

Calgary Meals on Wheels

Why Food Insecurity?



**1 in 6
Canadian
children are
food insecure.**
(Tarasuk et al., 2016)

The challenge of food insecurity has become increasingly pronounced in Alberta, where the current rate stands as one of the highest among all provinces, affecting 22% of the population.¹ This alarming statistic translates to 1 in 5 households experiencing food insecurity in the province.² The escalating inflation and the rising cost of living have cast a broad impact, with 2,281,100 families across Canada living above the poverty line, reporting food insecurity.³ This complex problem impacts the social well-being, academic and economic potential, and overall health of our community.

As the affordability of everyday essentials, including food, continues to diminish, a distressing trend emerges. For some, the consequence is skipping meals; a sacrifice made by 36% of Calgary parents who forego their own nourishment to ensure their children are fed. It's important to recognize that food insecurity is not a matter of lacking effort, skill, or motivation; rather, it is rooted in economic and income disparities.⁴ Surprisingly, 68.2% of food-insecure Albertan households earn their income through employment.⁵

Food insecurity continues to persist, as in 2023, 25% of Calgaryans found themselves unable to meet their basic financial needs – an increase from 19% the previous year.⁶ This underscores the need for Calgary Meals on Wheels and the services we provide to help address food insecurity in our community.

¹ Sharanjit Uppal. 2023. Food insecurity among Canadian families. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>

² Alberta Health Services. 2023. Household Food Insecurity. <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page18436.aspx>

³ Sharanjit Uppal. 2023. Food insecurity among Canadian families. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2023001/article/00013-eng.htm>

⁴ Hiren Mansukhani. October 9. 2023. Behind the food insecurity forcing some Calgaryans to skip meals. Calgary Herald. <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/food-insecurity-making-life-stressful-for-some-calgarians>

⁵ Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA, Tarasuk V. (2023) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2022. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

⁶ Hiren Mansukhani. October 9. 2023. Behind the food insecurity forcing some Calgaryans to skip meals. Calgary Herald. <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/food-insecurity-making-life-stressful-for-some-calgarians>



Since 1965, Calgary Meals on Wheels has specialized in preparing and delivering nutritious meals, a critical service in Calgary's charitable food-security landscape. We believe that everyone deserves to be well-fed and recognize that reliable nutrition is a critical link to overall individual and societal health and wellness. We have continued to grow alongside Calgary's population, addressing the escalating demand for nutritious, affordable, locally prepared and delivered meals. With the rise of inflation and less accessibility to affordable, nutrient rich foods, Calgary is facing a rise in food insecurity.

Our Production team prepares approximately 5,500 meals each day in our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen, working alongside our in-house Registered Dietitian, Dietary Technologist and Red Seal Chefs, to prepare affordable meals that are nutritious and accommodating to special diets. Our most of our locally prepared meals are offered at a flexible sliding scale rate, meaning even the lowest income can be well fed. Our dedicated team of employees, volunteers and donors form a robust network that ensures the success of our vision and mission. Calgary Meals on Wheels makes a tangible difference in the lives of vulnerable community members through our home delivery, school, and group/agency programs.

Our Impact

Calgary Meals on Wheels serves clients from all walks of life, from 3 years old to those celebrating their 101st birthdays. In the year 2023, we surpassed the million-meal mark for the first time in our history, and served approximately 2,300 adults (directly), 7,200 school children, and thousands of other adults (indirectly) by providing over 65,000 meals to social service agencies that also support vulnerable clients throughout the community.

Building on the success of 2022, our impact in 2023 has exceeded expectations, responding to the growing demand for our services. A significant portion of our beneficiaries, 65%, are children benefitting from our Student Nutrition and Hot Soup Programs. These initiatives, along with our My Choice Menu and Our Chef's Daily Special, contribute to our mission of providing nutritious meals to those in need.



**We provide
over 800,000
student meals
each year.**

Through Our More than a Meal program, over 420 dedicated volunteers deliver not only meals, but also the opportunity for social connection, wellness checks and recognition gifts such as birthday flowers. Each year, we discover significant positive health and wellness outcomes amongst our clients. The testimonials from our clients speak volumes, our 2023 client survey results indicate that 98% of clients said that the service allows them to eat more regularly and eat more nutritious food than they did before. 94% feel healthier and have more energy after being on the program; and 90% worry less about monthly household expenses. In addition, Our Going Home Program in partnership with Alberta Health Services, supports seniors 60+ who are leaving the hospital and significantly reduces hospital readmission as they can recover in the safety of their home while Calgary Meals on Wheels delivers nutritious meals to their doors.



Goals and the Future

We recognize that food insecurity is on the rise, and that we are in a unique position to help solve this problem. In 2024-26, and as stated in our strategic plan, we intend to expand on our mission by increasing awareness of services and extending our reach to those experiencing food insecurity, to achieve this, we aim to implement a research-informed strategy for menu development to ensure that we can better serve those in need of our services.



Female lone-parent and racial minority main income earner families are among the most likely to experience food insecurity.

(StatsCan, 2023)

To ensure sustainable growth we remain committed to upholding our current high standards for the safety and well-being of our clients and are establishing a robust foundation for future growth and leadership in our field through the utilization of technologies, tools, and best practices to remain reliable and responsive in the face of changing times.

To secure our future, we are focused on establishing a diverse financial foundation that supports long-term sustainability and growth. This ensures our ability to consistently produce and deliver affordable, high-quality meals to both current and expanding markets, even in the face of economic uncertainty. Through these strategic measures, we aim not only to fulfill our mission but also to thrive and make a lasting impact on our community.