

Building capacity for a hunger-free Ontario

Learn how the Gay Lea Foundation's support of the Ontario Association of Food Banks helped 12 Ontario communities build capacity to safely stock, store & deliver food into the hands of those who need it most.

In March 2017, the Gay Lea Foundation partnered with the Ontario Association of Foods Banks' (OAFB) to address an immediate need in the food bank community with a \$20,000 donation to the OAFB's 2017 Capacity Building Program.

Through the OAFB program, [12 Ontario food banks](#) received grants in 2017 to grow their capacity to accept, store, and distribute fresh food to adults and children living with hunger in Ontario. From freezers and fridges, to shelving and fork lift batteries, the equipment purchased through these grants enabled the food banks to collectively grow their capacity for fresh and frozen food by up to 50 per cent, and serve 58,379 clients (28,677 adults and 29,702 children) across Ontario.

Read on to learn more about the impact of this donation in **Peterborough, Minden** and **Mississauga**, and how Gay Lea Foods is helping change lives and communities through the Gay Lea Foundation!

The Kawartha Food Share, Peterborough

The Kawartha Food Share in Peterborough serves over 7,000 adults and around 3,000 children facing hunger each month. On top of the clients that go through their food bank, they also support an additional 17,000 children through regular breakfast and nutrition programs.

Providing nutritious food to this many people would be impossible without a forklift to help offload incoming shipments of fresh and frozen food, move skids around their large food warehouse, build food bank orders, or safely store and access the food in their fridge and



“Without use of our forklift, we would be unable to accept fresh and frozen shipments at our warehouse, [making us] unable to distribute them to our foodbanks serving clients in our community. We are so thankful to now have a fully working, safe piece of equipment to be able to accept and distribute these much needed items.”

Ashlee Aitken
General Manager,
Kawartha Food Share

freezers. This is why, when the battery in their only forklift died last year, they appealed to the OAFB.

With the funds received through the Capacity Building Program, the Kawartha Food Share was able to purchase a replacement battery for the forklift, which was up and running in no time, whizzing around the warehouse and ensuring that 7,000 adults and 17,000 kids in need of food, are fed.

Minden Community Food Bank

Just over three years ago, Minden Food Centre moved to a larger location, which includes the food bank, a food storage distribution hub (including a walk-in cooler and walk-in freezer), and a community kitchen. From here, they serve 300 adults and 140 children a month.

Over the months, the Minden Community Food Bank has been gradually acquiring the equipment they needed to maximise their new space. Not wanting to spend money given to them for food on storage, they were relying on make-shift solutions and inefficient equipment, storing food on pallets and boxes and in two old, temperamental freezers. This made it harder to store food safely and was cumbersome and inefficient to work with.



“I have always made do with storing product on pallets as I was not comfortable using money for this rather than for food. Our most sincere thanks to the Gay Lea Foundation for helping us.”

Joanne Barnes, Manager
Minden Community Food Bank

Receiving funding from the Capacity

Building Program meant the Minden Community Food Bank was able to complete the shelving in the walk-in cooler and freezer, fit 50 per cent of the shelving required in the food storage hub, and replace the old freezers.

With the new shelves and freezers in place, the food bank can now provide families in need with fresh food such as vegetables, fruit, eggs and dairy, on a regular basis. The heavy-duty shelving also means they can bulk purchase canned goods, saving significant money for additional food, as they now have the means to store them.

The Mississauga Food Bank

One of the larger food banks in Ontario, The Mississauga Food Bank serves more than 5,000 adults and over 3,000 children each month. Over the past year, they’ve taken steps to improve the nutritional value of the food they distribute to their clients by aligning their food procurement strategy with *Canada’s Food Guide*.



One of their goals for 2017 was to provide 75 per cent of the daily recommended servings of each food group for all food bank clients and to reduce the amount of 'non-nutritional foods,' such as candy, snacks, desserts, and beverages by half.

But to offer more fresh, nutritious food, such as fruit, vegetables, dairy products and proteins, The Mississauga Food Bank needed somewhere to safely store it all. While they had a sizeable walk-in cooler on site, a lack of shelves in the cooler meant they weren't able to use it to its full potential.

A grant from the OAFB Capacity Building Program meant The Mississauga Food Bank could purchase and install racking in their walk-in cooler, maximising their space and increasing their capacity to accept fresh food by 13,500 lbs. This increased capacity means families facing hunger in the area can now receive more nutritious food.

“With the new racking in place we now have the capacity to accept and refrigerate a greater amount of fresh and frozen items, which is crucial to achieving our two goals to improve the nutritional value of the food that we distribute to our clients.”

Meghan Nicholls
Interim Executive Director
The Mississauga Food Bank

“Thank you again to the Gay Lea Foundation for partnering with us on our Capacity Building Program to help achieve our vision of a hunger-free Ontario. We couldn't do it without you.”

**Carolyn Stewart
Executive Director
Ontario Association of Food Banks**

Said then Gay Lea Foundation Chair, Gerry Van den Hengel, when the Capacity Building Program grants were distributed in September:

“Gay Lea Foods places great value on being able to contribute to the strengthening and sustainable development of communities through the support of community-based programs and services such as those provided by the OAFB. On behalf of the Foundation, we are enormously pleased to support the OAFB's Capacity Building Program, which not only helps to address communities' short term hunger needs, but also contributes to their long-term health and success.”

About the Ontario Association of Food Banks

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is the province's leading provider of emergency food support to front-line hunger-relief agencies and the leader in province-wide hunger research. Their mission is to strengthen communities by providing food banks with food, resources, and solutions that address both short and long-term food insecurity. The OAFB food bank network provides food and support to more than 499,000 adults, seniors and children facing hunger. Through 129 direct member food banks, and over 1,100 affiliates, inclusive of breakfast clubs, school meal programs, community food centres, and emergency shelters, the OAFB provides over 6 million pounds of fresh and non-perishable food to those who need it most. The OAFB is not government funded and relies exclusively on the generosity of caring individuals and organizations to support its vision of a hunger-free Ontario.

About the Gay Lea Foundation

The Gay Lea Foundation is the official registered charity and collaborative forum for Gay Lea Foods and its members, directors and employees to support families and communities in need. Since receiving charitable status in 2014, the Foundation has provided more than \$685,000 in funding support for education, poverty relief and community well-being projects in Canada and around the world. The primary source of funding for the Foundation is an annual \$150,000 contribution from Gay Lea Foods, which is supplemented by personal contributions from across the Gay Lea Foods family. Funding applications are assessed twice a year by the Foundation's Board of Directors, which is comprised of Gay Lea Foods Directors, delegates, dairy producer members and employees.