

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming 2026
Federal Budget**

By: Feed Nova Scotia



Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Set national targets to cut household food insecurity in half and end severe food insecurity by 2030 through the National Food Security Strategy and ensure the strategy is effectively resourced.
- **Recommendation 2:** Commit resources to develop the National Food Security Strategy with clear implementation strategies to strengthen domestic food production and strengthen the work of non-profit and cooperative food retailers and public markets.
- **Recommendation 3:** Make permanent and strengthen the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit to provide adequate financial support to adults 18 to 64 with low and modest incomes.
- **Recommendation 4:** Reform and improve Employment Insurance (EI), the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB), and the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB).
- **Recommendation 5:** Advance Indigenous food sovereignty by funding salaried, land-based roles and providing multi-year, flexible core funding for Indigenous-led food systems, as called for [by Right to Food's Indigenous partners across the country.](#)

Body of Submission

Canada is in a national food insecurity crisis that continues to get worse. Over a quarter (25.5%) of people living across the country are currently food insecure, with Nova Scotia having one of the highest rates (29.3%) of food insecurity across all provinces^[1]. Budget 2026 must address the deep and growing crisis of food insecurity across this country. Food insecurity is a political choice, and one that this government has the power to change.

Recent announcements from the Government of Canada to transform the GST rebate into the Groceries and Essentials Benefit, create a National Food Security Strategy, and support local food production and distribution are essential steps towards strengthening food security and local food sovereignty in Canada. However, these steps don't go far enough – the GEB is time-bound, and other supports aren't extensive enough and remain unclear to demonstrate how they'll improve the local food system. Significant gaps remain to support farmers, better local food distribution, Indigenous Food Sovereignty, and to address the significant gap between incomes and cost of living across the country.

Feed Nova Scotia is the provincial association for Food Banks Canada and is a Good Food Organization with Right to Food. We draw from their recommendations to call for critical change in income, Indigenous Food Sovereignty and local food systems, along with set targets and strategy to improve food security across Canada.

Recommendations for the National Food Security Strategy

The development of the National Food Security Strategy presents an opportunity to take a systems-level approach and create solutions across government that address income shortfalls, strengthen local food systems, and address inequities in the food system. It must be effectively resourced to see change realized long-term, and that change must be tied to specific measures of progress to measure impact.

Recommendation 1: Set national targets to cut household food insecurity in half and end severe food insecurity by 2030 through the National Food Security Strategy and ensure the strategy is effectively resourced.

To work towards reducing food insecurity, the government must set targets to measure progress. The food insecurity crisis is growing year after year, and the Strategy represents an opportunity to set measurable goals, collect important data, and report on progress. The strategy must be supported by transparent public reporting and disaggregated data to address inequities experienced by Indigenous, racialized, northern, and single-parent households.

Recommendation 2: Commit resources to develop the National Food Security Strategy with clear implementation strategies to strengthen domestic food production and strengthen the work of non-profit and cooperative food retailers and public markets.

While the recent commitments to support local food production through immediate expensing for greenhouses, funding to the Food Security Fund & Local Food Infrastructure Fund, and supporting grocery competition will be beneficial, these initiatives are temporary supports, not transformative policies – they will help a few communities in the short-term, but better support is needed to generate systems-level solutions. The National Food Security Strategy should be resourced to identify and implement solutions for building a resilient local food system and to improve food access in communities across the country.

Recommendations for Income Supports

Recommendation 3: Make permanent and strengthen the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit to provide adequate financial support to adults 18 to 64 with low and modest incomes.

The Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit (CGEB) was announced in early 2026 as a measure to support households with the high cost of groceries by increasing and transforming the GST/HST Rebate. While the CGEB is a much-needed program, the amounts distributed to households over the next 5 years isn't enough to reduce food insecurity.

The original benefit model, [proposed by the Affordability Action Council](#), would have provided monthly, income-tested benefits of up to:

- \$150 per month (or \$1800 annually) per adult aged 18 to 64.
- \$50 per month (capped at \$600 annually) per child.

This support would far surpass the GEB that is in place now. While the current GEB is needed, it must be strengthened to reduce food insecurity. Current benefit amounts in 2026 with the one-time top up are \$400-\$527 but will reduce to \$136-\$272 over the next three years. For many households, the CGEB will be less than 1/12 of the proposal that was called for. An expanded and permanent GEB is needed to better support households struggling with the high cost of groceries.

Recommendation 4: Reform and improve Employment Insurance (EI), the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB), and the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB).

Current income support programs are insufficient to adequately meet the cost of living across the country, and low wages and inadequate income-assistance programs are key drivers of food insecurity. National organizations have developed well-researched proposals to reform existing programs to fill the gap. We support their recommendations for EI, the CDB, and the CWB:

- **Employment Insurance:**
 - Reduce the qualifying threshold to 300 hours for all workers

- o Expanding access to all workers, including migrant workers, self-employed, gig workers, those who have multiple jobs and leave one, and those who voluntarily leave low-paying, precarious jobs to find better employment
- **Canada Disability Benefit:**
 - o Expand CDB eligibility and introduce automatic enrollment.
 - o Enhance the CDB to lift recipients above the poverty line.
- **Canada Workers Benefit:**
 - o Transform the program to be for all working-age people (18-64), removing the work requirement
 - o Raising the maximum earning limit, depending on employment earnings, as [proposed by the Maytree Foundation](#).

Recommendations for Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Indigenous communities face disproportionate levels of food insecurity across Canada: in 2024, the rate of food insecurity in Indigenous populations was 39.9% and is likely higher given the lack of data for on-reserve rates of food insecurity¹. This rate is far above the 23% national average. Beyond food insecurity, Indigenous communities also lack food sovereignty; environmental and structural racism and colonial practices that continue to disrupt relationships with the land and traditional food systems prevent communities from having autonomy over their own food systems.

Recommendation 5: Advance Indigenous food sovereignty by funding salaried, land-based roles and providing multi-year, flexible core funding for Indigenous-led food systems, as called for by [Right to Food's Indigenous partners across the country](#).

Right to Food's Indigenous Network engaged Indigenous food leaders from across the country to identify priorities that would advance Indigenous food sovereignty in Canada. Indigenous communities know what the solutions are for their communities – it's the government's responsibility to make policy decisions and investments that support those solutions. We amplify Right to Food's recommendations to fund land-based roles and provide multi-year funding that support Indigenous-food systems. Traditional and cultural Indigenous foodways are at risk because of colonialism. Government structures and funding systems are bureaucratic and are not designed with Indigenous needs in mind. To advance food sovereignty, the government must resource solutions that are community-led.

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^[1] PROOF (2025). [New Data on household food insecurity in 2024](#).

