



NEWS RELEASE

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SQUAMISH-LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT COMMUNITIES LAUNCH “FEED THE NEED” PROGRAM TO SUPPORT LOCAL FOOD BANKS

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District – There is strength in numbers, and buying power with cash, and political leaders from Squamish to Lillooet are encouraging their communities to step up in numbers, and with money, to help locals in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Municipal leaders from within the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) are joining forces to launch the Feed the Need campaign to raise much-needed funds for food banks in across the SLRD, including the municipalities of Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton and Lillooet.

SLRD Board Chair Tony Rainbow emphasizes that although federal and provincial funds have been pledged to assist foodbanks, the need right here is already rising sharply and more is needed to help our friends and neighbours.

“As people find their lives upended in myriad ways, the demands on our social services are extraordinary,” explained Rainbow. “Any one of us could find ourselves in need of these services,” he said. “We are in a period of many unknowns. Not only is this a health crisis, but also an economic one and many people are suddenly out of work or on reduced hours, and many businesses are having to close or greatly reduce their operations. Food banks in our communities are already an essential lifeline for residents who need this service, but now, the need is rising sharply. People all around us who were doing just fine, and those who were just getting by, are suddenly needing support to put food on the table.”

Feed the Need allows for online donations to be made through the Sea to Sky Community Services website: <http://www.sscs.ca/FEED-THE-NEED/>

Donors can direct their donation to one of the following:

- Squamish Food Bank
- Whistler Food Bank
- Pemberton Food Ban
- Lillooet Food Bank
- General SLRD Regional Food Bank Donation

Tax receipts will be issued upon confirmation of payment. Sea to Sky Community Services will disperse funds to the specific food banks where the option is chosen, but

will not determine how the regional funds will be dispersed. These decisions will be made by a committee comprised of representatives from the SLRD. Regional distribution will be based on greatest need, determined by current and projected demand.

In Squamish, the food bank operates on the first and third Wednesday of the month and is providing pre-made hampers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"For those in a position to donate, the local food banks need our support more than ever as the financial stress of COVID-19 is felt across our communities. I cannot overstate the need as many people are now reaching out for help to cover their urgent basic needs. The incredible work of the food banks and their many volunteers are making a difference in the lives of many. I ask you to please donate if you can to ensure that no resident in Sea-to-Sky goes hungry," said District of Squamish Mayor Karen Elliott.

In Whistler, the food bank is operated by Whistler Community Services Society and is open on a drop-in basis from Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Whistler Conference Centre. Delivery is also available on Tuesdays and Thursdays for those not able to access the food bank because of quarantine.

"During this unprecedented time, I would like to encourage everyone who has the means to make a financial donation to a regional food bank to do so. Every person's contribution can make a difference," said Whistler Mayor Jack Crompton. "To meet the growing demand for emergency food in Whistler, the Whistler Community Services Society is working hard to allow more people to safely access the food bank in Whistler. Together, we can help ensure that everyone in the Sea to Sky Corridor who needs food has access to food."

The Pemberton food bank is accessible Monday through Thursday by appointment.

"As the demand of our food bank begins to grow during these difficult times, I encourage those that are able, to contribute to this critical community service. During these uncertain times, food security should always be a certainty. No contribution is too small. Our collective efforts will have a large impact on many families in need at this time," said Pemberton Mayor, Mike Richman.

In Lillooet, the food bank operates out of the Lillooet Friendship Centre.

"Through these very trying times for our residents, especially those that are now without incomes due to COVID-19 and the subsequent business disruptions; we ask all to consider those that are in need and contribute whatever you are able to our food banks," Added Lillooet Mayor, Peter Busse. "We sincerely appreciate those that are looking out for our vulnerable and those businesses that have been and continue to be the supporters of this essential need. Together we will get through this pandemic and from what I have seen so far – our community has stepped up and the kindness and caring is most evident."

Political leaders from Squamish to Lillooet agree that it's important to approach this need from a regional perspective.

“We know that each of our communities is in need,” said Rainbow. “But we are all connected, and together, we can have a bigger impact.”

Sea to Sky Community Services is pleased to be engaged in the project and to act as a conduit to get these much-needed donations out into the community, recognizing that food banks have more buying power with cash donations, than with food items. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's also important to minimize the handling of food, and accepting food item donations at this time poses a number of challenges: monetary donations are the preferable option at this time.

“We’re so grateful for the support of the SLRD in pulling this initiative together,” said Jaye Russell, Executive Director of Sea to Sky Community Services (SSCS), which operates the Pemberton food bank in addition to many other vital services and programs to help children, youth, adults, seniors and families.

“Providing food to those in need is always a challenge, and the COVID-19 health crisis has put an even greater strain on all food banks as we work hard to give support to an ever-increasing number of people experiencing job loss and financial insecurity. Financial donations will be crucial in helping us continue to provide food to those who are most vulnerable in this health crisis,” she said.

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