainable growth, healthy and culturally-appropriate food production, and building stronger, better-connected communities. We are planning 7 urban agriculture sessions for our Healthy Beginnings and Community Kitchens program; better connecting our members to healthy food, green space, and skill-building activities around both.

Outputs:

- connection of marginalized urban residents with green space and healthy, local food
- ecological growing skills and knowledge
- increased mental health and connections to others
- year-round sustainable food production (through our greenhouse and community gardens)
- promotion of environmental stewardship

We hope to reach over 280 community members through our cross-pollination initiative in 2022. These community members already access emergency supports and the cross-pollination will help provide additional benefits through urban agriculture.



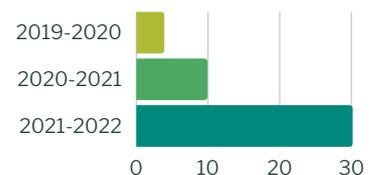
Microgreens

From December 2021 to March 2022, we hired three individuals to participate in our Microgreens program. It takes place at our greenhouse, where individuals who identify as experiencing barriers to employment (eg. being out of employment for over a few years, being part of a minority group, lacking Canadian work experience, etc) are hired as Microgrowers to plant, grow, care for, harvest and sell microgreens at our weekly farmers market in the Winter.



Seedling Giveaway

With some capital improvements, we grew seedlings throughout the winter. The 8,137 seedlings grown this season were distributed to 35 different community gardens across the city, thousands of community members, and also provide food for our meal services



of kgs harvested from Nov-April

2019-2022 - 689% increase
2020-2022 - 209% increase



We're back outside

Farmer's Market

This winter was hard for the market; we were using a hybrid model with vendors located inside and outside due to COVID precautions. Originally we were seeing about 1,500 customers a week but now we're seeing our numbers pop back up to 2,500 customers as the market is fully outside.

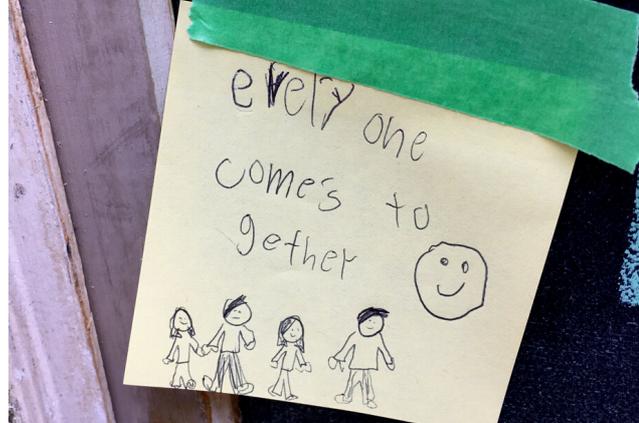
We currently work with 50 vendors, 30 farmers/20 non-farmers. We've provided community tables for SURJ, Tichester Gardens Apartments for Seniors and are also working with Sagatay participants to animate the bake oven. They are making and selling various prepared foods, with the proceeds staying within the Sagatay program.

The Stop's Farmers' Market is producing a public newsletter with over 400 subscribers, and a new Instagram account w/ over 500 followers.

Good Food Market

New this spring, we will host the Good Food Market out front, on the sidewalk, of our 1884 Davenport location. We want to make sure that the neighbourhood sees the market (rather than tucked behind the building) and knows they have access to fresh, affordable produce and prepared goods.

Chef Yvonne has been sourcing local fruits and vegetable from The Stop's Farmers' Market in order to make delicious baked goods, hand pies and nutritiously packed soups.





[Volunteering] extended my life into wider areas in my community, increased my enjoyment of life by providing me with ways to make some contributions that will affect the lives of others, increased my confidence both socially and gardening skills, everyone and everything has been a total delight. The staff are very sensitive to each volunteer's needs and all the volunteers I've worked with have been so kind friendly and helpful. I've looked forward to every shift in the gardens and left each time feeling so enriched to be part of this experience. I feel so much more strongly connected to this community, so much less isolated and alone

Volunteer



thank you

We appreciate your partnership

Our community members, donors, volunteers, staff, partners, and supporters all come together to fight poverty, enjoy good food, and create a better Toronto that is more equitable and accessible. Thank you for being a part of it!



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