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Date: February 11, 2025
To: Mayor Davis and Members of Council
From: Councillor Samwell
Re: Declaration of a Food Insecurity Emergency in the City of Brantford

1.0 Resolution

WHEREAS food insecurity refers to the inability to obtain sufficient nutritious food due to financial constraints or other barriers, and poses a serious public health risk due to its association with higher rates of diseases and chronic health conditions; and

WHEREAS according to the 2024 Vital Signs Report, 1 in 6 Brantford area households experienced food insecurity in 2023; and

WHEREAS the primary cause of food insecurity is the lack of sufficient income to obtain food, housing and other basic needs; and

WHEREAS the City of Brantford provides support to low-income households through the administration of Ontario Works, homelessless programs, affordable housing programs, child care subsidy, and funding to school nutrition and emergency meal programs; and

WHEREAS a wide range of community agencies, service providers and faith groups are working to provide food and basic needs to Brantford residents including the Brantford Food Bank, Soup for the Soul, Brant Food for Thought, St. Vincent de Paul, Child Hunger Brant, and the Salvation Army, just to name a few; and

WHEREAS many Brantford residents rely upon provincial and federal income programs including Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Old Age Security (OAS), Employment Insurance (EI), and Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS); and

WHEREAS the income provided through provincial and federal programs has not kept up with rising costs of food, housing and other basic needs; and

WHEREAS social assistance rates for Ontario Works recipients have been frozen since 2018, with no increase or inflation-based adjustment despite the increased costs of living; and

WHEREAS the maximum single person monthly Ontario Works benefit for basic needs is \$343 and \$390 for shelter, totaling \$733 per month; and

WHEREAS the CMHC Average Market Rent (AMR) for a bachelor apartment in Brantford is \$984 and for a one bedroom is \$1,215; and

WHEREAS food banks and food programs, once thought to be a temporary support to people experiencing food insecurity, are now an ongoing part of the social safety net for many families; and

WHEREAS the number of individuals using the Brantford Food Bank has increased by 86% over the past four years, from 5,543 unique individuals in 2021, to 10,332 unique individuals in 2024, with 34% of those supported being children.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- A. THAT Brantford City Council declare a food insecurity emergency in the City of Brantford
- B. THAT the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada BE REQUESTED, in accordance with their respective mandates, to:
 - i. Increase the rates of income support programs to ensure they are adequate to address the basic needs of individuals and families; and
 - ii. Increase direct funding to local organizations providing food and other basic needs to families; and
 - iii. Increase funding to school nutrition programs, and commit to expanding school nutrition programs; and
 - iv. Increase investment in affordable housing solutions; and
 - v. Act to address the causes of food insecurity by establishing a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income; and
 - vi. Review the feasibility of additional income support measures, including the Groceries and Essentials Benefit and increases to minimum wage; and
 - vii. Include the reduction of food insecurity as a component of all appropriate government policies; and

C. THAT a copy of this Resolution BE FORWARDED to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Federation of Municipalities of Canada (FCM), Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), all Ontario Municipalities, Member of Provincial Parliament Brantford-Brant, Member of Parliament Brantford-Brant, Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, M.P., Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, M.P, Yves-Francois Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois, M.P. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada, M.P.P. Marit Stiles, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, Bonnie Crombie, Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, M.P.P. Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario, the Ontario Public School Boards Association, and the Canadian School Boards Association.

2.0 Corporate Policy Context

Council Priorities Strategic Theme #2: Focus on productive and collaborative partnerships.

3.0 Resources

Combined staffing resources to research and develop the Notice of Motion was approximately three hours.

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the resolution section.

By-law required yes no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk yes no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? yes no