

Laura's Story



"I feed my kids first to ensure they have enough to eat." Laura

NOTE: This fictional story about food insecurity is based on real-life experiences faced by residents of Guelph and Wellington County. The characters of Laura and her family represent dozens of descriptions we have heard about the struggle of community members to access and afford adequate healthy food.

Laura lives in a small apartment in Guelph with her children Emily and Alex. For years now, Laura, a single mother, has faced a continued struggle to keep her children fed and nourished.

"I feed my kids first to ensure they have enough to eat," says Laura, an effort which has sadly resulted in her cutting back on her own meals. Over a two-month period, she lost almost 20 pounds.

Regardless, the welfare of her children remains her primary concern. She is a frequent visitor to local food support programs. They are a lifeline, says Laura, but they can only provide so much: "I often have to take the bus to visit several places, sometimes up to six, to gather enough food. It's challenging and dehumanizing." The need to navigate multiple food support programs leaves her feeling worn out and affects her mental health.

Laura's paycheques from a retail store, where she earns minimum wage, never seem to stretch far enough for rent, bills and groceries, let alone what might be considered "luxuries" by some. "Emily couldn't go to a friend's birthday party because I couldn't buy a present. Alex chooses to not go to the skate park with his friends because I can't buy him the skateboard he's been wanting or even give him change to get a snack while he's there.

It's embarrassing for them and me, and there's anger sometimes. It's a difficult conversation to have with kids when I tell them no."

Laura says that while the community is generous and there are many helpful local food support services, what she needs most is a job that pays more than minimum wage.

Reflection:

- 1. What stood out to you in this story? (A moment, emotion, or detail that felt powerful or memorable)**
- 2. What message or takeaway do you think the storyteller wanted people to understand? (About poverty, food insecurity, needed change, etc.)**
- 3. What do you think makes this story impactful for advocacy or powerful for an elected official to hear?**