



COMMUNITY

Staying safe while feeding the need during the holidays

Area residents encouraged to follow public health guidelines when donating to food banks during COVID-19 pandemic

By [This Week](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

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Area residents who plan to donate to local food banks as part of their holiday gift-giving are encouraged to do so safely amid the pandemic.

The recently released Hunger Report 2020 from Feed Ontario shows COVID-19 has led to a significant increase in food bank use in Ontario. With the onset of the pandemic, Ontario food banks saw a 26 per cent increase in first-time visitors between March and June 2020, according to the report. Demand continues to be

high during the second wave of the pandemic, but it's equally important to ensure helping address the need remains safe.

“During COVID-19 and with the festive season on the horizon, donations to food banks are welcomed,” says Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit manager of health protection Richard Ovcharovich. “By being informed and following guidelines, we can ensure donated food items are safe and do not pose a health risk.”

Area residents are encouraged to follow these guidelines when donating to local food banks:

- •. Stay home if sick to prevent the spread of illness to others.
- •. Call food banks in advance to see what food items are in high demand or what will be taken. Ask what COVID-19 precautions are in place for making donations.
- •. When dropping off food items, wear a mask/face covering and keep two metres apart from others.
- •. Consider making a financial donation instead.
- •. Give food that is properly labeled to reduce allergy risks.
- •. Donate canned items in good shape. Items that are dented, bulging, rusted or damaged, may allow illness-causing germs into the food, which can produce a dangerous toxin like botulism.
- •. Be aware of expiry dates; don't donate food you wouldn't serve your own family.
- •. All packages or containers must be properly sealed.

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Public Health Inspectors with the health unit work closely with food bank staff in Haliburton County, Northumberland County and the City of Kawartha Lakes to ensure the safety of food. Regular and routine inspections of these food premises are done, and the health unit also provides guidelines to food banks for the safe

handling, storage and distribution of food.

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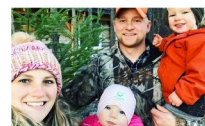
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