



NEWS RELEASE

National study shows working Canadians turning to food banks more than ever

HungerCount 2008 provides essential information on levels of food bank use in Canada, profiles people in need of charitable food assistance

Toronto, November 25, 2008 – In its *HungerCount 2008* study, released today, Food Banks Canada (formerly the Canadian Association of Food Banks) reports that food banks are helping a growing number of working individuals and families. As a percentage of all households assisted by food banks, those with income from employment have grown from 11.9% in 2002 to 14.5% in 2008 – the highest level ever.

“More people assisted by food banks are working. We are seeing this trend right across the country,” said Katharine Schmidt, Executive Director of Food Banks Canada. “Individuals and families are struggling as well-paying jobs are replaced by those that do not provide adequate wages, and that are more likely to be part-time or temporary.”

HungerCount 2008 results show 7 of 10 provinces, accounting for 72% of the national population, saw an increase in the proportion of food bank clients who were working in 2008. The report also indicates fully one-fifth (19.3%) of the households that turn to food banks for help each month are living on income from current or recent employment (i.e. a job or Employment Insurance).

Food bank use continues to be a stubborn problem in Canada:

- 704,414 people – 37% of them children – were assisted by a community food bank during the *HungerCount* study period of March, 2008.
- After more than a decade of robust economic health, food bank use remains 6% higher than in 1997, the first year for which comparable data are available.
- The number of people turning to food banks for help in an average month has not dropped below 700,000 per month since 1997.

To address the problem, Food Banks Canada is calling on the federal government to:

1. Implement a national poverty-reduction strategy with measurable targets and timelines.
2. Increase the value of the Working Income Tax Benefit and widen eligibility to include all households with earned incomes below the most recent low income cut-off (LICO).
3. Increase the value of the Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5,000 per child, per year.
4. Implement the recent recommendations of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry with regard to (a) increased funding for rural housing improvement and repair, and (b) a review of rural housing programs to ensure they are effectively meeting objectives.

HungerCount was initiated in 1989 and is the only national survey of emergency food programs in Canada. Since 1997, data for the study have been collected every March. The information provided by the survey is invaluable, forming the basis of many Food Banks Canada activities throughout the year. For a full copy of the *HungerCount 2008* report, and for more information, please visit www.foodbankscanada.ca.

About Food Banks Canada

Food Banks Canada is a national charitable organization representing the food bank community across Canada. Our members and their respective agencies serve approximately 85% of people accessing emergency food programs nationwide. Our mission is to meet the short-term need for food and find long-term solutions to reduce hunger. Please visit www.foodbankscanada.ca for more information.