



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **HUNGER STATS COULD BE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

Halifax, NS (November 1, 2011) – After two years of significant increases, the latest stats show a modest decrease in food bank use, which could be an indication of better days ahead for Nova Scotians struggling with hunger.

HungerCount, an annual, national survey on food bank use conducted by Food Banks Canada, shows that across the board, the number of Nova Scotians accessing food assistance in 2011 has decreased by 0.3 per cent compared to 2010. While this is only a very slight drop, and there are regional variations of the numbers, FEED NOVA SCOTIA is optimistic that it's a step in the right direction.

“Although there are still a significant number of Nova Scotians accessing food assistance, this is the first year in a long while we haven't seen a large swell overall in the data,” says Dianne Swinemar, executive director. “It shouldn't be celebrated as a good news story, but we are certainly feeling hopeful about the decrease and motivated to push for structural change to ensure this continues.”

In Nova Scotia, 97 food banks are represented in the survey, revealing that 22,505 individuals were assisted by a food bank in March 2011. In addition to those assisted by food banks, meal programs and soup kitchens collectively served 145,239 meals during the same month. The outlook nationwide remained essentially unchanged from last year, with a total of 851,014 individuals being assisted by a food bank or affiliated food program.

While on the whole numbers were down in Nova Scotia, not all regions throughout the province reported a dip in the number of individuals receiving food assistance; in fact agencies in the Valley-Yarmouth and Colchester-East Hants-Cumberland areas saw an increase. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some families and individuals are having to access food banks more often than they have in the past.

“When looking at hunger in Nova Scotia, you have to look at each region individually,” says Swinemar. “The variation between regions emphasizes the need for flexible public policy and social programs that address the economic challenges unique to each area.”

FEED NOVA SCOTIA is hopeful things will improve in these areas and continue to improve for those who reported a decrease in food bank usage, especially in light of the recent \$25 billion contract won by Halifax's Irving Shipbuilding. Swinemar is optimistic about the boost this will give the province's economy, but emphasizes the need for strategic planning, to ensure this growth and stability will trickle down to everyone.

“We are eager to work with government and other stakeholders to carefully and thoughtfully prepare for the future, so that the Nova Scotians who are most vulnerable will also benefit from this opportunity for economic prosperity.”

To view a copy of the HungerCount report visit the Hunger Facts tab on [www.feednovascotia.ca](http://www.feednovascotia.ca).

**About FEED NOVA SCOTIA**

FEED NOVA SCOTIA is a charitable organization that collects and distributes food to approximately 150 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](http://www.feednovascotia.ca)

- 30 -

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