



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec 19, 2023

URGENT APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

Almost 27,000 individuals from nearly 9,000 households turn to the Christmas Exchange for help!

OTTAWA, ON – There is under a week left until Christmas, **but there are still 190 households in Ottawa** who are waiting to hear if the Caring and Sharing Exchange can provide them with a warm meal for Christmas. With support from the generous people of Ottawa, we don't think they will need to wait much longer!

Through the 108-year-old Christmas Exchange program, community members in need, most of which are seniors and children, receive food assistance in the form of a voucher or a food hamper. This program ensures that struggling families can enjoy a healthy and festive meal, leaving them with a sense of dignity and hope for the new year.

We have all faced challenges due to the dramatic increase in the cost of living, but it has been exceptionally hard on families who were already struggling to make ends meet. For families who have experienced job loss or seniors who have been living in isolation, being able to shop for food or having money to purchase all the fixings for a Christmas dinner is a privilege they cannot afford. **This year, the Caring and Sharing Exchange received applications from almost 9,000 households requesting food assistance over the holidays, and as of today, 190 households are still on their waitlist to receive help.**

"We are hearing from the community that many are struggling this year." says Cindy Smith, Executive Director of the Caring and Sharing Exchange. "We have seen an overwhelming 19% increase in the need! Ottawa is such a generous community; we are confident we will be able to get there. There is no greater goal for us at this time of year than knowing every person on our list will have the means to celebrate the holidays with the ones they love."

The food hampers provided through the Christmas Exchange Program contain all the fixings to create a festive holiday meal: from turkey and stuffing to cookies and hot chocolate. They also include a variety of vegetables and fruits, which are crucial additions to a nutritious meal but are not always accessible to those on tight budgets. In partnership with Giant Tiger, they also offer gift vouchers to households who may have dietary restrictions or do not feel comfortable having a hamper delivered to their door. These vouchers offer recipients the flexibility to shop for items that suit the needs of their family.

"Many of us take a homemade meal on Christmas for granted, but for many families it is a luxury," says Cindy. "We are reaching out to the generous members of Ottawa today to request donations so that we can eliminate our waiting list all together. Every dollar counts and will put us one step closer to ensuring not one person on our list goes hungry over the holidays."

Those interested in donating can do so by visiting www.CaringandSharing.ca.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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