

# Healthy Food Access Programs

## THE ISSUES WE FACE

### FOOD INSECURITY

Rates of food insecurity across Canada are either rising or persisting. **More than 4 million Canadians struggle to afford enough to eat, and 1 in 6 children in Canada are affected by food insecurity.**<sup>2</sup>

### LOW WAGES AND INADEQUATE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RATES

People are hungry because they are poor. This includes the working poor and people on social assistance. **62% of food insecure households are employed. 61% of households that rely on social assistance as their main source of income are food insecure.**<sup>3</sup>

### CHARITABLE SECTOR CAN'T KEEP UP

The charitable food sector works hard to pick up the slack, but many organizations are under-resourced and can't meet the demand for their services. **38% of food banks have to cut back on the amount of food they provide because of insufficient resources.**<sup>4</sup> And many food insecure households don't use food banks because of the stigma associated with them.<sup>5</sup>

## OUR RECIPE FOR CHANGE

- 1. Offer dignified food access programs**, operate them to the highest standards of health and quality, and use the most accountable, transparent policies possible.
- 2. Meet immediate needs and provide the opportunity for social connection** and links to other Community Food Centre programs and community resources.
- 3. Involve those affected by food insecurity** to volunteer in programs and play leadership roles. Create ways for those affected by food insecurity to push for policy responses that address the issue at the scale of the problem.

### KEY INGREDIENTS

- Warm, welcoming, and non-judgemental staff and volunteers
- Bright, beautiful spaces
- No intrusive questions, line-ups or means testing
- Fair and consistent food distribution
- Healthy, delicious, and high-quality food (focus on local and sustainable sources)
- Connections to other supports, programs and services

## PROGRAMS ON THE MENU

- + Community meals
- + Affordable produce markets
- + Healthy food distribution



## THE CHANGE WE'RE COOKING UP

↑  
**AVAILABILITY, ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF HEALTHY FOOD**



**STIGMA**

↑  
**SENSE OF DIGNITY**

↑  
**COMMUNITY BELONGING**

↑  
**CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND OTHER HEALTHY FOODS**

## THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

**“I got more vegetables in today's lunch than I can afford to buy in a month.”**

-Community member at Dartmouth North Community Food Centre (Dartmouth, NS)

**93%**

of people surveyed say their Community Food Centre is an important source of healthy food

**“It helps me with food. I would have a much more difficult time making ends meet without it.”**

-Community member at The Local Community Food Centre (Stratford, ON)

<sup>1</sup> Tarasuk, Mitchell and Dachner (2014).  
<sup>2</sup> Tarasuk, Mitchell and Dachner (2016).  
<sup>4</sup> Food Banks Canada (2013).  
<sup>5</sup> Conference Board of Canada (2010).