



The Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries is a non-profit organization that actively participates in building and strengthening our community through research, analysis, facilitation and education, fostering innovation and positive social change.

We wish to thank the following funders for their support.



Food Security

Food security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Commonly, the concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's dietary needs as well as their food preferences.¹ It is estimated that about 9 percent or 1.1 million households in Canada – representing 2.7 million Canadians – experience food insecurity. Among families with children, 5.2% reported child-level food insecurity, lone-parent families and families receiving social assistance are at higher risk.² Food security is a significant determinant of health, as a lack of access to healthy food can have many negative health consequences.

This factsheet will highlight community trends and indicators that relate to the issue of food security in Cambridge and North Dumfries.

The Cost of Eating Healthy

People with low incomes experience a higher rate of food insecurity. Research has shown that even without adding the most basic monthly expenses such as telephone, toiletries and transit costs, individuals and families relying on social assistance (i.e. Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) or earning minimum wages do not have the income to support a healthy diet.³

The Nutritious Food Basket measures the cost for an individual to eat healthfully. It is calculated based on the cost of 67 basic food items which are selected based on Canada's Food Guide (2008) and adjusted to meet current recommendations based on age and sex. This measure does not include personal hygiene items or convenience food items.⁴

Data from previous years show that the cost of a nutritious food basket increased 25% from 2003-2008 in Waterloo Region. In the most recent 3 years, since 2009, the cost has remained fairly stable – between the 2010 and 2011 Nutritious Food Basket costs for a "reference family of four" increased by 0.26%.

Nutritious Food Basket Weekly Costs– Waterloo Region

"Reference family of four" (Man 31–50 years, Woman 31–50 years, Male 14–18 years, Female 4–8 years)

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*	2010*	2011*
\$112.56	\$111.91	\$120.06	\$120.78	\$133.35	\$141.21	\$169.41	\$168.45	\$168.89

*Due to changes in data collection methods, 2009 and beyond cannot be compared to pre-2009 figures
Source: Region of Waterloo Public Health, The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket, 2003-2011

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Food Security Agencies and Organizations in Cambridge and North Dumfries

Several organizations provide programs that work to bring about increased food security for residents of the community.

Emergency food services include food banks, co-ops and community food closets that provide clients with supplies of food staples to help meet their basic dietary needs.

Community meal programs offer prepared food to those who may not have any other means of accessing or preparing a complete cooked meal.

Supports for Seniors, includes services such as Community Dining that provides an opportunity for seniors to get together and share a hot noon-hour meal, participate in a recreational activity and expand their social network. Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver nutritious, hot and frozen meals to the homes of seniors or persons with disabilities at mid-day, Monday through Friday.

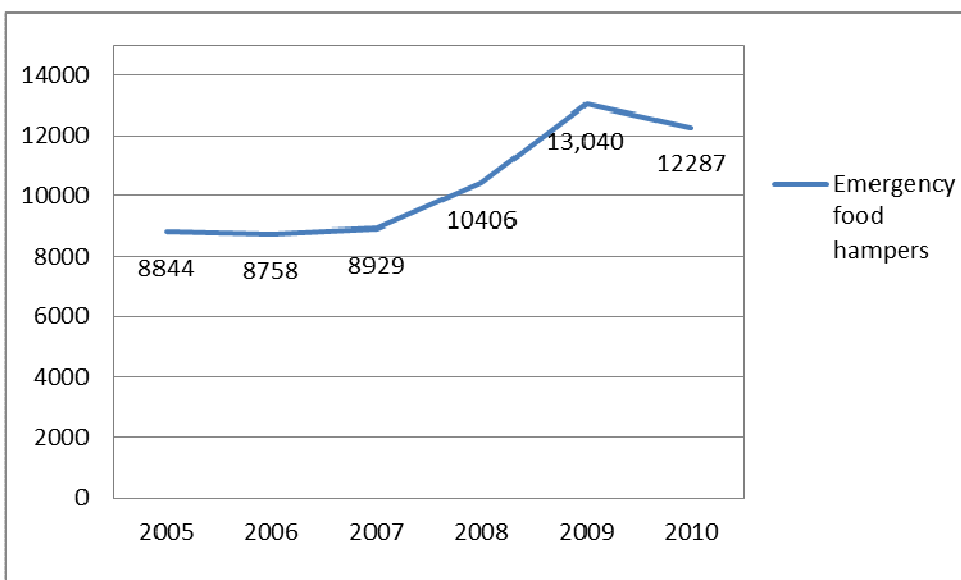
School-based programs such as school breakfast and snack programs that aim to help meet the nutritional needs of school-aged children and are designed to facilitate better learning.

Community gardens and markets provide healthy, accessible and locally-produced food in many neighbourhoods, particularly those with a high prevalence of people with low incomes. These programs and initiatives encourage citizens to become involved in the food production and distribution process enable increased access to healthy food.

Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank

The Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank (CSHFB) first opened its doors in 1984. Over 1600 families and 32 community organizations are provided with food each month. The Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank provides emergency food hampers to assist individuals in immediate need. The Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank is unique in operating a food co-operative program for low-income individuals and families. As well as providing a stable source of groceries, Co-op membership offers opportunities for skill development and personal growth.

Number of Emergency Food Hampers Distributed



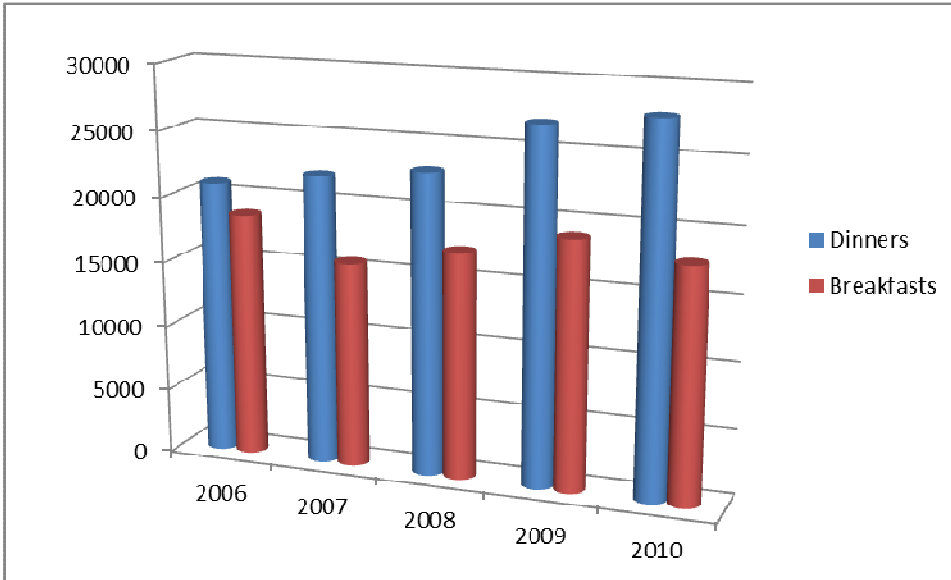
- The number of emergency food hampers distributed decreased slightly from 2009 after three consecutive years of increase. There has been a total increase since 2005 of 39%
- In 2010 there were 12,224 food pick ups, by co-op members, up from 10,754 in 2009
- In 2010, \$2,047,775 in food-stuffs was distributed in the community, up from \$11,893,169 the previous year

Source: Cambridge Self Help Food Bank, Program Statistics, Personal Communication, 2011

Cambridge Shelter Corporation, “The Bridges”

The Cambridge Shelter Corporation serves daily dinner and weekly community breakfasts at “The Bridges”.

Number of Meals Served



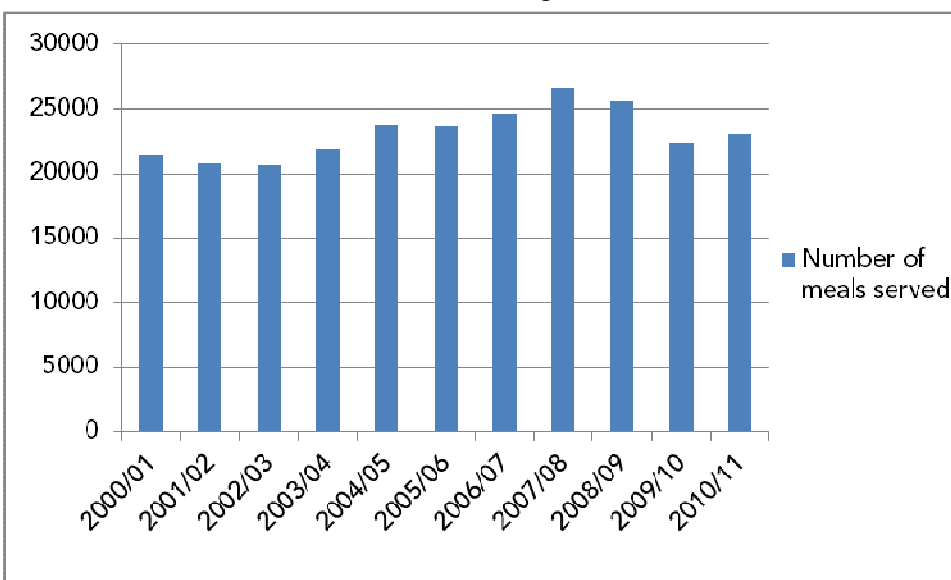
- In 2010, 27,905 dinners and 17,806 breakfasts were served.
- The number of dinners served continues to increase each year, with an increase of 33% since 2006.

Source: Cambridge Shelter Corporation Program Statistics, 2011

Community Support Connections – Meals on Wheels and More

Community Support Connections – Meals on Wheels and More is an independent non-profit agency which provides services for seniors, recently convalescing, and eligible adults with special needs, to assist them in living independently at home. Services at the Cambridge site include Meals on Wheels and Community Dining program for seniors and people with disabilities.

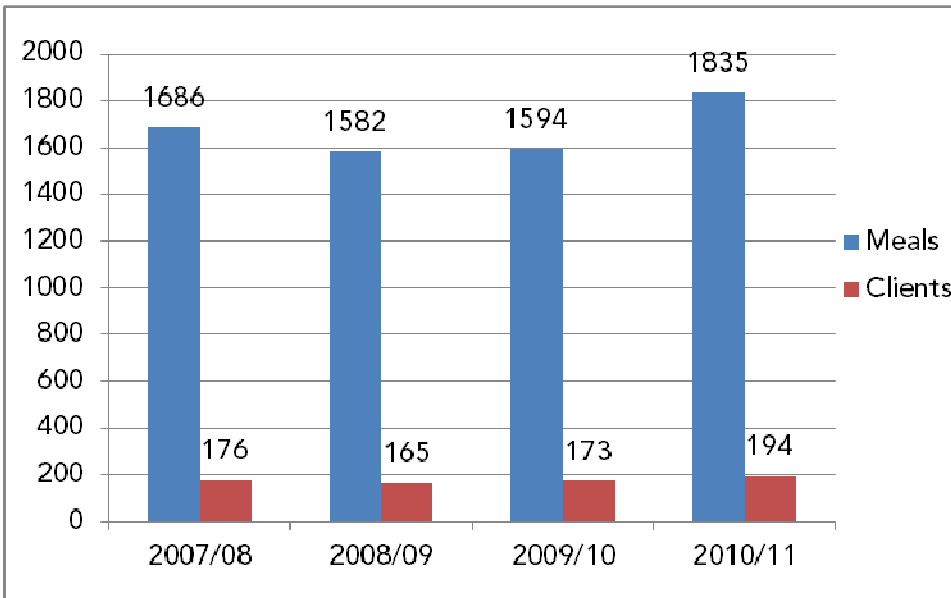
Number of Meals Served, Cambridge Site



- The number of meals served increased in the most recent year by 637, to 23035 total in the 2010/11 year.
- A total of 358 Meals on Wheels clients were served in 2010/2011, the same as in the previous year.
- Demand for this program has remained steady since 2000/01.

Source: Community Support Connections Meals on Wheels and More, Personal Communication, 2011

Number of Community Dining Clients, Cambridge Site



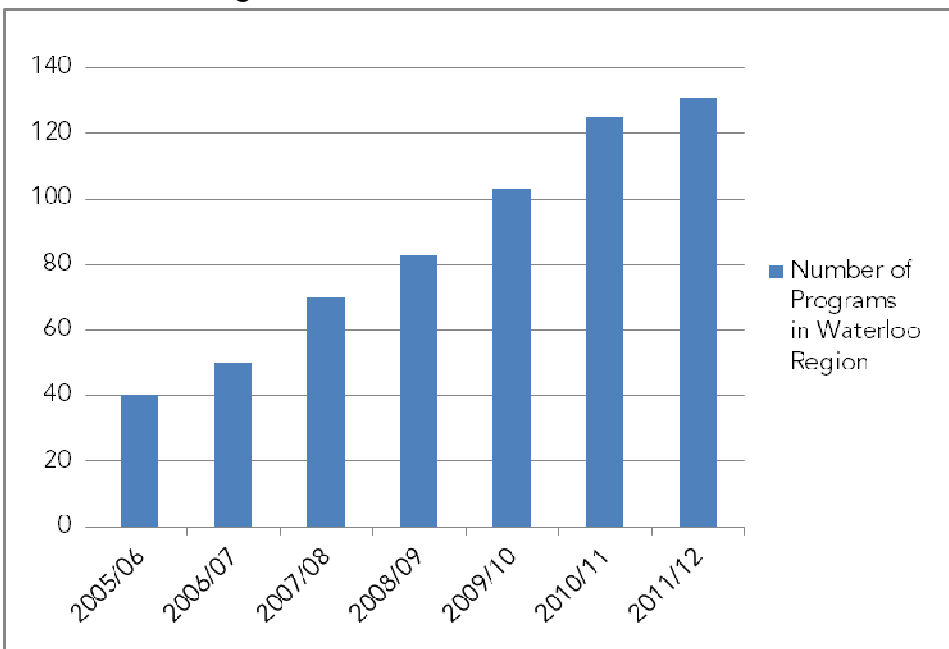
- The number of community dining clients in 2010/11 increased to the highest number in 4 years.
- The number of meals served to community dining clients also increased by 241 from the previous year, a 12% increase since 2007/08.

Source: Community Support Connections Meals on Wheels and More, Personal Communication, 2011

Nutrition for Learning

Nutrition for Learning has been a registered charitable organization since 1997, supporting community based nutrition programs committed to improving the learning capacity, health and well being of children and youth in Waterloo Region. Research has proven that students coming to school hungry do not perform well in the classroom, have difficulty concentrating, display behavioural problems, are less alert and are often lethargic. Its programs impact the physical, cognitive, behavioural and academic needs of children and youth in Waterloo Region.

Number of Programs



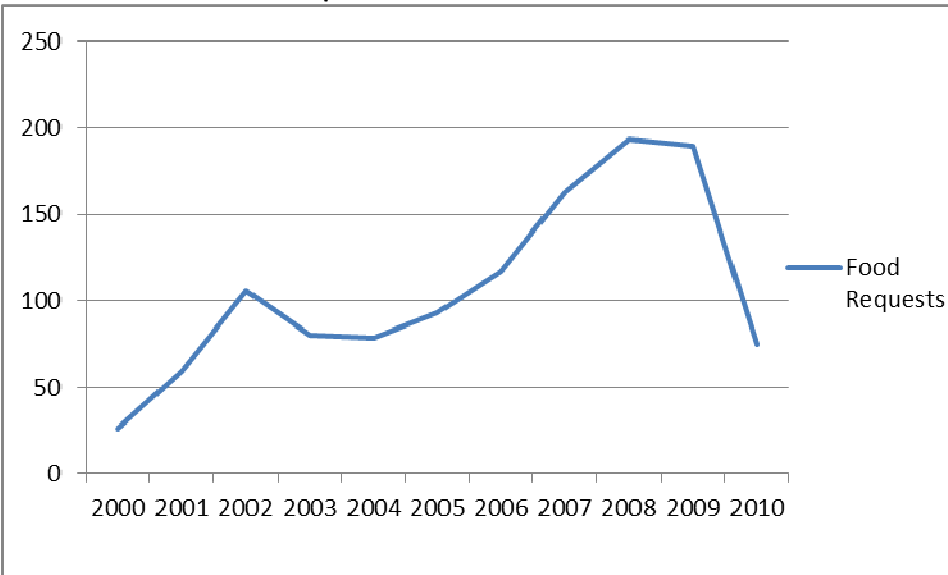
- There are currently 40 schools in Cambridge which run 50 programs (breakfast, morning meal, healthy basket, snack or lunch)
- In Waterloo Region, a total of 9000 students access programs daily
- The number of programs in Waterloo Region has increased by from 40 in 2005/06 to 131 in 2011/12.

Source: Nutrition for Learning, Personal Communication, 2011

Family Counselling Centre/ Community Connections , Ayr

Family Counselling Centre/ Community Supports in Ayr provides a variety of services to the North Dumfries community through its partnerships with a number of different organizations and groups. It has received emergency food requests over a number of years and with its partner organizations, connects people in need to available services.

Number of Food Requests



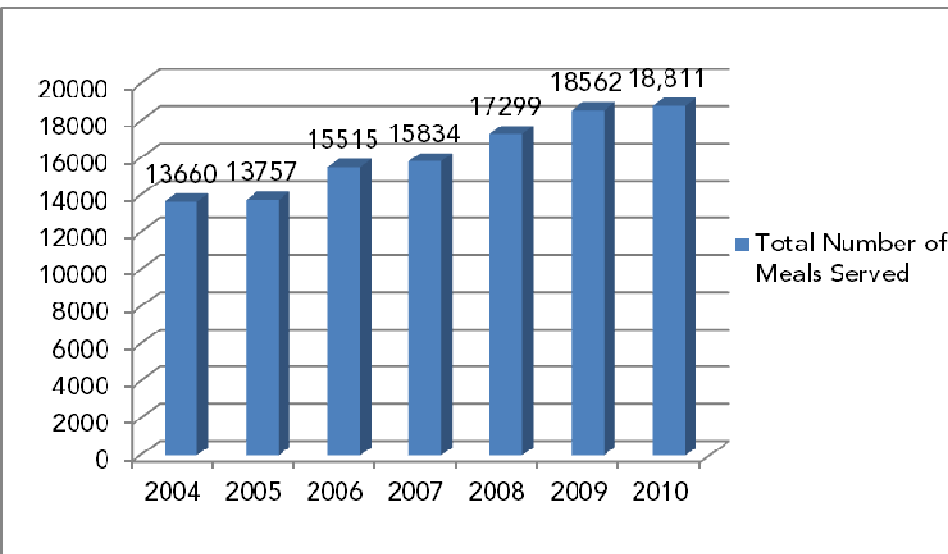
- The number of food requests decreased 60% from 2009 to 2010, from 190 to 75.
- This drop may be attributed to some of the regular clients securing employment.

Source: Family Counselling Centre/Community Connections, Ayr, Personal Communication, 2011

Trinity Community Table

Trinity Community Table is committed to providing a hot, nourishing noon meal at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday in a warm, non-threatening environment.

Number of Meals Served



- The number of meals served in 2010 was 18811, an increase of 249 from 2009.
- Since 2004, the number of meals served has increased by 38%

Source: Trinity Community Table, Program Statistics, Personal Communication, 2011

The ability to access healthy food is important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Neighbourhoods that do not have access to good quality and affordable food are have been referred to as “Food Deserts”.⁵ These urban areas are often considered to be socially-distressed, characterized by low average household incomes. If policy makers wish to improve the health, productivity and general prosperity of communities within their jurisdictions, addressing the existence of food deserts is an important first step forward.⁶ Barriers such as lack of transportation, disabilities, or low incomes can prevent individuals from accessing healthy, affordable food. Ontario is one of the leading provinces in promoting local food products. One approach to promoting local food is through local farmer’s markets.⁷

Several initiatives in Cambridge exist to ensure that more people have access to healthy food, including community gardens and neighbourhood markets. Community gardens encourage affordable healthy eating by providing opportunities to grow fresh produce. Neighbourhood markets are designed to increase accessibility to healthy produce in areas that are underserved by grocery stores.

Community Gardens

During the summer of 2010 there were 8 community gardens in Cambridge with a total of approximately 109 plots.

Neighbourhood Markets

In 2008, the neighbourhood market pilot project began with the goals of: increasing people’s consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, increase access to locally-sourced healthy foods, increase social connections within neighbourhoods, and support local farmers.

In 2010, there were 3 neighbourhood markets in operation:

- Mill-Courtland Community Center Market
- Centreville Chicopee Community Center Market
- Preston Towne Market (Farmers Market)

The Preston Market averages over 1000 visitors weekly. The two community centre markets in Kitchener average 350 to 400 people weekly.

The Preston Market located in Cambridge has evolved from a Community/Volunteer run market to a small scale Farmers' Market, they will again host 6 farmers' and one local baker. The Preston Market had a small Planning Committee which was comprised of members representing the Preston Business Improvement Association, Cambridge Farmers’ Market, Alan Reuter Center, Region of Waterloo Public Health, Preston Ward Councillor and a number of community residents.

To increase affordability, market vouchers in \$5 denominations are provided to pregnant women who participate in the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and people served by Community Outreach Workers. Market vouchers were distributed by the Preston Heights Community Center Outreach Worker to residents from the Preston Heights neighbourhood.

Source: Region of Waterloo Public Health, Personal Communication, 2011

Food security is achieved when all people have access to sufficient quality and quantity of food. As the cost of buying healthy food remains unaffordable for those with low incomes, many people will rely on community agencies and organizations in order to secure adequate nutrition.

As in past years, agencies in Cambridge and North Dumfries are seeing a steady demand for emergency food and meal services, indicating that many people rely on these programs. Community gardens and neighbourhood markets are efforts to strengthen the local food system and give more people better access to healthy food, thereby increasing food security for residents of the community.

References

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- ² Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management.
- ³ Region of Waterloo Public Health (2008). *The Cost of Eating Well: The Health Impact of Food Insecurity*. Retrieved from: http://www.chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/healthyLivingHealthProtection/resources/Cost_EatingWell.pdf
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- ⁷ Local and Just (2011). *Provincial Approaches to Food Security*. Retrieved from: <http://www.localandjust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/provincial-policy-scan.pdf>

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