

An examination of the community food security resources in and around Simon Fraser University, and food security best practices from student unions across Canada

Community Resources and Best Practices

Simon Fraser Student Society

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INTRODUCTION

As established in the study “Food Security for Post-Secondary Students at Simon Fraser University”, which will be referred to as “the Study”, Simon Fraser University (SFU) undergraduate students and Fraser International College (FIC) students experience food insecurity at a rate more than 3 times higher than the national and provincial populations. This report seeks to provide information on how food insecurity experienced by students can be minimized and eliminated, from a community resources perspective. Evaluating the food resources, including food retailers, restaurants, food charities, community kitchens, and community gardens, among other food-related resources, will provide a greater understanding of the options available for the benefit of Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) members, as defined in the previous study. Creating a robust informational guide to community food resources at SFU will be complemented by evaluating best practices in improving student food security through services offered at different student unions and post-secondary institutions across Canada. Finally, this report will use the programs identified across Canada to determine if there are gaps in both the on-campus and off-campus community resources available to SFSS members. This report will focus on community food security.

TYPES OF FOOD SECURITY RESOURCES

To improve community food security, in Canada there are a number of short term food relief programs, as well as longer term programs to address the root of food insecurity, provided by different levels of government as well as non-profits and businesses. **Table 1** below provides examples of these programs, gathered from the BC Ministry of Health (2014). As identified in the Study, low-income and poverty is the root cause of food insecurity, which can be exacerbated by many variables. Improvements to government policies and programs as well as systematic changes are needed to fully eradicate food insecurity. These mechanisms serve as tools to reduce food insecurity for communities across Canada, and examples of these tools will be explored on- and off- SFU campus.

Immediate/short term food relief programs	Longer term food security
Charitable food programs (e.g. food banks, soup kitchens, meal programs)*	Programs on food skills (e.g. community/collective kitchens)
Food recovery programs (e.g. gleaning, encouraging donations for food)*	Urban agriculture
Nutritional support programs for low-income pregnant women	Farmer’s market (e.g. subsidies for low-income people using coupons/vouchers at the market)
School meal programs for low-income children	Farm-to-school program
	“Good food” boxes (e.g. membership fees to a farm, community supported agriculture)

Table 1: Emergency vs long-term food security options

*Note: * indicates that this does not address the root cause of food insecurity*

SFU ON-CAMPUS FOOD SECURITY RESOURCES

The SFU Food Access & Education Committee (SFU FAEC) is a working group formed in January 2014 to bridge the communications and efforts being made across campus to improve food access and education initiatives in order to inform and support students. The Committee includes representatives from different SFU departments and groups on campus who work to enhance student food access and education. These groups include the SFSSS (including the SFSS Women's Centre), the Graduate Student Society (GSS), Embark Sustainability, SFPIRG, SFU Health and Counselling Services, SFU Dining Services, and SFU Student Services. This section of the study will examine these on-campus resources, as well as the Global Student Centre and Veggie Lunch.

THE SFSS EMERGENCY FOOD BANK PROGRAM

SFU had a campus food bank that was run by SFU Student Services and the SFSS for 20 years until December 2013 when it was replaced with the current food voucher program. According to an article by *The Peak*, the food bank experienced major service problems as the lack of accessibility and convenience for students, as well as the social stigmas for students using the food bank. In order to fill this gap for students, the SFSS created a Food Bank Working Group to implement a pilot project for the food voucher program in partnership with Nesters Food Market. The food voucher program has been modified and expanded to other campuses over the years (Zwan, 2016).

The SFSS Food Bank Program, sometimes referred to as the Emergency Food Bank Program (EFBP), supports undergraduate students at SFU who are in financial need and are unable to purchase food. The EFBP is run by the SFSS and currently operates as a food voucher program in which students can request grocery store gift certificates via an online form on the SFSS website in times of emergencies. For each semester, each undergraduate student and more recently, FIC student, is allowed to apply for a maximum of three food vouchers per semester, to a total of \$75 per semester. After requesting a voucher, it can be picked up at the Student Centre office 24 hours later. As of 2019, the food vouchers can be used at Nesters Market in Burnaby, SFU Woodward's Nesters Market in downtown Vancouver, and SFU Surrey's Safeway (Tran, 2018). In previous years, SFU Burnaby's Dining Hall also participated in the program allowing students to access their food services using \$10 vouchers, but has since ceased partnering in the voucher program.

Students that are located campuses other than the Burnaby campus are still able to access the EFBP from the SFSS. Students that are located at the Surrey campus are able to register online and then pick up the food voucher from the registrar's office in Surrey. Similarly, the students that are located in the downtown Vancouver campus are able to pick up the food voucher from Nesters Woodward's (SFU Woodward's) located downtown.

The EFBP has seen an increase in usage and demand from SFU, leading to a financial deficit of \$14,683 in the 2017-2018. That demand has since decreased, leading to a surplus in the most recent fiscal year. The program is funded by the student levy, in which students both full and part-time students contribute 25 cents and 13 cents per semester, respectively (Tran, 2018). In 2017-2018, SFU pledged to contribute a \$4,000 of additional funding towards the enhancement of the SFSS Emergency Food Bank Program. However, in order to improve upon food security for SFU students, the university and the SFSS agreed to co-fund a research project in the amount of \$20,000 to address the growing food challenges for students and identify the financial burdens that students experience (Simon Fraser Student Society, 2017; Tran, 2018).

In 2019, the SFSS and FIC came to an agreement to allow FIC students access to all SFSS services in exchange for fees. As a result, there is an estimated annual revenue of \$2,000 that will be deposited to the Food bank account and will only be used to support this program. According to a report from the 2018/19 board, the SFSS recommends monitoring the food bank usage by FIC students every month, in order to assess if funds collected are meeting the needs. Furthermore, the SFSS recommends that FIC students are included in the food security research project to ensure that the redeveloped food bank program will be assessing the needs for this demographic (Simon Fraser Student Society, 2019).

GSS EMERGENCY GROCERY CARD PROGRAM

Graduate students at SFU can apply for the emergency grocery card program that was established by the Graduate Student Society (GSS) to assist graduate students in financial need. According to their website, the GSS has the right to reject applications that do not meet the terms of the program. If an applicant receives a grocery card they are eligible for a maximum of 3 cards per the length of the individual's Master's program (GSS, nd).

One of the main differences between the undergraduate and the graduate emergency voucher is that the graduate students applying have to go through a screening process to be approved for the emergency food vouchers. Students have to provide detailed demographic information such as which campus they attend, their marital status, if they are an international student, employment and other income sources, and if they have children or dependents. The application form also asks the user about personal circumstances which the GSS explains is to be used towards their advocacy efforts and does not have an impact on the general application for the grocery card. The personal circumstances questions includes if it is long-term, emergency, or short-term funding the user needs, explaining the financial hardships, other resources they have accessed, rating their level of concern for finances, and any suggestions that could be used to improve the program (GSS, nd).

Another critical difference between the undergraduate and the graduate program is that the GSS provides students with a \$50 (instead of \$25) card that can be used at President's Choice markets that are much lower in price for their food selection such as Superstore and Walmart (in comparison to expensive grocery stores such as Nesters). In addition, the GSS program also offers students the option to choose between the grocery card, Quest Food Exchange, or both. The Quest Food Exchange application provides a brief introduction to their organization and the food options available for students as well as a few basic questions for the applicant (GSS, nd). Proof of financial need is required by Quest, which will be discussed later in this report.

SFSS WOMEN'S CENTRE

The SFSS Women's Centre (WC) provides services to students of all genders, including food security options. The Centre has a 24/7 safer space for self-identified women, that includes a full kitchen; as well as two garden plots in collaboration with Embark. The kitchen has a fully equipped fridge for students to make their own food, coffee and tea, and provides snacks and canned food for free. The WC hosts many events every month, some of which offer free food to students. The WC also provides menstrual and sexual health products such as pads, tampons, condoms, and pregnancy tests, helping to ease students' financial burdens, addressing the root cause of food insecurity.

EMBARK

Embark Sustainability, often referred to as Embark, is a sustainability advocacy group at SFU who is funded by a fee levied on SFU undergraduate students each semester, which is collected by the SFSS and remitted to Embark. Embark's three priorities identified in their 2017-2020 Strategic Plan are food systems

change, climate action and social sustainability, which guide each of their programs and events (Embark, n.d.). Three of Embark's current programs relate directly to food systems change, and contribute positively to student food security.

FOOD RESCUE PROGRAM

Embark collects and redistributes so-called "ugly food" that although healthy and fresh, does not meet the selling criteria of Nesters, to the university community for free or by donation. Food is picked up from Nesters Market and distributed to students and community members at SFU Burnaby's Blusson Hall on Mondays and Thursdays, from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm. This program takes place year-round, except during exam periods and breaks between semesters.

LEARNING GARDEN

Embark runs three Learning Gardens at SFU – two outdoor raised-bed Learning Gardens at Burnaby and at Surrey campuses, and an indoor vertical garden at the Surrey campus. The gardens contribute to the mission of Embark by providing members "space to explore their connections to food production and security in our communities" (Embark, n.d.). Embark also hosts events and workshops at each garden.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Embark operates a regular community kitchen event which provides a free and low-barrier space for students to socialise, cook and enjoy a four-course vegetarian or plant-based meal in three hours. Every Community Kitchen has a distinctive theme that "facilitates opportunities for participants to explore, learn about, and reflect on different food cultures and challenges within our food systems" (Embark, n.d.). The Community Kitchen events take place in the SFSS Women's Centre kitchen, typically in the evenings.

SFPIRG

The Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG) is a student advocacy and research group at SFU, who, like Embark, are funded by a fee collected by the SFSS and remitted to the organisation. SFPIRG was partnered with Quest Food Exchange, BC's largest non-profit food exchange program (SFPIRG, n.d.). SFPIRG would refer students to Quest so they could access their discount grocery stores, offering food 50 to 70 percent off retail. SFPIRG is currently undertaking a review of the Quest referral process for new clients, and is thus unable to refer new clients to Quest until further notice. Graduate students can continue to access Quest through the GSS. Undergraduate students may visit Quest's website for information about accessing a referral, and can continue to use the SFSS Food Bank Program.

HEALTH AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

Health and Counselling Services (HCS) provides a range of resources and services for the SFU student population so students can improve and maintain their health and well-being. HCS offers drop-in programs, including Community Cooking lessons. These pre-registerable lessons provide easy and nutritious recipes for healthy eating and take place in the SFSS Women's Centre at the SFU Burnaby campus. Meet, Greet, and Eat is another drop-in program that is hosted on Thursdays from 12 to 1:30 pm in the Global Student Centre. They offer a space to hang out, eat a light meal and participate in a fun crafting activity. In addition, their website offers off-campus resources for students through their Student Wellness Guide that include links to the Lower Mainland Food Banks, The Credit Counselling Society, and The Financial Literacy Counsel (Health and Counselling, n.d.).

SFU DINING SERVICES

Dining Services operates and/or manages the dining halls (including the 24/7 Dining Hall and Dining Plans), coffee shops, various restaurants, and catering services (through SFU Meeting, Event and Conference Services) across Burnaby campus. They publish a Dining Map for Burnaby campus that shows the location of food services on campus, but not those offered in Cornerstone, part of the UniverCity community, that for the purpose of this report, is considered on-campus. Dining Services also offers occasional discount programs, such as discounted meals over reading break. SFU Graduate Studies also has a [webpage](#) that features various Dining Services and other food operator locations across campus.

THE GLOBAL STUDENT CENTRE

The Global Student Centre (GSC) is identified as an important partner for the SFSS to connect with international students on campus. The GSC at SFU Burnaby has a lounge for students that includes couches, TV, and a kitchen area with a microwave, coffee pot, kettle, and sink (The Global Student Centre, n.d.). The Centre hosts many events for international students and newcomers that provide a variety of Canadian and ethno-cultural foods.

VEGGIE LUNCH

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, an affordable, 3-course vegan lunch called Veggie Lunch is offered in the Maggie Benston Centre Forum Chambers. This lunch costs just \$6 for customers that bring their own containers, and \$6.50 for those that require a compostable plate and plastic cutlery (Embark Sustainability, 2017). All proceeds go towards supporting Gaura Hari Karma-Free Meals Society, who provide food in the Downtown Eastside community (Kirtan Vancouver, n.d.). The Society is supported by the yoga non-profit Kirtan Vancouver.

SFU COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY RESOURCES

BC GOVERNMENT

The provincial government in British Columbia provides a variety of different food security resources through various ministries and agencies, most prominently the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction. The BC Ministry of Health includes food security programs in their core public health programs. Under the Ministry of Health, the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) Population and Public Health Program is working to advance food security in BC. The PHSA Population and Public Health Program team has a Provincial Manager of Food Security that supports the food security work six health authorities in BC through an initiative called the Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI), one of the core public health programs (Lederer, 2008). The CFAI works to increase food security for individuals living in BC by providing funding for community projects – in its first two years, it successfully funded 155 community project to positively impact over 14,000 people across BC in building food security knowledge, skills and policies (Lederer, 2008). The PHSA also manages the BC Food Security Gateway which provides online resources for BC communities on food security projects, initiatives, organizations and potential funding opportunities for these endeavours (BC Food Security Gateway, n.d.).

A second major provincial initiative of the Ministry of Health, which launched in 2011, is *Healthy Families BC* which promotes healthy eating and healthy communities and lifestyles (BC Ministry of Health, 2014). BC has worked with non-profits and community groups to establish a variety of other initiatives, including the following:

- a. *Food Skills for Families* promotes healthy eating and cooking skills,
- b. *Farmers' Market Nutrition and Coupon Program (FMNCP)* which is a collaborative partnership between the BC government and the BC Association of Farmers' Markets to provide farmers' market coupons to lower-income families and seniors,
- c. *Produce Availability Initiative (PAI)* which was a year-long program (ending in 2012) for promoting year-round availability of fruits and vegetables, and
- d. *Food Systems in Remote First Nations Project* which is a collaborative partnership between BC Ministry of Health and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada that ensures long-term sustainability of community gardens and greenhouses for remote First Nations communities (BC Ministry of Health, 2014).

The BC Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction provides income assistance to individuals who are unemployed. The Provincial Nutrition Benefits Program ensures nutritional supplements (including infant formula), diet supplements, monthly nutritional supplements, tube feed supplements, and natal supplements are available to support food security for eligible citizens (BC Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction, 2020).

FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION COUPON PROGRAM

The FMNCP began as a pilot project in 2007, operating through each of the six regional health authorities, and began receiving Ministry of Health funding in 2012 (BC Association of Farmers' Markets, n.d.). The program has been in full operation since 2015 and provides healthy, local and fresh food to over 12,000 families in B.C (BC Association of Farmers' Markets, n.d.). Coupons can be obtained through local community partners, such as neighbourhood houses, food banks, and family services organisations, all listed by geographic region on the BC Association of Farmers' Markets website (BC Association of Farmers' Markets, n.d.).

BC NON-PROFIT INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

QUEST

Quest Food Exchange is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to provide affordable (up to 70 percent off retail prices) and healthy food options to people in BC that are experiencing food security challenges. Quest Food Exchange aims to "reduce hunger with dignity, build community and foster sustainability" (Quest, n.d). The organization works with food suppliers that donate their excess food as well as local community resource partners who provide references for clients. The food exchange program operates through delivery trucks, distribution centers, and grocery markets that are not-for-profit to ensure clients are able to be served effectively. For clients to be eligible in participating with the organization, they must be either low income, on disability or be on old-age pension; they must have local partnering contact; and complete an online form (Quest, n.d). Quest has locations across the Lower Mainland including Burnaby, Surrey and Vancouver.

SECOND HARVEST

An Ontario-based charity, Second Harvest is the largest food rescue organisation in Canada, recently expanding to BC in 2019 (Second Harvest, 2019). The mission of Second Harvest is simply to avoid having good food go to landfill and provide social service agencies with fresh, surplus food for their clients. They started an online platform, Foodrescue.ca, in order to Loblaws Companies Limited has been partnered with Second Harvest

since 1985, and provides much of their recovered food to Second Harvest. Loblaw has provided the organisation with \$415,000 in order to support the Foodrescue.ca platform in Ontario and its expansion into BC, focusing on the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island at this time, with plans to expand across the province in the future (Second Harvest, 2019). It is important to note that while Second Harvest seeks to reduce avoidable food waste, they are not addressing the root cause of food insecurity through the food distribution. However, Second Harvest offers many workshops (mainly in Toronto at this time but with aims of expanding) including food literacy workshops, food safety training and workshops, food date label workshop, and food waste reduction workshops (Second Harvest, 2019).

FRUITICANA

Although this report will not specifically evaluate low-cost food retailers, but rather point to resources that provide a comprehensive source of affordable local grocers, Fruiticana is a low-cost grocer with a focus on South Asian food products, and was specifically mentioned in the Study's focus group interviews. Fruiticana also prioritises local, seasonal produce in addition to various ethnic fruits and vegetables that are only available at Fruiticana stores (Fruiticana, n.d.). There are locations in South Vancouver, Richmond, Port Coquitlam, Surrey, and Abbotsford. Unfortunately, all of these locations are difficult to get to from the Vancouver and Burnaby campuses without access to a vehicle.

VANCOUVER

As stated in the Study, Vancouver is home to some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in BC as well as some of the most destitute. Thirteen percent of SFU undergraduates live in Vancouver, and the following food security resources are available to them.

GREATER VANCOUVER FOOD BANK

Every year, the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) reports to distribute an estimated 3.5 million pounds of food every year. According to the GVFB website, they provide assistance to over 27,500 people every week, and of those, 22 percent are children and 22 percent are seniors (Greater Vancouver Food Bank, n.d.). The GVFB was established in 1982 as a temporary relief program but has significantly grown over the past thirty years (Greater Vancouver Food Bank, n.d.).

A study in the summer of 2015 at various GVFB sites was conducted to analyze the characteristics and experiences of the food bank users in Vancouver. The study found that financial challenges related to income was the most prominent factor that impacted the food bank use. The main findings from the study showed respondents reported the following: severe food insecurity (66 percent), health challenges (77 percent), reliance on social assistance (84 percent), and long-term (over five years) of food bank use (54 percent) (Holmes, 2017).

VANCOUVER FARMERS' MARKETS

Vancouver Farmers' Markets is an organisation that supports the operation of six farmers' markets, two being year-round, across the City of Vancouver (Vancouver Farmers' Markets, n.d.). While many of the markets operate on Saturdays and Sundays (without both of those days featuring a year-round market), there are also markets during weekdays. Each of the markets feature local and organic produce, artisanal food products, and prepared food vendors.

Vancouver Farmers' Markets' Fresh to Families Fund is an expansion project of the BC Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program, supporting over 175 low-income families as well as the livelihoods of over 80 local farmers (Vancouver Farmers' Markets, n.d.). The program provides recipients with fresh food direct from partner farms and producers. Low-income, newly-arrived refugees and at-risk expectant mothers are eligible for this program.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a food distribution channel that “enables food lovers to support local agriculture, give farmers job security, take care of the environment and guarantee themselves a share of fresh, healthy local produce at a fair price” (Vancouver Farmers' Markets, 2020). Vancouver Farmers' Markets vendors and friends of the market are listed on their website for locals to sign up. CSA boxes often provide fresh produce below market price, but are typically more suitable for families or larger households than individuals.

VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS

There are 15 Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks (VNFN) in Vancouver. VNFN are a [network of community organisations](#) dedicated to supporting food security in all neighbourhoods across the city, particularly for community members struggling economically (Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks, 2019). VNFN believes that all members of society have the equal right to quality food. VNFN creates a space “for different food networks across the city to collaborate, share best practices and advocate for food equity & justice, ecologically & culturally sustainable food systems, and community food resilience with a unified voice” (Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks, 2019). Through their programming, each food network aims to break down barriers that prevent people from accessing nutritious, affordable, and preferable food. Many of these networks receive funding through the CFAI funding. Some of the programs offered by the various networks involved in the VNFN include: drop-in meal programs and workshop series, bulk buying clubs, mobile produce markets, emergency food access, community gardens, school gardens, and more. The VNFN have created the Vancouver Food Asset Map that outlines different places in the city that residents can grow, prepare, share, buy, receive or learn about food, for free or for an affordable price (Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks, 2019). Each of the individual food networks have a “Resources” tab on their website, providing visitors with links to many other food security resources in their specific neighbourhoods.

ASSOCIATION VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES AND OTHER VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

The Association of Vancouver Neighbourhood Houses is made up of 7 neighbourhood houses and one outdoors centre, all of which are located in Vancouver, except Alexandra Neighbourhood House which is located in Surrey. There are other neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, such as Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House, and Little Mountain Neighbourhood House. Neighbourhood houses strive to strengthen neighbourhoods and communities, through inclusivity and collaboration, and value leadership and social justice. Neighbourhood houses offer a wide variety of programs, and often work in collaboration with food networks that operate in their area. Some of the food security-related programming offered includes cooking and food preparation workshops, free, pay-what-you-can and low-cost meals, and community produce markets.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

The City of Vancouver has over 110 community gardens in city parks, schools or on private property, which are operated by local community groups (City of Vancouver, 2020). Membership fees vary but can be free and many have policies that allow fees to be waived for low-income individuals, or paid in installments. The City of Vancouver includes an interactive map of all the community gardens in the city on their website, as well as a data portal to learn more about each individual garden and how to add your name to a waitlist (City of Vancouver, 2020). Waitlist times around the city vary based on location.

FOOD ASSET MAPS

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) has partnered with numerous organizations including Vancouver Neighborhood Food Networks, North Shore Table Matters Network, Squamish Food Policy Council, UBC Land and Food Systems students and instructors, the City of Vancouver, and Fresh Roots in order to create three maps called the *Food Asset Maps*. These maps highlight food assets that are located in local communities to show where people can go to receive food education, buy, grow, prepare, and share food. There are three neighborhood maps created in Vancouver, the North Shore, and the Squamish-Lillooet region (Vancouver Coastal Health, n.d.). These maps offer a great way to find free or low-cost meal programs and groceries in individual neighbourhoods.

SURREY

Surrey is home to 19 percent of SFU undergraduates, and is one of the fastest-growing cities in the Lower Mainland, having almost double the region's growth from 2011 to 2016 (City of Surrey, 2018). Surrey is also one of the most diverse cities, with a large immigrant (42 percent of residents) and visible minority (58 percent of residents) population, with large South Asian, Chinese and Filipino communities. Surrey residents face many barriers to food security; however, they have a strong network of food security services to support them.

SURREY FOOD BANK

The Surrey Food Bank provides nutritious food to families across Surrey and North Delta in a respectful dignified manner, with the goal of connecting clients to community services to help them become self-sufficient (Surrey Food Bank, n.d.). An article from CBC in 2016 found that the resources at the Surrey Food Bank were insufficient to handle the increasing demand due to food insecurity in the community. Some of the beneficiaries of the food bank have expressed that financial challenge such as increased rent and are pushing them to use alternative means to earn money for nutritious food, such as collecting bottles or panhandling (Britten, 2016). The executive director of the Surrey Food Bank, Marilyn Hermann, discussed the diverse number of individuals accessing the food bank including seniors, people with chronic health problems, Syrian refugees, and children. Hermann reported that the Surrey Food Bank provides food to one of the highest number of users that are under the age of 18 of any food bank in Canada (Britten, 2016). Every six weeks, they spend approximately \$10,000 on just baby formula. Instead of operating under its mission to be an emergency food service, the Surrey Food Bank has become an essential service that community members are relying on for consistent, long periods of time (Britten, 2016).

SOURCES COMMUNITY RESOURCES SOCIETY

Sources Community Resources Society is a charitable non-profit that operates out of White Rock and serves over 40,000 citizens in White Rock, Surrey, Delta, Langley, Prince George, Parksville and beyond (Sources Community Resources Centres, n.d.). Their social wellness services are offered out of Community Resource

Centres over 20 locations, including Surrey and White Rock. Sources has four main services with the aim of “put [sic] food on my table”: Sources Langley Food Bank, Sources White Rock/South Surrey Food Bank, Sources Food Hub and Sources Volunteer Services Shop-by-Phone program (Sources Community Resources Centres, n.d.). The food banks provide community members with two days’ worth of food per person per week, and offers classes, workshops and other food preparation-related resources. Sources Food Hub provides education and training on food waste reduction and redistributes recovered and harvested foods to community agencies in Surrey, redirecting the equivalent of 1,838 meals over 5 months. The Shop-by-Phone program allows the delivery of meals to residents with disabilities, injuries or illnesses that make obtaining food difficult.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Like Vancouver, Surrey has community gardens on both private and public land – there are nine community gardens on City of Surrey park land, and several others on private land (City of Surrey, 2020). Surrey is also home to the PLOT, which is on city land adjacent to the Surrey Newton Bus Loop that provides an organic sharing garden that is free to anyone in the community (The PLOT, 2020). The PLOT is home to Gro-Carts, an initiative started by two SFU undergraduate students and aims to support citizens in Surrey Centre in accessing fresh and affordable food, when it would otherwise be a challenge to do so for financial or geographic reasons.

FARMERS’ MARKETS

Surrey is home to three different farmers’ markets, held in the May to October period. The City of Surrey (n.d.) reports that the Surrey Urban Farmers Market is hosted outside the Surrey Civic Plaza behind City Hall every Saturday from 10am to 2pm, June through October. The Clayton Community Farmer's Market takes place in the Clayton Heights Secondary School parking lot on select Sundays from May to October (City of Surrey, n.d.). It features products from local farmers, crafters and artisans, as well food trucks. Cloverdale Market Days features a mix of over 100 local artisans, retailers and farmers’ market vendors, operating five times each summer from May through September.

DIVERSECITY

DIVERSEcity is a community non-profit with locations around Surrey, including Surrey City Centre (DIVERSEcity, n.d.). They operate two food security programs, the Community Kitchen Program and Projects, and the Community Garden Program. In the Community Kitchen Program, participants learn cooking skills, including how to cook Canadian and multicultural healthy food (DIVERSEcity, n.d.). They learn new food preparation skills, visit grocery stores and learn about local community food supports for low-income families. The Community Garden Program provides plots to (mainly) new immigrant, refugee and low-income families at one of two community gardens in Surrey, teaching participants how to grow healthy food organically (DIVERSEcity, n.d.). The program offers workshops and cultural celebrations and events to help connect garden members who all come from different parts of the world.

THE SURREY/WHITE ROCK FOOD COALITION

The Surrey/White Rock Food Coalition is a group of citizens, agencies and other leaders in collaborative food security work (Surrey/White Rock Food Coalition, n.d.). They work to enhance access to healthy foods, build citizen capacity to empower their food growing and preparation skills and improve food policy in Surrey, which has 11 of the 20 poorest neighbourhoods in BC (Surrey/White Rock Food Action Coalition, nd). They also provide documents that lists free or low-cost meals and grocers/retailers (including community organisations), as well

low-cost transportation options to access those meals or food. As Surrey does not have quite as strong and coordinated network of community resources including neighbourhood houses, food banks, churches/temples and other social services as Vancouver, the [Surrey Low Cost and Free Food and Transportation](#) document is very valuable to citizens. However, this document is out of date, and includes programs like Harvest Boxes which are no longer available, and God's Little Acre Farm that has faced allegations of fraud.

COMMUNITY FOOD RESOURCES MAPS AND CHARTS

The Surrey/White Rock Food Coalition also created a [community food resources map of Surrey](#), partnering with the City of Surrey to use their COSMOS online mapping system (Hinks, 2018). This map highlights over 150 different resources where residents can access affordable food from sources like food banks, community kitchens, low-cost retailers, community gardens, CSA farms, and farm gate sales (Hinks, 2018). It even showcases food skills programs like Food Skills for Families, to foster a greater connection to food through food preparation.

BURNABY

SFU's biggest campus is located in North Burnaby. Over 23 percent of SFU undergraduate students, including 54 percent of international students, call Burnaby home, despite being less than half the size of both Vancouver and Surrey. Burnaby lacks the robust food security services provided in Vancouver and Surrey, which will be discussed below.

BURNABY FOOD FIRST

Burnaby Food First is a group of community members and local agencies that meet 9 times per year to work together to make Burnaby food secure. They operate a blog, share gardening resources and tips, host free educational workshops on healthy eating and food preparation, and support the Sharing Backyards program operated by the non-profit LifeCycles, to connect people who have space in their yards with those looking for a place to grow food (Burnaby Food First, n.d.). The "Resources" tab on their website provides many food security resources in and around the City of Burnaby, including a [free and low-cost food chart](#) for the Fraser Health region. Their "Local Food" tab specifically locates farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, grocers and directories and guides in the region.

Burnaby Food First is in the process of creating a food asset map of Burnaby, similar to the ones in Vancouver and Surrey. The results of the Community Asset Mapping and Food Security Framework workshop revealed many of the strengths, gaps, barriers, solutions and collaborative opportunities to address food insecurity in the community. They presented these findings to City Council in March 2018.

BURNABY ARTISAN FARMERS' MARKET

The only current farmers' market in Burnaby operates out of the North Parking Lot at City Hall every Saturday year-round, with no markets during the Christmas holiday season (Artisan Farmers Markets Society, 2020). The market features organic and traditional produce, craft vendors, and prepared food vendors. It is operated by Artisan Farmers Markets Society that operates two other artisan markets on the North Shore.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Burnaby has several community gardens throughout the city, most notably, the Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association (BARAGA) in South Burnaby, western Canada's largest allotment garden (Burnaby

and Region Allotment Gardens Association, n.d.). The gardens were established by the City of Burnaby, but collectively run and administered by various local non-profit groups. They grow vegetables, berries and flowers. The annual fee is more expensive than most community gardens in Vancouver and Surrey; however, members can waive their clean-up fees at the end of the growing season if they clean up the plot themselves.

BURNABY NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

Burnaby Neighbourhood House (BNH) is a non-profit with two locations, one in North Burnaby and another in South Burnaby (Burnaby Neighbourhood House, n.d.). BNH offers community garden plots at the BARAGA and Sharing Cultures Nights where an affordable meal with differing cultural themes is served. They also participate in the inter-community agency network committee called Food First Committee.

STUDENT UNIONS ACROSS CANADA

This section of the report will explore the various food security programs offered by different post-secondary student unions across Canada.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (UBC)

The UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) offers an emergency food bank program (AMS Food Bank) for UBC students and includes personal hygiene supplies, budgeting tips and information on food security resources in and around Vancouver. All UBC students who need emergency relief can utilize the program up to **six** times a term. The terms at UBC run similar to SFU: September-December, January-April and May-August. Each time an individual student chooses to utilize their services, they receive one bag of groceries, and families receive two bags. The AMS collects \$0.83 per year per undergrad student in student fees to fund the food bank program, and is sponsored by multiple UBC departments and organisations, and external groups such as Cartems Donuts, Save On Foods and Mix the Bakery. The AMS also runs the AMS Food Bank Blog that provides easy, affordable recipes for students. Roots on the Roof is an AMS club that is 100 percent student-run, and operates a rooftop farm on the top of the student union building, the Nest. Roots on the Roof offers a CSA box, Fall through Summer, at affordable rates as low as \$12 per CSA box. Roots on the Roof is in addition to the existing large-scale UBC Farm operated by the university, which also provides a CSA program at a much higher cost.

UBC also has a choose-what-you-pay café called Fooood that offers three tiers of pricing to make a wholesome meal accessible to all students. This program is subsidized by the university and generous customers.

CAPILANO UNIVERSITY

The Capilano Student Union (CSU) offers the “Community Cupboard” program in which students who wish to utilize the program can either visit the CSU Centre and request a bag of food, or be referred to the Community Cupboard by the university’s Financial Aid & Awards office. Each bag of food is limited to one bag per person each semester, with each bag containing approximately 10 items. The CSU has also partnered with Quest Food Exchange, who work with local wholesalers, supermarkets and farmers to make food available to low income patrons at a reduced cost (approximately a third of retail value). Students have to pre-register to be enrolled within the program. The CSU collects a Student Union Equity and Sustainability Fee of \$0.79 per credit to a maximum of \$11.85 per year (this includes other services as well).

An additional food bank program offered at Capilano is provided by the university, administered through the Financial Aid & Awards office. The program's "emergency funding" is for students who have faced unexpected financial distress or have had major change in their finances. The approximate amount each student is given is determined by the Financial Aid & Awards Office and can take one to two business days to be administered.

MANITOBA

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

The University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA) offers a Foodbank program for students attending the University of Winnipeg who are in need of supplemental groceries. Students must sign up online to access the program, then sign in again at the student centre in order to collect food. Students who do not pre-register online have to wait until all registered students have an opportunity to collect their food (approximately half an hour). Students can register for the program every second week and receive "4-5 non-perishable items, some produce, and usually crackers or granola bars". The approximate value of the food items per week is \$50-70, students can additionally request for cat/dog food, feminine hygiene products, gluten free kits, or baby food. If students are in need of food between their registered appointments, students can act as a "walk-in" client. The annual Foodbank levy is \$1.60 per student.

ONTARIO

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

The Lakehead University Student Union (LUSU) provides a food bank with a goal to "eliminate student hunger". Students with a valid student card are able to access the food bank once every month and students with dependents are allowed to take double what is suggested. Students can take one bag a month of food (doubled for those who have dependents) and can apply for additional assistance through the Food Bank Coordinator in case of an emergency. Additionally, LUSU offers the Thunder Bay Good Food Box similarly to Ryerson University where students are able to buy fresh produce at low cost. An individual box costs \$15 and a family box costs \$25. The LUSU Food Bank additionally provides a free meal every Thursday through the Peoples Potato program, in which students are asked to bring their own plate and cutlery to the campus pub in order to receive their free meal. Students have the option of paying a non-essential opt out fee of \$5.50 for Sustainability per semester.

LUSU previously partnered with the Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy (TBAFS) and Students Feeding Change (SFC) Project to offer a free grocery bus service to students, shuttling them on Saturdays and Wednesday evenings to affordable grocery stores. This service operated as a 4-week pilot program in 2018 and 2019.

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

The Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) operates the Good Food Centre (GFC), a food security program with several services including a drop-in food bank program, workshops, recipes, and educational events. In order to become a recipient, students must register to be a member annually and make an appointment with staff so they can understand each student's specific needs. The Drop-in Food Bank is where students are able to receive free non-perishable and perishable food items after registering via email. Another option offered by the RSU is the Good Food Box, which is a non-profit fresh fruit and vegetable distribution service provided by Food Share Toronto that offers students a box of seasonal produce to fit their needs. The box contains produce sourced from local farmers depending on the season, and is offered at a discounted price for students. An additional resource the RSU offers students is the Community Garden. During the spring, summer, and early fall months, a collection

of organic food is grown onsite in the garden to provide to the food bank program. A priority is growing vegetables that are nutrient dense and easy to grow including chard, kale, tomatoes, summer squash, lettuces, beets and pole beans. The GFC also has a recipe blog their website. Lastly, the GFC offers programs such as Eat Up Meet Up, a cooking workshop that teaches students how to cook, Soup 4 Cents where students pay what they can for soup, community dinners and a Foodies Fair to allow students to learn more about Ryerson Good Food Centre services. The RSU fee levy for the Good Food Centre services is \$5.13 per student per year for the Good Food Centre. *It should be noted, that Ryerson University terminated its 34-year-old agreement with the governing student union in 2020. The university is withholding fees the student union collects until the RSU produces a forensic audit of finances.*

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

The Central Student Union (CSU) at the University of Guelph offers many food security services through their FoodBank program. The program is offered to both graduate and undergraduate students, and can be accessed through filling out an application. There are two funds that can be accessed to improve food security – the Compassionate Fund (\$50 per year per student to be used in emergencies) and the Special Diet Fund (supplements the money provided by the Compassionate Fund for students with dietary restrictions). In the Fall and Winter semesters, the CSU FoodBank hosts a monthly cooking class, each with a different theme, and a weekly breakfast on Wednesdays from 9:30 am to 11:30 called Breakfast Club, where food such as oatmeal, cereal, fruit, coffee, tea and muffins are offered for free. The Garden Fresh Box provides students with affordable fresh produce from local farm, available in large and small sizes once a month. This program is offered year-round, with winter produce being supplemented with non-local items like bananas. The CSU FoodBank also has many great resources on their section of the CSU website, including an Eating on a Budget document, and an 82-page Guelph Student Cookbook that is filled with recipes for every diet and budget.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

While the University of Waterloo does offer a Student Food Bank that provides food hampers to students for pick-up across campus, the Environmental Studies (ES) Coffee Shop will be the focus of this section. The ES Coffee Shop is a student-run café that provides locally-sourced and ethical food and coffee (using products such as Rainforest Alliance certified coffee beans) at a discounted cost to all Faculty of Environment students and friends. The coffee shop is able to offer such low prices as it is entirely volunteer-run by students. The coffee shop is cash only.

QUEBEC

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

The Concordia Student Union (CSU) has arguably the most robust student food security program, delivered through a variety of different services. Rather than a physical food bank program, Concordia operates similar to the SFSS and distributes grocery store gift cards through their Emergency Food Vouchers program. The amount of the voucher is at the discretion of the CSU and students can apply a maximum of twice per semester. The CSU also offers a bursary called the Food Systems Special Project Funding, available to facilitate the growth of a student-run community food system at Concordia. The Hive Café Solidarity Co-operative, established through a CSU student referendum, has two locations that provide local, affordable, and sustainable food to students. Like the ES Coffee Shop, the Hive Café Co-op is 100 percent student-run; however, as a co-op, it has three distinct membership categories: user-members, worker-members, and support or community-members.

The Hive Café Co-op has its own by-laws and Board of Directors who oversee the financial and social sustainability of the co-op. It supports the Solidarity Food Movement, which allows students to purchase food items in advance, which can be paid-forward to students in need requesting it at a later date. It also provides catering, space booking, and the Hive Free Lunch (a free, vegan, nut-free lunch every weekday at the Loyola campus). The CSU also collects a variety of different fee levies on behalf of other independent groups, aptly called Fee Levy Groups. The services these groups provided are discussed below.

Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) was established via student referendum as a Fee Levy Group, in order to “bring students, faculty and staff together to bring students, faculty and staff together to mobilize and facilitate a transition towards a sustainable food system on campus”. The CFC achieves its mission through its working groups, which do everything from running Pop-Up Market Stands with produce grown on-campus through the Campus Potager program, to providing educational workshops on hydroponics and pollinators.

Another group is the People’s Potato Collective, which is a collectively-run soup kitchen that offers a by-donation vegan meal every weekday for the fall and winter semesters. In addition to the soup kitchen, they run a food bank, offering food parcels of items like canned foods, milk, bread and cereal to students twice monthly (and more frequently during exams). They also provide prepared food, snacks or beverages for events that support their mandate of social and environmental justice, or cooking space for groups that fall under this mandate.

Le Frigo Vert is another fee group that provides an alternative health and community space, offering variety of services including cooking workshops and affordable bulk food products, challenging the notion that health food culture must be expensive.

The Sustainable Action Fund is another fee levy administered by the CSU that provides additional funding for a variety of sustainability-focused projects, including the Concordia Greenhouse (another Fee Levy Group) and its City Farm School, and the Plant Based Cooking program. It provides funding for these projects on an annual basis.

The fee levies collected by the CSU to support student food security at Concordia are: \$0.16 per credit for the CFC, \$0.40 per credit for the People’s Potato Collective, \$0.33 for Le Frigo Vert, \$0.25 per credit for the Sustainability Action Fund, \$0.24 for the Concordia Greenhouse, and \$0.10 for the Hive Café Co-op, totaling \$1.48 per credit. Generally, one-semester courses at Concordia are 3 credits, meaning an undergraduate student taking a full course load (5 classes) would pay \$22.20 per semester. These fee levies are refundable, through the individual non-profits/groups.

The university also offers several excellent food security services. The Multi-Faith and Spirituality Centre at Concordia University provides vouchers to local grocery stores. Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard is a weekly event hosted on Thursdays around supper time, offering a vegan meal for a donation of \$2.

FOOD SECURITY RESOURCE GAPS

One of the gaps identified in the review of provincial, municipal and non-profit/charitable programs was that many programs have ceased to exist, despite being referenced in current and recent food security resource documents across B.C. This finding points to a lack of sustainable funding for food security programs in British Columbia, whether they are funded by the government, through a government partnership, or fully-funded by a non-profit. There is little involvement from the private sector in food security initiatives in British Columbia, outside of grocery chain donation of products past their sell-by dates. It is clear that Vancouver and Surrey have stronger food security services than Burnaby, but also more individuals living in poverty or that are low-income.

However, as noted in the Study, food security rates across Vancouver and the Fraser Valley are comparable. Additionally, of the many programs and supports offered in local communities, many of them, such as gardening, shopping at farmers' markets and attending food preparation workshops, require time that students may not have, even if it promotes long-term food security by teaching them how to prepare and grow affordable food. Furthermore, many of the community food security support programs are targeted towards seniors and families, limiting the number of programs that young individuals on a low-income can access. However, serving families is important as the Study identified that students living with partners and/or children were one of the most at-risk groups to food insecurity.

Based on the examination of other student unions and universities across Canada, several gaps have been identified in the SFU on-campus and off-campus community resources for improving food security. The SFSS Food Bank program fee is one of the lowest for student union-run food banks in Canada. A small operating budget makes it difficult to provide adequate services to address student food insecurity. It is difficult to provide any food security resources to students beyond a food bank voucher program unless the levy is increased or the number of vouchers provided are significantly reduced. Furthermore, compared to the student unions at Concordia, Guelph and Ryerson, the SFSS provides fewer services beyond the typical food bank/food voucher program, and provides students with very little guidance on budgeting, cooking and community resources. Waterloo and UBC also offer low-cost, subsidized cafés, while Veggie Lunch is one of few consistent affordable meals on SFU campus.

CONCLUSION

This community food resources assessment is by no means exhaustive. There are likely more community-based programs and initiatives across cities in the Lower Mainland, and universities across Canada. This report seeks to provide a holistic examination of food security services in Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby, and best practices at student union food banks or food security services across Canada.

Burnaby campus has many different food security resources, namely through Embark, Health and Counselling and the SFSS Women's Centre. As a whole, Burnaby lacks many of the food security services and programs offered in Vancouver and Surrey, particularly for young individuals and families. Student unions across Canada offer innovative food security services, such as regular free or low-cost meals, affordable CSA programs or similar, affordable and student-run cafés, easy recipes for students on a budget, grocery vouchers, and physical food bank access or hampers. The SFSS collects a very low fee (the lowest of all the Society fees) to fund the Food Bank Program, especially comparing it to other student unions in Eastern Canada. This community food security resources assessment and evaluation of food bank best practices at post-secondary institutions across Canada provides a look at existing community resources in and around SFU, and at student unions across Canada, allowing best practices to be gleaned and applied in the SFSS context in the final report of this study.

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