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More funds needed to address food bank needs

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Dufferin County council has passed a motion to consider increasing the amount of money they will give to the Orangeville Food Bank and the Shelburne Food Bank next year.

During their meeting on Sept. 12, council received a delegation from Heather Hayes, executive director of the Orangeville Food Bank, requesting that council consider increasing the amount of funds given to the Orangeville Food Bank to $70,000 for 2025.

The increase in funding would be used to help address the growing demands and shortfalls at the Orangeville Food Bank.

According to the presentation to council, the Orangeville Food Bank saw 1,422 people access their services in August. In the same month, the food bank took in 21,000 pounds of food, of which 7,000 was reclaimed food from grocery stores in town and distributed 53,000 pounds of food to clients.

?That's a deficit of 30,000, it's a 143 per cent increase in what went out the front doors versus what we took in the back; that's pretty astounding,? said Hayes.

It was also noted in the report that from June 2020 to June 2024 the Orangeville Food Bank saw a 176 per cent increase in the number of clients they service and are expected to serve an additional 200 to 250 people between December and June 2025, for a total 1,800 people feed per month.

?We've never seen these kinds of numbers,? said Hayes.

Hayes recalled to county councillors a scenario last month where she was packing an order for a client and of the 70 points they had filled in their food bank cart, Hayes was able to fill less than 30 of the items because they did not have the stock.

?I was sad, I was hurt and wounded because I couldn't for the first time do something to help somebody,? said Hayes. ?I know this individual will not have enough food for the next two weeks and she cannot come back to the food bank for two weeks because I don't have it to give.?

Dufferin County Warden Darren White commented that the Orangeville Food Bank has an emergency need and asked what the organization needed immediately from the county and councillors.

?I need your contacts. You all know farmers and who do you know who has a food-based business that could support us,? said Hayes. ?I need all the people who have never donated to the food bank before. We've got a great donor based in the community, our donations are up 25 per cent over last year, nut it's not taking off.?

While councillors expressed support for increasing the funding, some also pointed out that by providing the increase funding they would be ?letting off? on the shortfalls of provincial and federal government policies.

?You can't keep coming back to the public purse,? said Mulmur Mayor Janet Horner. ?I'm not sure any of use are comfortable [with] the fact our taxpayers are paying the shot because the policies aren't correct.?

According to Dufferin County, the Orangeville Food Bank received $10,000 in funding from them in 2022 and the amount was increased to $50,000 in 2023 and 2024.