

MLA JULIE GREEN – YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE – IN THE MEDIA

Yellowknifers step up to provide food for the needy after food bank,

Food Rescue close

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Temporary closures due to potential spread of COVID-19 leave gaps for city's most vulnerable

People in Yellowknife are helping to fill the gaps left by the temporary closure of two organizations that provide food for those who cannot afford it.

The Yellowknife Food Bank and Yellowknife Food Rescue announced this week that they're suspending operations due to concerns about the potential spread of COVID-19.

Food Rescue collects food from grocery stores that would otherwise have been thrown out and donates it to organizations such as the Yellowknife Women's Centre and Side Door. The food bank gave out food hampers to the needy twice a month.

The executive director of the Yellowknife Women's Society said the food rescue program was an important part of their operations, particularly their food hamper program.

"Fortunately, so far the community has been very generous, with cash donations coming in to help us buy groceries and people dropping off donations to the shelter," said Bree Denning in an email.

"One of our staff has been reaching out to grocery stores today to see if there is something that we can do in the interim, in terms of collecting food that would otherwise be thrown away, to use in our shelter and to share with the community."

Businesses, Facebook groups pitch in

To help meet any increased demand, Northern News Services Ltd. is asking its readers to pitch in. The newspaper chain dropped the paywall from its site to make information more accessible during the pandemic.

It's asking people to donate \$1.30 for every newspaper they download, with \$1 going to the Salvation Army's food hamper program and \$0.30 to the company that processes the payments.

Julie Green is the MLA for Yellowknife Centre. The riding includes most of the city's downtown, where many of the city's homeless live. She is urging people to donate grocery gift cards or cash to agencies such as the Yellowknife Women's Society and YWCA.

She said the homeless who relied on the food bank and Food Rescue are among the most vulnerable during this pandemic.

"We still have a downtown homeless population that doesn't that can't practice self-isolation or physical distancing the way you or I can." said Green. "They don't have anywhere to go. They're a very vulnerable population because they have existing health issues, so contracting the virus could be very difficult for them to fight."

Other Yellowknifers are making offers of food donations and delivery services through the Facebook group Caremongering YK.

The Salvation Army is anticipating the closures will increase demand for its food program. It hands out food hampers every Monday and Thursday. But it's now going to be by appointment, said executive director Jason Brinson.

"We're trying to keep people safe. Normally people just sardine into the lobby and wait for their hampers. Now we're asking them to call ahead and make an appointment."

Brinson said the new approach to distributing hampers is coming into effect on Monday.