

Waterloo Region Shares

Building a Strong
Food Support Network

Waterloo Region Shares is a collaborative initiative of the Food Assistance Network, working to implement nine recommendations in order to improve the coordination, efficiency, and effectiveness of the local food assistance system. The project is led by an Implementation Committee, including staff from Woolwich Community Services, House of Friendship, the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and The Food Bank of Waterloo Region. Staff from the Region of Waterloo act as a resource to the Committee.

The nine recommendations are the result of a study funded by the Region of Waterloo. Research involving food assistance organizations and patrons was conducted throughout 2005/2006. Representatives from emergency hamper programs, community meal programs, shelter and residential programs, community resource and outreach programs, and regional government were actively engaged in the process. The final report, “*Waterloo Region Shares – A Review of Emergency Food Distribution in Waterloo Region*” makes nine recommendations for improvements in the way the Food Assistance Network is working. They are summarized as follows:

- Build the momentum of the Network
- Support coping and prevention programs
- Examine community centre and neighbourhood access to food assistance
- Investigate the feasibility of a centralized data collection system
- Ensure agencies have food safety and handling training
- Address service gaps
- Improve the consistency and coordination of service levels
- Analyze the research conducted
- Improve operating efficiencies and coordination of food collection and distribution

None of this work would be possible without the support of our community. We are thankful for the generosity of our funders: The Ontario Trillium Foundation, The Region of Waterloo, United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries, United Way of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area, and The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

Last year 25,000 of our neighbours needed food assistance. Almost half of those were children. We are working together to build a strong Food Support Network in order to improve our services for the benefit of the entire community. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact the Coordinator, Elizabeth Faulkner, at 519-579-8087 or elizabethf@waterlooregionshares.ca.

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