



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVA SCOTIA RECEIVES FAILING GRADES IN KEY AREAS OF POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

DARTMOUTH, NOVA SCOTIA – JUNE 2, 2026 – The 2026 Poverty Report Card released by Food Banks Canada confirms what communities across Nova Scotia have been experiencing for years: poverty and food insecurity remain widespread, affordability pressures continue to grow, and too many people are being left behind.

“This report should be treated as a warning sign and a call to action,” says Ash Avery, Executive Director of Feed Nova Scotia. “Poverty and food insecurity are affecting more households across Nova Scotia and the impacts are falling hardest on people who are already struggling to meet basic needs. This crisis cannot be addressed through incremental change alone.”

The report assesses poverty and affordability across several indicators, including the experience of poverty, material deprivation, poverty measures, and legislative progress.

Experience of poverty, which received a D this year, looked at housing affordability, cost of living outside of housing, access to healthcare, comparisons to last year, and the adequacy of government support. The material deprivation index was Nova Scotia’s highest grade of the year, coming in at a C+. While an improvement from the D- received in 2025, this grade shows that deprivation remains widespread across the province.

Nova Scotia received an F in poverty measures. While social assistance rates are now indexed to inflation, they remain among the lowest in Canada relative to need. Other factors looked at the poverty rate (10.9%), disability assistance as a percentage of the poverty line, unemployment rates (6.6%), and food insecurity (a rate of 26.2%).

“Income assistance rates in Nova Scotia are not adequate to meet basic needs,” says Avery. “People receiving income assistance are living in deep poverty. We know poverty does not exist in isolation. It affects health, housing stability, mental well-being, food security, and people’s ability to participate fully in community life. When income supports leave people without basic stability, the consequences ripple across every social determinant of health.”

The report acknowledges some positive policy measures, including investments in school food programs, housing development, and affordability supports. At the same time, it highlights continued gaps in the province’s approach, including planned reductions to social and employment programs and the absence of an updated poverty reduction strategy.



Nova Scotia's Poverty Reduction Strategy hasn't been updated since 2009.

"We are not living in the Nova Scotia of 2009," says Avery. "Housing costs, food prices, and economic pressures have changed dramatically. A poverty reduction strategy that has not been renewed in more than fifteen years cannot adequately respond to today's reality. Meaningful progress requires measurable targets, accountability, and action."

Feed Nova Scotia is calling for immediate action, including:

- Increasing social assistance and disability assistance rates to levels that meet basic needs while maintaining indexation
- Restoring and strengthening employment and skills training programs
- Protecting and investing in targeted affordability and poverty reduction supports
- Releasing a renewed provincial poverty reduction strategy with measurable goals, public reporting, and clear accountability
- Continuing investments in housing, school food programs, and community infrastructure that support food security and stability

Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities continue to experience disproportionate impacts of poverty and food insecurity. Seniors, single parents, and a growing number of working households are also struggling to afford basic needs, demonstrating that employment alone is no longer protecting many people from economic hardship.

"This is a public policy issue, and it requires public policy solutions. Nova Scotia has the information. We have the evidence. What we need now is action."

About Feed Nova Scotia:

Feed Nova Scotia is one of 10 provincial food associations in Canada, representing over 130 member organizations across the province. Since 1984, Feed Nova Scotia has been focused on providing high quality, nutritious food to the member organizations, while focusing on creating change at the systemic level. This includes collaboration through grants and community partnerships that focus on food distribution efficiency, community farming education, and advocacy projects.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Kenya Plut
Communications Coordinator
media@feednovascotia.ca