

Toronto

## GTA food banks asking for help to recover from flooding

Tuesday's rainstorm flooded fridges and storage spaces, damaging food inventories

[Ethan Lang](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jul 18, 2024 11:39 AM CDT | Last Updated: July 18, 2024



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### Flooding causes \$50K in damages at Toronto food bank

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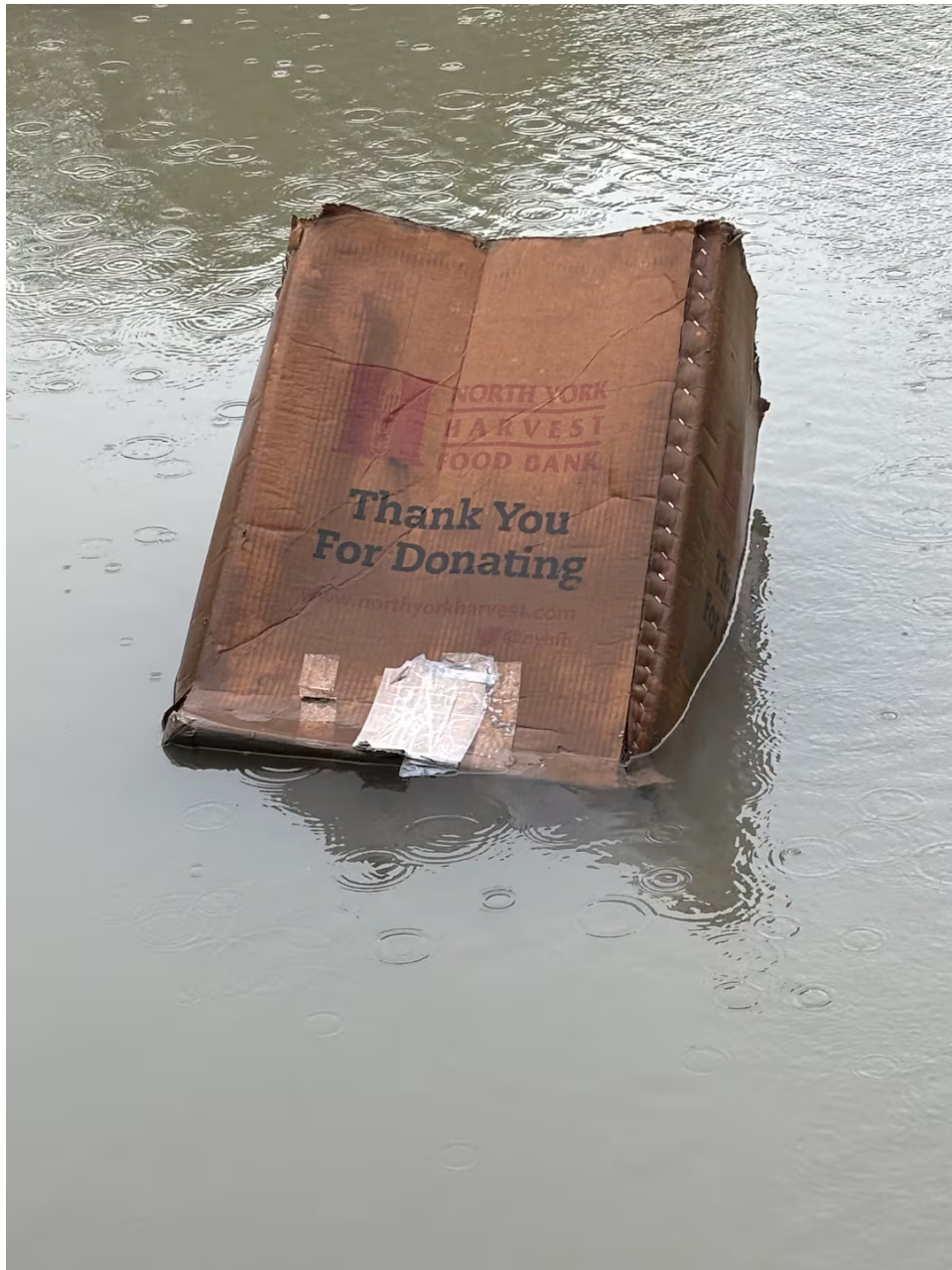
Cleanup continues in Toronto after torrential rain and flooding brought parts of the city to a standstill. Some businesses have reopened, but others are dealing with significant and expensive damages — like North York Harvest Food Bank, which is navigating through \$50,000 in destruction to their products and equipment.

First the parking lot flooded, stalling delivery trucks. Then the roof started to leak. And while food bank workers were getting dry goods to safety, the power went out.

With hot, humid temperatures and no working fridges, executive director Ryan Noble says North York Harvest Food Bank (NYHFB) wound up losing \$20,000 of product, including pallets of "high quality food" like milk, eggs, cheese, chicken and beef. Total damages from flooding, including lost food, is closer to \$50,000, he says.

"The amount of food is quite heartbreaking," Noble said Thursday. "That's food that could've been helping people in our community

today."



North York Harvest Food Bank and other food banks around the GTA are asking for help from the public after Tuesday's rainstorm flooded and damaged facilities. (Submitted by North York Harvest Food Bank)

NYHFB still got its deliveries out after Tuesday's rainstorm, Noble said, but the food bank is now asking the public for donations to help cover the lost food, as well as damages to the facility and delivery vehicles.

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- [Severe Toronto storm causes flooding, major power outages](#)

NYHFB, which also distributes products to other food banks, serves 25,000 people in northwestern Toronto, with about 136,000 kilograms of food each month, Noble said.

In the four decades the food bank has been open, Noble says the organization has never seen so many people accessing its services. He says while the food bank is bouncing back, damaged goods shouldn't be affecting this many Torontonians, and policymakers need to step up.



Damage to the walk-in fridge at North York Harvest has prevented the food bank from storing perishable goods since Tuesday's rainstorm. (Submitted by North York Harvest Food Bank)

"The network of food banks that are vital in the lives of tens of thousands of people every day, are really stretched far beyond what they were ever intended to do," he said.

"So we really are operating, and have been for a number of years now, really well beyond what we're able to do. And you see a disruption like this just ripples through and causes a major issue."



Ryan Noble, executive director of North York Harvest Food Bank, stands by the food bank's empty, flood-damaged fridge Thursday. He says they lost about \$20,000 of perishable food when the power went out in Tuesday's storm. (Submitted by North York Harvest Food Bank)

Noble says affordability is affecting more and more people, and systemic change is needed "so people can have a sustainable livelihood and don't need to turn to a food bank in the first place."

"We'll bounce back," he said. "But we're going to continue to be dealing with a crisis that's really alarming."

- [VIDEO Shelves left bare after flooding damages food bank](#)

For now, NYHFB is focused on the immediate recovery, Noble says. The food bank is working to replace the lost food items and repair its fridge and some of its vehicles.

Details about what products are most needed and where donations can be dropped off are available on the food bank's website.

## Other food banks lost goods to flooding

GlobalMedic, an Ontario-based charity that recently sent supplies to Caribbean countries hit by Hurricane Beryl, had a team delivering food and hygiene products to food banks around Toronto on Tuesday and Wednesday.

"A lot of the food banks in the city are in basements of churches and we had a lot of basements flood," said executive director Rahul Singh on Thursday. "We don't want to see people go hungry or lose out on aid so our teams were out delivering aid just to keep those services open."



GlobalMedic delivered supplies to St. Philip Neri's Table after flooding damaged food product in the church-based food bank. GlobalMedic said about two months' worth of food was lost. (Submitted by GlobalMedic)

One of those church-based food banks was St. Philip Neri's Table, which lost about two months' worth of food to flooding, GlobalMedic said in an email.

- ['We are in a crisis': 1 in 10 Torontonians now rely on a food bank, new report finds](#)
- [Daily Bread food banks see record 300k visits in February](#)

The charity now has volunteers packing food to distribute to food banks that have lost inventory to flooding this week.

A year-end report in 2023 from North York Harvest and Daily Bread found roughly one in 10 Torontonians now rely on food banks, twice as many as in 2022.

*With files from Ali Chiasson and CBC News Network*

