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FOOD BANKS REPORT ANOTHER DEVASTATING RECORD YEAR OF VISITS

DARTMOUTH, NOVA SCOTIA – October 21, 2026 – The 2026 HungerCount released by Food Banks Canada reinforces what communities across Nova Scotia have been experiencing over the past year: food insecurity is continuing to grow, with more community members relying on emergency food support to survive.

“This report should be treated as an emergency signal and a call to action,” says Ash Avery, Executive Director of Feed Nova Scotia. “We are reaching a crisis. With food bank usage now at its highest in Canadian history, and more people struggling to meet basic needs than ever before, it’s a crisis that needs urgent action now.”

The annual report on food bank use across the country shows that in 2026, Canada saw 2.35 million visits to food banks per month. Since 2019, food bank usage has risen by 117%, with an almost 9% increase in the past year alone.

In Nova Scotia, people visited food banks 46,627 times in March of 2026 – a 7.4% increase from 2025. Food bank visits across the province are up 82% since 2019, and persons are up 53%. One third of people supported by food banks are children.

“We are seeing numbers we have never seen before,” says Avery. “More families and households are having to make impossible trade-offs every day between paying rent, paying essential bills, or putting food on the table.”

Findings from the report showed that income and cost of living are key drivers of food bank use across the country and in Nova Scotia.

Since 2021, national food prices have increased by 30%, housing costs by 28%, and transportation costs by 24%. Wages and social supports have not kept up.

The report also highlights that employment is no longer protecting people from severe financial hardship. On a national level, almost one in five people who access food banks have jobs but cannot make ends meet. In Nova Scotia, over 23% of food bank clients report employment as their main source of income—up from 14% in 2019. With a current minimum wage of $17 per hour, thousands of Nova Scotians are trying to afford the basics with a salary more than $10 below the living wage. Grossly inadequate provincial social assistance remains the most common source of income for food bank clients across Canada. In Nova Scotia, 42% of food bank clients report relying on provincial income assistance, the rates of which for all household sizes are far below the poverty line.

“We know that we can’t feed our way out of food insecurity – this is an income and affordability crisis. Households across the province are struggling more than ever and food banks cannot keep up. It’s unsustainable,” says Avery.

Feed Nova Scotia is calling for immediate action by both federal and provincial governments.

Federal calls to action to the Government of Canada include:

- **Modernizing Employment Insurance** to expand access to EI, extend length of support and include non-standard workers, self-employed and gig workers
- **Doubling the Canada Worker Benefit** for individuals and families and raise income eligibility to the poverty line
- **Removing barriers to the Disability Tax Credit**, including adopting the definition of disability as defined by the Accessible Canada Act.

Provincial calls to action to the Government of Nova Scotia include:

- **Strengthening the Employment Support and Income Assistance program** by increasing benefit rates towards the poverty line
- **Expanding eligibility of the Poverty Reduction Credit program** by removing wait times and increasing the income threshold
- **Reversing 2025 program cuts to the Heating Assistance Rebate Program** by reinstating benefit amounts and earning thresholds for eligibility
- **Expanding the Nova Scotia Affordable Living Tax Credit** to support low income earners living under the poverty line with 10 cents for every dollar they earn up to a maximum of $2000 per annum for single person and $3500 for families.

“Food insecurity remains a national and provincial public policy issue and requires national and provincial public policy solutions. We have the evidence and policy tools that can make a change. 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.

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