



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORE NOVA SCOTIANS JOIN THE FOOD BANK LINE UP

Halifax, NS (November 16, 2010) – The number of Nova Scotians accessing food banks continues to rise, according to a study released today.

HungerCount, an annual, national survey conducted by Food Banks Canada that tracks food bank and other emergency food program use in the country, shows that food bank usage in our province is up 11 per cent from last year, and a staggering 33 per cent compared to 2008.

“While the numbers do not come as a great surprise, they are disheartening,” says Dianne Swinemar, executive director of FEED NOVA SCOTIA. “As are the personal stories we hear every day from clients who are struggling with the devastating realities of hunger.”

In Nova Scotia, 98 food banks are represented in the survey, revealing that 22,573 individuals were assisted by a food bank in March 2010. In addition to those assisted by food banks, 56 meal programs and soup kitchens served 134,940 meals during the same month.

The outlook nationwide was equally grim, with a total of 867,948 individuals being assisted by a food bank or affiliated food program—an increase of 9.2 per cent. The survey also shows that food bank use grew in every province in 2010.

Although the magnitude of need has changed, one thing has not changed: the need for food assistance exists across the social spectrum. In Nova Scotia, 33 per cent of those helped are children (down slightly from 34 per cent in 2009). Fifteen per cent of people visiting food banks own their home.

In terms of year to year changes, 20 per cent reported employment-related income as their primary source of income, including current employment at 12 per cent (up four per cent from 2009) and Employment Insurance at eight per cent (up two percent from 2009). Those reporting income from Social Assistance decreased from 56 per cent to 50 per cent. The number of households receiving the majority of their income from disability-related income supports remained consistent with previous years (12 per cent, down slightly from 13 per cent in 2009).

The struggle to support an increasing number of Nova Scotians who require food assistance has been made even more difficult by the decrease in financial gifts to FEED NOVA SCOTIA. While food donations remain strong, the organization experienced a sharp decline in financial support during the spring that has set them behind compared to recent years. While Swinemar acknowledges this reality, she also emphasizes the need for a collective effort to address the issue.

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“We look to government, community and corporate leaders to step up to the plate with firm resolve to end the anguish poverty causes for far too many Nova Scotians,” Swinemar said. “The elimination of hunger and poverty will only be achieved through strategic commitment to innovative solutions.”

Download a copy of the 2010 HungerCount report after 12:00pm Tuesday, November 16 at http://www.feednovascotia.ca/hungerfacts_hungercount.html.

About Food Banks Canada

Formerly the Canadian Association of Food Banks, Food Banks Canada is a national charitable organization representing the food bank community across Canada. Food Banks Canada conducts research, engages in public education and advocates for public policy change to eliminate the causes of hunger and poverty in Canada. More information can be found online at www.foodbankscanada.ca.

About FEED NOVA SCOTIA

FEED NOVA SCOTIA is a charitable organization that collects and distributes food to 153 member agencies across Nova Scotia, including food banks, shelters, soup kitchens, breakfast programs, prepared meal services, and emergency food assistance programs. The organization has both an immediate goal to feed hungry people and a long-term goal to eliminate chronic hunger and alleviate poverty. www.feednovascotia.ca

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