



THE FOOD BANK
LA BANQUE D'ALIMENTATION

Media Release

For Immediate Release: May 5th, 2006

Ottawa To Have Canada's Most High-Tech Food Bank

(Ottawa, ON) – In an effort to alleviate rising hunger in Ottawa, The Ottawa Food Bank and six public and private sector partners have joined forces to launch an ambitious project that will make Ottawa home to the country's most technologically advanced central emergency food program. Known as *FoodNet*, the initiative comprises a web-based system designed to increase the efficiency and accessibility of The Food Bank's services.

"We're very hopeful that *FoodNet* will make us an even more effective, efficient, and accountable organization. As the number of people that require our services continues to grow, this is a necessary step for us, one that would be impossible without the generosity of our partners," said Peter Tilley, Executive Director of The Food Bank. "The organization has grown significantly in recent years and the number of food programs supplied by The Food Bank has increased by 50 percent since 2000."

The Food Bank has partnered with the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Cognos, Adobe Systems, Cisco Systems Canada Co., Rogers Telecommunications Inc., and the Social Planning Council of Ottawa to create *FoodNet*. The project has been made possible with a \$75,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. These funds will cover costs in both phases of the two-year project, which will result in improved communications and community outreach for The Ottawa Food Bank and its network of food programs. The Foundation is an agency of the Ministry of Culture and receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative.

"The contribution of each and every member of the community is important. Everyone must be given a chance to flourish and to fully participate, which is something that hungry people cannot do," said Meilleur. "The Ottawa Food Bank provides invaluable help to people in need. The *FoodNet* project will assist the organization in providing its services even more efficiently."

FoodNet will have four main components developed in two phases: Phase 1, which is now complete, is a food ordering system and information sharing module; Phase 2, scheduled for completion in May 2007, will feature an agency boundary-mapping system and a rapid agency-look-up utility, developed in association with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. Together, these features are expected to cut time spent on administration in half, leaving more resources for the purchase and distribution of food.

Volunteers from Cognos and Adobe Systems are developing the software for *FoodNet* and Cisco is supplying over 60 computers with endpoint security and wireless networking capability to The Food Bank's agencies. Tech volunteers will also provide *FoodNet* training and documentation, which will improve the computer skills of the people who help run the organization's agencies. Rogers is providing High Speed internet service and web-hosting.

The Ottawa Food Bank is the National Capital Region's central emergency food assistance organization. Through its 112 member agencies, The Ottawa Food Bank helps 38,500 individuals per month, 40 per cent of whom are children.

-30-

For More Information Contact:

Peter Tilley
Executive Director
The Ottawa Food Bank
(613) 745-7001

The Ottawa Food Bank's *FoodNet* Project Partners

The Ontario Trillium Foundation: The generous contribution of \$75,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will fund the two-year *FoodNet* project at The Ottawa Food Bank.

Cognos: Cognos is a key partner in the development of *FoodNet*. Volunteers from Cognos continue to help the Food Bank develop business processes that help the organization maximize its resources. Cognos volunteers developed The Food Bank's first data base and inventory management system, to which *FoodNet* will be linked. The company has also made financial contributions to cover extra costs of hardware necessary for the project. Cognos is the world leader in business intelligence and performance management solutions.

Adobe Systems Canada Inc.: Adobe Systems is also a long-time community partner with The Ottawa Food Bank. Volunteers from Adobe Systems have been working alongside Cognos volunteers to develop the food order forms and the information sharing module and they will continue to play a key role in *FoodNet* throughout the course of the 2 year project. Adobe supports strategic programs and partnerships that help make communities better, stronger, and more vibrant places to live, work, and do business

Cisco Systems Canada Co.: Cisco, one of The Ottawa Food Bank's largest corporate donors, contributions to *FoodNet* include over 60 laptop computers with endpoint security and wireless networking capability – generously helping get technology and the *FoodNet* program to food bank agencies that lack computers.

Rogers Telecommunications Inc.: Rogers provides The Ottawa Food Bank with free High-Speed internet connectivity and web-hosting which are necessary components of *FoodNet*. Rogers better the lives of its customers through innovative and integrated ways to stay informed, in touch and entertained.

The Social Planning Council of Ottawa: The Social Planning Council of Ottawa will provide the expertise needed to evaluate the existing Ottawa Food Bank agency boundaries and identify under-serviced areas in the community. Being able to work with statistical information at this level will allow The OFB to distribute limited food resources in the most equitable and efficient manner. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa is a people-centered, non-partisan, not-for-profit organization, whose primary objective is to build the community's capacity to improve the social and economic well-being of its residents.

Backgrounder

FoodNet is a web-based network project underway at The Ottawa Food Bank (OFB) and is being made possible with generous support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation; from volunteers and donations from Adobe Systems, Cognos, Cisco Systems Canada Co., Rogers Telecommunications Inc. and in association with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa.

The **FoodNet** project will have four main components: a Food Ordering and Statistics Reporting system, an Information Sharing module, an Agency Boundary Mapping system and an Agency Look-up module. These four on-line systems and tools will greatly improve The OFB's methods of communication, co-ordination and information-sharing with its 112 Member Agencies, as well as greatly improve everyone's administrative efficiencies.

1. **FoodNet's Food Ordering and Monthly Statistics Reporting** system will be linked directly to our existing OIMS (Ordering Inventory Management System) database and will save time, reduce the risk of error and reduce manual data input by 50% by allowing agencies to place their orders and submit their statistics on-line.
2. **The FoodNet Information Sharing Module** component will provide a means of internet based communications between the OFB and its Member Agencies for the exchange of both general and critical information (such as food alerts from the Canada Food Inspection Agency). Moreover, Agencies who are not yet using computers or the internet will have access to refurbished computers and **FoodNet** systems training.
3. **The FoodNet Agency Boundary Mapping** component will allow the OFB to examine, rationalize and re-draw existing Agency boundaries as well as make adjustments to arrive at the most equitable distribution of community resources. The Mapping component will also be used to help create an Agency Look-Up Module.
4. **The FoodNet Agency Look-Up Module** will allow all Agencies and the OFB to refer a food bank beneficiary - as quickly as possible - to the nearest OFB food program based on postal code information alone. This Look-Up Module will also be accessible to the public and will allow social service agencies and individuals to research this information on the OFB's website whenever they need it.