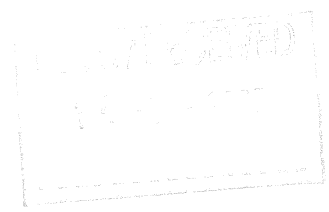




Joanne F
②

April 1, 2005

Mr. Bill Fisch
Regional Chair and CEO
York Region Council
17250 Yonge St., 4th Floor.
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1



Dear Regional Chair Fisch:

Re: Food Bank Use in York Region

In 2004, seven main food banks operated across York Region. The earliest began operations twenty years ago as a temporary measure to address the growing issue of food insecurity in the Region. In addition, a number of local churches and agencies also provide limited emergency food relief.

York Region Food Network, working with York Region Health Services, tracks five community food banks on a monthly and annual basis, and the attached report reflects highlights from food banks in Aurora, Georgina, Markham, Newmarket, and Richmond Hill. We are currently working to include Whitchurch-Stouffville in the future reports, but regret that the Vaughan Food Pantry has declined participating in the collection of regional statistics.

Overall, the total number of people fed by food banks increased **25%** between 2001 and 2004 and the number of total visits increased **31%**. To meet the growing demand, an eighth food bank has opened in York Region. The King Township Food Bank, with a central food depot in Kettleby, began operations in January 2005 and operates from three locations: Schomberg, King City and Nobleton.

Food banks are volunteer driven and operate with little or no government support. Sadly, food banks no longer provide just food to low-income families. They are also being required to provide basic necessities such as toiletries, winter wear, and back to school supplies.

From this report, we can conclude that food banks are here to stay and that food insecurity is a growing issue in York Region that needs to be addressed. I ask that you review and bring this report to Council as soon as possible. It is imperative that we find the means to eliminate food insecurity, and to feed York Region residents.

Sincerely,

Terry O'Brien
Chair, York Region Food Network

Encl.



York Region Food Bank Utilization 2004 Summary

In 2004, the food banks served approximately 44,000 people – an increase of 25% since 2001.

An average of 3,663 individuals used a food bank each month, representing 0.6% of the population¹. Of these individuals, 44% were children – approximately 1 of every 100 children use a York Region Food Bank each month.²

An average of 1,336 households used a food bank each month and most of these (89%) were regular users.

Where does this information come from?

Statistics are based on monthly utilization statistics collected by 5 of York Region's 8 Food Banks – Georgina Food Pantry, Newmarket Food Pantry, Aurora Food Pantry, Markham Food Bank, and Richmond Hill Community Food Bank. King Township and Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Banks, as well as the Food Room at the Women's Centre of York Region will be included in future reports. **Vaughan Food Bank does not share their statistics with the YRFN.**

Revised tracking methods prevent comparison to years prior to 2001.

Why do we collect this information?

Food bank statistics provide valuable insights that are used for a variety of purposes:

- **To increase awareness** that food banks exist and how they operate (i.e. food banks are operated primarily by volunteers and are generally funded through private, charitable donations of both food and money);
- **To monitor demographic trends** in users, which helps both the food banks and other agencies to plan services appropriately;
- **To develop programs** that improve access to nutritious foods. Tracking who requires a food bank can assist social service agencies to develop programs to improve access to healthy food (e.g. if half of all food bank users are children, programs can be developed to address this need);

¹ Population of Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill (Ontario Ministry of Finance data)

² Aged 18 years or less

- **To influence social policies** by informing politicians and key decision-makers.
- **To use when applying for community project funding for YRFN programs** such as the Back to School Backpack and Winter Needs programs.

What we do not know

What is the true extent of the hunger problem in York Region?

These statistics provide insight into the number of people at risk or who are food insecure, but underestimate the extent to which hunger is a problem in York Region. There are many more people having difficulty accessing food, going hungry or at risk of going hungry, than can be estimated using food bank statistics. A recently published list of reasons why people may not access food banks includes inadequate amounts of donated food, geographic fragmentation, and failure to meet ethnic or nutritional adequacy³.

How many people receive food assistance through other means?

There are many additional agencies in York Region that provide emergency food assistance to people who are experiencing food insecurity (e.g. Salvation Army and other faith communities, food voucher programs, closed or targeted programs at social service agencies, “Soup Kitchens” and other meal programs). People who receive these services and the service volumes are not captured in this report.

Why are people going hungry?

Tracking the number of people who use food banks, along with limited demographic characteristics tell only one part of the “story”. The reasons why people are going hungry and need to access food from food banks are not reflected in these statistics⁴.

³ *Individual and Household Food Insecurity in Canada. Position of Dietitians of Canada. Copyright 2005. Dietitians of Canada.*

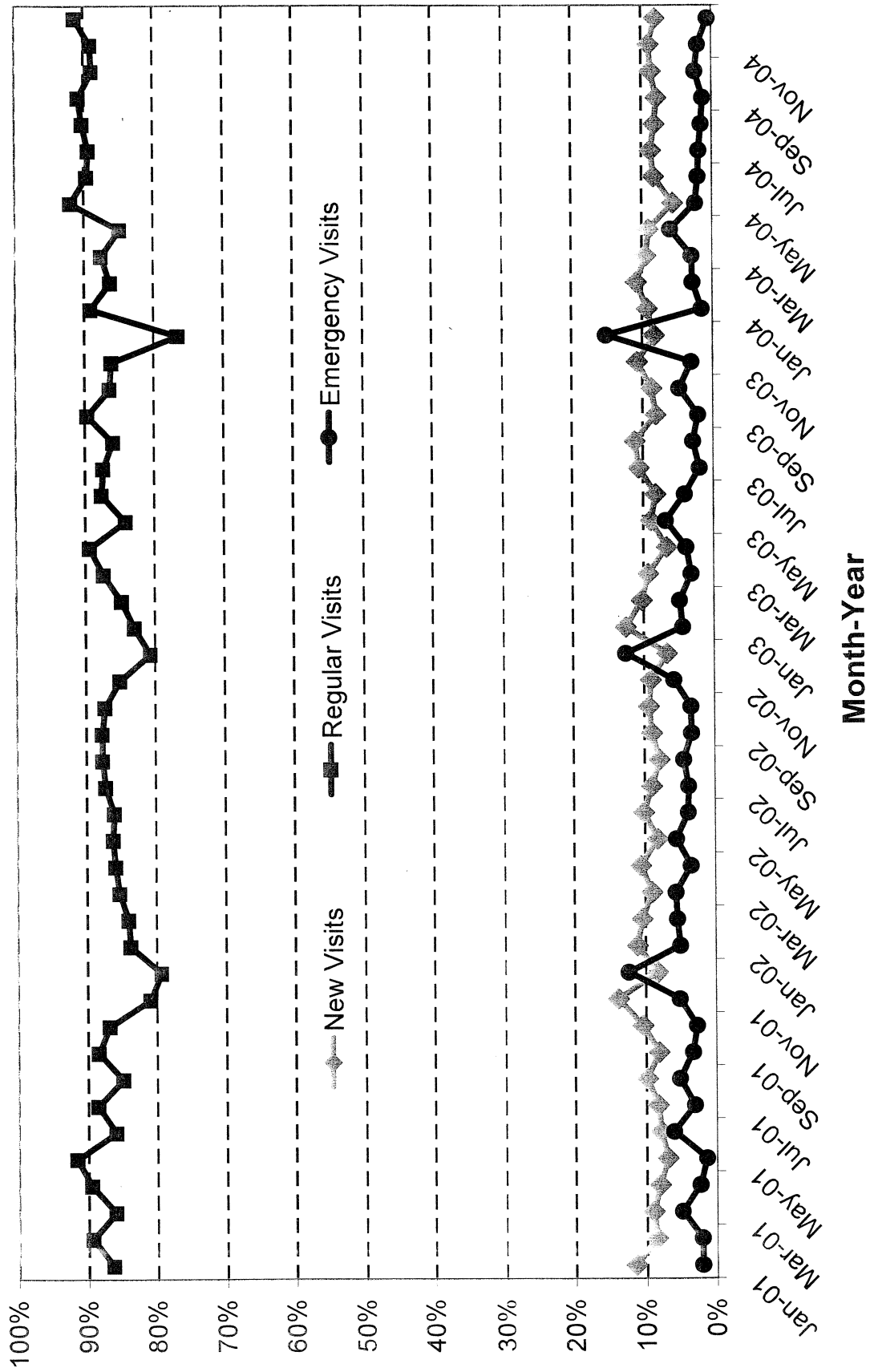
⁴ The YRFN carries out an annual food bank user survey to help address this issue. Results are published in September.

Statistical Tables and Charts

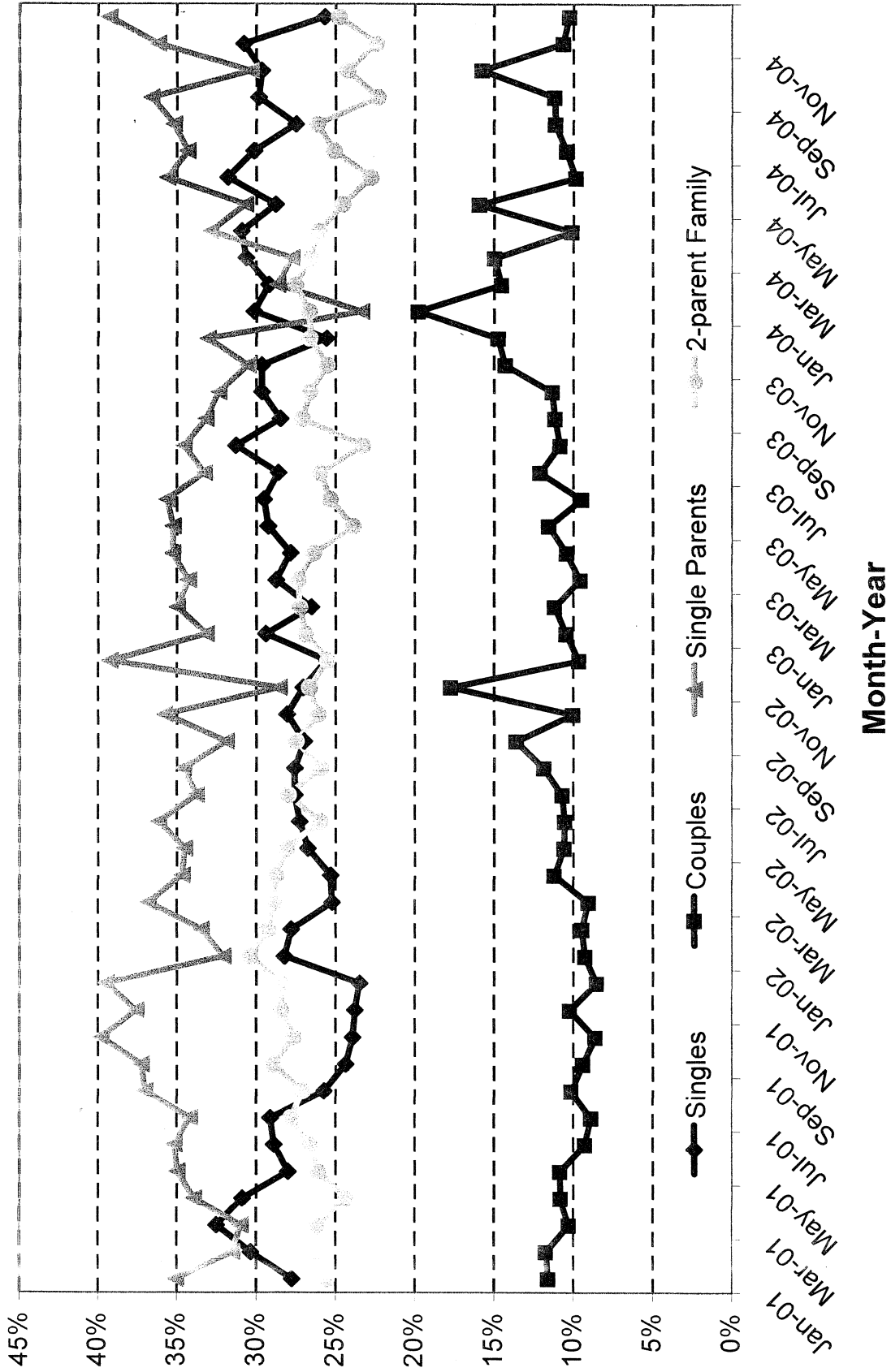
Table 1. Food Bank Utilization, York Region, 2004

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL
New Visits	122	142	132	125	70	100	113	107	99	113	122	139	1,384
Regular Visits	1,162	1,124	1,217	1,162	1,141	1,071	1,151	1,172	1,130	1,147	1,206	1,558	14,241
Emergency Visits	20	37	41	82	30	24	24	20	16	31	27	10	362
Total Visits	1,304	1,303	1,390	1,369	1,241	1,195	1,288	1,299	1,245	1,291	1,355	1,707	15,987
Singles	393	384	434	422	367	384	390	348	368	384	416	441	4,731
Couples	258	191	212	138	203	119	135	141	138	204	144	176	2,059
Single Parents	305	377	394	449	391	430	444	445	451	393	489	674	5,242
2-parent Family	348	362	377	356	313	275	325	331	275	314	303	425	4,004
Total Singles, Couples & Families	1,304	1,314	1,417	1,365	1,274	1,208	1,294	1,265	1,232	1,295	1,352	1,716	16,036
Infants (0-2 yr)	235	242	244	246	227	174	196	235	187	203	194	255	2,638
Children (3-12 yr)	825	886	922	883	874	773	842	881	794	856	909	1,226	10,671
Youth (13-18 yr)	476	491	538	504	498	484	515	515	502	485	530	680	6,218
Adults (19-65)	1,878	1,878	2,021	1,991	1,856	1,736	1,919	1,795	1,749	1,875	1,949	2,605	23,252
Seniors (66+)	81	85	102	74	59	96	99	106	130	103	114	123	1,172
People Served	3,495	3,582	3,827	3,698	3,514	3,263	3,571	3,532	3,362	3,522	3,696	4,889	43,951

**Percentage of Food Bank Visits per Month by Type of Visit,
York Region 2001-2004**



**Percentage of Food Bank Visits per Month by Family Composition
Type, York Region 2001-2004**



Percentage of Food Bank Users by Age, York Region 2001-2004

