

Harvest Manitoba food drive aims to fill former dealership

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JESSICA LEE/WINNIPEG FREE PRESS / Vince Barletta, president and CEO of Harvest Manitoba, is looking forward to the pop-up food drive. (Jessica Lee / Winnipeg Free Press)

It'll be the largest "tin for the bin" site in the city.

A former auto dealership slated for demolition next month will become a Manitoba Harvest site.

A food drive will take over the former Subaru dealership, at 2537 Pembina Hwy., from April 18 to 30.

South end residents will be able to drop off canned food, non-perishable items, and even cash, to help the people the food bank assists.

"I want to fill that building (with donations) before we tear it down," said Waverley West Coun. Janice Lukes, who is spearheading the venture.

The idea started after area residents began asking what they could do to help Ukrainians and assist refugees already here, Lukes said.

When she called the Toronto developer that will tear down the dealership — and replace it with an 18-storey building with businesses on the main floor and 397 suites above — it agreed to allow the food drive, she said.

"We've got refugees here already from Afghanistan. We've got Ukrainians coming. We've got our own people in Winnipeg who've lived here all their life who are really feeling the pinch for food. Harvest is a wonderful organization who can distribute (donations)," Lukes said.

"There are a lot of wars. It's not just Ukraine. It's Afghanistan. We've got horrible stuff in Yemen, Syria, and Ukraine. We've got people in Winnipeg living in bus shelters. The pandemic has (particularly) impacted women and seniors. It's just so sad. What can we do?"

"Everyone needs food, so I called up a whole pile of people."

Several organizations have joined in, including the Whyte Ridge and South Winnipeg community centres, école South Pointe School, the Manitoba Islamic Association, and the Winnipeg Chinese Seniors Association.

Vince Barletta, president and CEO of Harvest Manitoba, said "we're so happy to see a tremendous group of Winnipeg organizations come together to support Harvest.

"There are many challenges around the world — Ukraine and the Middle East — but we knew there are hungry people in our own backyard, too. Events like this food drive are vitally important."

The location will be open weekdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.