

Online, in-person and phone donations encouraged for Season of Hope campaign

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Amid the ongoing postal strike, a local non-profit is encouraging residents to remember those in need.

Caledon Community Services (CCS) runs its Season of Hope campaign each year to provide vital food and utility support for those in need. Normally, the campaign is run by mail, but this year alternative donation methods must be used.

CCS welcomes donations to the campaign in person at 55 Healey Road (Unit 10), by phone (905-584-2300), and online at ccs4u.org.

Mars Canada has pledged to match community donations to Season of Hope up to \$25,000. CCS CEO Geraldine Aguiar said she's grateful for strong corporate partners like Mars Canada.

Mariia Kupriianova, CCS' Chief Development Officer, said there's truly a food insecurity crisis in Ontario right now. She said last year, one million people turned to Ontario's food banks.

"Hunger and poverty are right here at our doorstep? this Season of Hope, we are very grateful to each and every one of our community donors who are stepping up, who are coming here to drop off food donations, drop off cheques, who generously donate online," she said.

Kupriianova said people using food banks are not those you might think. There are many double income families using the food bank because they just can't make ends meet. She said the affordability crisis is pushing people to the brink and many people are using food banks that have never had to before.

One in three people that uses CCS' food bank, The Exchange, is a child.

Kupriianova said CCS is even seeing former donors needing to ask for help.

"There's no stigma in seeking help, this is just the harsh reality we are all facing," she said. "Your gift will mean those families, those children, will have a much-needed hand up."

Aguiar said the government does not provide as much as people think to non-profits. She shared that each year, CCS has to raise one million dollars to provide its many services.

"Our clients are people trying to be as independent as they can, they're not people looking to beat the system. It's people who are exhausted trying to make it on their own," said Aguiar. "We're here to help you get where you want to be."

Kupriianova said CCS is often the last stop before someone becomes homeless or goes hungry.

"We are already serving the highest-ever number of Caledon neighbours in need and we are setting new tragic records every day," she said.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on December 7, CCS is hosting its annual family day of giving at The Exchange (55 Healey Road). There will be a variety of family-friendly volunteering experiences available, as well as hot cocoa and cookies.

On the same day, CCS is hosting a sip and shop event at its Evolve Caledon thrift store (4 Industrial Road).