

THE LANGLEY Times

Sources low-barrier food bank opens in Langley



By Langley Times
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Sources, a low-barrier food bank, based out of South Surrey, has opened its doors in Langley.

The news comes after another Langley food bank reportedly declined to help a single mother because she went to school instead of attending a scheduled meeting.

The Langley Food Bank was under pressure to change its policies by the Food Banks BC association to comply with the Food Banks Canada code of ethics. But rather than alter their approach, the Langley Help Network, the operators of the food bank, opted to quit the association last year.

"We have absolutely no association with them whatsoever (now)," Food Banks BC executive director Laura Lansink said.

Lansink said the association, which represents 96 food banks in the province, received a "significant" number of complaints, both from clients of the Langley Food Bank, and from donors.

Most of the complaints concerned food bank decisions to deny service to people, Lansink said.

Lansink described a "philosophical difference" between the association and the food bank concerning The Ethical Food Banking Code that all members of the Food Banks BC are expected to follow.

Lansink said after about two years of discussions, the Langley food bank decided to leave the association rather than adjust its policies to comply with the code of ethics.

When contacted by The Times, Langley Food Bank manager Naomi Chambers refused to comment on the split with the association.

"I'm going to decline (to speak)," Chambers said.

Now, a new food bank is operating in Langley, one that is recognized by the provincial and national associations of food banks.

After the Langley Food Bank quit Food Banks BC, the association asked Sources to set up a food bank in the community.

Sources is a non-profit group that has operated a food bank serving South Surrey/White Rock for over 30 years.

It was already serving people in the Langleys, occasionally delivering hampers to people denied service by the Langley Food Bank.

Since September, Sources has been operating its new food bank from the United Church of Langley at 5673 200 St.

It currently distributes food to clients on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

It has 449 households registered so far, and expects the number will soon grow to more than 1,000 as word spreads.

Bruce Strom, the Sources food bank Langley operations manager, said the agency takes a "low-barrier" approach that only requires clients to provide a picture I.D. to show they live in the area.

If someone happens to be homeless, or without picture I.D., arrangements can still be made, he added.

"Dignity and respect, that's how we like to treat people," Strom said.

"Not making them jump through hoops."

The Sources food bank approached The Times after the newspaper reported on the case of Heidi Dosch, a Langley single mother of four who was denied food by the Langley Food Bank because she chose to attend classes rather than a mandatory meeting to re-apply for benefits.

Sources food bank manager Jaye Murray offered to help, saying the newer food bank doesn't require detailed financial disclosure.

The Times informed Dosch, who was pleased to learn about the new food bank and said she would "definitely" be going there.

Murray said Sources takes the position that most people who seek the services of a food bank are sincere.

"Who's going to stand in line half an hour for food if they don't need it?," Murray said.

Sources director of community services Denise Darrell said the food bank is there to feed the hungry.

"We're not gatekeepers," Darrell said.

The Sources food bank started operating from a boardroom in the basement of the United Church on 200 Street.

It recently expanded into a multi-purpose room, but it will soon need to find a bigger home, preferably one with warehousing capability.

Anyone who can help with that is asked to contact ddarrell@sourcesbc.ca or phone 604-541-4820.

Sources also needs volunteers, especially drivers to make pickups of donated food.

If you can help, you're asked to phone 604-542-4357.

And if you would like to make a donation, including financial support, contact jmurray@sourcesbc.ca or phone 604-541-4833.

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