

**Food is a right**



# THE M-PROJECT

**LEARN**

**ADVOCATE**

**TAKE ACTION**

## FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

The goal of this project is to see and listen to those who often don't have the voice and resources to explain their situation. The M-project seeks to highlight experiences of Malvern residents through stories (lived experience) and a map of Malvern showcasing the food apartheid pockets.

A food apartheid is a term coined by food activist Karen Washington, who defines food access issues as a systemic issue rather a naturally occurring phenomenon or accident. A food desert refers to the geographical reality of an area where residents aren't able to access affordable and healthy food options. It also refers to a lack of any fresh produce within a 1 km distance (15 min walk), this does not take into consideration culturally relevant foods that are available/unavailable.

Adding on, the differentiation was important to both explain the gaps in systems and policies that serve marginalized communities as well as explain the gaps in food systems that physically exist to serve the Malvern community as a whole. For example, there isn't a social or physical infrastructure that allows easy access to culturally relevant food that is also affordable even if there is a grocery store that is only minutes from one's house.





# PUTTING MALVERN'S FOOD ACCESS ISSUES ON A MAP

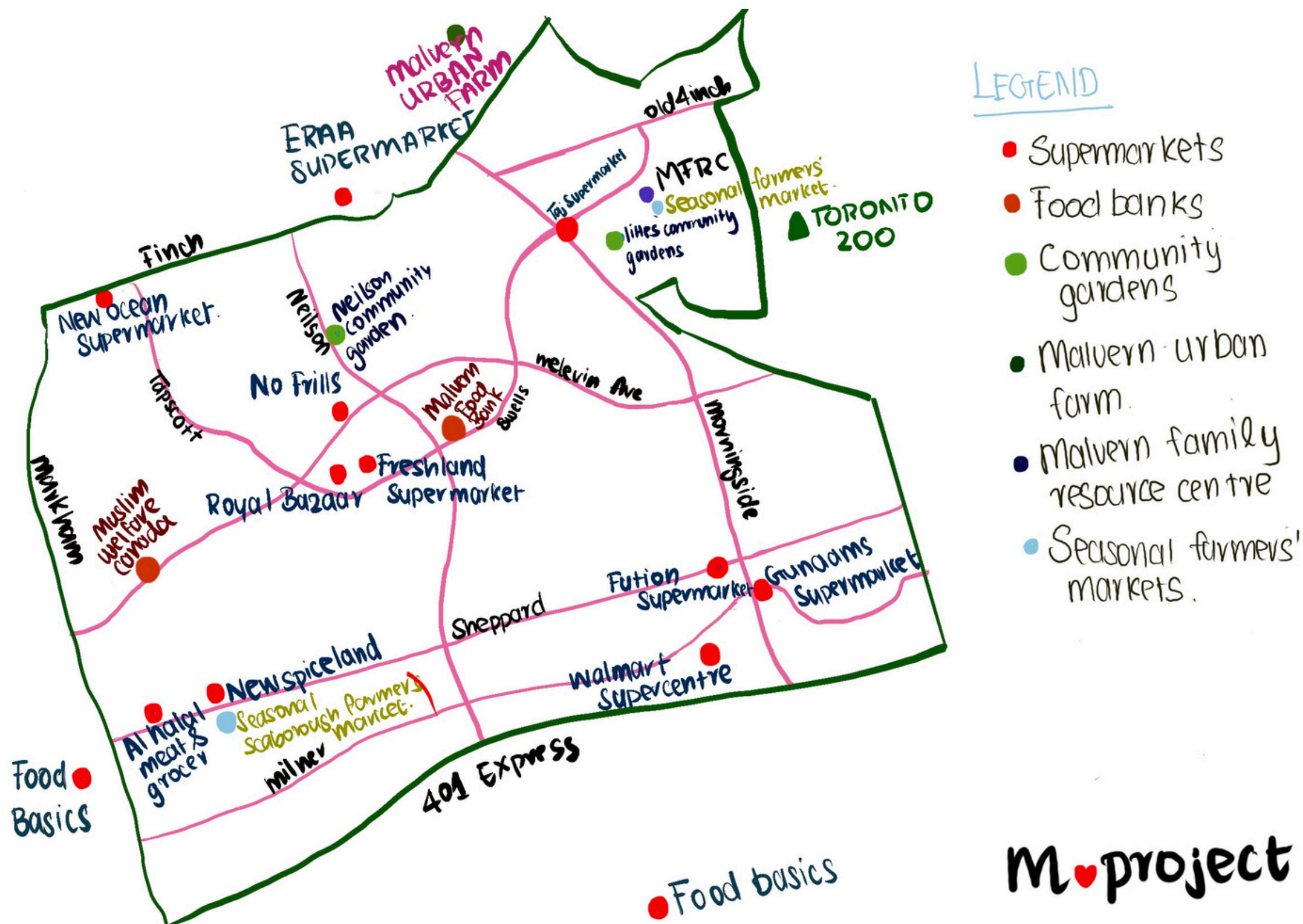


Image 1: Map of Malvern's food apartheid

## FINDING STORIES IN A MAP

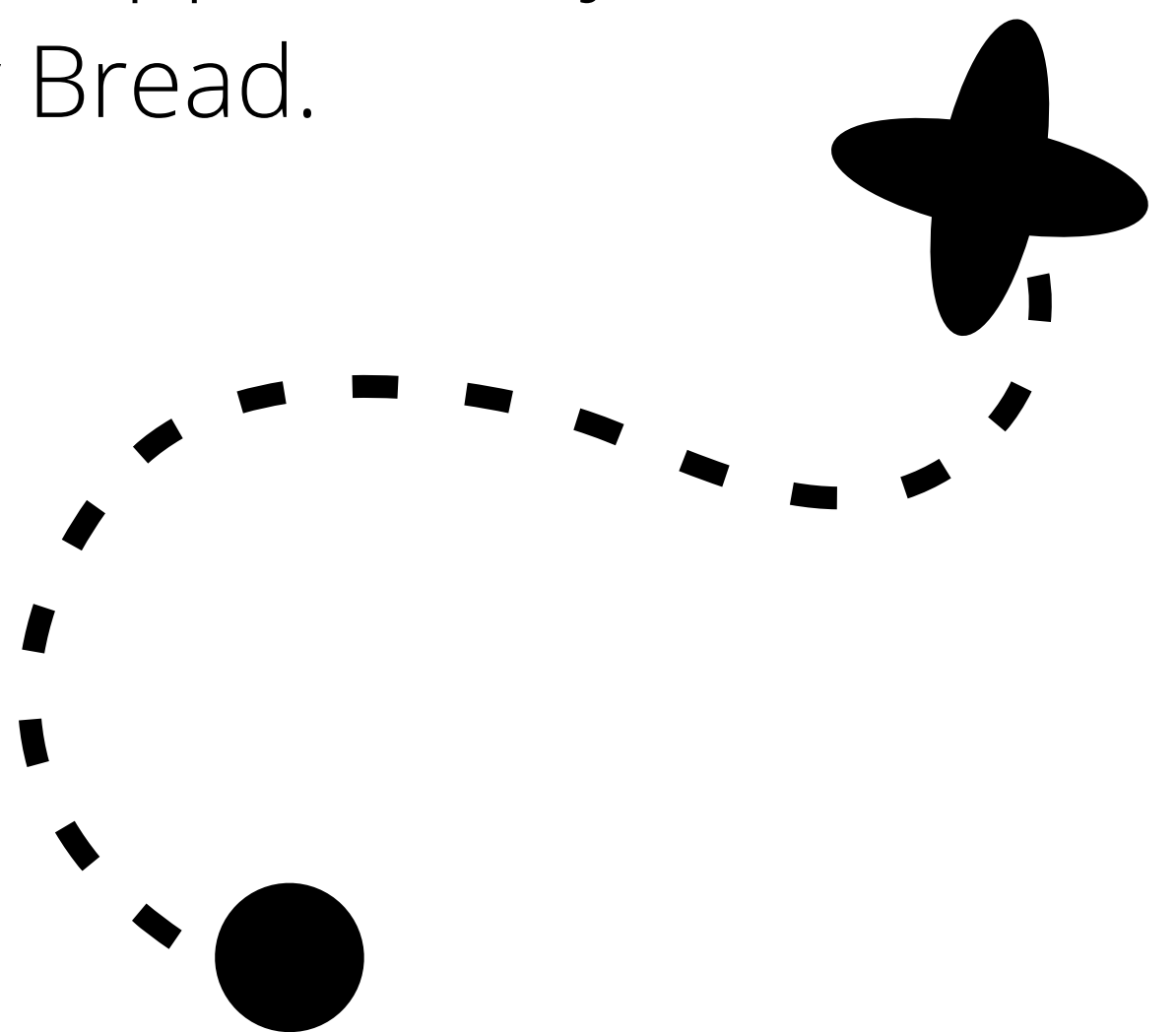
Maps can help us visualize and reveal realities that we don't pay attention to on a regular basis. This map (Image 1), spots all the spaces one can find fresh produce while also highlighting food banks, a community garden and an urban farm. Visually we see more empty spaces than stores with fresh produce. This

creates an inequality in our community of 43,794 people. On the other hand, stories shared in this project reveal lived realities of real people which adds to the story the map reveals. Storytelling is a powerful cultural tool that helps us make sense of the world around us while reminding us that we aren't alone in a situation and that there is power in our collective.

# MORE TO THE MAP AND IT'S PEOPLE

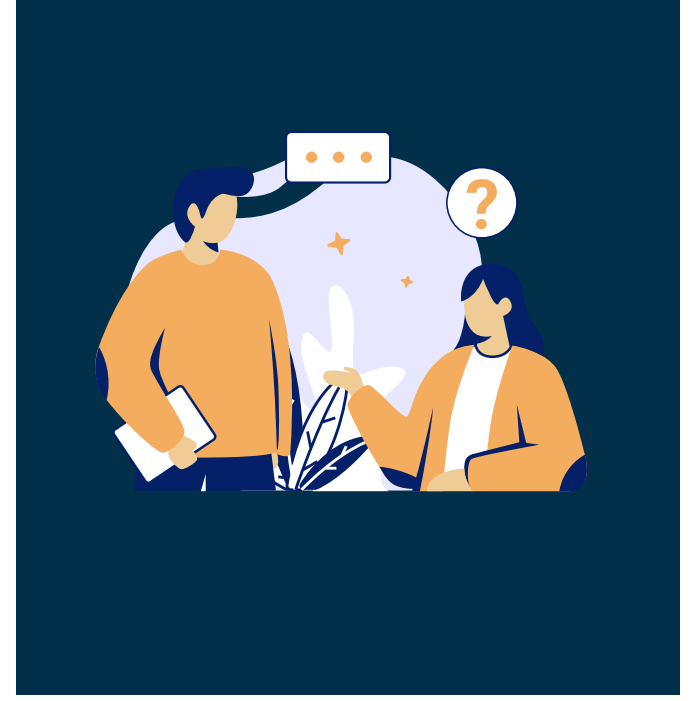
## FINDING STORIES THROUGH A MAP

The M-project aims to unmask the intricacies of food insecurities faced by the people of Malvern (Scarborough) through storytelling. This portion of the project is called “The listening Project”, and it aims to listen to people of Malvern who are experiencing food insecurity and poverty to create a discussion discourse. The project was inspired through the food sovereignty work, the growing together team at Malvern Family Resource Centre (MFRC) is leading while aiming to connect with MFRC’s organizational goals around their 3-year food strategy program. Many facts shared in this report and Instagram posts are supported by the 2024 Who’s Hungry report, Daily Bread.





# THE LISTENING project



Aim of this portion of the project was to listen to lived and heard experiences with food insecurity from community members, community workers, volunteers and other stakeholders.

The stories shared were of hunger, life situations that highlighted hunger, socio-economic barriers that affect hunger and much more.

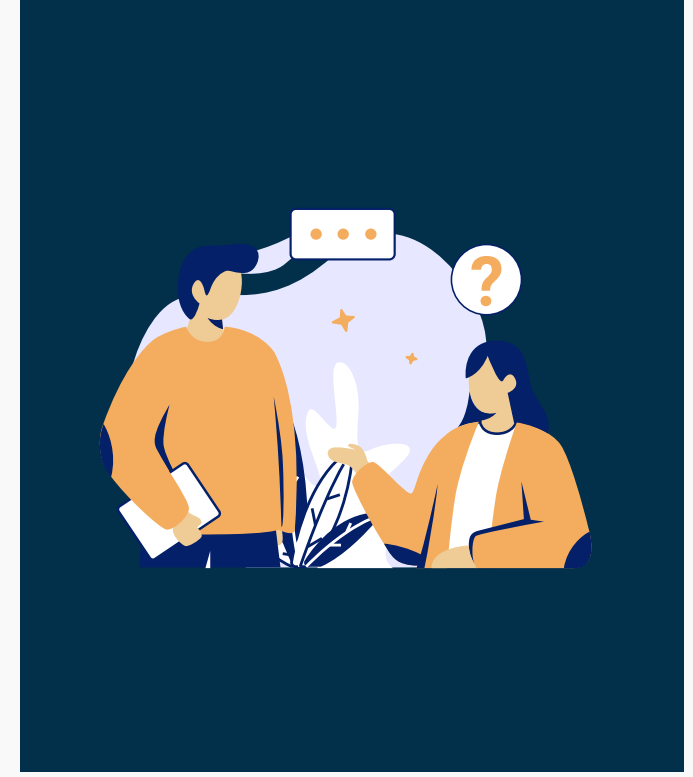
# What did we do with all these stories?



we made  
**Archetypes**  
THAT REFLECT ON REAL  
STORIES SHARED

*On page 6*

# THE LISTENING project



## Food banks

Often the most advertised but is a band aid solution, just as community fridges and pantries are.



## Unaffordable housing

Uncontrolled rent, renoviction, lack of support from rent geared income subsidies housing not being available are some themes.

# Big Themes

that were explored in  
the listening  
project

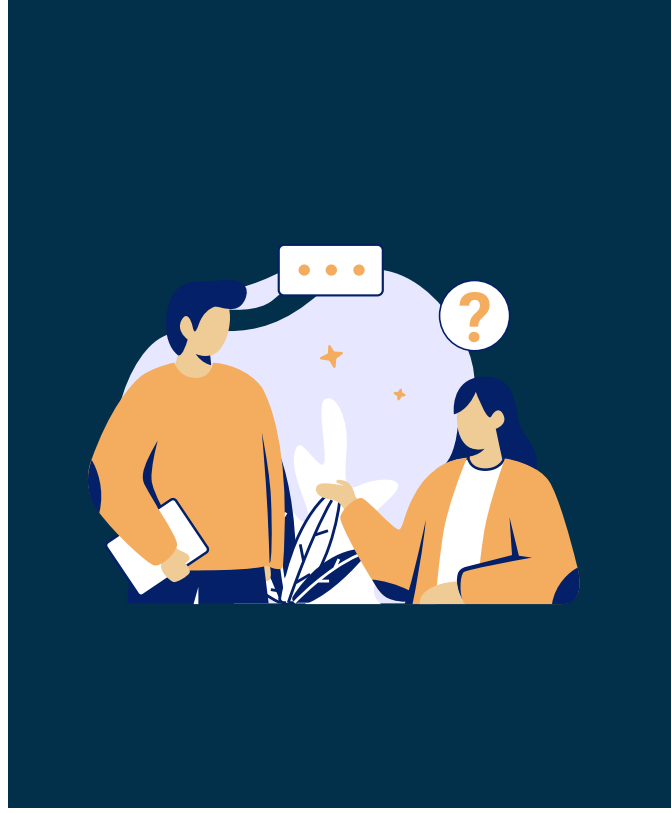
## Vulnerable population and their unique circumstances

Renters, seniors, disabled people, International, newcomers, under/unhoused people are more vulnerable to hunger.



## Income and the lack thereof

Livable wage in Toronto is \$25.05/hr. Many people live under this income and either fall into the poverty or deep poverty line.



# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

## STORY #1

Amelia is a 25-year-old masters' student. She has education related loans she is trying to pay off while studying and works 2 part-time jobs. Working and studying an average of 75 hours a week. Her busy schedule doesn't allow time for her to cook meals for herself. Amelia notes "The interest rates on my loans scare me and I would rather pay off some of the loans while I study than let interest rates pile up the minute I graduate. Although National student loans gives you a six month buffer they still apply interest rates for that first six months" - Amelia. Food insecurity for Amelia looks like juggling her income between her essentials, food and paying off student debt.

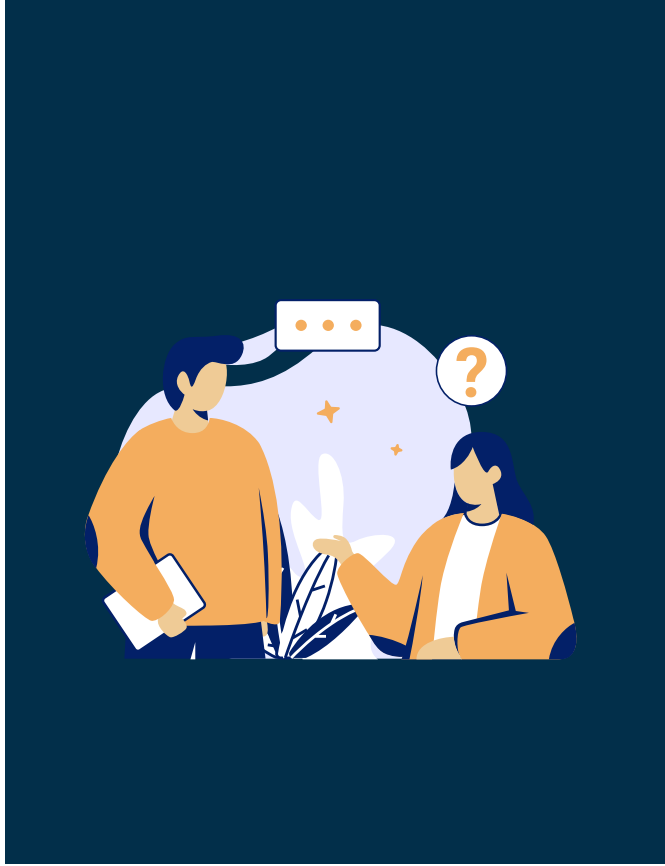


Amelia  
Student

### FACT:

Official poverty line for Toronto is \$2,397, while deep poverty line is \$1,798, people earning less than this amount experience potholes in social safety nets.





# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

## STORY #2

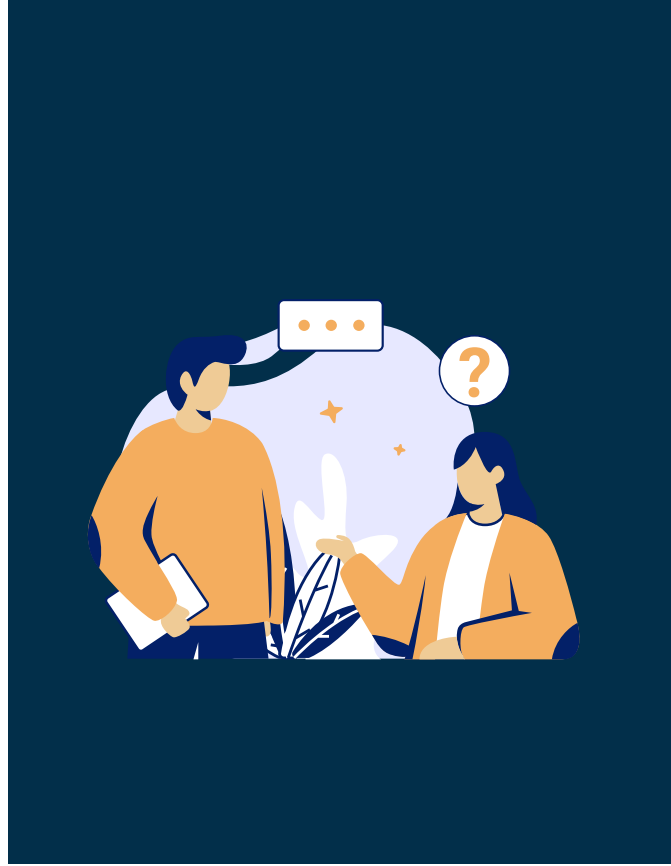
Ben is a 60-year-old homeowner. He isn't old enough to qualify for Old Age Security (OAS) nor is he eligible for Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) as the age of eligibility is 65. His fixed income from his pension and retirement savings isn't enough to cover his expenses due to inflation after the pandemic. He registered himself to a food bank through Daily Bread. Food insecurity looks like getting ready on a cold January day to join the line up for the food bank. He notes "The wait time outside the food bank can last around 3 hours so I prepare hot tea and coffee for myself and others to help us stay warm" - Ben, a retired senior.



Ben  
Senior

### FACT:

Data shows that seniors accessing food banks in Toronto increased by 15% in the past year.



# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

## STORY #3

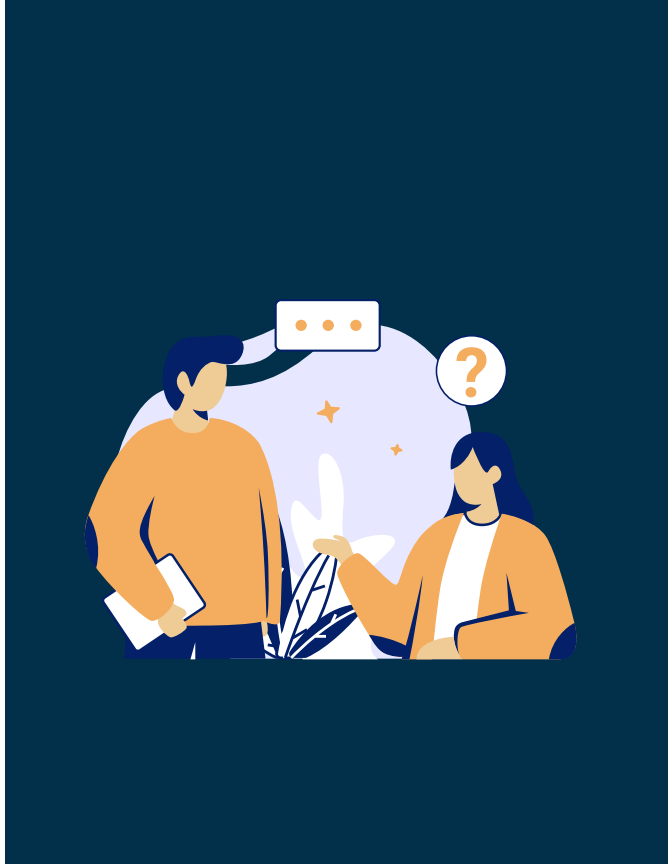
Fatima is a single mother who currently lives with her 2 kids and her mother in a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing. Due to complicated medical conditions she was let go of her job as a sale associate. While she is looking for a job her mother's pension helps cover some of the household expenses. This isn't enough to cover all the essentials of Fatima's household. Although she had to wait 12 years to secure her rent-geared-to-income was 12 years, Fatima is grateful that it helps her bring the biggest cost [rent] down. In Fatima's house food insecurity looks like only having \$200 at the end of the month for food.



Fatima  
Single Parent

**FACT:**  
**While data shows an individual is meant to spend \$339 per person for a month on healthy food (daily bread, who's hungry report, pg. 33).**





# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

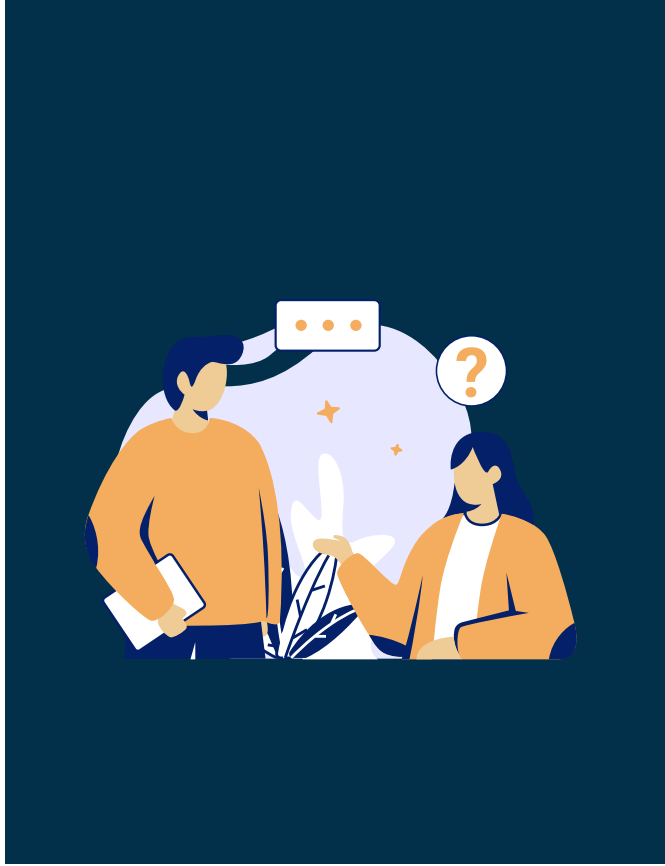
## STORY #4

Ramesh, his wife, and their four teenaged children moved to Canada 3 months ago. They are staying with a relative while they wait to sort out logistics. Ramesh has some debt from before the move that he hopes he can pay off after finding a job here. Although he and his wife were doctors in their home country the licensing process in Canada is taking a while. In the meantime, food insecurity looks like applying for minimum wage jobs and not reporting their education level. Their dual income of \$2400/month only leaves \$150 for food.



Ramesh  
New Immigrant

**FACT:**  
**4 in 5 food bank clients are newcomers. The vast majority (97.6%) of Canada's population growth came from international migration in 2023.**



# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

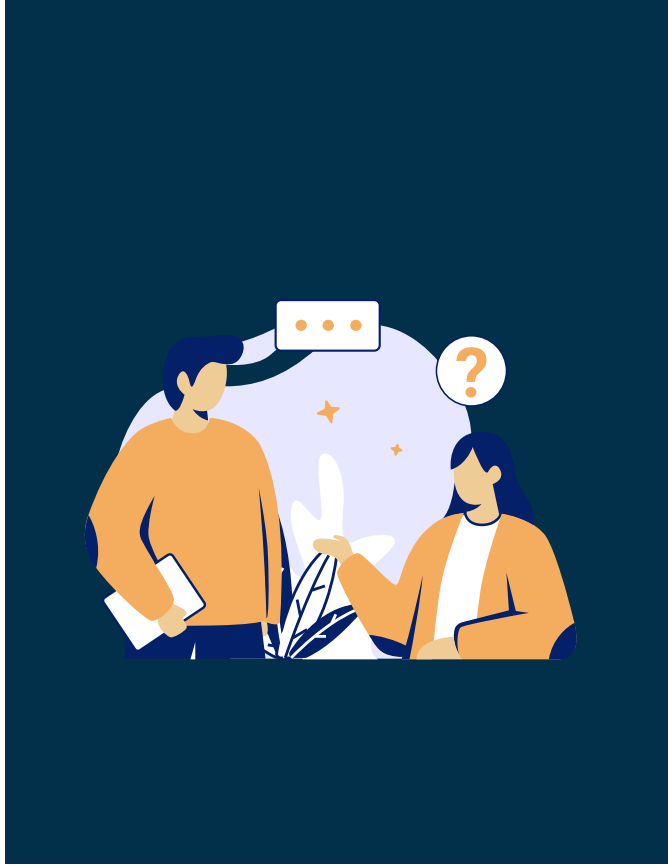
## STORY #5

Dan is a single father who lost his house due to pandemic related unemployment. He lives in a shelter with an invisible disability and has a daughter. Ontario disability support program (ODSP) payments are not enough for him to help him get back on his feet. For the time being he is able to have his daughter stay with distant relatives while supporting her through the ODSP payments. Food insecurity looks like making sure his daughter eats proper meals at their relative's house while he eats “what he can find” through volunteering for afterschool programs and at food banks. Just like in Dan’s situation, often food insecurity is a layered issue.



Dan  
Adult with Disability

**FACT:**  
**ODSP provides only \$1368 per month for a single individual. This income keeps up the poverty cycle and does not include the additional costs for a person living with disability.**



# THE LISTENING & ADVOCATING project

## STORY #6

Judy is an international student who pays \$9000 for tuition (three times more than a Canadian student) per year. Being an international student means bringing in more revenue than domestic students to an Ontario university (Daily bread, Who's hungry report, 2024). Judy notes "I've been here for 3 years now...In some ways Covid was a good time for me to make money as the government lifted the limit of working only 20 hours per week, that also meant a lot of my friends and I got sick but we needed to work to help ourselves survive. Now it's hard to make ends meet..." - Judy, 2024. Food insecurity looks like only having \$10 per month after essential expenses and only being allowed to work 20 hours per week.



Judy  
International  
student

**FACT:**  
**On average  
international  
students only have  
\$3.30 after housing  
while other students  
have \$7.78.**



**Message of M-report** 

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**FOOD IS A  
RIGHT!**

**A CALL TO  
ACTION IN  
ENDING  
HUNGER IN  
OUR  
COMMUNITY**

**FIND OUT MORE AT [MFRC.ORG](https://mfrc.org)**



Scan this QR code to  
write to your Member of  
Parliament



Check out Eat. Think. Vote



Get involved with MFRC



**ADVOCACY  
&  
ACTION**

# RESOURCES @MFRC

Food supports in all in-person programs

Seasonal Farmers market with a Market Buck program to support community members experiencing food insecurity.

Malvern Urban Farm with local and community farmers.

Growing Together team is dedicated to addressing food justice issues in the community.

**Find out more at [mfrc.org](https://mfrc.org)**

