Article of the Week

1. *Mark your confusion*
2. *Show evidence of close reading*
3. *Write a 1 page response. You may use the suggested prompts at the end of the article or choose your own direction of response.*

**Canadians Are Starving in a Land of Waste**



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From: The Huffington Post

Across Canada hundreds of food banks sent out special appeals over the Thanksgiving season asking people to donate generously. They had clear reason for doing so. Most food banks are facing record demand, as a deep recession that has supposedly ended still leaves its impact all over the country.

The London Food Bank, which I co-direct, has seen a 19 per cent increase over this time last year -- the majority of that increased demand made up of people who only two years ago were working. Last August saw our highest monthly demand ever in our 25-year history and our highest daily record was only two weeks ago. While many still claim that food banks should remain a temporary solution to poverty, all the indicators seem to be heading in the wrong direction.

Just as we were learning of all these new pressures on the demand for food among the marginalized, news broke of the ironic reality that Canadians waste $27 billion worth of food each year -- $27 billion. The draft report on this kind of wastage, by the [Value Change Management Centre](http://www.thewhig.com/2012/10/06/canadians-waste-billions-in-food-each-year) mentions that 51 per cent of that total finishes up as unwanted leftovers that end up in the garbage. The breakdown of the report, which you can read [here,](http://www.georgemorris.org/uploads/userfiles/files/cut%20waste%20grow%20profit.pdf) states that 18 per cent of the food wasted is due to packaging and processing. Retail stores waste 11 per cent, while a figure just below that (9 per cent) is lost during the farming stage. Even the food industry itself wastes 8 per cent.

If we broaden the issue out to include the United States, things don't look any better. The U.S. Natural Resources Defence Council says that almost [40 per cent of food](http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2012/08/22/us-food-waste-nrdc-report.html) in America goes in the garbage each year -- a figure proportionally equal to Canada.

It appears as though North Americans waste food on a grand scale. The average American wastes 10 times more food than a Southeast Asian. Like their Canadian counterparts, American families throw out 25 per cent of their groceries. And then there are those restaurants and catering services, which together discarded 126-billion pounds of food in 2008 alone. Grocery stores threw out 43 billion pounds of food in the U.S. -- mostly fresh foods.

Twenty years ago we heard that over 20 per cent of food in Canada was tossed before it ever left the package. Have we learned anything? Furthermore, there used to be a widely held belief that we shouldn't be wasting food because millions were dying of hunger in places like Africa. Now it's worse than it ever was.

What exactly are we doing? With the price of food constantly rising, and with millions more being globally added to the destitute poor each year, how can we reconcile our conduct with such developments? We can't. It's one thing to say we shouldn't need food banks, that they should be a temporary presence in our communities, but what does it matter if we are throwing out more food than is distributed by those food banks collectively each year?

It was Mahatma Gandhi who used to say, "There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread." How do we square this in a nation where we toss out $27 billion worth of food in the midst of hunger? We do have much to be thankful for as a country, yet no population can be truly grateful when throwing out food while children suffer in poverty. A huge gap exists between all those polls that say the majority questioned desire to end hunger and so much waste. It is a credibility problem -- for food companies, for citizens, and ultimately for us as a nation.

If it is true that the real cause of hunger is the powerlessness of the marginalized to gain access to the resources required to feed themselves, then the proper answer to that dilemma is not to send them to the dumps where we have just displaced our leftovers. Canada once used to feed the world with our surplus, now we can't even feed our own with it.

Possible Response Topics:

1. What are some ways that you can help prevent the wasted food in your household or community?
2. Is wasted food an issue to you? Explain why or why not.