



Selkirk & District Community Foundation and Selkirk Food Bank members with Lt.-Gov. Anita Neville at Government House last December for the Thomas Sill Manitoba Fund announcement.

Thomas Sill Manitoba Fund first grant awarded to Selkirk Food Bank

Essentially, the Selkirk & District Community Foundation is in the inspiration business, so it was fitting that a donation to the Selkirk Food Bank from Manitoba's Lt.-Gov., Anita Neville inspired Foundation board members in a very significant granting decision.

Late last year, Neville, through her Sharing Hope Initiative, delivered more than 350 pounds of non-perishable food to the Selkirk Food Bank. According to Foundation Executive Director Bev Clegg, the timing of the Lieutenant Governor's generous gift was significant.

“It was because of the Honourable Anita Neville’s thoughtfulness and generosity that the Foundation decided to provide additional funding to the Selkirk Food Bank,” Clegg said.

“The Foundation was about to award the first grant from the Thomas Sill Manitoba Fund, and it became clear to everyone at the Foundation that the Selkirk Food Bank was the perfect recipient.”

The Foundation has provided grants to the Food Bank over the years for costs associated with keeping the operations going, but this grant, in the amount of \$22,903.32, is directed to food security and will help the Food Bank keep its shelves stocked year-round. The funds are actually earmarked for perishables, like fruits, vegetables, milk and meat, that have a short shelf life.

Foundation Chair David Thorne surprised the Food Bank executive with the news during a visit to Government House in December 2024. Food Bank representatives were told they were visiting to say thank you to Neville.

“It was my pleasure, and the pleasure of everyone on the board and who works for the Foundation, to inform the Food Bank representatives of the Thomas Sill grant,” Thorne said.

The Thomas Sill Foundation ceased operations on Dec. 31, 2023 and created endowment funds with several Manitoba community foundations. This grant is from the Thomas Sill Manitoba Fund, administered through Endow Manitoba and held at the Winnipeg Foundation.

The Sharing Hope Initiative was started by Neville in September 2023. Guests to Government House are invited to bring non-perishable food items whenever they attend events.

“As lieutenant-governor, I want to use my voice to do what I can to raise awareness of food insecurity throughout our province and encourage others to join me in taking an active role to support our neighbours and friends in feeding their families,” Neville said.

“Access to nutritious food is a fundamental human right. It is my intent to continue this program for the duration of my time in office.”

Since its inception, Sharing Hope has been able to donate about 5,000-pounds of food items to half a dozen different food banks in the province. News that Sharing Hope inspired the Foundation to grant funds to the Selkirk Food Bank was humbling for Neville.

“I was delighted, I thought it was wonderful. I’m so impressed with the volunteers in Selkirk and the commitment of everybody involved in the Food Bank and to meeting the needs of people in Selkirk,” she said.

“I was not aware that my donation would kick start that kind of donation from the Selkirk & District Community Foundation through the Thomas Sill Fund, and if we can lever other supports, we’ll continue doing it.”

Selkirk Food Bank Spokesperson Bonnie Singleton says she and other board members were thrilled to be invited to Government House, but had no idea how wonderfully the morning would unfold.

“We were totally blindsided, we had no inkling that this was even going to happen so it was quite a shock for our board members that were in attendance,” Singleton said.

“It was quite an emotional presentation. We were incredibly surprised, thankful and grateful that the Foundation had chosen us to share the grant money with. We have been fortunate enough to receive a lot of grants over the years, but a lot of those are earmarked for operations, building upgrades, those sorts of things.

“What this will do is help secure food for a long period of time. It will help keep our shelves stocked, especially in January and February when donations really go down, and that historically happens. But our usage numbers continue to go up. This is going to really help in terms of food security for us.”

The SDCF is accepting grant applications for the Western Canada Games Legacy Fund and the Community Grant program now, with the deadline to apply being Feb 28. Grant applications have moved solely online. Go to sdcf.ca for an application. Call 204-785-9755 or email cd.officer@sdcf.ca for more information.