

COVID-19 Response

We All Want to Make a Difference. Here's How.

There's increasing pressure on food banks to keep up with demand. Here's how you can help.

Tania Amardeil



Chris Hatch
CEO,
Food Banks Canada

As the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps the world, Canadians from coast to coast are being impacted. Food Banks Canada, a national charity, is seeing that impact firsthand.

"We're seeing on average a 20 percent increase in food bank use across Canada," says Chris Hatch, CEO of Food Banks Canada. Food banks are facing a triple threat: increased demand, fewer donations (since many spring food drives were cancelled, Canadians are grocery shopping less, and disruptions in the food supply chain are preventing grocery stores from making their usual large

donations), and challenges with volunteers and staff. "It's a perfect storm," says Hatch.

Communities pulling together

The good news is that Canadians are rising to the challenge. "We're seeing tremendous support from all levels," says Hatch. This includes support from governments, corporate partners, various foundations, and celebrities like Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively.

"The biggest one for me is that we've had over 25,000 individuals make donations on our website," says Hatch. "This unprecedented support has been heart-warming."

The organization still needs more support. "Volunteers are the life blood of food banks, and there's been a major drop off in volunteers during COVID-19," says Hatch. "A lot of volunteers are seniors, so rightfully they're self-isolating and staying at home. Others have to stay home with children or think that the risks are too high."

Food banks' volunteer and staff challenges have disrupted their operations. Many have put out an urgent call to local communities for volunteers.

Making a difference

If you can't volunteer, you can still help. "We're appealing to all



Canadians to donate financially to help ensure that our neighbours living with food insecurity have enough food to make it through this pandemic," says Hatch. "We need everyone's help to get through this together. And no gift is too small or too large." ■



Please visit foodbanksCanada.ca to donate to the COVID-19 Response Fund and to get involved.



Cheers to Volunteers

Paula Speevak

A noticeable national surge of compassion and innovation shown by volunteers and the non-profit and charitable sector during the COVID-19 outbreak has been truly awe-inspiring and a source of hope for so many.

Supporting vulnerable people and continuing essential services while staying safe and practising physical distancing has been a challenging tightrope to walk. But all across Canada, the challenge is being embraced by volunteers of all ages.

Governments, businesses, and community organizations have stretched their resources and adapted their policies to respond. It's time to applaud every volunteer who has stepped up, stepped cautiously, and, at

times, stepped back in response to this pandemic.

National Volunteer Week is a time to highlight the enormous contributions of Canada's volunteers. People are formally volunteering through organizations and checking in with family, friends, and neighbours. When you see groceries at a front door, chances are a volunteer delivered them. When you call a help line, a volunteer is there to listen to you and help you find support. Volunteers are continuing to drive people to doctor's appointments, bring them hot meals, and help out in shelters.

Volunteers who are isolating at home are also continuing to support others. They're tutoring, mentoring, and connecting with people online. Volunteers are leading sing-alongs, organ-

izing concerts, and teaching yoga. They're teaching others to participate in online discussions, worship services, and classes. Businesses are finding new ways to support employee volunteering by directing skills, goods, and services to help communities. During this COVID-19 pandemic, new resources are being developed to help people reduce risks and to make volunteering safer for everyone.

Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, Canada already had much to celebrate with close to 13 million Canadians volunteering more than 2 billion hours each year. Volunteer centres in communities work year-round to connect people with organizations and volunteer resource managers match people's skills and passions to address critical

social, economic, and environmental issues.

This year, perhaps more than ever, it's especially important to thank those who are new to volunteering, those who have continued to volunteer, and the volunteers who are staying back to keep themselves and others safe. Cheers to Canada's volunteers! ■



How Technology Is Mobilized in the Domestic Violence and Homelessness Response to COVID-19

Tech social enterprise HelpSeeker has partnered with social sector leaders to support vulnerable populations.



Dr. Alina Turner
CEO & Co-Founder,
HelpSeeker



Lucille Bruce
CEO,
End Homelessness
Winnipeg



Lesley Lindberg
Project Manager,
Manitoba
Association of
Women's Shelters
(MAWS)

When the COVID-19 crisis struck, Canadian tech social enterprise HelpSeeker partnered with social sector leaders and innovators to identify organizations that are providing support and services during the pandemic and to get them listed on the HelpSeeker app for everyone to find quickly. “We know disasters impact vulnerable groups, especially those at risk of or experiencing violence and homelessness, and that new ways of getting updated information to those in need quickly are needed,” notes Lucille Bruce, CEO of End Homelessness Winnipeg, a key partner in the COVID-19 social response.

Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters (MAWS) Project Manager Lesley Lindberg explains, “As we all work together in these extraordinary times to keep the most vulnerable in our society safe and healthy, there’s a need now more than ever to coordinate our actions and have clear information available to frontline workers and those we serve. Women’s shelters are reporting that staying home and self-isolating with the added

dimensions of stress can be an explosive mix for those experiencing abuse in the home. We need to ensure we have a fulsome social response in place to mitigate and prevent social issues for vulnerable families.”

Already, there are over 2,300 listings and 17,000 services supporting this social response in Manitoba on helpseeker.org, bringing the national total to 117,000. In the last 30 days, HelpSeeker saw a tripling of interactions to almost 100,000 in Canada compared to the month of February. Looking at the top needs overall, there was a jump in people looking at education/training, food and housing, and mental health and addictions supports. But when HelpSeeker honed in on COVID-19-related needs specifically,

they confirmed service providers’ reports: addiction, abuse, mental health, and domestic violence were at the top of the list after health.

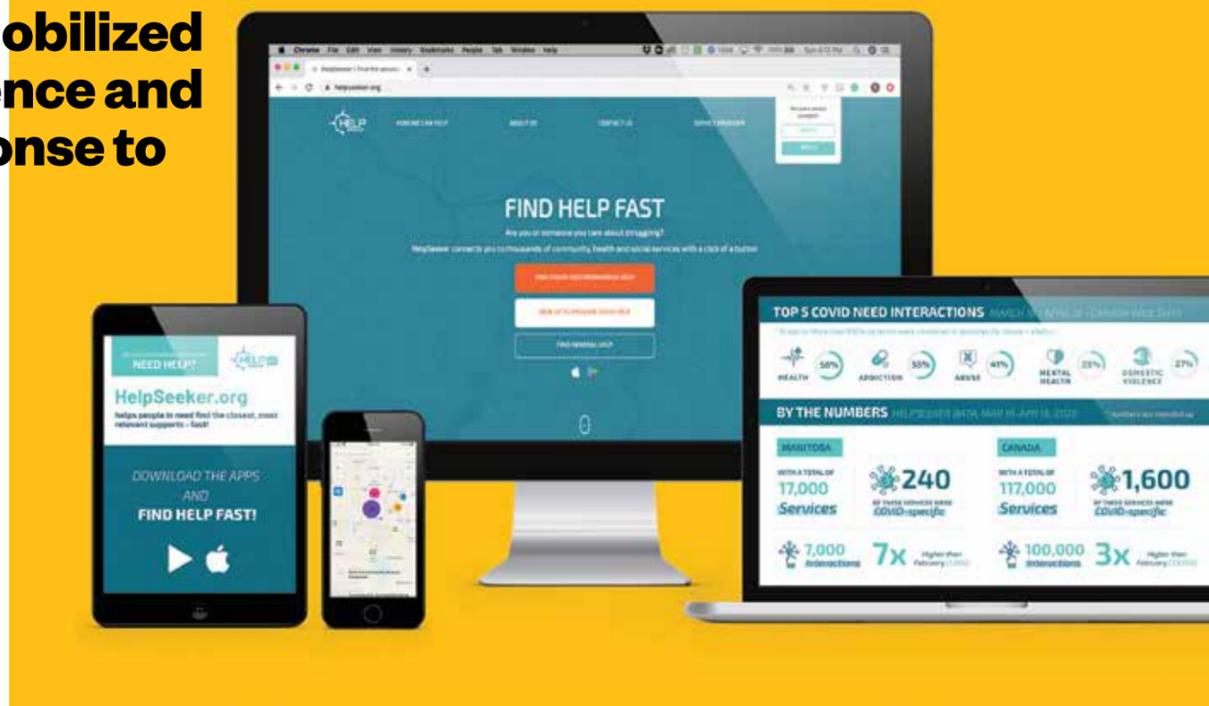
The numbers are showing increased demand, but what’s been encouraging has been the community stepping up. Just over 240 new COVID-19 services have registered in Manitoba on HelpSeeker to date, bringing the national total to 1,600. “It’s encouraging to see the innovative ways to connect people with resources and supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. This technology is needed to ensure people can quickly access information and resources,” says the Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs and MP for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital. By creating a searchable tag

for COVID-19 and opening up the ability to list supports and services to the general community, the HelpSeeker app is helping create a comprehensive list of available services by providing those offering services the ability to populate the site with their information. “There’s no way any one group can keep up with the speed of change happening right now. This is the time for innovative technology solutions that use crowdsourcing to get us through this crisis — we’re thankful to have the opportunity to pitch in,” notes HelpSeeker CEO and Co-Founder, Dr. Alina Turner. “This is another example of the incredible, innovative work taking place in our community,” Terry Duguid, MP for Winnipeg South, adds. ■

This article was produced in partnership with **End Homelessness Winnipeg, HelpSeeker, and MAWS.**



For anyone struggling, download the app or go to helpseeker.org to find support free and anonymously.



Stand (Together) and Deliver



Dominic Porporino
President,
UPS Canada

Thrust into our second month of forced confinement as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has upended everything we too often take for granted, I’m struck by our collective resilience and ability to adapt. Perhaps most inspiring, despite this unsettling “new normal,” an attitude of gratitude is quietly emerging.

As a global leader in logistics with deep roots in Canada, UPS Canada is in a unique position to see this firsthand — in our sorting facilities, distribution hubs, warehouses, and delivery routes all across the country.

With people putting out baskets with snacks on their porch, leaving gift cards for drivers to purchase coffee, and sticking thank you notes and drawings on their front doors, our network of dedicated employees are profoundly moved by displays of

support and kindness.

Because while the movement of people has been severely restricted — if not completely halted as is the case with domestic and international air travel — the movement of goods has never been more vital.

Whether it’s critical medical supplies that need to reach frontline health care workers, care packages to friends and family in need, or that online “pick-me-up” purchase to get through these challenging times, the isolation has brought us closer together in many ways.

Small business owners heavily impacted by the crisis are once again demonstrating ingenuity and tenacity to fuel their entrepreneurial spirit. And we’re happy to support them with business solutions to meet their evolving needs.

One month ago, Evelyne Nyairo was running her all-nat-

ural skincare business, Ellie Bianca, as a one-woman dynamo who came to Canada from Kenya on her own at the age of 16. Staring down adversity and with a renewed sense of purpose, she used her training as an environmental scientist and chemist to produce hand sanitizer — building new connections between her suppliers, her customers, and her Calgary-based operations along the way.

With life being transformed a bit more every day, the definition of an “essential service” has evolved considerably. My heartfelt thanks go out to Canada’s frontline health care workers — and those supporting them behind the scenes — along with the selfless men and women working in emergency services, the scientific community, food-service, civil servants, and those who hold public office. We thank the government for considering

us as an “essential service.”

As concerned citizens, we long for signs that things will get better. Maybe the first glimpse of spring weather, catching up with friends and family on a video call, or enjoying an outdoor barbecue will help turn the emotional tide.

At UPS Canada, we’re fortunate to be operating at full capacity. While it’s not business as usual, we’re proud to do our part to keep the economy moving, people working, and Canadians hopeful.

While it’s certainly sobering to watch news reports on the spread of the novel coronavirus and its impact on human interactions, I can tell you the feedback I’m getting from our drivers, from St. John’s to Victoria, has been consistent: the generosity, empathy, and humanity of Canadians are what truly move us. ■

This article was produced in partnership with **UPS Canada.**



Thank you.

Helping Canadians with Immediate Online Mental Health Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

From hand sanitizer to masks and beyond, Canadian companies are stepping up to help lead the charge against the physical effects of COVID-19. No less important is the need for innovative solutions to address the pending wave of mental health issues facing people across the country.

Wellness Together Canada is Canada's first and only online platform offering immediate mental health support for all Canadians, at no cost to individuals. Powered by Greenspace Health, the portal offers a range of different services, including a wellness self-assessment, self-guided courses and apps, peer support, and counselling by text, phone, or video.

Introduced by the Government of Canada, the portal is a joint venture between Stepped Care Solutions, Kids Help Phone, and Home-wood Health — three of Canada's leading mental health service providers. For this critical service to be made available to all Canadians, Greenspace Health has expanded

upon its proven clinical technology, empowering individuals to access the level of mental health support they need when they need it.

"As mental health services nationwide have been experiencing unprecedented demand, there has never been a more important time to bring a scientific and technology-driven approach to mental health services," says Jeremy Weisz, CEO of Greenspace Health. "This portal is designed to offer a full range of mental health support to people of all ages in every part of Canada. It's a resource ready to help support Canadians and their mental health." ■

Visit ca.portal.gs to access the Wellness Together Canada portal.



Jeremy Weisz
CEO,
Greenspace Health

McGill Researchers Launch Program to Help Canadians Stay Fit While Social Distancing

The new initiative provides a six-week web-based wellness program designed for Canadian veterans and their families.

These are challenging times as the world adapts to life trying to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. Staying at home and practising social distancing are critical in order to help flatten the curve of the virus' spread. The downsides are too much sitting around and weight gain due to unhealthy eating, plus feeling tired, stressed, and isolated.

To help improve the resiliency of Canadian veterans, health professionals at the McGill Comprehensive Health Improvement Program (CHIP) have launched a free web-based health promotion program (Homebound Resiliency Mission) developed to safely improve physical and mental health in only six weeks. Dr. Steven Grover and his colleagues at McGill University developed the program to help Canadian veterans, their families, and their supporters maintain their health. Earlier programs, tested with the Canadian Armed Forces, demonstrated significant improvements in daily physical activity (a 30 percent increase), reductions in stress levels (a 20 percent decrease), and an average weight loss of half a pound each week.

Participants learn how to exercise safely, use mindfulness techniques to eat healthier, and reduce their stress levels while competing with friends and family. All aspects of the program — accessed via computer, tablet, or smartphone — can be practised in the safety of one's home or outside while maintaining social distancing.

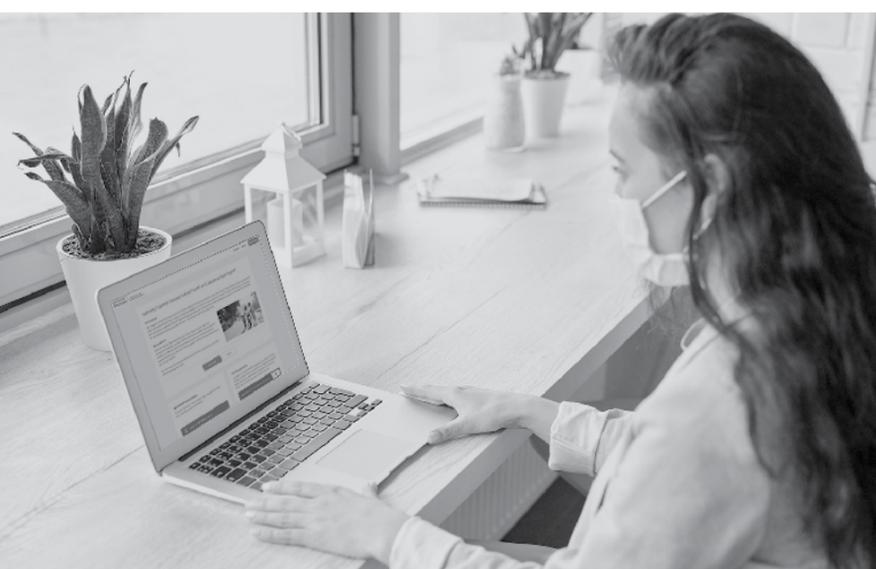
The program is free, secure, and private. Personal information will be de-identified for research analyses and individual data won't be shared with any third party.

Registration for the Homebound Resiliency Mission opens on April 30 and the program will begin on May 6. ■

For more information, visit missionvav.com. For more media interviews about this program contact steven.grover@mcgill.ca



Dr. Steven Grover
Director,
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Comprehensive
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This article was produced in partnership with Greenspace Health.



This article was produced in partnership with Mission VAV.



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