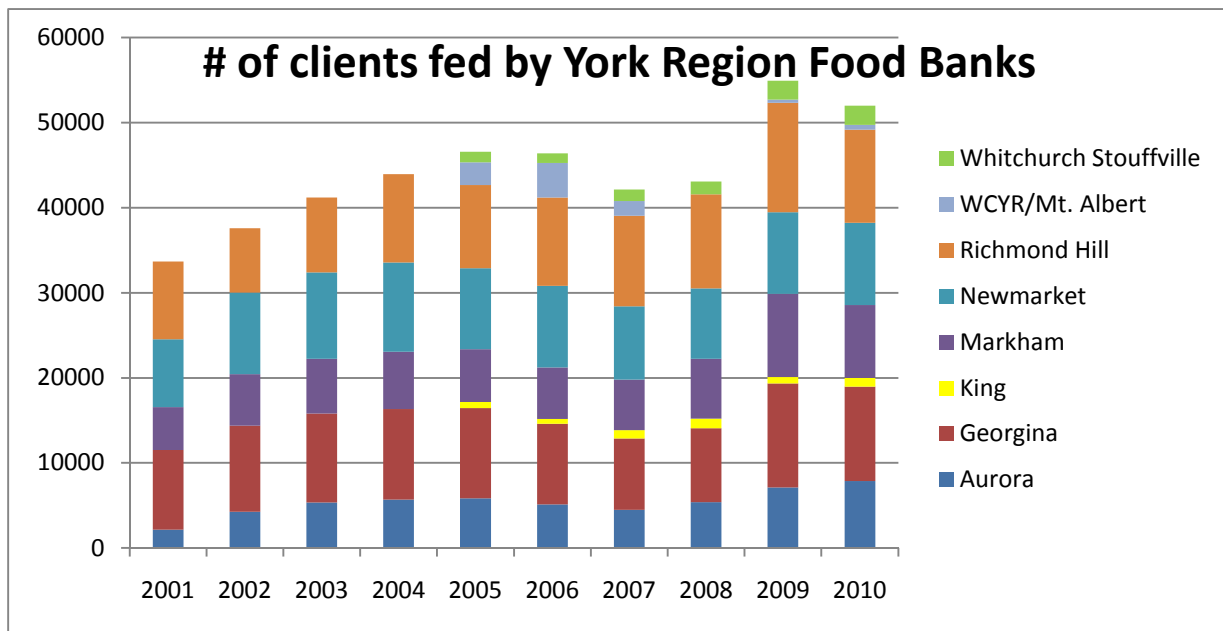


# Hunger in the Midst of Prosperity

## *The Need for Food Banks in York Region: 2011*

**In 2010, York Region food banks provided food for over 52,000 clients – up 20% from 2008**

Why do people in such a prosperous region need to use a food bank? In March of 2011, the York Region food Network interviewed 196 food bank clients to help answer this question.



When asked about hunger, 41% of adults said that they go hungry at least once per week.

Research into the issues of food security and hunger indicates that parents will go without food in order to make sure that there is enough food in the house for their children. Therefore, it is frequently found that children are buffered from the effects of poverty and hunger.

Even with this protection, when York Region food bank clients were asked about their children's experience with hunger, 17% of children go hungry at least once per week.

**46% of households accessing food banks had at least one person employed, and 27% indicated that employment was their main source of income.**

York Region food bank clients reported that they spend an average of 76% of their income on their rent or mortgage, including utilities. Households are considered to have housing affordability problems if more than 30% of household income is spent on housing costs<sup>1</sup>.

1. Statistics Canada. *Non-medical determinants of health*. 2.2 Living and working conditions – Housing affordability. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-221-x/2010001/def/def2-eng.htm> accessed December 15 2010

|                       | Family of Four, Ontario Works | One Person Household, Ontario Works |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Monthly Income</b> |                               |                                     |
| Basic Needs           | \$ 438.42                     | \$ 221.25                           |
| Shelter Allowance     | \$ 674.58                     | \$ 364.34                           |
| Child/Family Benefits | \$ 733.00                     |                                     |
| Federal Tax Credits   | \$ 63.00                      | \$ 21.00                            |
| <b>Total Income</b>   | <b>\$1,909.00</b>             | <b>\$ 606.59</b>                    |

| Selected Monthly Expenses                                | Three Bdr.        | Bachelor          |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Average Monthly Rent (may or may not include heat/hydro) | \$1,276.00        | \$ 764.00         |
| Food   | \$ 728.42         | \$ 243.47         |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                                    | <b>\$2,004.42</b> | <b>\$1,007.47</b> |

| Monthly Funds Remaining (for basic needs e.g. telephone, transportation, child care, household and personal care items, clothing, school supplies etc.) | Three Bdr. | Bachelor    |
|---|------------|-------------|
|   | \$ (95.42) | \$ (400.91) |
| Percentage of income required for rent  | 67%        | 126%        |
| Percentage of income required to purchase healthy food  | 38%        | 40%         |

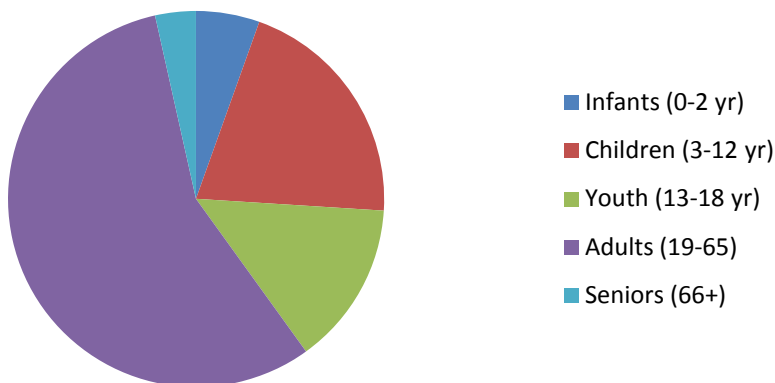
These scenarios illustrate that households on social assistance have little, if any, money left over to cover basic monthly expenses such as the following:

- Heat and hydro
- Telephone
- Internet, cable or satellite
- Laundry
- Toiletries and household cleaning products
- Insurance
- Transportation (bus pass, taxi or car expenses)
- Clothing
- Debt payment
- Gifts
- Non-prescription drugs and dispensing fees for prescription drugs
- Banking service charges
- Children's school costs
- Child care
- Education fund contributions
- Unexpected expenses

When budgeting their monthly income, people will pay their rent and other fixed expenses such as heat, hydro and transportation first, before food costs. Food becomes a "discretionary" expense, resulting in a diet of poor nutritional value.

The effects on health of income and income distribution, food insecurity, employment and working conditions, housing etc. are actually much stronger than the effects associated with behaviours such as diet, physical activity and even tobacco and excessive alcohol use. (The Canadian Facts, D. Raphael)

## People Accessing Food Banks in 2010 by Age Group



### Acknowledgments

Thank-you to the eight food banks in the Region for sharing their statistics and participating in Daily Bread Food Bank's annual Survey of People Accessing Emergency Food Programs in the GTA, as well as to the many volunteer interviewers who administered the surveys. Above all, we thank the food bank clients who participated in the survey process.