

Collaborating to combat food insecurity

Investing in upstream solutions

Peel Region values recent provincial investments to help address food insecurity, including:

- Project-based provincial funding, through sources such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation for food providers.
- Partnering with Peel Region on potential capital investments that grow the capacity of addressing structural, systemic issues underlying food insecurity.

By increasing Ontario Works (OW) rates, the provincial government will invest in an upstream solution that supports food security, leading to better health outcomes and decreased reliance on social supports.

Research has repeatedly shown that household food insecurity can be reduced by policy interventions that improve the financial circumstances of households at the bottom of the income spectrum.

Addressing the root cause of food insecurity must include adequate income to cover basic costs of living, including higher social assistance rates.

The following measures are also needed:

- Emergency food relief
- Long-term systemic change
- Focus on upstream community-driven solutions

By working collaboratively across sectors — government, nonprofit, community organizations, and local businesses — a more equitable, resilient food system that supports all residents can be developed. Moreover, reducing food insecurity in Peel will also reduce demands on the health system as people living in food insecure households are more likely to have chronic health conditions, mental health challenges, and a greater need for health care services.



Peel's food insecurity challenges

- 8.6% (123,660) of Peel residents live in poverty, including 9.5% (27,900) of children aged 0 to 17.
- Nearly 23% of Peel residents, more than 1 in 5 households, face some level of food insecurity.
- From 2022 to 2024, Peel Region invested \$7.34 million to improve access to emergency food.

Rising demand for food support in Peel (2024)

Food Banks Mississauga:

- Served 1 in 13 residents
- Reported 421,251 client visits

Knights Table (Brampton):

- Served 1 in 16 residents
- Reported 474,099 client visits

The Exchange (Caledon):

- Saw a 43% increase in demand
- 27% of users were first-time clients

Overall demand increased by 40–60% across Peel food providers compared to 2023.

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Root causes of food insecurity

The difference in the rates of poverty and food insecurity reveal an alarming trend that food insecurity in Peel is experienced by residents both above and below the official poverty rate.



Solution

Addressing the root cause of food insecurity must include adequate income to cover basic costs of living, including higher social assistance rates.



Key takeaway

Food insecurity cannot be eliminated through downstream community-level interventions alone. All levels of government must act to alleviate the burden on municipalities and food banks by investing in stronger upstream social and health programs and poverty reduction policies.

