

## Media Release

For Immediate Release – November 26, 2008

### Numbers Consistent – Hunger a Perpetual Problem in Waterloo Region (Annual HungerCount numbers released today in Waterloo Region)

Today, members of the Food Assistance Network in Waterloo Region travelled across the Region from Cambridge to Waterloo to Wilmot Township to release HungerCount 2008, illustrating the complexity of this perpetual problem in our community. Hunger in Waterloo Region is not defined by urban or rural residence, employment or unemployment, or personal attributes. It is a problem that has the potential to touch all of our lives and the lives of our neighbours.

“We see the full spectrum of people and situations.” Matt Cooper of the House of Friendship Emergency Food Hamper program commented on the members of our community he sees at the doors of their agency. “Some only need to visit our program once, before they are able to get back on their feet. Often, they will come back and donate money or food or time. However, a significant proportion of our patrons have been forced to rely on food assistance programs regularly during the last five years to feed themselves and their families.”

The HungerCount is an annual survey coordinated by Food Banks Canada that provides a snapshot of food bank use in Canada. In Waterloo Region, data is collected by the Food Bank of Waterloo Region from over 100 community programs providing emergency food services (food hampers, community meals, shelter & residential programs). This data reflects program usage from January – December 2007. In 2007, approximately 25,000 different people were served, a total of 59,416 emergency food hampers were distributed and 380,841 meals were served.

“The number of people accessing emergency food who receive government assistance has decreased over the last 10 years. Today 25% have a full or part-time job or are receiving Employment Insurance, meaning they have been working within the last year,” stated Pat Singleton, the Executive Director of the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank. “Social service agencies throughout the community are collaborating and working hard to meet these changing needs.”

Brice Balmer – the secretary of the Interfaith Social Alliance Reform Coalition and Chair of Opportunities Waterloo Region -- helped the group call the community to action. “Poverty reduction needs to have “a comprehensive multi-year plan, not just a set of quick fixes.” Organizations within the food assistance network in Waterloo Region endorse the 25 in 5 Poverty Reduction Network and are asking the community to do the same.

“There is no one solution to eliminating hunger and poverty. It is a journey that begins with a food assistance network providing a basic need – to keep people healthy today, tomorrow and next week so they can take the next step.” says Wendi Campbell – Executive Director of The Food Bank of Waterloo Region. “It ends with a multi-faceted approach that enables everyone to access this basic human need with dignity.”

#### For more information please contact:

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