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

By: Feed Nova Scotia

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Amend the National Food Security Strategy to set national targets to cut household food insecurity in half and end severe food insecurity by 2030 and ensure the strategy is effectively resourced.
- **Recommendation 2:** Strengthen the National Food Security Strategy by convening a cross-departmental roundtable on food security including civil society organizations, researchers, Indigenous partners, and people with lived experience of food insecurity, to explore opportunities to strengthen the strategy's implementation and ensure that food security is addressed through a whole-of-government approach with income-based solutions.
- **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 Disability Tax Credit.
- **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. Nearly a quarter (24%) of people living across the country are currently food insecure, with Nova Scotia having one of the highest rates (26.2%) 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 and the launch of the National Food Security Strategy to support local food systems are important steps towards strengthening food security. However, these steps don't go far enough – the GEB is time-bound, and the Food Security Strategy doesn't address inadequate incomes as a driving cause of food insecurity. Significant gaps remain to support 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 National Food Security Strategy announced this year was an opportunity to address food security, but it is missing the necessary income-based policies to achieve that. The strategy does bring much-needed investment into the food system to strengthen local food production, processing, and supply chains, but there is no clear path forward to meaningfully address a key root cause of food insecurity – inadequate incomes.

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

Food insecurity is growing year after year, and there are no measurable targets in the National Food Security Strategy to address this crisis. The Strategy was an opportunity to take meaningful action against food insecurity and announce accountability measures, but it fell short. The Government of Canada must amend the National Food Security Strategy to set a target to reduce food insecurity with measurable goals. A target must be include transparent public reporting and disaggregated data to address inequities experienced by Indigenous, racialized, northern, and single-parent households.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the National Food Security Strategy by convening a cross-departmental roundtable on food security to explore opportunities to strengthen the strategy's implementation and ensure that food security is addressed through a whole-of-government approach with income-based solutions.

While the National Food Security Strategy brings welcome and necessary investment to improve the local food system, it does not include any investments that will predictably reduce the high food insecurity rates across the country. Taking action to reduce food insecurity will require a coordinated approach.

Organizations in the food security sector across the country are calling for a strengthened strategy through meaningful consultation with civil society organizations, researchers, Indigenous partners, and people with lived experience of food insecurity. We echo their call; the sector brings considerable expertise that should be included in the Strategy to ensure that the root causes of food insecurity are addressed and the Strategy can have the greatest impact.

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 Disability Tax Credit (DTC).

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 DTC, and the CWB:

- **Employment Insurance:**
  - Reduce the qualifying threshold to 300 hours for all workers
  - 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 Tax Credit**:
  - Design a new eligibility system for the DTC, as called for by Disability Without Poverty and organizations from across the country
- **Canada Workers Benefit**:
  - Transform the program to be for all working-age people (18-64), removing the work requirement
  - 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 insecurity[1]. 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.

For more information, contact: Ash Avery, Executive Director, Feed Nova Scotia
Address: 67 Wright Ave, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3B 1H2.
Contact email: aavery@feednovascotia.ca Phone: 902-457-1900 x 200.

[1] PROOF (2026). New Data on household food insecurity in 2025