



2023 IMPACT REPORT



**PARKDALE
FOOD CENTRE**

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the Parkdale Food Centre, we gather everyday at our table on the unceded and unsundered land of the Anishnabe Algonquin Nation. In doing so, we stand in the footsteps of many whose rich and cherished food traditions and practices have been extinguished through colonialism, racism and cultural appropriation.

Food security and food justice are at the heart of our work at Parkdale Food Centre. As a part of our commitment to reconciliation, and in acknowledging the land where we gather, we recognize that food security includes powers such as colonialism, that are built into our food system and impact who has a seat at the table, whose voices are heard and who experiences the most food insecurity.

We strive to honour the peoples and the land of the Anishnaabe Algonquin Nation, and commit to listening, learning and taking action in assisting to decolonize, heal and reconcile.



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MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters of Parkdale Food Centre,



As the new Executive Director, having joined Parkdale Food Centre in January 2024, it is both a privilege and an honour to share with you the incredible work accomplished in 2023. Although I am new to this role, I am already profoundly inspired by the dedication, resilience, and compassion that define our community.

In 2023, Parkdale Food Centre faced numerous challenges, yet we emerged stronger and more united. Our team, volunteers, and partners worked tirelessly to provide connection and nourishment through food.

The true measure of our success lies in the stories of those we serve. Families finding stability, individuals gaining confidence and new skills, youth engaging as active leaders in their communities, and volunteers and Neighbours forging new friendships – these are the heartbeats of the Parkdale Food Centre. These stories inspire us and drive our mission forward.

As I grow into this new role, I am committed to continuing the legacy of advocacy and community building that Parkdale Food Centre is known for. Together, we will address the root causes of food insecurity and strive for a future where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your unwavering support and trust. I look forward to working alongside each of you as we embark on this journey together.

With deep appreciation,

Beth Ciavaglia
Executive Director, Parkdale Food Centre



MESSAGE FROM CHAIR OF THE BOARD

OUTGOING CHAIR

Dear Parkdale Food Centre Friends, Neighbours,
Donors and Supporters,



This will mark my last year as the Chair of the Parkdale Food Centre Board of Directors, how did these years go by so quickly? As I reflect on 2023 I am reminded of the many challenges that we faced. In December of 2022, Social Service Relief Funding that significantly supported our work throughout the pandemic ended abruptly which meant starting 2023 with far fewer resources; over the course of the year, rising costs of living and decreased supports meant the

number of Neighbours accessing our services climbed dramatically – by the fall of 2023 we were seeing 30% more Neighbours at our grocery program than at the beginning of the year (numbers that would continue to climb into 2024). More importantly, when I reflect on 2023, I am reminded of how we pulled together to end the year stronger and more determined to continue the work to ensure that our Neighbours – your Neighbours – are provided with a welcoming place to call their own.

I am always in awe of the day-to-day work that goes into our centre. How often does someone volunteer in a Board role and get to work side by side with such an amazing team? The dedicated, passionate staff whose daily goal is to always offer a place for Neighbours to meet, share stories and a meal, a cup of tea or coffee, or simply a conversation. The hundreds of volunteers who make the Grocery Program and Community Kitchen run so smoothly, giving their all to make our Neighbours feel connected. I know I don't thank them enough. We couldn't do what we do without them. Our donors and partners, without whose generosity, Parkdale Food Centre could not continue the programs and support that our Neighbours rely on every day.

I am often reminded that in order for individuals to be well they need to be part of a community. Wellness means community. Connecting with “place” “space” and “self”, and forming friendships along the way is what I believe Parkdale Food Centre offers everyone on their journey.

To quote Leonard Cohen: There is a crack in everything and that is how the light gets in. Thanks to our staff, volunteers, donors, Neighbours and partners that make PFC's light shine brightly.

Deb Abbott
Chair, Board of Directors



INCOMING CHAIR

Dear Parkdale Friends and Neighbours,



I am honoured to be taking on the role of Chair of the Parkdale Food Centre Board of Directors. When I first joined PFC's Board of Directors in 2022 I thought that I had a fairly good understanding of the organization. PFC provides, among other things, dignified access to nourishing, wholesome food, an advocacy program that supports Neighbours and seeks to end food insecurity, engaging youth programs and a place where all are welcome. I soon realized

that while this is all true, it is only skimming the surface. There are so many intangibles that truly make PFC special. It is the passion, care and generosity of its staff and volunteers. It is its history of aiming high for the organization and its community, of forging creative partnerships, and of always transforming to ensure the best impact possible. It is the sense of dignity that it offers to all who enter its premises. It is people of different backgrounds engaging in simple yet powerful acts of breaking bread and sharing conversation. It is community.

PFC had to weather numerous changes and challenges in 2023. Like many similar organizations PFC had to find ways to help an ever-growing number of friends in need with fewer resources. Thanks to its incredible staff and volunteers, its strong sense of community and its commitment to its values, however, PFC has demonstrated another intangible characteristic – resilience. I am incredibly optimistic about the organization's future and look forward to serving PFC in my new role.

Thank you to Deb Abbott for her incredible dedication to PFC over many years and for all the help she has given me personally in my role as a Director and in anticipation of my new position as Chair.

Alex Wilson
Incoming Chair, Board of Directors

SPECIAL THANK YOU

Deb Abbott's leadership as Board Chair guided Parkdale Food Centre through many ups and downs during her tenure, always with a compassionate heart and determination. Her contributions have undoubtedly left a lasting impact on the community and the lives of those she has touched as displayed by the number of Neighbors that know her by name and gather to pay her a visit when she volunteers her time in our Kitchen.

Her hands-on involvement as Board Chair & Kitchen Volunteer have not only nourished countless individuals but has also fostered a sense of belonging for all in the PFC community.

On behalf of the entire PFC community, thank you, Deb, for your invaluable contributions and dedication. Wishing you all the best in what comes next, knowing that wherever your journey takes you, you will continue to make a profound difference.



Nutritious food is a Human Right.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT TO FOOD?



The Right to Food is about ensuring that all people regardless of their gender, race, immigration status or age are able to access food in a dignified way.

Despite producing more than enough food to feed everyone in Canada, there is a lack of access and availability of healthy and culturally appropriate food to many. Food insecurity is the result of poverty and removes choice and dignity when it comes to feeding oneself and one's family.

Meeting basic needs, including food, requires redesigning work and welfare systems to ensure adequate income. Food charities providing what is supposed to be temporary emergency food provision are overstretched and under-resourced - a greatly insufficient response to a systemic issue.

2023'S KNOWING OUR NEIGHBOURS SURVEY



Revealed that many Neighbours, despite access to our and other community food programs, are still deeply struggling with poverty and food insecurity.

Who uses PFC services?

64%

of persons in households responding to the survey identified themselves as being Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour

69%

of households had at least one person with one or more disabilities

68%

of households represented in the survey reported an annual income of \$20,000 or less, which was also the annual average of incomes

82%

of households said it had been more difficult to access and/or afford food in the last year, citing inflation, rising food prices, and lack of increase in social assistance rates being the cause

61%

of households reported that food ran out and there wasn't money to buy more

70%

of households reported being unable to afford a healthy and balanced diet

49%

of households were unable to afford and access culturally appropriate food



On average, households spend around 50% of their income on housing alone.



MINO'WEESINI GROCERY PROGRAM



THE NEED SKYROCKETS

In late April this year, the Federal Government released the 2023 statistics on food insecurity in Canada: 23% of Canadians – nearly nine million individuals – experienced food insecurity in 2023. This is close to one in four Canadians – a number that is even higher in Canadian children. Importantly, some folks are experiencing food insecurity even more acutely: 46% of people living in female lone-parent families, 40.4% of Black individuals, and 36.8% of Indigenous persons.

These numbers translated into record-breaking numbers of Neighbours accessing our Grocery Program in 2023. In 2022, on average, we provided groceries for 936 individuals each month – by the end of 2023 this number jumped to 1,300 – a 38% increase. Combined with a drop in funding from all levels of government in 2023, this meant upholding our commitment to consistent availability or nourishing, culturally appropriate, fresh food at Mino'Weesini was a true challenge in 2023. Committing to a space that is bright, welcoming and prioritizes choice, agency and nourishment, despite these challenges, is cemented in our belief that how we share food matters deeply.



A TRANSFORMATION TAKES SHAPE

Since moving our grocery program to 5 Hamilton Ave North in 2021, we've been on a journey to transform Mino'Weesini into an inclusive space for food access and a cornerstone for community engagement. In 2023, we took huge strides in that direction, thanks in large part to a unique opportunity to participate in RBC's Social Impact Learning Program, and to a strong investment by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. For 12 weeks, we worked alongside eight passionate, skilled, consultants from RBC to create roadmaps to where we wanted to go; this resulted in the groundwork needed to then work with KWC Architects to design a new layout for our space. Longtime volunteer Mark Rollins began the process of implementing creative technological solutions. We're so grateful to the amazing team of volunteers and Neighbours who have not only embarked wholeheartedly on this journey with us, but have contributed ideas, time, and invaluable feedback that are carrying this process forward into 2024 and beyond.



COMMUNITY KITCHEN

RECIPES FOR CHANGE

Over the years, the Parkdale Food Centre kitchen has hosted an incredible diversity of community groups who all have one thing in common: a belief that food builds community. In 2023, our team developed a new opportunity for groups to engage in our kitchen community. Through a specific focus on welcoming groups of colleagues looking to create delicious meals together while learning about how to be advocates for stronger healthier communities, Recipes for Change was born. Interactive, thought-provoking and empowering, participants of these workshops build skills, knowledge, and connection by preparing a delicious meal from scratch and participating in facilitated discussions on issues that relate to food insecurity. Groups learn how we can take on an active role in reframing food charity paradigms using social justice strategies. Since its launch in the fall of 2023, we have hosted 9 groups that have helped prepare 1,350 meals for our grocery program.

EQUIPPING OUR SPACE

In 2023, our community kitchen underwent a major upgrade. Early in the fall, water damage to the floor became too significant to ignore and we were forced to replace the flooring urgently. Our kitchen team borrowed Causeway Work Centre's kitchen to prepare meals while new anti-slip, durable floors were installed. Later in the year, we were awarded an Ontario Trillium Foundation Capital Grant for more urgent work: replacing the ventilation system above our gas range, replacing the aging ranges themselves, and installing a grease interception system. These upgrades represented an investment of over \$100K into the longevity of the space that makes our beautiful weekly meals possible.



COMMUNITY ADVOCACY



ADVOCACY IN MOTION LAUNCHES

In November 2023, the launch of Advocacy In Motion (AIM), a leadership and advocacy development program, marked an important step in our commitment to equip, inspire, and empower our community with a focus on amplifying Neighbour voices. In its inaugural cohort, 11 Neighbours from different backgrounds built upon their existing knowledge and skills over the course of 10 weekly sessions, supported by two of their peers employed as Community Navigators. The group explored the roots of poverty, building community and inclusivity, self-and-community care, storytelling and effective communication, how to organize to create social and political change, and so much more.

An important part of the program and subsequent advocacy opportunities was paying the participants for their time and travel, as well as sharing a delicious meal prepared by our kitchen team. Participants developed practical skills to challenge oppression on personal and systemic levels, as well as advocacy and organizing skills to speak out/act on issues that are important to them. The skills shone through in their participation and contributions to numerous events, including: the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy Roundtable, a Parliamentary Breakfast with the Anti Poverty Caucus of Canada, and multiple consultations on the Canada Disability Benefit.



A NEW COMMUNITY ADVOCACY OFFICE

Our Advocacy office also launched in 2023 and over the course of the year received hundreds of requests from Neighbours for support. The Advocacy Team worked collaboratively alongside our Neighbours to:

- Develop personalized action plans to address needs and accomplish goals
- Connect to community resources
- Offer information, direction, and support in navigating difficult situations
- Fill out government forms, apply to benefits, and follow up with referrals

The team also connected with other agencies to let them know about PFC's services and advocated for Neighbours needs to other service providers when appropriate. In the process of supporting the community through the Advocacy Office, we have built trust with Neighbours, relationships with partners, and stronger connections to supportive resources across the City.



"Being a member of the Advocacy in Motion group was a terrific learning experience for me and other members. We learned so much about social justice, community activism, advocacy, and the functions of different levels of government. It taught me how to access each level of government in order to appeal to them about causes and issues that are critical to people and communities. Examples are the Disability Benefit, free public transport, and the Right to Food. I'm much more of a social activist along with others than before. I, and we, have much stronger voices to effect change."

– AIM cohort 1 participant

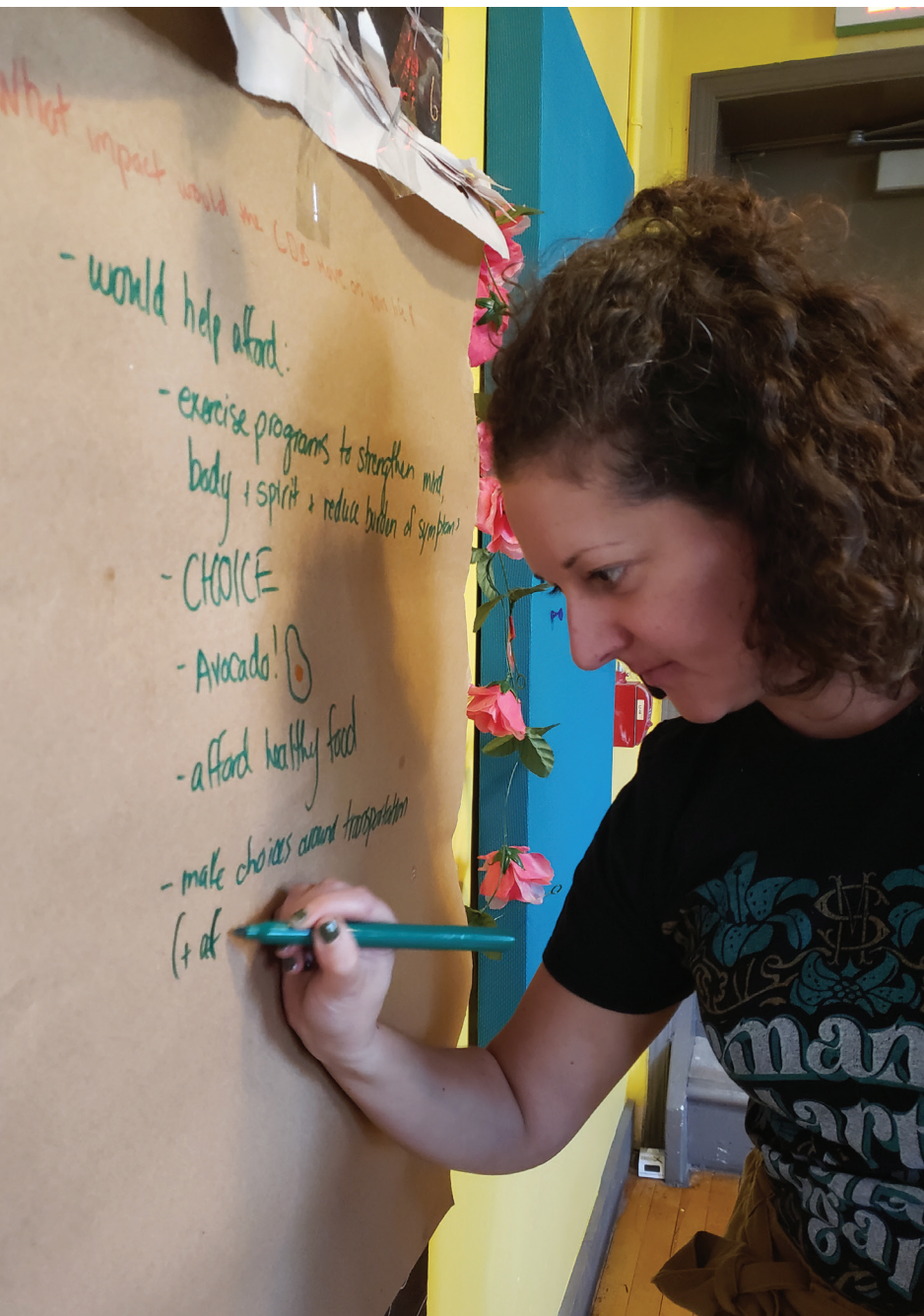


The impacts of this work are not small:

- By coordinating with emergency housing providers, several of our Neighbours were housed after months to years of living homeless or in precarious housing.
- Many Neighbours gained access to benefits by applying for Seniors Dental and Drug Benefits, subsidized electricity support, ODSP, and other entitlements through being connected with free tax clinics.
- More broadly, Neighbours' mental health improved, stress and isolation reduced, and many felt increased agency over their lives, helping to restore hope in face of ongoing systemic barriers.



"Welcoming spaces like this help me feel less isolated and actually, part of a community that allows me to participate and lifts me up in my spirits. Most places of assistance do not do this in my opinion. I can't tell you the number of times a food pantry/food bank has me feeling worse about myself or my situation. I always cried when I left."



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



TODAY'S SOLUTIONARIES

2023 saw the graduation of 42 amazing youth from Thirteen's Social Enterprise and Growing Futures' Solutionary Crew (our 14-week youth employment programs). Over the course of the year, these youth identified issues that mattered to them and dove deep to activate their community around them. They surveyed 100 of their peers to better understand how food insecurity affected high school students and made sweatshirts to carry the messages they found: 65% said they were frequently distracted in class because of hunger; 43% also said the prices in their school's cafeteria were not affordable for their family; and 83% said they didn't see their culture's foods represented in their school cafeteria. The youth also collaboratively created a powerful zine on what being a Solutionary means and hosted seniors in partnership with The Atelier for an intergenerational cooking workshop. F opportunity to break bread and connect.

TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Over the course of 2023, we provided placements to 10 youth to support their educational requirements and employment training goals, in partnership with the Youth Services Bureau, Algonquin College's Bachelor of Early Learning and Community Development and Social Service Worker program, and a new partnership in 2023 with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board's Focus on Youth program. These temporary opportunities are vital supportive work experiences for youth, focused on opportunities to build skills and confidence, and social justice training aimed at inspiring and empowering youth to put forth solutions to complex problems.



OTTAWA COMMUNITY FOOD PARTNERSHIP

A POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY FOR OUR CITY

In the years leading up to 2023, the Ottawa Community Food Partnership (OCFP), the Ottawa Food Bank (OFB), and the Coalition of Community Health and Resources Centres (CHRC) spearheaded work with the City on an official Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ottawa. This groundwork was accomplished through the aforementioned groups working with the Tamarack Institute's Cities Ending Poverty initiative and the City of Ottawa's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan. In the summer of 2023, a Community Roundtable was formed, bringing together a diverse group of voices from various sectors to begin drafting Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy, building consensus on priority areas, and focusing action plans for building momentum on collective work.

During the fall of 2023, the City of Ottawa held several listening sessions with stakeholders to ensure that the priorities outlined accurately reflect what was needed in the community. A total of 55 organizations were represented, many of whom were partners of OCFP. Another Community Roundtable followed aimed at identifying tangible actions for advancing each priority. A total of 69 organizations attended, and one fifth of attendees were people with lived and living experience of poverty, many of whom were invited to Community Roundtables by OCFP. Through these roundtables and listening sessions the scope of Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy was defined around five pillars: food security, financial security, economic development, employment, and system level change. The community aspiration that emerged for the strategy is that, "people have the resources they need so they can make decisions about their well-being and pursue their full potential."

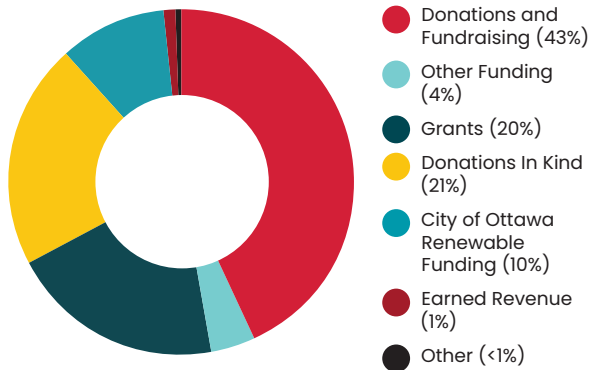
REVISIONING THE OTTAWA COMMUNITY FOOD PARTNERSHIP POST-PANDEMIC

In December of 2023, OCFP started work with the Tamarack Institute to determine new directions for the partnership that represented current needs, assets, and priorities of partner agencies. Partners identified a shared mission of working collaboratively to reduce food insecurity in Ottawa with a focus on equity, justice, resource sharing, capacity building and advocacy. Through our work over the next few years, we are aiming to continue to build dignified communities and neighbourhoods, increase awareness of the root causes of food insecurity amongst civil society and policy makers, and advocate for a city in which people have the means to afford and access food that is nutritionally and culturally appropriate.

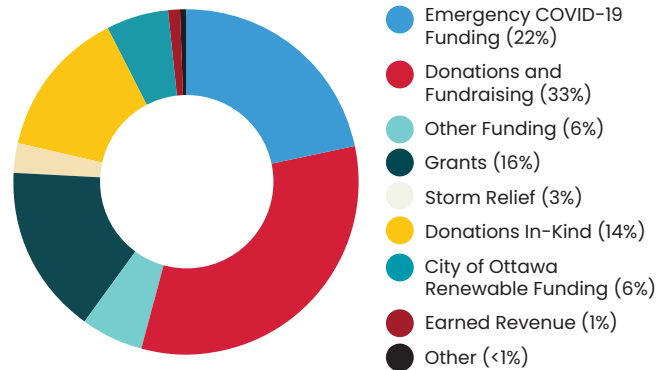


A SNAPSHOT OF PFC'S 2023 NUMBERS

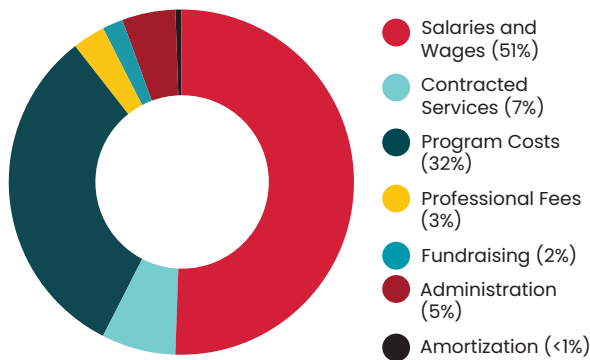
REVENUE 2023



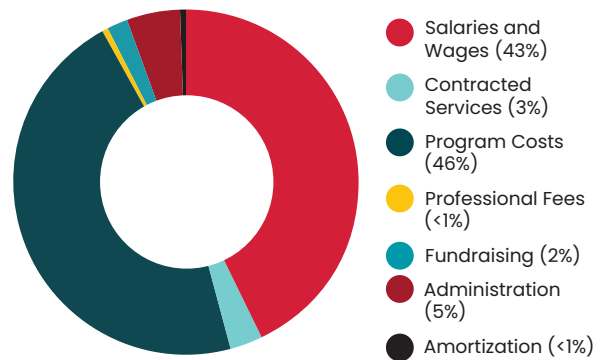
REVENUE 2022



EXPENSES 2023



EXPENSES 2022



THANK YOU!



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