

# Community

## Demand almost double

BI and JFS host food security events for Tu b'Shevat.



The Vancouver Jewish Food Bank is now distributing more than 10,000 kilograms of food every month.

According to the Community Food Centres Canada report *Beyond Hunger: The Hidden Impacts of Food Insecurity in Canada*, “Even before COVID-19, nearly 4.5 million Canadians struggled to put good food on the table for themselves and their families. In the first two months of the pandemic, that number grew by 39%, affecting one in seven people.”

Demand on the Vancouver Jewish Food Bank has almost doubled since the start of COVID-19. The organization is now distributing more than 10,000 kilograms of food every month; supporting seniors, families and individuals. While some of us have been impacted by food scarcity during COVID-19, those most in need live in a state of constant worry about where their next meal will come from.

The 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as: “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” To this end, Jewish Family Services and Congregation Beth Israel are hosting More Than a Bag of Food on Jan. 28, bringing organizations and people together for a Tu b'Shevat program on food security in our community and beyond.

Vancouver Talmud Torah students are raising awareness about the food bank and reaching out to recipients. King David High School is hosting a cooking demonstration with Hilit Nurick and Rabbi Stephen Berger at 4 p.m. on Jan. 28, which will feature local ingredients and discuss the need for healthy food for everyone. Hillel BC is running an online quiz, with prizes, and a deep dive into information around food security.

At 7:30 p.m. on the 28th, there will be a Zoom panel including Dr. Tammara Soma, assistant professor, School of Resource and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University; Dr. Eleanor Boyle, educator and author; Krystine McInnes, director and chief executive officer of Grown Here Farms; Mara Shnay, chair of the JFS client advisory committee; and Cindy McMillan, director of programs and community partnerships at JFS. Lawyer Bernard Pinsky will moderate the discussion.

“This is an important conversation,” said McInnes. “The stakes are very high. The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief just how vulnerable we are, given the way our society is organized.”

Food systems produce and deliver based on historic demand. With the advent of COVID-19, the system has been stretched, leading to empty grocery shelves and desperate food banks. International supply chains are no longer reliable, with Russia and Vietnam limiting the sale of wheat and rice outside of their countries. Canadian food production plants have been hard hit by pandemic outbreaks and the lack of international workers. This is particularly problematic when food production is concentrated at large facilities; for example, two plants in Alberta provide 70% of Canadian beef.

“We are going to talk about initiatives from local to global,” said Boyle, “and panelists will let audience members know about some of the creative approaches to food security that are being taken at the Jewish Food Bank, as well as what’s going on around the world to try to shift agriculture and diets toward being better for climate and public health.”

To register for the cooking event and/or the food security conference, visit [bethisraelvan.ca/event/tubishvat5781](http://bethisraelvan.ca/event/tubishvat5781).

— Courtesy Beth Israel and Jewish Family Services

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