

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water, cautions Food Pantry

I would like to respond to the article in the June 26, 2014 edition of the Auroran, "Food advocates decide it's time to consider other options on the shelf."

The Aurora Food Pantry did not participate in the York Region Food Network's panel discussion entitled, "Have Food Banks Reached Their Best Before Date." We felt the panel's title reflected a bias and was insulting to the community of Aurora citizens, churches, schools, businesses, organizations and volunteers that have supported the Aurora Food Pantry for over 20 years. It's a catchy title, but misplaced.

Late in the article, Joan Stonehocker states, "Our intention is not to go out and shut down food banks?" but attitudes like hers are potentially hurtful to the functioning of the Aurora Food Pantry. I'm absolutely sure that those who know us would be unaffected by the "best before date" comments. However, Ms. Stonehocker's views can possibly harm attracting new support in both donations and volunteers.

Food banks are not a solution to the problem of food insecurity. I don't think anyone connected with the Aurora Food Pantry would ever espouse the idea that we are anything but a community safety valve. Having a client representing a family of four leave the AFP with five or six grocery bags after their monthly visit is hardly a solution to the problems that brought them to us.

And, the poverty, or illness, or unemployment, or misfortune of these people is now --- not in the future. The social justice activism mentioned in the article is admirable. Raising guaranteed income levels in our country to the point where everyone has food security is something to strive for and we praise the efforts of the panellists mentioned.

On the other hand, I am uncomfortable with Ms. Stonehocker's cry to arms, being "impatient with the changes that we do or don't see in our community surrounding hunger and poverty and it's time to get provocative." What does she mean by this? Does she have an agenda? She states, "There have been a lot of things that have gotten us to this place and now moving on is what we need to think about." What does she mean?

Let's debate the best routes to take to achieve common goals co-operatively.

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