

## Feed Nova Scotia's Reaction to Canada Strong Budget 2025

**Canada is in a food insecurity crisis** with over a quarter of the population living in food insecure households<sup>1</sup>. Every month, over 2 million Canadians need to visit food banks to survive<sup>2</sup>. Food bank usage in Nova Scotia has increased by 43% since 2022, with a 17% increase in the past year alone, giving the province one of the highest rates of food insecurity across the country<sup>2</sup>. These increases are staggering and continue to rise year after year.

Poverty is not an inevitability; it is a political choice. The federal government has said Budget 2025 will shape the next generation, but we are deeply concerned that this budget will continue to grow the income and affordability gap, leaving millions of Canadians behind.

While we welcome signs of some progress in Budget 2025, including making the National School Food Program permanent, investments in affordable housing, and automatic tax-filing, we are alarmed to see a general shift away from investing in people and in building a strong social safety net for Canada. This budget features a temporary commitment to expand access to EI, no commitment to expand crucial targeted income supports like the Canada Disability Benefit, and no committed resources to counter the rapid escalation of the cost for essentials for regular Canadians, including food.

Incomes across the country are not meeting the escalating cost of living. In Nova Scotia in 2025, 24% of food bank clients reported employment as their primary source of income<sup>2</sup>. A third of Nova Scotian workers currently earn \$20 or less per hour<sup>3</sup>, while the average living wage needed to afford essentials exceeds \$27.00 per hour<sup>4</sup>. The income solutions outlined in Budget 2025 will do little for Canadians who are buckling under the strain.

While automatic tax filing for lower-income households will unlock income supports they're eligible for, this change is not enough to bridge the affordability gap. Federal income support programs in this country offer a patchwork of assistance that fails to bring recipients up to the poverty line. While we welcome investment into expanding EI given the uncertainties with tariffs, the program is long overdue for reform, and this investment should not be a temporary measure.

Transitioning the National School Food Program to be permanent is welcome news, but it won't shift the needle on family food insecurity without additional and coordinated action. Nova Scotia has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada, and Budget 2025 provides no meaningful increases to help families afford to live. In the run up to Budget 2025, the food security sector across Canada called on the federal government

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<sup>1</sup> PROOF (2025). [New data on household food insecurity in 2024.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Food Banks Canada (2025) [HungerCount 2025.](#)

<sup>3</sup> CCPA (2024). [Atlantic Canadians need a raise: One-third of workers earn less than \\$20 an hour.](#)

<sup>4</sup> CCPA (2025). [2025 Living Wages for Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.](#)

to include a new benefit for low-income households to off-set the rapidly escalating cost of groceries and essentials. We are deeply disappointed to see no response to this call.

Budget 2025 focuses on Canada's sovereignty, but with no notable commitments to invest in strengthening Canada's food sovereignty. At a time when tariffs have increased the already unaffordable price of groceries across the country, building upon our food sovereignty is more important than ever before. The budget has no emphasis on building robust local food systems or on dedicating resources to advance Indigenous food sovereignty. Indigenous communities continue to experience the highest rates of food insecurity across Canada, and with continued violations to their Treaty rights.

Millions of Canadians are struggling to make ends meet across the country today. One third of Nova Scotians are living in food insecure households and have no reliable access to food, a basic human right. Budget 2025 needed to deliver immediate and considerable support to the millions of Canadians living in poverty. Instead, we see plans for billions of dollars to be spent on national defence and on long-term infrastructure development plans. The 'Canada Strong' that this government envisions will not be felt by the vast majority of Canadians who are falling deeper into an affordability crisis.

As we look to 2026, we are bracing ourselves for another devastating year of record-breaking food bank visits as we anticipate even more Canadians will get left behind. An austerity budget while massively increasing capital spending on defense will continue to guarantee millions of Canadians will remain in poverty. We are certain we will return to next years budget, once again stating that food bank visits have hit record highs. These are not statements that we should have to make.

At Feed Nova Scotia, we'll continue to advocate for bold government policy and action that will reduce poverty and build healthy communities.