

MEDIA RELEASE

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HungerCount Still Above Pre-Recession Results

In Waterloo Region 22% more people are accessing food assistance than prior to the 2008-9 recession. The national HungerCount released today by Food Banks Canada indicates similar findings. In March of 2011, 851 014 Canadians received food from a food bank. This number remains 26% above levels experienced before the 2008-9 recession.

“People in our Region are facing a variety of challenges reflected in the HungerCount numbers,” said Wendi Campbell, Executive Director of The Food Bank of Waterloo Region. “The Food Assistance Network is working hard to provide food and programs that will help our residents cope.”

What do we know about hunger in Waterloo Region?

We know:

- 6,811 food hampers were distributed in Waterloo Region in March 2011
- There was a 5% increase in food hamper distribution in March 2011 from March 2010.
- 12% of those who accessed food hampers did so for the first time in March 2011
- At least 1% of our hamper recipients were on student loans and approximately 1.5% were post-secondary students in March 2011. All three of our local post-secondary institutions have food banks on campus that serve students in need.
- 7% of those who accessed food hampers in this region in March 2011 were employed
- Approximately 25% of those accessing food hampers received disability-related income support, 41% received Ontario Works, 5% received a pension
- 4% received unemployment insurance, 8% had no income.

The manufacturing sector in the region has taken some hard hits over the past five years. Recent layoffs and plant shutdowns of local manufacturing firms are disproportionately affecting older workers over 50. Local statistics reflect the employment challenges of many in our community. From October 2008 to October 2010 the number of non-participants in the labour force age 45-55 increased 4%, 55-65 increased 3% and 65 plus increased 4% according to The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin’s November 2010 report.

The Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) responds to the reality faced by older workers. The work they have known and the jobs they have done are either no longer available or no longer suit their abilities. The Working Centre offers the TIOW program locally.

Joe Mancini, Executive Director of The Working Centre notes, “TIOW offers participants a combination of training funds, transportation costs, and a potential living allowance. We help develop a workable plan. People participate for a minimum of 25 hours per week. Computer

skills, occupational skills, and refresher courses on problem solving and communication are also offered.”

What does it mean?

- Some recipients are successfully overcoming job losses through use of programs like Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers and stop gap solutions such as emergency food programs. Others are involved in a long term struggle with food and employment insecurity.
- The need endures.

Community support of the agencies and programs that support our neighbours facing challenges continues to be important to maintain the strength of Waterloo Region. Thank you to our media partners for their ongoing efforts to communicate the needs and challenges faced by many residents of Waterloo Region.

For more information on The Working Centre or The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, visit www.theworkingcentre.org and the www.thefoodbank.ca or call The Food Bank at 519-743-5576 and The Working Centre at 519-743-1151.

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