



'Wall of Hunger' looks to end the need for food banks



metro

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He's passionate about his job, but the executive director of the Outaouais regional food bank hopes to see the organization shut down in coming years.

"Our goal is not to keep it going for five to 10 years. Our goal is to close as soon as possible," said Jean Pigeon, executive director of Moisson Outaouais and one of the organizers of the 'Wall of Hunger' at Les Galeries de Hull yesterday.

Held to mark the second annual National Hunger Awareness Day, the event is not a celebration, Pigeon emphasized.

"The purpose of (the wall) is to make people aware that

there is a problem in the Outaouais region," said Benoit G elinas, of Moisson Outaouais.

Moisson Outaouais redistributes surplus goods from producers or grocers that would otherwise go to waste and partners with the Ottawa Food Bank to supply 25 area organizations.

It currently serves 5,500 people a month, but the organization estimates the need as closer to 23,000 — around seven per cent of the population of Outaouais.

The Ottawa Food Bank serves 40,000 people monthly. Most of the city food bank's clients are people going through crisis periods, said Ottawa Food Bank agency relations co-ordinator, Carolyn Hunter.

Forty per cent of the people Moisson Outaouais

growing numbers

► Although the number of people accessing the food bank in Ottawa varies, it tends to go up about 1,000 people a year.

serves are children, said Pigeon. "That's 9,000 (children) in Outaouais that have empty stomachs and sit in front of empty plates."

The Wall of Hunger is decorated with Styrofoam plates that are scrawled with sentiments from food bank users.

"I want to eat everyday," someone wrote. In huge, child-like writing, another plate declared in French, "I'm hungry."

The event's guest speaker, NDP Leader Jack Layton, signed a plate to show his support for the cause.