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NEWS RELEASE

REGIONAL DISTRICT SUPPORTS FOOD BANKS WITH COVID-19 RESTART FUNDS

Food Banks in Lillooet, Pemberton, Whistler and Squamish to receive one-time funding

Pemberton, BC – Food banks in Lillooet, Pemberton, Whistler and Squamish will receive a much-needed financial boost with a one-time contribution from the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD).

The SLRD Board of Directors voted unanimously at the November 24, 2021 Board meeting to direct a portion of the regional district's COVID-19 Restart funds to local food banks, to help address the increased need in services, due to the pandemic.

Each of the four foodbanks will receive a one-time contribution of \$17,500 to assist with winter 2021/ 22 operations.

"Food banks provide such an important service in our communities, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated that need," said SLRD Board Chair Jen Ford. "Individuals and families in each of our communities are facing increased food insecurity and we know that monetary contributions go a long way in helping to address this need," she said.

In Lillooet, the food bank is operated by the Lillooet Friendship Centre Society (LFCS), and demand has increased there since the pandemic. "Each food bank is supporting more clients in this challenging time and this funding will go a long way in assisting food banks in being able to continue ensuring those that need food and support are able to receive those services," said Carol Camille, LFCS Executive Director.

Jaye Russell, Executive Director with the Sea to Sky Community Services Society (SSCS), which operates the Pemberton Food Bank, said demand at food banks throughout the region has seen an unprecedented surge since the onset of the pandemic.

"Our food banks are always busy, there is always a demand," said Russell. "But with COVID-19, the demand has been far greater than ever before. We are seeing more and more families in need of assistance" she said.

"We are very grateful to the SLRD for their work, not only in helping to raise awareness about food insecurity and the local need, but for this generous contribution that will help so many people, in all of the communities in the region."

In Whistler, the situation is the same, with the Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS)-operated food bank seeing massive demand.

"This is news that truly lifts our hearts and supports our communities," said Jackie Dickinson, WCSS Executive Director. "Demand for services at the Whistler Food Bank has remained high throughout the summer and fall of 2021; averaging 2-3 times the number of clients served when

compared to pre-pandemic days. Food insecurity is prevalent throughout the corridor, but we know we can help all those who need assistance when we work together like this. We are so grateful for the support of the SLRD in this initiative.”

“We are so grateful for this generous contribution from the SLRD,” said Mariana Borsuk-Gudz, Program Manager for the Squamish Food Bank. “The \$17,500 will allow us to provide a significant amount of support to our local community who may live with ongoing food insecurity. In partnership with Squamish Helping Hands, the Food Hub works to support nearly 400 individuals on a monthly basis, and sees over 1,000 to our Market - a dignified, low-barrier food access space. We serve nearly 3,000 meals out of our Community Kitchen, and are committed to furthering food access and food justice in our community. This kind donation will certainly go a long way in supporting us in this mission.”

In 2020, the SLRD worked with SSCS to launch the Feed the Need campaign, to raise awareness and funds for area food banks. SCSS hosted the Feed the Need portal on their website, while the SLRD created social media awareness of the fundraising campaign. The program was boosted, with each SLRD Electoral Area contributing \$100 from Select Funds towards a Facebook advertising campaign and each member municipality sharing information about the campaign through their own social media channels.

Through that program, more than \$70,000 has been raised. The initiative continues, and through the landing page, donors can direct their contributions to a specific food bank, or the regional food bank fund.

Feed the Need remains active and the SLRD encourages residents to consider supporting their local food banks with donations.

“It’s important that we all remember just how connected we are,” said Ford. “Our region may be vast, but we are all neighbours.”

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About the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is a local government federation consisting of four member municipalities (the District of Lillooet, the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton and the Resort Municipality of Whistler) and four unincorporated, rural electoral areas (A, B, C, and D). Headquartered in Pemberton, which is the approximate geographic centre of the region, the SLRD delivers a wide range of local, regional and sub-regional services to approximately 42,665 residents (2016 Census).

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