Look what we can do

TOGETHER

2023 annual report
Under the weight of it all, we continued to provide a basic need and advocate for sustainable solutions to food insecurity—because of you.
In 2022-23, we distributed 2,714,589 kg of food across our network. Perishable items like fruit, vegetables, dairy, and meat made up half of that.

At least 46,434 people received food support from Feed Nova Scotia member food banks in 2022.

This represents a 25% increase in the number of people accessing support compared to 2021.

14,721 people accessed support for the first time in 2022.

These numbers reflect the growing food insecurity crisis in our province and the critical need for policy-based solutions.
Responding to a disaster on top of a crisis

When Hurricane Fiona tore through our province, cutting connections to vital resources, and making thousands of food-insecure Nova Scotians even more vulnerable, we knew we needed to act fast. With your support, here's how we responded:

- **800 food boxes** distributed to folks in HRM, Antigonish, and Cape Breton
- **$100,000 of non-perishables** purchased with funding from the provincial government
- **$400,000 in cheques** sent directly to member agencies from provincial government funding
- **$100,000 of frozen foods** distributed to member agencies to help replenish what was lost during the hurricane
- **$20,000 in grocery gift cards** for United Way Cape Breton to distribute to people affected
Collective care lives here

We rely on the huge hearts of donors to raise food, funds, and awareness, and Nova Scotians always show up. The countless ways people rally for their neighbours is incredible!

More than 300 events held on our behalf

$1.3 million collectively raised

65,000 kilograms of food collected

Photo by Will Yang
Adapting to provide support
Volunteers at the Christ Church Food Bank heard from some of their clients—especially those who worked full time and single parents—that only offering pick-up hours on a weekday morning was a barrier to access. So Christ Church added an evening pick-up time one day a week to their schedule. The response from clients has been overwhelmingly positive, with the number of evening pick-ups quickly outpacing the morning. The volunteers are now considering another evening to better serve the needs of their community.

COVID-19 food box program
For 21,000 Nova Scotians, our COVID-19 food box program bridged a critical gap to food access during the pandemic, and discontinuing it last summer felt tough. After the program ended, we provided financial support to 11 member food banks in areas where food box requests were highest to reach folks who experienced barriers to accessing support. Through this pilot project, some food banks were able to continue offering home delivery or taxi services.

We know people’s challenges aren’t limited to transportation. The top two reasons Nova Scotians requested food box deliveries were a lack of income and the high cost of food. Tackling systemic problems with charitable responses won’t create food security. We need policy-based solutions that provide all Nova Scotians with adequate income.

“A lot of clients were asking for a different pick up time for the food bank, especially single moms, so we started opening one evening a week.”
—Christine Hoehne, Christ Church Food Bank

Network members: Breaking down barriers

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—Christine Hoehne, Christ Church Food Bank
Bought food and gave it to people
Provided gift cards to people
Reduced transportation barriers to food (e.g., taxi chits, mileage)
Provided other essentials (e.g., heating costs, tents, sleeping bags, and other supplies for unhoused individuals)

Network members: Meeting critical needs

Staff and volunteers at member network food banks, meal programs, and shelters are much closer to their communities than we are, and sometimes it makes the most sense to provide money and get out of the way. Here’s how they responded to the need when we distributed financial support:

- **76%** Bought food and gave it to people
- **49%** Provided gift cards to people
- **21%** Reduced transportation barriers to food (e.g., taxi chits, mileage)
- **6%** Provided other essentials (e.g., heating costs, tents, sleeping bags, and other supplies for unhoused individuals)

These funds are so very important to our clients. I have been in my role as director for 24 years and I have never seen so many desperately hungry people since this past year.

—Christine Porter, Ally Centre of Cape Breton
When high school student Kai Hollett put out a call to action to his peers, people rose to the occasion—in a big way—raising over $3,500 and 1,400 kilograms of food for Feed Nova Scotia, through a friendly competition among nine schools. We’re proud to celebrate Kai and all the top community-led fundraisers and food drives.

$100,000+ worth of food or funds
Loblaw - Spring and holiday food drives
NSLC - For the Good of Our Communities campaigns
Q104 Thanksgiving presented by Cherubini Sobeys Inc. - Holiday Food Drive
Stuff-A-Bus presented by ATU Local 508, Move 100, and Scotiabank
Tim Hortons Smile Cookie
The Coast’s Halifax Burger Bash
Walmart - Fight Hunger Spark Change

$5,000+ worth of food or funds
AVR and Magic 94.9 - Give What You Can BLT Jr. Elementary - Halloween for Hunger
CAPREIT - Holiday Food Drive
CBC Make the Season Kind
CBRE - Atlantic Market Outlook Breakfast
CFB Halifax Firefighters - food drive
Citco - We Feed Nova Scotia
Compass Commercial Realty LP - food drive
Dawson’s Birthday food drive
EastPoint Engineering Ltd. - food drive
Gateway Business Brokers - online campaign
Herring Cove Fire Station 60 - food drive
HRM Schools food drive
Light Up Bedford Parade
Novacorp Properties Limited - food drive
Paramount Management - food drive
Park West School - food drive
Propeller Brewing Company - 25K IPA
Purolator - Tackle Hunger Holiday Boxes
Sackville High School - Fright Against Hunger
SaltWire Holiday Parade of Lights
The AndyVent Calendar
Tom Jackson - Stories, Songs & Santa Causes
Ultimate Online Nova Scotia Kitchen Party and NS Buzz

“We saw how rising food costs were impacting the people in our communities, and wanted to do what we could to help support our neighbours.”

-Kai Hollett
Championing change where we live

Sometimes, the passion to help runs so deep among our supporters they look for multiple ways to connect people with our cause. Joanne Lawen-Mrakic is a perfect example. We’re thrilled with the way she engaged family, friends, and the community in supporting our work. Thanks, too, to the Lebanese Festival, Paramount Management, Lawen Dentistry, and Beads by Zoya, for responding to her enthusiasm!

The power of yes

When NSLC staff come together for the good of our community, they make big things happen. And they highlight the most critical part of fundraising—the ask! And they’re not alone. Through donations at the till, staff and customers at Atlantic Superstore, Foodland and participating Co-ops, Lawtons, No Frills, NSLC, Sobeys, Walmart, and Your Independent Grocer collectively contributed $361,000 for Feed Nova Scotia—and that doesn’t include the support we received beyond the till! Our heartfelt thanks to staff who asked and every person who said yes.
Increasing access to local foods

This year we purchased more food from local producers to provide staple items for Nova Scotians accessing support. We’ve budgeted an extra $1 million for food purchases next year, and we’ve set a target to source 50% of all food purchases locally, with a particular focus on buying direct from farmers. Here’s what we bought and distributed this year, because of you:

$156,000 of eggs

$154,000 of milk

$87,000 of produce

$136,000 of poultry and beef
“I cried very happy tears. It’s been a rough several years and this food carried me through.”

During the holiday season, Feed Nova Scotia alongside 21 member agencies and 24 community organizations supported 20,737 individuals in 7,195 households in HRM with Christmas support. Here are a few facts unique to this year:

- 1,200 additional households registered for support compared to 2021.
- To support the additional number of unhoused or precariously housed people who applied for support, we provided $50 grocery cards through the Navigator Street Outreach team.
- We recruited additional volunteer groups to help meet the request for home-delivery service.

“Giving back to the community over the holidays was an incredibly rewarding team-building experience for everyone.”
—Ambassatours
Advocating for real, meaningful change

Our message is clear: Nova Scotians need adequate income to live a dignified life.

This year we surveyed individuals receiving food support and their voices were a chorus, highlighting the urgent need for policy intervention.

We were pleased to see our public opinion survey echo that sentiment.

Bottom line, charitable band-aid solutions aren’t going to cut it. A dignified life for all Nova Scotians is possible. It’s time to make it so.

80% of food bank clients surveyed cited insufficient income and rising cost of living as the top reasons for food insecurity.

56% of food bank clients surveyed sacrificed food to pay for medication.

83% of Nova Scotians surveyed believed provincial income support should be increased.

85% of food bank clients surveyed spent more than 30% of their income on housing, the threshold for what’s considered affordable.
Four ways we can create food-secure communities:

1. Raise Income Assistance rates substantially to match the poverty line and index the rates to inflation.

2. Provide a minimum income floor for Nova Scotians, often referred to as a basic income guarantee.

3. Support and invest in non-market, non-profit, co-op, affordable housing.

4. Reduce out-of-pocket expenses for prescription medication by waiving or reducing the deductible in the Family Pharmacare Program.

We delivered an urgent call for policy-based solutions to MLAs at a Public Accounts Committee meeting in June and a Standing Committee on Community Services meeting in January. A few months later, in the provincial budget, we’d see our politicians’ blatant choice to leave thousands of Nova Scotians in crisis.

We were encouraged to see that at the 64th General Assembly, our recommendation resulted in Bill 209, which proposes to reduce out-of-pocket expenses on pharmaceuticals for families and seniors.

Member network: Working to provide homes

Thousands of Nova Scotians are at the intersection of the housing and food insecurity crises. We were thrilled to cheer member agencies on as they continued to dig in and provide long-term, sustainable solutions.

When Adsum for Women & Children opened The Sunflower, they showed everyone that when resources, leadership, and vision align, we can create dignified, affordable housing. They could’ve filled the 25 units several times over, once again highlighting the need is urgent, and has been for years.

In Cape Breton, the North Sydney Community Food Bank began major upgrades to their building, with accessibility and sustainability at the forefront. Future work will include 20 new affordable housing units for seniors in the community.

The Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre will also redevelop an existing building to include 21 long-term housing units to support Indigenous clients experiencing chronic homelessness. They will also provide cultural support and programming to encourage clients to engage with their community and traditions.
Supporting community to lead the way

We formed a committee of 16 Nova Scotians who have lived experience with food insecurity to ground and inform our work. They're compensated at a living wage rate for the time they spend contributing their expertise—providing meaningful insight into where we're getting things right, and more importantly, where we're getting things wrong. We're extraordinarily thankful for their participation, openness, and honesty.

We launched a grant stream and supported 14 community-led projects that are trying new ways to increase access, availability, or choice of food; increase community-led production of food; support service coordination and/or build awareness and advocacy around the root causes of food insecurity. We’ll take the learnings from this year’s soft launch to refine the process before opening the grant publicly in 2024.

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance spent a year and a half engaging in extensive community consultation and from this, identified 56 action items—known as the JustFOOD Action Plan. We’ll be working closely with community partners to advance two items from the plan: a social supermarket and a rural food access program.

The best solutions to food insecurity will come from those with lived experience and local community leaders who know what people want and need.

In this spirit, our Innovation and Learning Lab aims to explore, test, and develop new ways of meeting the needs of food-insecure Nova Scotians.
Shifting our culture

Change starts within

Many staff expressed that accessing mental health support can present a challenge; commuting, scheduling, and other commitments at home and in the community are obstacles, and the cost of private mental health services can be prohibitive. Understanding that it’s critical for staff to be able to connect with support in whatever way they are most comfortable, and recognizing these barriers, we established on site mental health support with counsellor Stacy Darku of Esinam Counselling, and doubled the allowance through our benefits provider.

In a continued effort to be a fair and equitable employer, and help create social change, we partnered with the Diversity Employment Network to host the first BIPOC Atlantic Job Fair. There were 250 participants and 46 exhibitors. From first-hand feedback, we know of 16 people who received job offers through connections they made.

We are also grateful for support from several community partners like Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Black Business Initiative (BBI), and the Diversity Employment Network (DEN). Through these critical connections, we continue to diversify our pool of candidates and strengthen our recruitment efforts to have a staff team that is reflective of the community we support.
“I’ve been in the Pride parade before with businesses, but this felt different, and so very special. We danced the whole way. The crew was SO fun, the crowd was screaming with joy, and I was so proud to be a part of the magic!”

-Tanya Colbo

23,769 hours
contributed by volunteers to help in every aspect of our organization. And they did it with big heart!

472 people
chose or continued to choose Feed Nova Scotia as an organization they want to volunteer with. How amazing is that?

3 volunteers
hit a very big milestone this year, contributing over 3,000 hours. Hats off to Mary McNab, Nancy Fullerton, and Delores Smith!

1,382 hours
spent by volunteers out connecting with the community at fundraisers and food drives.
Celebrating excellence

How do you honour someone who gave over 10,000 hours and a whole lot of heart in their 14-year volunteer post? Well, we decided to make it an annual celebration, by creating the Norma Searle Award for Volunteer Excellence. Congratulations, Norma! We can’t wait to recognize some amazing people who, like you, have done so much to help us work toward our mission.

Sharing a legacy of support

For more than 20 years, Charles Belliveau has been quietly supporting our work, sending a cheque in the mail almost every single month, to help support folks experiencing food insecurity. For Charles, growing up with mobility and speech impairments had its challenges, but one thing he’s grateful for is that he’s never had to worry about food. This year, when Charles wanted to deepen his impact in the community, a gift of shares made it possible. We’re honoured to recognize Charles for a lifetime of showing up for his neighbours—allowing us to provide enough food for 350,000 meals. But that’s not all; in true Charles fashion, he’s already planning for his next gift.

Donating securities is a tax-smart and impactful way to give. Together with Charles, 35 of our incredible donors contributed $570,000 this year through gifts of shares.
Building a framework for the future

How do we start working toward social justice when we’re all deeply entrenched in a system that holds up charity as an acceptable response to human rights violations? There’s no easy answer, but as a staff and board of directors, we started to dig in this year. Led by DLM Consulting, the board and staff team are looking critically at our mission, vision, and values and developing new strategic pillars to ground our future direction.

We know there’s much work to be done in the days ahead and the only true measure of success will be how our efforts are felt by the communities we support.

We acknowledged it’s time to move away from a Eurocentric governance model to one that is intentional and respectful of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous heritage. We’re working with Paul Taylor of Evenings & Weekends Consulting to make this change.

We’ve created a justice, equity, diversity, decolonization, and inclusion standing committee and a workplan to hold these principles at the forefront of our work.

We now use a five-P equity lens (people, process, place, power, possibilities) at every board meeting with an in-camera evaluation at the end of the meeting. The board looks critically at our own work with 27 guiding questions for discussion.

Board of Directors

Duma Bernard
Patricia Bradshaw
Kim Burns
Cynthia Dorrington
Joe Fraser
Mark Fullerton
Mary Ellen Greenough
Ahmad Hussein
Maxime Lessard
Roddy Macdonald
Miranda Mavhunga
Sylvia Parris-Drummond
Mohammad Ali Raza
Robert Strang

Thank you to outgoing members Lisa Haydon, Jeff Hillyard, and Kristen Hollery.
Outstanding contributions ($10,000+)

Brad Abernethy
Stella and Scott Balfour
Flemming Charitable Foundation
Helga Guderley
Black Family Foundation
Becel
Charles Belliveau
BHP
The Edwards Family Charitable Foundation
CUPE
The Elia Corporation

John Himmelman
KBRs
LiFT Family Fund
Marian Fund
F.M. McCulloch
Michael Robert Merchant
Canada
NOVA SCOTIA

The River Philip Foundation
St. Augustine's Church, Purcell Cove Road
Holly Murphy-Stenton and Ted Stenton
The Sidney Crosby Foundation
The Windsor Foundation

Thanks, also, to those who prefer anonymity or haven’t consented to recognition.
Outstanding food donors

100,000+ kilograms
Atlantic Superstore
Food Banks Canada
Sobeys
Walmart

25,000 - 99,999 kilograms
Charles Keddy Farms Ltd
Costco Wholesalers
GlobalMedic
Sable Warehousing & Distribution Ltd
Saputo Dairy Products Canada
Sawler Gardens
Spa Springs Mineral Water Company
Stokdijk Greenhouses
Sysco Atlantic
Vermeulen Farms Ltd

5,000 - 24,999 kilograms
Apex Sales Group Inc
Apple Valley Foods Inc
Canada Bread
Catelli Foods Corp
den Haan Enterprises Ltd
Egg Farmers of Canada
Elmridge Farm Ltd
Ferme Benoit Vernier
High Liner Foods Inc
Maple Leaf Foods Inc
McCain Foods (Canada)
Nova Agri Inc
Ocean Crisp Apple Company Inc
Scotian Meat Market
Spurr Brothers Farms Ltd
TDL Group Corporation
Van Meekeren Farms Ltd
Financials

Revenue
$24,563,830 (Includes $89,720 from Innovation and Learning Lab)

- In kind food donations (58%)
- In kind other donations (2%)
- Individual donations (7%)
- Corporate donations (4%)
- Donations by and through other charities (15%)
- Government grants (12%)
- Other income (1%)
  - Investment income (less than 1%)
  - Innovation and Learning Lab (less than 1%)

Expenses
$24,003,648 (Includes $187,900 from Innovation and Learning Lab)

- Food procurement and logistics (74%)
- Community connections (4%)
- Fundraising and donor relations (3%)
- People, culture, and administration (5%)
- Occupancy (1%)
- Member-designated donations (12%)
- Innovation and Learning Lab (1%)

Find our audited financial statements at feednovascotia.ca
A different Nova Scotia is possible.

Through the generous donations of food and funds by our donors, and the incredible work of our volunteers, we move into the next year hopeful about the future despite the notable absence of government leadership in poverty reduction.

We’re thankful for, and humbled by, the continued outpouring of support.

We all agree better is possible for Nova Scotians struggling with food insecurity. With your steadfast contributions of time, money, and vocal support for change, we can make it so. We can build a province where everyone has adequate income to access the food they want and need to live a dignified life.

We will get there. Together.