



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Local Agencies Pooling Resources to best serve the community during outbreak

As our community continues to battle the effects of the recent Covid-19 outbreak, Lethbridge Food Bank, Interfaith Food Bank and MyCityCare will be banding together to coordinate emergency food services for our most vulnerable citizens. This partnership will coordinate services, maximize resources and provide the most effective and efficient support to our community as we navigate this crisis.

Emergency Food Assistance will be our top priority, as an essential service to our community. For the time being, we are suspending programs, workshops and activities not related to primary services, and focusing all efforts on ensuring that community members have enough to eat. "We are open," says Danielle McIntyre of Interfaith Food Bank, "Our first priority is to keep food on the table for local citizens in need, especially in a situation like this where our community needs us most."

Many food bank users are vulnerable citizens with health challenges and other issues that will compound the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak. Agencies are implementing safety precautions and activities that encourage social distancing, hygiene and cleaning procedures as recommended by Health Canada and Alberta Health Services. Food banks will allow existing clients to designate an alternate to pick up their hampers if they are ill or self-isolating.

Agencies are expecting to experience challenges with both supply and manpower. Current panic has resulted in empty shelves at grocery stores as well as limited donations, despite the fact that our government has assured Canadians that our supply chain is not in jeopardy.

Maral Kiani Tari, executive director with Lethbridge Food Bank notes "with the recent COVID-19 developments, our organizations have witnessed a substantial drop in donations and are anticipating this could continue over the coming weeks. We also anticipate the demand for our services will increase. This is an unprecedented time for our agencies, and we need the support of our community more than ever to serve our most vulnerable population."

Agencies strongly encourage community members to remember those who are unable to shop for themselves, and the need for emergency response programs to be able to access food and supplies for the most vulnerable members of our community. Financial support is the most efficient means for supporting relief efforts, as agencies will be able to purchase most needed supplies.

Human resources are also affected, as the majority of food bank volunteers are senior citizens, persons with disabilities, or from groups that have cancelled programming due to the outbreak, such as schools and faith-based organizations. Agencies encourage those who are well, and may be temporarily unable to work or attend school due to closures, to offer their time to help with emergency food services.

Jen Tribble of MyCityCare indicates their organization will help in mobilizing volunteers and helping to ensure enough manpower to maintain suitable levels of service. "In this time, more than anything, we need community. Our agencies are going to be affected dramatically in the coming days. Many of our volunteers are within the vulnerable sectors and we can't put them at risk. We need people to step up and help serve our communities - we are better and stronger together. MyCityCare will continue to provide emergency hampers and household essentials to the community, try to fill holes where we can, and allocate extra resources to the crisis as it unfolds in our city."

The partnership of agencies will ensure not only a sharing of the workload, but also a contingency plan in the event that any one agency is unable to maintain full operational capacity. Sharing of resources and coordination of services is familiar to this group, who work together annually to serve the community at Christmastime.

Agencies encourage community members who are able to, to step up to help:

- Safely give online by clicking the links on any one, or all three agency websites
- Offer volunteer service if you are well and have the time to give
- Stay home if you are sick, practice healthy hygiene and social distancing
- Buy only what you need, and remember your neighbors and community members who may need a hand up in these trying times.

AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

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