



**FEED NOVA SCOTIA**

# ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

## OVERVIEW

### CURRENT SITUATION



Nova Scotia is experiencing a food insecurity crisis and all available data indicates that the situation is **getting worse**.

In 2023, the rate of food insecurity recorded in Nova Scotia was one of the highest across all the provinces, at 28.9%. Feed Nova Scotia's data shows food bank visits are up 21% since 2023, and 53% since 2019.

Major and multi-faceted policy change is needed to shift this alarming reality, and it is needed immediately.

### ROOT CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

In the spring of 2025, we spent time researching key contributing factors to food insecurity. We mapped out a range of income and affordability issues, as well as food system issues that intersect to prevent almost 1-in-3 Nova Scotians from being able to afford and access the food they want and need.

A brief summary of the key root causes of food insecurity can be found in **Appendix A**.

### PROCESS TO BUILD OUR ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

Through the 2025 summer, we engaged with Feed Nova Scotia staff, First Voice Advisory Committee members, organizations from the member network, volunteers, and members of the public to gather input and feedback about the issues that are impacting food security in Nova Scotia.

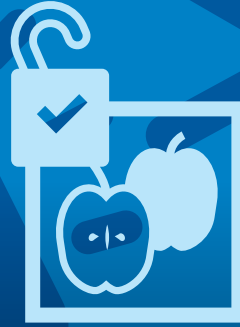
We combined this input and feedback with a critical review of which root causes of food insecurity align with our mission and purpose, and which issues already have strong leadership in advocacy. The result is a set of three key priorities for Feed Nova Scotia's advocacy work.



## KEY ADVOCACY PRIORITIES



**Income**



**Food Access**



**Food Sovereignty**

**Three advocacy themes** have been identified as a priority for Feed Nova Scotia to advance our mission and purpose while also addressing current advocacy gaps in Nova Scotia. **They are:**

### **INCOME**

Low wages and inadequate income assistance are major drivers of poverty and food insecurity in Nova Scotia and across Canada. Under this theme, we will advocate for income support reform at both federal and provincial levels. We will also partner with other organizations who are already advocating for a living wage and basic income to amplify their demands.

### **FOOD ACCESS**

Both urban and rural communities across Nova Scotia are struggling to access food in different ways. Many rural communities do not have access to local or affordable groceries or to public transit. The grocery industry in many urban areas are controlled by big corporations, which impacts competition and access to affordable food. Climate-related emergencies that require a food-based response are also not easily available to equity-deserving communities. Under this theme, we will advocate to address the gaps in community food access, acknowledging that even with enough income to buy groceries, many Nova Scotians may not be able to access food.

### **FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

Food sovereignty is at the core of our mission and purpose and brings a justice lens to our work that goes beyond food security. It recognizes the right of individuals and communities to define their own food systems. Under this theme, we will advocate for a more robust local food system and partner with equity-deserving communities to support their advocacy efforts to achieve food sovereignty.

## **WHAT ABOUT OTHER ROOT CAUSES?**

We recognize we cannot advocate for everything, and we may not be best positioned to be a lead advocacy voice on certain issues.

Issues such as the escalating cost of groceries, unaffordable housing, energy poverty, and migrant farm worker rights already have strong community leaders advocating for change at national and provincial levels. Rather than duplicate their efforts, we will amplify or support their work as needed.



## TAKING ACTION

To take action and advance our advocacy priorities, Feed Nova Scotia will:

- Highlight our key advocacy issues and policy solutions through social media, volunteer and donor engagement, and public speaking opportunities.
- Support communities as they explore and mobilize around our priority advocacy issues.
- Engage elected representatives and public sector staff to push for policy change that advances our advocacy priorities.
- Build a collective voice with organizations and community groups whose advocacy priorities align with ours.

## APPENDIX A: KEY ROOT CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

### Access to Health Care

Public healthcare is not available to all Nova Scotian residents, resulting in some having to pay to access essential healthcare services. The cost of dental care and prescription medicine are also additional costs that many people cannot afford.

### Barriers to Work

Systemic injustices faced by equity-deserving populations inhibit access to work and result in increased rates of food insecurity.

### Childcare

Lack of affordable childcare is a barrier to accessing employment and can strain household budgets. Single parents and low-income households are most impacted by unaffordable childcare.

### Energy Poverty

Utilities are an essential component of housing affordability, and just like other housing costs, high rates often mean people on low incomes do not have enough money left over for the food they want and need.

### Food Production

Even as prices rise at the grocery store, farmers' profits are declining. Farmland across the province has decreased by over 20% in the last few years and 68% of farmers in Nova Scotia plan to retire or transition in the next decade.

### Inadequate Income

Low wages (including minimum wage) and income assistance (IA) in Nova Scotia are major causes of poverty and food insecurity.

### Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Indigenous communities have restricted access to traditional foods due to land theft and intentional disconnect of access to land and food.

### Inequitable Tax System

Canada's tax system is regressive for higher-income earners (meaning they do not pay their fair share), resulting in lost revenue for essential public and community services.

### Local Food Sovereignty

Nova Scotia does not have a local food system that can support its population. Communities do not have access to infrastructure or resources needed to grow and distribute local food.

### Migrant Farm Work

20% of all farm workers in Nova Scotia are migrant workers: they're a critical part of our food system. The UN has categorized Canada's migrant worker program as 'a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery'.

### Restrictive Covenants

Multiple communities in cities/towns have become food deserts/food apartheid areas due to restrictive covenants, which are put in place by big corporations to restrict competition.

### Rising Cost of Food

The cost of food has increased sharply in recent years beyond general inflation rates. 95% of 2025 survey respondents identified the cost of food as a major affordability concern.

### Rural Food Access

40% of people in Nova Scotia live in rural areas, with little to no access to local food stores or public transit. Food access programs within rural communities are often in church buildings or community halls that may not be accessible to everyone.

### Unaffordable Housing

Nova Scotia is in a housing crisis and housing costs are increasingly consuming a significant portion of household monthly income. When housing is unaffordable, it leaves little room to afford food.

## QUESTIONS?

Please Contact [advocacy@feednovascotia.ca](mailto:advocacy@feednovascotia.ca)