

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Feed the Need Partnership for Market Model Food Bank

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**Report to:** Council

**Date of meeting:** November 27, 2023

**Report Number:** CAO 28-23

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

**Submitted by:**

Sarah Klein, Director, Strategic Initiatives

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

**For additional information, contact:**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO 28-23 be received for information; and,
2. That, pursuant to section 107(2) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Council authorize staff to enter into a lease agreement with Feed the Need to deliver a market model food bank at Iroquois Park Sports Centre upon terms satisfactory to the Director, Strategic Initiatives, and the Commissioners of Financial Services/Treasurer, Community Services and Legal and Enforcement Services/Town Solicitor.

#### 2. Highlights:

- Food insecurity is an increasing challenge for many Whitby residents. The Community Strategic Plan identifies working with partners to address food security concerns as a priority.
- A partnership with Feed the Need to offer a market model food bank at Iroquois Park Sports Centre would provide an accessible, dignified and equitable provision of a food bank to residents in a community setting.

- The completion of a lease agreement would be the next step to proceed with a market model food bank that would be operated by Feed the Need with the support of Whitby Food Bank providers starting in Spring 2024.
- This food bank would address the current gap in services by offering evening and weekend availability through a market model which a grocery style food bank experience with fresh, frozen and nonperishable items.

### 3. Background:

Food insecurity is a rising concern and for many families in Whitby, being unable to buy nutritious food is a reality. Households living with low incomes struggle to pay for rent, bills, and food and are often forced to reduce their amount of food and give up healthy food choices to pay for other expenses.

The [2022 Price of Eating Well in Durham Region](#) report found that many families are struggling to afford a sufficient and healthy diet, with 15 percent of households categorized as food insecure, which means they either worry about running out of food, settle for lower quality food, or miss meals altogether. Individuals most affected by food insecurity are low wage workers, single parents with children under 25, individuals on Ontario Works, individuals on Ontario Disability Support Program and college/university students.

Feed the Need's most recent Hunger Report reflects data gathered from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Feed the Need reported that in Whitby:

- There were 68,000 visits to food banks; this is a 46% increase
- There were 7,200 Whitby food bank clients; this is a 36% increase
- There were 2,250 new Whitby clients; 31% of clients were first time food bank users
- There were 26,100 visits to meal programs in Whitby; this is a 29% increase

Clients indicated that they were accessing food banks for the following reasons:

- 96% due to rising food costs
- 20% due to housing costs
- 7% due to declining wages

In early 2023, a meeting of all Whitby food security partners was held. At this meeting, a review of current food banks, their service levels, current challenges, and the need for a collaborative approach were discussed. Feed the Need presented trends regarding food bank use in Whitby and shared about their newly launched market model food bank.

Feed the Need's market model food bank opened in July 2022 at their Oshawa location and is based on their core principles of dignity, access, and equity.

“The Market” is open on Tuesdays from 3:00-6:00pm and offers clients a grocery store style food bank experience with fresh, frozen and nonperishable products available. Individuals are given a certain number of basket(s) based on their family size. The Market sees an average of 150 families per week over 3 hours of operation.

From this initial food security partner meeting, a map of the current food banks in Whitby and their hours of service was created and can be found [here](#). From this review, it was determined that there is a gap in the provision of food banks open evenings and weekends for working individuals and families to access. The commitment to pursue a market model food bank in partnership with Feed the Need and the Whitby food security partners was established. To support the equipment needed for this food bank, Feed the Need applied to and was successful in receiving a \$15,000 grant from the Mayor’s Community Development Fund to purchase shelving, a refrigerator, a freezer, and supplies. Whitby staff have been working with Feed the Need to find a suitable location for the market model food bank and after an extensive review, are recommending it be located at Iroquois Park Sports Centre.

#### **4. Discussion:**

The Town of Whitby is recommending a partnership with Feed the Need to offer a market model food bank at Iroquois Park Sports Centre in the current office space located at the south end of the building (see Attachment 1). This space is currently operating as office space for Community Services staff. With the merging of Community Services and Operations, staff will be relocated to Whitby Operations Centre to free up this space for this partnership. The space is approximately 1,000 square feet and includes an accessible entrance, storage space, access to washrooms and an open area for the market model food bank to operate.

Upon Council approval of this partnership, an agreement would be established with the Town of Whitby and Feed the Need including the following:

- The market model food bank would be operated by Feed the Need in partnership with and with volunteers from local food banks.
- The hours of operation would begin with one 4-hour time slot on one weeknight and extend to include a weekend time slot within the first 6 months of operation. Further expansion of hours will be based on need and resources.
- The space would be provided as a no cost lease for a three-year term with the ability to extend annually.
- Feed the Need would secure insurance and name the Town of Whitby as additionally insured.
- The costs of cleaning and utilities would be absorbed by the Town of Whitby.
- Any renovations to the space would need to be approved by the Town of Whitby and at the cost of Feed the Need.
- Any equipment would be provided by Feed the Need.

The goal would be to open the market model food bank in Spring 2024.

Pending Council approval to proceed, the next steps would be to relocate the existing staff from the space, make any necessary modifications to the space for the purposes of the market model food bank and reconvene the Whitby Food Bank Network to secure volunteers and then advertise and promote volunteer opportunities to the community at large. Feed the Need would develop their operating procedures and ensure all volunteers are trained prior to the opening of the market model food bank.

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

The recommendation is to provide space at Iroquois Park Sports Centre at no cost to Feed the Need to operate a market model food bank. As the space is currently being used by the Town, there are no additional operating costs (e.g. utilities or cleaning) projected as a result of this partnership.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

As a part of the Community Strategic Plan engagement in early 2023, the community identified a safe, healthy community as a priority. Furthermore, when asked to identify priority actions to achieve this, one of the top recommended actions was working with partners to address food security concerns.

When staff engaged service providers of food banks currently in Whitby, similar feedback was received indicating the need for more access to food banks across the community.

## **7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

Community Services, Legal Services and Feed the Need have all been engaged regarding the recommendations within this report.

## **8. Strategic Priorities:**

The establishment of a market model food bank in partnership with Feed the Need directly supports Action 1.3.5 – Work with partners to address food security under the Neighbourhood Pillar in Whitby's Community Strategic Plan. The location at Iroquois Park Sports Centre is accessible and supports equitable access in a community setting.

## **9. Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Identification of Partnership Space at IPSC