

**From:** Marie-Louise Knight <m.knight@pqchc.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 18, 2024 3:12 PM  
**To:** Pelot, Eric <Eric.Pelot@ottawa.ca>  
**Subject:** written deputation

Hi Eric,

*I would like to register to deputize a written submission on item 6.1: Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy at the October 22 Community Social Services Committee meeting.*

*Your name Marie-Louise Knight*

*Your organization Foster Farm Family House*

*Your email address m.knight@pqchc.com*

*I have attached my deputation for your review. Thank you in advance for your support*

*Marie-Louise Knight*

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## Foster Farm Family House Deputation

We continue to see an increase in needs climbing over the past four years, which has now reached a level of crisis for those most vulnerable in our city. Those living in poverty are most affected negatively as they already struggle with inequities to health care, a livable working wage, affordable housing and food insecurity. Clients accessing our services have increased by 45% since 2021 and are still rising weekly.

Food insecurity has affected the physical health of clients as they cannot afford to purchase enough food to support themselves or their families. They are unable to make healthy food choices as the cost of fresh products is unreachable within their budgets. To maintain special needs foods for medical conditions. Having to make choices of paying other bills or having food often leaves their cupboards empty.

This increased stress has added to the deterioration of mental health within our communities at all ages of our population. Complex needs in clients who are facing many obstacles to addressing these needs have been evident in the number of wraparound services needed at the community level.

I have seen many clients coming to our doors in tears and at a loss as they are depressed and feel that they are unable to sustain their present reality of the constant day-to-day struggles that come with living in poverty. We are spending additional time to make sure we provide them with not only food but wrap-around services.

I have seen many children and youth coming to our doors to ask for snacks and food as they are hungry. Children are missing school as they have nothing for their lunches or snacks. Children who go to school hungry are unable to focus and learn and are distracted by hunger. Young children and Youth should be thinking about playing with their friends or about their futures, not about where their next meal is coming from. This is one of the realities children and youth who are living in poverty are faced with each day in our community.

With the current food insecurity climate, we have developed an appointment-based model hoping to increase the number of appointments we are able to provide. Still, we have to refer clients to other food banks or have clients waiting up to 2 weeks for a space. This requires staffing to support the appointments, calls to clients, intake and preparations of boxes, which we are struggling with as there is no sustainable funding to support staffing. We continue to apply for grants and find ourselves competing for many grants as agencies across the city are also struggling. We have to use our existing Community worker and the house coordinator to support food distribution and to be available to support wraparound services for clients with complex needs.

With the increased number of clients accessing foodbanks, we are now receiving fewer supplies from the OFB as they are also affected by the large number of clients, and meeting the needs is impossible. Less food is going to families, and more visits from new and past clients

returning after many years of not needing support has significantly impacted our capacity in both the amount of food distributed and stretched our staffing capacity.

Having foodbanks in the community is essential. At a grass root level, we are able to be the first point of contact for clients living in low-income areas. Allowing us to develop trusting and meaningful relationships as well as being a multi-service space to access many resources, programs and social interactions that empower members to be actively involved in making changes that are meaningful to them and their families. A safe and respectful space for all ages within walking distance of home.

We support the Poverty reduction strategy. With the present food program crisis, we are hopeful for a short-term critical action plan as well as a long-term poverty reduction plan.

We ask that the City of Ottawa provide us with increased, sustainable funding for both food purchases and staffing to address the critical shortages we are currently facing. This funding will allow us to meet the urgent food security needs of our clients, many of whom are in crisis. With this support, we can ensure that vulnerable residents continue to have access to not only food but also to the much-needed wrap-around services that support complex needs such as housing, mental health, and social support. These services are crucial for improving the overall quality of life for those most at risk in our city.

Both sustainable funding and poverty reduction strategies are essential in making changes that will impact our ability to support those most vulnerable right now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Marie-Louise Knight

Foster Farm Family House Coordinator

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