

Food Security Report for Greater Moncton
Analysis of Services, Structural Challenges, and Community Needs
With Strategic Recommendations for a Sustainable and Equitable System

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Abstract.....	5
I. Introduction	6
i. Purpose of the Report.....	7
ii. Definition and Key Statistics.....	8
iii. Food Insecurity in New Brunswick and Canada	8
iv. Disproportionate Impact and Systemic Strain.....	9
v. Local Data.....	9
II. Food Security Services in Moncton & Area	11
i. Range of Services Provided	12
ii. Populations Served	13
□ Capacity and Service Levels	13
iii. Access to Services.....	15
□ National Context	15
iv. Scale of Delivery and Trends in Demand	15
III. Methodology	17
Phase 1: Documentary Research and Context Mapping.....	17
Phase 2: Survey Development and Data Validation	18
Phase 3: Qualitative Interviews and Site Visits.....	18
i. The organizations engaged in this process included:	19
IV. Program Design, Resources, and Partnerships	19
i. Access to Services and Eligibility Frameworks.....	19
ii. Seasonal and Cyclical Demand.....	20
iii. Sources of Food and Funding.....	22

iv.	Human Resources	23
V.	Food Quality, Nutrition, and Program Impact	23
i.	Dietary Accommodations and Cultural Inclusivity	23
ii.	Food and Health Correlation	25
iii.	Food Security within the Justice System	25
iv.	Implications for implementation	26
v.	Sustainability Measures	26
vi.	Data Collection and Client Feedback	27
VI.	Shelters, Supportive Housing Providers and Food Insecurity	28
i.	Role of Shelters and Supportive Housing Providers in the Food Security Network	28
ii.	Dependency and Resident Profiles	28
iii.	Financial Pressures and Policy Gaps	29
iv.	Integration with Community Food Supports	30
v.	Broader Service Continuum and National Context	31
VII.	Key Challenges and Barriers	32
i.	Rising Costs and Inflation	32
ii.	Funding Limitations and In-Kind Dependence	32
iii.	Staffing and Volunteer Shortages	32
iv.	Infrastructure and Space Constraints	32
v.	Collaboration and Data Sharing	33
vi.	Limited Flexibility to Provide or Refer for Emergency Meals	33
vii.	Transportation and Geographic Barriers	33
viii.	Administrative and Reporting Burden	34
ix.	Broader Systemic Inequities	34
VIII.	Recommendations	34

i.	Integrating Food Security into New Brunswick's Coordinated Response	34
ii.	Addressing the Root Causes of Food Insecurity	35
iii.	Stabilizing Food Procurement and Operational Funding.....	35
iv.	Operational Improvements for Efficiency, Accessibility, and Inclusion	36
IX.	Conclusion	37
X.	Bibliography:.....	38

Abstract

This report analyzes the state of food insecurity and the structural and operational challenges faced by food providers in Greater Moncton, New Brunswick. The study originates from the provincial government's announcement in March 2025 of a \$1,000,000 reduction in provincial food procurement funding allocated to Feed NB. Feed NB is the provincial organization responsible for the procurement, storage, and distribution of food for food banks and community kitchens across New Brunswick. This governmental decision further strained a system already weakened by a 140% increase in demand over three years.

This research relied primarily on a mixed methods approach. Through documentary research and interviews with 24 food providers, including food banks, community kitchens, shelters, supervised housing providers, and multiservice agencies, the study maps the food provider network, highlights its key gaps, and analyzes the obstacles compromising its sustainability.

Data show that 1 in 4 New Brunswick households lives in food insecurity, reflecting economic precarity, stagnant incomes, and persistent systemic inequalities. The provincial food system relies heavily on charity and donations, and in the absence of sufficient public investment, this creates an annual food procurement deficit estimated between \$1,000,000 and \$1,500,000. Racialized and Indigenous households are disproportionately affected, with food insecurity rates reaching 46.7% and 39.9%. Many organizations also lack the necessary resources to respond to specific food needs, including consistent access to halal products.

The report also highlights pressures related to the rising cost of living, stagnant funding, staff retention challenges, and declining numbers of volunteers, all of which make it difficult to sustain essential programs. Despite these challenges, the study underscores the resilience of community actors through food recovery efforts, inter organizational collaboration, and repeated calls for sustainable solutions.

The recommendations aim to establish stable food procurement funding, adjust the minimum wage so it aligns with a living income, and implement socially and culturally equitable policies. The overall objective is to adopt permanent measures instead of relying on temporary solutions.

I. Introduction

The reduction of provincial funding to Feed NB generated significant concern among community members, food bank users, and service providers, as the demand for food assistance was already rising. Feed NB had reported a 42% increase in requests (Clow, 2025). According to Simpson (2025), the 1,000,000 \$ rollback represented a 50% decrease compared to the previous fiscal year, creating a substantial funding gap. Global News (April 2025) also reported that this cut jeopardized existing contracts, including agreements with a Bouctouche Farm, which supplied fresh produce to food banks.

One of the most concerning risks involved the suspension of the breakfast program for vulnerably housed and unhoused individuals at St George's Anglican Church. This interruption, scheduled for summer 2025, would have deprived people not only of an essential morning meal but also of access to basic services such as showers, laundry facilities, and clean clothing. At the same time, Harvest House Atlantic announced it would soon limit its meal services exclusively to its residents, further reducing available food access points in the city.

These changes would have created a major service gap, as no organization would have been able to provide breakfast to unhoused individuals or establish an emergency replacement service. Remaining services, including Humanity Project for supper and Karing Kitchen and Ray of Hope for lunch, were already at full capacity. Any increase in demand would have placed additional strain on their financial resources, staffing, and physical space. In this context, the interruption of these programs would have left many unhoused people in Moncton without access to food, showers, or basic hygiene for entire days.

In response to these risks, community leaders convened emergency meetings to prevent a complete collapse of meal distribution. The Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee were able to redirect funding to Harvest House, to maintain breakfast, lunch, and supper programs for unhoused people, vulnerable residents, and seniors until December 31, 2025. This intervention temporarily ensured access to three daily meals while broader conversations on long-term funding continued.

Recognizing the temporary nature of this measure, the Committee initiated the development of a report aimed at identifying sustainable long-term strategies to ensure consistent meal access for Moncton's most vulnerable residents. In September 2025, the provincial government announced a 1,500,000 \$ investment in Feed NB to help offset rising food costs and meet increasing demand.

However, well before this announcement, our team had begun consultations with organizations throughout July and September to better understand the true extent of the challenges they were facing. These discussions revealed significant pressure on food providers even prior to the arrival of new funding.

Although the new investment was welcomed as a relief, its impact remained limited. Feed NB had requested a higher amount to meet growing provincial needs. Internal estimates showed that the organization's food purchasing budget increased from approximately 300,000 \$ in 2021 to nearly 6,000,000 \$ in 2025, a rise driven by inflation and increasing community needs (Clow, 2025). As a result, the 1,500,000 \$ investment was insufficient to stabilize food procurement at the provincial scale. While services remain available, their sustainability will depend on securing adequate long-term funding.

i. Purpose of the Report

- Document the full range of food services available in the Greater Moncton region, including food banks, community kitchens, shelters that provide meals, and multi-service agencies with a food assistance component.
- Analyze the challenges these providers face, including funding instability, rising cost of living, barriers related to service accessibility and cultural diversity, staff retention issues, and inadequate infrastructure.
- Assess the effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability of the services offered using data collected through interviews, field visits, and documentary research.
- Highlight the essential role of social and community partners including farmers, volunteers, housing providers, health workers, and advocates, in ensuring equitable access to food.
- Provide recommendations aimed at long-term, transformative, and sustainable solutions to strengthen the food system as a whole.

ii. Definition and Key Statistics

According to the World Bank Group, food insecurity refers to a lack of consistent access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to meet dietary needs and sustain a healthy life. Food security is built on four interrelated dimensions:

- 1- **Availability**, meaning the continuous presence of sufficient quantities of food.
- 2- **Access to** the financial and physical ability to obtain nutritious food that ensures a balanced diet.
- 3- **Utilization**, the proper biological use of food through a diverse and balanced diet, safe water, and adequate health care.
- 4- **Stability**, reliable access to food over time, without the risk of losing availability or access due to economic or social shocks.

iii. Food Insecurity in New Brunswick and Canada

Food insecurity in Greater Moncton and across Canada stems from a deeper social and economic crisis affecting every province. Recent data shows that this issue is placing increasing pressure on organizations as needs grow rapidly.

Scope and Magnitude of the Crisis

The most recent data highlights the extent of financial instability in New Brunswick and Canada. It shows a clear rise in food insecurity across all population groups, particularly among low-income households and children.

- At the provincial level, approximately 29.5% of New Brunswick residents, lived in a food insecure household in 2024 (PROOF, 2025).
- Roughly 1 in 4 households in New Brunswick experienced food insecurity in 2023 (PROOF, 2025).
- 2 in 5 children under the age of 18 lived in food insecure conditions in 2023 (PROOF, 2025).
- Nationally, 25.5% of Canadian families, including 2.5 million children, reported experiencing food insecurity in 2024 (PROOF, 2025).

- In relation to poverty, the report's recommendations emphasize aligning the minimum wage with the living wage, estimated at approximately \$24.62 per hour.

iv. Disproportionate Impact and Systemic Strain

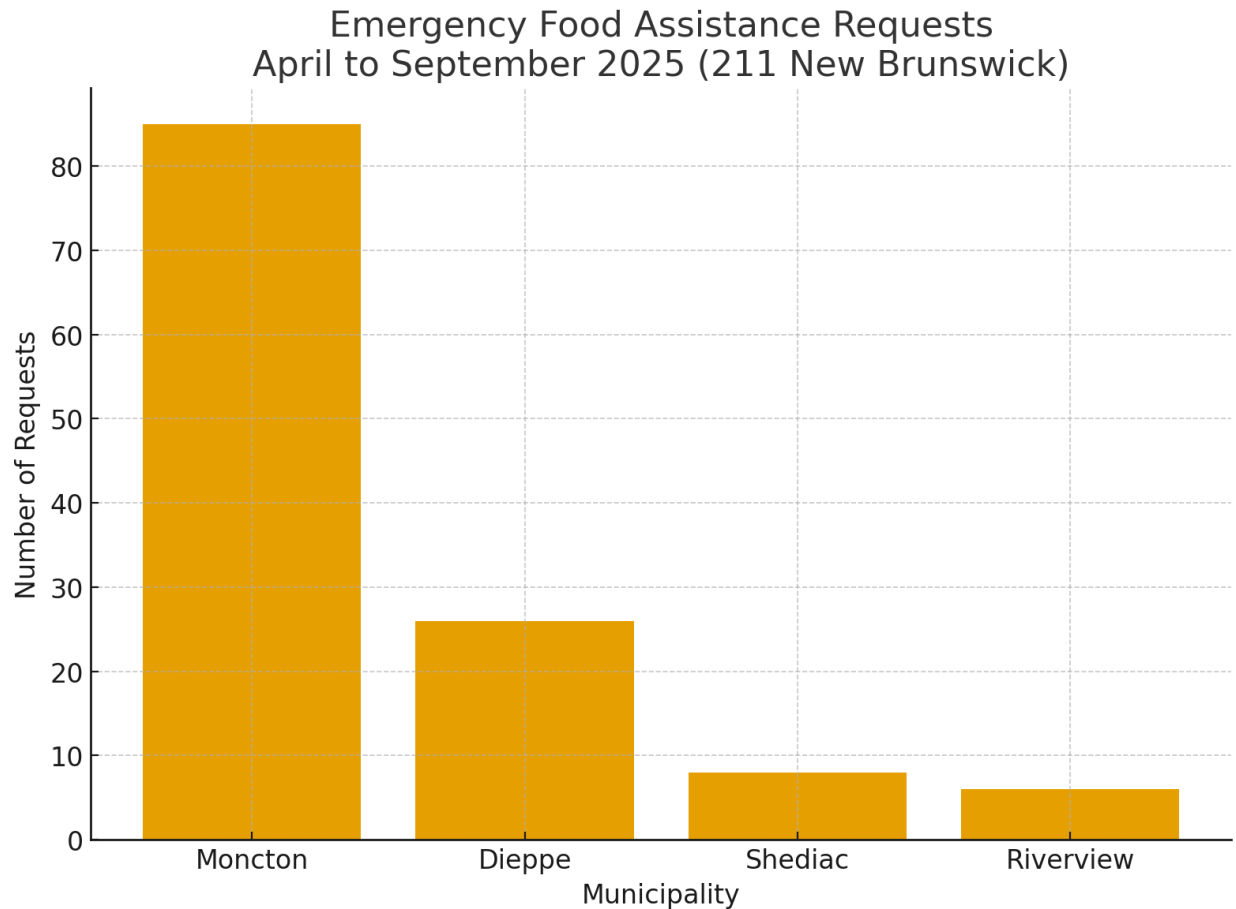
Food insecurity is highly racialized and closely linked to housing precarity, which increases the workload of frontline workers.

- Among racialized households, approximately 46.7 % of Black households and 39.9 % of Indigenous households living off reserve experienced food insecurity in 2024 (PROOF, 2025).
- In shelters, more than 60 % of incoming individuals had previously relied on a food bank, demonstrating the direct connection between food access and housing stability (Jadidzadeh, Kneebone, and Burek, 2025).
- In terms of demand, Feed NB recorded a 140 % increase in service usage over the past three years, which exceeds its operational capacity.
- For individuals with dietary restrictions, the cost of inclusivity forces difficult choices. For example, halal meat costs between 30 % and 50 % more than standard products. In this context, Moncton Cares and others food banks invest between 500 \$ and 700 \$ per month solely to maintain a minimal stock of halal meat.

v. Local Data

Beyond data from PROOF and Statistics Canada, 211 New Brunswick also collects information on emergency food assistance requests. For this report, we selected the municipalities directly relevant to the study, providing a precise picture of the pressure placed on local services.

To better illustrate the extent of these needs, the data collected between April and September 2025 has been compiled in the graphic below, showing the total number of emergency food assistance requests recorded per municipality during this period.



Number of emergency food assistance requests (April to September 2025, 211 New Brunswick)

- Moncton: **85**
- Dieppe: **26**
- Shediac: **8**
- Riverview: **6**

These data demonstrate that food insecurity remains a deeply economic and structural issue. They highlight the need for systemic reforms, both in public policy and in funding, so that allocated resources genuinely reflect the needs of communities.

II. Food Security Services in Moncton & Area

During the course of this research, it became clear that food banks, community kitchens, and other related organizations are often perceived as a single, uniform group, even though they play very different roles. Based on our observations and interviews, we identified **five types of organizations** operating in the Greater Moncton region.

➤ Feed NB

Feed NB is the provincial organization responsible for food procurement, storage, and distribution. According to information available on its website and in media reports, the organization subsidizes 67 food banks and community kitchens, giving it a central role in ensuring equitable food distribution across the province. Feed NB coordinates transportation, logistics, bulk food purchasing, and redistribution of goods based on the needs and capacity of each organization.

In total, Feed NB supports 67 member agencies and collaborates with approximately 100 additional community partners, largely supported through donations and food recovery efforts. Several organizations we interviewed confirmed that they receive food directly from Feed NB, with quantities determined by the number of clients served each month as reported in Link2Feed.

Link2Feed is the provincial data system used by food banks to record the amount of food distributed every month and to submit required reports. Organizations such as Moncton Cares, the Peter McKee Community Food Centre, Harvest House Atlantic, and Youth Impact Jeunesse use this platform to document service volumes. Feed NB relies on this information to plan its budget, adjust purchasing needs, and distribute resources more equitably.

➤ Food Banks

Food banks operate similarly to grocery-store models where individuals can select the foods they want. They also prepare emergency food hampers for households in crisis or for individuals who are not registered. Food provided by Feed NB typically covers three to five days of food per person per month. Depending on size, storage capacity, and location, organizations receive one or two deliveries per week. Their distribution capacity relies primarily on Feed NB, donations, and volunteer labour, all of which are essential for responding to growing demand.

➤ **Community Kitchens**

Community kitchens serve ready-to-eat meals, usually on site. They support people experiencing homelessness, financial precarity, or social isolation. Depending on available resources, some serve three meals per day, while others offer only one. Not all have the capacity to provide complementary services such as showers, laundry facilities, or hygiene products. In theory, these organizations aim to offer three meals per day, but most cannot achieve this consistently due to insufficient funding. Maintaining constant service without adequate resources would require reducing the nutritional quality of meals, forcing difficult trade-offs between quality and quantity.

➤ **Shelters and Emergency Beds**

Shelters and residential programs offer meals **exclusively to their residents**. They differentiate between:

- **dependent residents**, who rely entirely on meals provided by the facility
- **independent residents**, who prepare their own food but may receive donations or have access to shared kitchens

➤ **Multi-Service Agencies**

These are organizations whose primary mandate is not food provision but who offer meals or distribute food as part of a broader set of community services.

i. Range of Services Provided

Across the cities of Moncton, Dieppe, Riverview, and Shediac, organizations offer a wide range of services designed to meet the immediate and diverse needs of residents. These services include grocery hampers, hot meals, school meal and snack programs, delivery services for low-income seniors, and people with disabilities, grocery cards or vouchers, community kitchens, community gardens, and nutrition education workshops.

Although several organizations engage in food recovery efforts, only a few have structured partnerships with farms. For example, the Vestiaire Saint Joseph maintains a collaboration with local farms. When farms have surplus vegetables, they donate them to the Vestiaire, which in

return gives unused food items back to the farms for animal feed. Even on a small scale, this initiative helps reduce food waste and strengthens connections with local producers.

Organizations also emphasized the social and emotional role of their services. Distribution sites often become safe spaces where people can socialize, receive referrals to other services, or obtain information about housing or employment resources.

Several food banks also distribute essential non-food items, such as hygiene products, menstrual pads, toothpaste, diapers, and infant formula. This demonstrates that food insecurity is deeply connected to broader material poverty. Although these items are essential for dignity, most organizations acknowledged that their limited budgets force them to prioritize food, making them heavily dependent on donations.

Finally, some small food banks have been created specifically for populations who face barriers in traditional food bank settings, including people with cognitive challenges or mental health difficulties. The goal is to offer a more accessible and less intimidating environment to encourage these individuals to receive the services they need.

ii. Populations Served

Food organizations in the Greater Moncton region support a highly diverse population, reflecting the complexity of poverty and social vulnerability in the area. Services reach individuals experiencing homelessness, newcomers and refugees, Indigenous community members, racialized communities, seniors, children and youth, postsecondary students, single parent households, and low income families. Some organizations also provide adapted services for individuals with cognitive challenges or functional limitations to ensure safe and inclusive access.

- **Capacity and Service Levels**

Survey results indicate that the number of people served varies significantly based on the size, location, and mandate of each organization. Food banks in the region support anywhere from several hundred to several thousand people each month:

- Large food banks in Moncton serve more than 5,000 people per month

- Medium sized food banks in surrounding communities support 1,000 to 5,000 people
- Small community food banks assist 100 to 500 people

In addition, most food banks record at least 10 new users each month, including elementary, secondary, and postsecondary students.

Direct meal programs distribute between 500 and 5,000 meals per month, depending on available resources.

To provide a consolidated overview of capacity and associated food costs, the table below summarizes the trends observed across the region:

Table. Monthly Service Capacity and Average Food Costs by Provider Type

Type of Provider	People/Meals Served per Month	Average Cost or Budget
Large food banks (Moncton)	5,000+ individuals	≈ \$5,000/month
Mid-sized food banks	1,000–5,000 individuals	≈ \$5,000/month
Small community food banks	100–500 individuals	≈ \$5,000/month
Direct meal providers	500–5,000 meals	≈ \$176,000/month
Shelters and supportive housing	Based on number of residents	\$140,000/year food budget + \$9.25/day per resident + \$4/day for special dietary needs

iii. Access to Services

Food banks operate within specific geographic service areas and require proof of address. Households can receive one food hamper per month without a financial review, but additional requests may involve an assessment of the economic situation.

Since January 2025, income verification (pay stubs, tax returns) has been removed at the request of Feed NB to reduce access barriers, particularly in the context of rising rental costs, stagnant wages, and increasing cost of living.

Direct meal programs, unlike food banks, are accessible without registration or geographic restrictions.

- **National Context**

According to PROOF, approximately **10 million people** lived in a food insecure household in 2024. PROOF (2025) data reveal particularly high disparities:

- **46.7%** of Black households
- **39.9%** of Indigenous households living off reserve

are food insecure, rates much higher than the national average.

These findings confirm the need for a support network capable of responding to diverse needs that are influenced by economic, social, and cultural conditions.

iv. *Scale of Delivery and Trends in Demand*

Food providers in the Greater Moncton area operate with very different levels of capacity. Some food banks serve a few hundred people per month, while the largest support more than 5,000. Direct meal distributors also serve several thousand meals each month. Despite these differences, all organizations face growing pressure linked to demand that is higher than ever.

Over the past year, many households have relied on food banks or meal programs several times per month, and in some cases every week. This increase particularly affects people without stable income or affordable housing. Organizations consulted in Moncton, Dieppe, and Shediac all reported a notable rise in demand, attributed to inflation, rising housing costs, lack of funding, limited storage space, and gaps in nutritional education.

Many organizations also observed a rise in people seeking help for the first time, including workers and families who were previously self-sufficient. In some cases, even staff members rely on their own organization's food services due to financial pressures.

At the provincial level, Feed NB Executive Director Stéphane Sirois reports a 140 percent increase in demand over the past three years. In Moncton, the Peter McKee Community Food Centre serves approximately 300 families and individuals every day. Despite the provincial government's 1,500,000-dollar investment announced in September 2025, Feed NB still expects an annual shortfall of 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 dollars, even with an expanded spending capacity of 4,500,000 dollars (Clow, 2025).

This constant growth in demand is straining a system that is already underfunded. Staffing shortages, lack of storage space, and rising food costs are worsening the challenges. Several organizations fear that without additional funding; some meal or food distribution programs may be forced to close before the end of 2025. The gap between community needs and available resources is becoming increasingly significant.

v. Models of Access to Food Services

Food banks operate within specific geographic service zones. In Moncton, for example, only residents of the city can be served. Proof of address is required before registering in the Link2Feed platform, which is used to track users.

Since January 2025, income verification requirements, such as pay stubs or tax returns, have been removed to reduce access barriers. This decision, requested by Feed NB, aims to strengthen equity and better reflect current economic realities.

When a household requests a second food hamper in the same month, organizations may require financial documentation to ensure that additional food is provided to individuals genuinely in need. This measure recognizes that declared income does not always reflect a household's actual ability to cover essential expenses, especially in a context of rising rents, stagnant wages, caregiving responsibilities, or illness.

Unlike food banks, community kitchens, soup kitchens, and other meal providers are accessible without registration or geographic restrictions. Anyone in need of a meal can access these services regardless of where they live. This model provides an immediate response to urgent food needs and often serves as a safety net for individuals without a fixed address, experiencing homelessness, or facing a crisis.

III. Methodology

The results of this report are based on a combination of methods including surveys, in-depth interviews, field visits, and the analysis of existing data. The objective was to provide a mapping of food security services in Greater Moncton. The project relied on a collaborative approach and direct engagement with organizations.

Phase 1: Documentary Research and Context Mapping

The process began with an in-depth documentary review. We consulted annual reports and statistical data from reliable sources, including 211 New Brunswick, the Human Development Council, PROOF Canada, Statistics Canada, and various media articles. This stage made it possible to identify trends related to food insecurity, changes in funding, and the structure of food programs in the province, particularly within the Greater Moncton area. It also highlighted several recurring systemic issues such as funding instability, sustained growth in demand, and the gap between provincial policies and their actual implementation on the ground.

At the same time, we created an internal database listing all organizations offering food-related services in Greater Moncton and Shediac. For each, a descriptive profile was developed based on publicly available information. This work revealed that many organizations do not always have

time to update the information posted on their websites, particularly regarding service hours, eligibility criteria, or operational capacity.

Phase 2: Survey Development and Data Validation

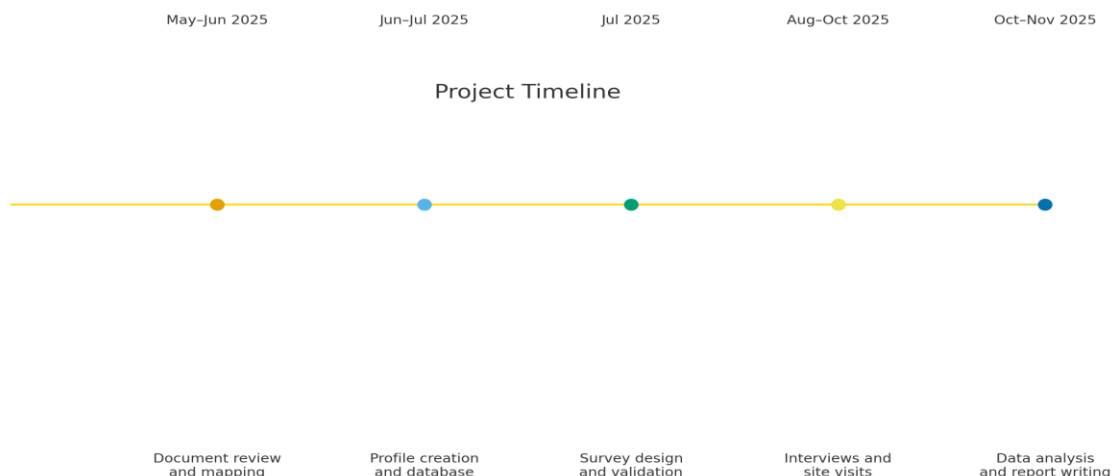
To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data collected, we contacted each organization directly and identified a point person, usually a program coordinator or an executive director. Each organization was invited to review and update its descriptive profile, then review a preliminary version of the survey we were preparing for data collection. They were also encouraged to suggest adjustments to make the questions more inclusive and representative of their realities.

The feedback received improved the final survey, which accurately reflects the operational conditions on the ground. The final version was emailed on July 15, 2025. Phone calls and follow-up emails were made in the following weeks to encourage participation. To ensure all organizations could contribute despite time constraints, some surveys were completed over the phone.

Phase 3: Qualitative Interviews and Site Visits

The methodological sequence used in this project relied on three complementary steps. After survey data collection, qualitative interviews were conducted with organizations between August 12 and October 17, 2025, followed by field visits to validate and contextualize the information collected.

The timeline below illustrates the progression of these stages.



i. The organizations engaged in this process included:

1. Albert County Food Bank
2. Alternatives Residences
3. Boys and Girls Club of Moncton
4. Crossroads for Women
5. Ensemble Moncton
6. Feed NB
7. Food For All NB
8. Harvest House Atlantic
9. House of Nazareth
10. Humanity Project
11. John Howard Society
12. Karing Kitchen
13. Moncton Cares
14. Moncton Lions Club
15. Peter Mckee Food Bank
16. Ray of Hope Kitchen Inc.
17. Salvation Army
18. Second Harvest
19. Second Mile Food Bank
20. St. George's Anglican Church
21. Vestiaire St-Joseph Inc.
22. Vitalité Health Network
23. Youth Impact Jeunesse
24. YWCA Moncton

IV. Program Design, Resources, and Partnerships

i. Access to Services and Eligibility Frameworks

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many food banks required proof of income or pre-registration to access services, even for a first visit. During the pandemic, these requirements were reduced or

suspended to prioritize safety and enable rapid distribution, leading some community kitchens to serve meals at the door rather than welcoming clients inside.

Based on consultations with food providers, eligibility frameworks now vary significantly from one organization to another. Some services, such as community kitchens, operate under a fully open access model, allowing anyone in need to receive a meal without restrictions. Others apply age-based criteria, such as Youth Impact Jeunesse, which can only serve individuals under the age of 19. Certain organizations also use a referral-based model, where eligibility must be confirmed by a social worker, housing agency, or community partner, particularly for emergency requests.

Most organizations still conduct income assessments to determine whether a household may access food more than once per month. Some require formal registration or membership, sometimes with a small fee, such as at the Boys and Girls Club. The contribution can be waived when household income is low. In certain cases, households must provide an address and Medicare number to receive a monthly hamper. Finally, some services are designed exclusively for individuals with cognitive disabilities.

These variations illustrate the diversity of service models and the need to adapt eligibility on a case-by-case basis, depending on operational capacity and available resources. However, for logistical reasons, most food banks operate by appointment. Once individuals are registered, they are assigned specific dates within the month when they can pick up their food hamper.

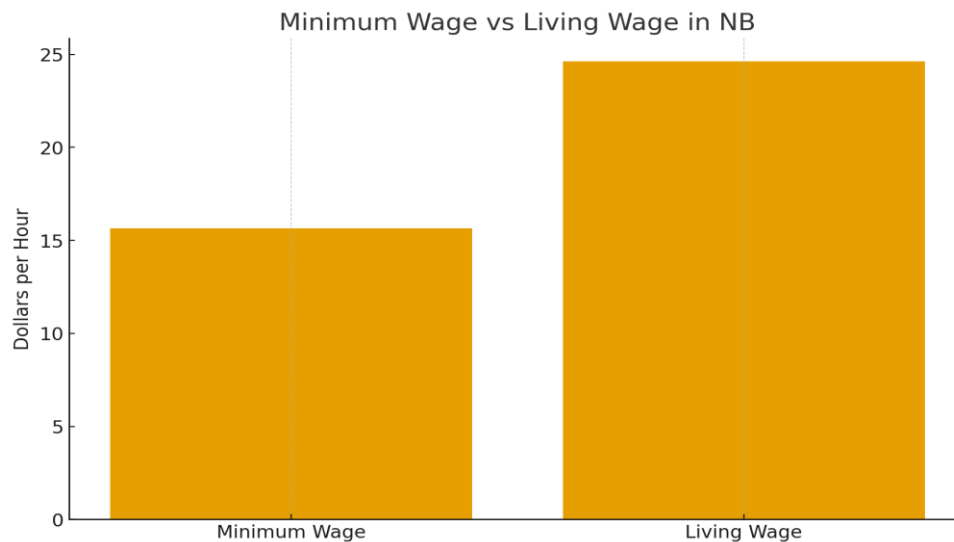
ii. Seasonal and Cyclical Demand

Food providers report significant seasonal fluctuations in service usage, particularly during the winter months when households face higher heating and utility expenses. The start of the school year also contributes to increased demand, especially for children and youth who rely on school-based meal and snack programs.

These seasonal pressures take place within a broader context of economic strain. According to the Human Development Council (2024), the living wage in New Brunswick is \$24.62 per hour, while the provincial minimum wage remains at \$15.65 per hour, (Government du Nouveau-Brunswick, 2025). Recent labour force data also shows that 45 % of workers in New Brunswick earn below the living wage, limiting their ability to cover basic expenses such as housing, transportation, and

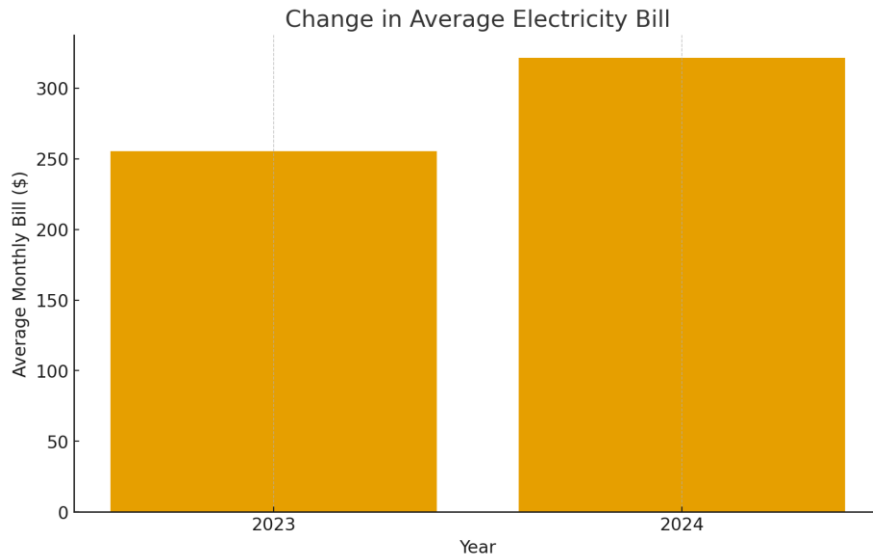
food. This wage gap forces many families with earning, to rely on food banks and meal programs, particularly during periods of increased financial pressure.

The chart below highlights the significant gap between minimum wage and the living wage, a key factor undermining the financial stability of households.



Rising household expenses, particularly electricity costs, further intensify financial strain. According to KPMG's 2025 assessment of residential customers, the average urban electricity bill increased from \$255.42 in 2023 to \$321.47 in 2024. These rising energy costs coincide with the colder months when heating becomes essential, forcing low- and middle-income households to make difficult choices between paying utility bills and purchasing food. Organizations such as the New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities have identified electricity and heating costs as major contributors to poverty in the province (Petit, 2024).

The chart below illustrates the sharp increase in electricity expenses, highlighting the growing financial burden on households during the winter season.



Taken together, these seasonal variations create substantial instability for households. They also explain why food assistance requests predictably rise each winter, often exceeding the operational capacity of food providers.

iii. Sources of Food and Funding

Food banks and community meal programs rely on a mix of food and financial sources. Feed NB and Second Harvest were identified as the primary suppliers by more than half of the organizations we consulted, providing large quantities of fresh food, non-perishable goods, and non-food items. These distributions are supplemented by donations from grocery stores, restaurants, local farms, individual donors, and, in many cases, by direct food purchases made by organizations to fill gaps, particularly for perishable or culturally appropriate items such as halal meat, fresh produce, or dairy products.

Although this diversity of suppliers provides some resilience, it also creates vulnerability when one source is disrupted. For instance, when Feed NB faces a funding shortage or delays in food procurement, smaller food banks or community kitchens like Karing Kitchen which may depend on this supply for up to 90 percent of their food inventory are immediately impacted.

Financial structures mirror this fragility. Most organizations rely on a combination of federal, provincial, and municipal funding, along with grants, foundations, private donations, and sponsorships. These funding sources are often short term or project based, limiting long term planning and operational stability. As inflation continues to increase the cost of food, utilities, and

transportation, many providers report having to reallocate funds originally intended for programming, staffing, or infrastructure simply to maintain basic food supply levels and ensure core operations can continue.

iv. Human Resources

Most non-profit organizations rely on a mix of volunteers, part-time and full-time staff, retirees, and students. Volunteer recruitment and retention remain ongoing challenges, particularly as many long-standing volunteers are aging and fewer younger individuals are engaging in community-based work.

Staff retention is also a significant concern. Many employees are underpaid relative to their workload, stress level, and the safety risks associated with frontline work. This contributes to high turnover, as many workers view these roles as temporary and transition to sectors offering better working conditions. In some instances, staff members rely on the same food support services offered by their organization, underscoring the deep financial strain experienced within the sector.

To strengthen organizational stability, food security organizations must prioritize fair compensation, safe and supportive working environments, and ongoing training and development for both staff and volunteers. These measures are critical to reducing turnover, preserving service continuity, and ensuring the long-term capacity of the community food security network.

V. Food Quality, Nutrition, and Program Impact

i. Dietary Accommodations and Cultural Inclusivity

Many organizations strive to offer food that aligns with the nutritional and cultural needs of their users. This includes culturally appropriate foods, halal products, vegetarian and vegan options, gluten free items and infant formula.

Dietary restrictions related to medical reasons can sometimes be supported with prescriptions, but those linked to culture or religion do not receive the same recognition. Halal meat, for example, must be prepared, handled and slaughtered in accordance with Islamic law. It must also be free from substances considered haram such as pork, alcohol or certain slaughtering practices (The Halal Times, 2025).

Several organizations report that meeting these needs, especially for halal products, is becoming increasingly difficult. Some allocate part of their limited budget to these purchases, but the absence of dedicated funding for culturally appropriate foods creates difficult tradeoffs. Since halal meat often costs between 30 percent and 50 percent more than standard products, organizations are forced to choose between respecting cultural needs or maintaining sufficient volume for all users.

A simple comparison of similar products illustrates the magnitude of the price gap. Standard chicken strips sold at 10 dollars for 1.5 kg cost 0.67 dollars per 100 g. The halal equivalent, priced at 13 dollars for 800 g, costs 1.63 dollars per 100 g and the gluten free version reaches 1.67 dollars per 100 g. Halal and gluten free options therefore cost approximately 2.4 times more than the standard product. This has direct implications for organizations that must adjust their purchasing strategies or reduce the quantities they can offer.

Comparative table of equivalent products

Product	Format	Total price	Price per 100 g
Standard chicken strips	1.5 kg	10 \$	0.67 \$
Halal chicken breast strips	800 g	13 \$	1.63 \$
Gluten free chicken strips	600 g	10 \$	1.67 \$

Among the organizations consulted, only three are able to maintain a regular stock of halal meat. Others explain that they do not have the resources to purchase it consistently. When halal products are unavailable, users are encouraged to take fruit, vegetables or bread instead. One organization reported spending between 500 dollars and 700 dollars per month simply to maintain a minimal supply of halal products.

Beyond financial constraints, some individuals reported experiencing discrimination when requesting halal products. These situations highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity, especially for newcomers and racialized communities. To address these unmet needs, Moncton Cares created its own food bank focused on culturally adapted products.

With rising immigration in New Brunswick, the demand for culturally inclusive food services is also increasing. According to the Department of Post Secondary Education, Training and Labour

(2025), 14,988 people obtained permanent residency between July 2023 and June 2024, confirming the need to adapt food services to evolving demographic realities.

ii. Food and Health Correlation

Food insecurity is closely connected to both physical and mental health. A study published in *The Journal of Nutrition* by Tarasuk, Mitchell, McLaren, and McIntyre in 2013 shows that adults living in food insecure households are significantly more likely to experience depression, anxiety, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and fibromyalgia.

The study also demonstrates that the relationship between health and food insecurity is bidirectional. Limited access to adequate food can worsen health, but health problems themselves can also increase a household's vulnerability to food insecurity. Expenses related to medication, specialized dietary needs, health care, or transportation often strain already limited budgets, making it even more difficult for people to purchase food. Individuals with physical or psychological limitations may also find it harder to use cost saving strategies, such as cooking in bulk or shopping at multiple stores.

Mental health conditions, particularly anxiety and depression, are among the strongest predictors of food insecurity, as they make planning, organizing, and seeking help more challenging.

In this context, food banks and meal programs play an essential role in supporting community health. They reduce the stress caused by food shortages, provide a basic nutritional foundation, and help prevent financial hardship from turning into a health crisis. During our site visits, several organizations explained that entire families, including households with multiple children, young couples, seniors, and individuals living with chronic illnesses, depend on these services to meet their basic food needs.

iii. Food Security within the Justice System

In June 2025, Minister of Justice and Public Safety Robert McKee announced the creation of a Mental Health and Addictions Court in Moncton, scheduled for launch in 2026. The program, inspired by diversion models, aims to offer dignified and tailored treatment to individuals whose charges are linked to substance use, gambling disorders, or mental illness. Navigators will work

with Crown prosecutors to assess eligibility and connect participants with community supports, including housing and mental health services.

The announcement carries important policy implications. Many individuals who will enter the program also experience severe material deprivation, including food insecurity. This contributes to psychological distress, instability, and a higher risk of recurring crises.

Stable access to food is essential to treatment adherence, recovery, and compliance with court requirements. Individuals who cannot meet basic needs are less able to attend appointments, follow conditions, or maintain engagement in treatment. Food security therefore becomes a central factor in the success of both the clinical and judicial components of the program.

During our fieldwork, the Beauséjour Mental Health Services team explained that they frequently refer clients to food banks and sometimes cover transportation costs to reach them, including the food bank in Shediac. This indicates that even publicly funded health authorities work to compensate gaps in upstream social supports.

iv. Implications for implementation

- The Court Program should include routine food insecurity screening at intake
- Participants should be immediately connected to community food programs or grocery supports
- Stable food access should be monitored as a key outcome alongside mental health, housing, and justice indicators

In this context, food banks and meal programs act as essential community health supports. They help prevent health deterioration, reduce stress, and bridge the gap between insufficient income and essential nutrition needs.

v. Sustainability Measures

Sustainability efforts among food providers rely on food recovery, redistribution, and resource tracking. The scope of these initiatives varies. Some providers partner with grocery stores,

restaurants, and farms to recover surplus food. Others collaborate with pharmacies for hygiene products or operate community gardens during the summer.

Community gardens improve food resilience and engage volunteers. However, several providers reported losing farm partnerships, forcing greater reliance on public or commercial donations. Some organizations now track the monetary value of donated goods to anticipate losses when a donor withdraws support.

Resource management also includes a close review of expiration dates. Many providers check food items daily to prevent waste and ensure redistribution before expiry.

Prepared food is carefully portioned, and leftovers are frozen for later use. During fieldwork, we observed a community kitchen's meal service, which highlighted the diversity of clients and the efficiency of waste reduction practices.

These practices demonstrate the adaptability and creativity of organizations operating with limited resources.

vi. Data Collection and Client Feedback

Providers use various methods to track client information and manage program access. Food banks use the provincial Link2Feed system to collect demographic data, record monthly service numbers, and track visit frequency. This system is mandatory for any organization receiving food from Feed NB.

Access varies. Some programs are walk in, others require appointments or operate on specific distribution days. Certain housing providers or youth programs serve only residents or members, such as the Boys and Girls Club.

Dietary restrictions are generally noted informally, since providers distribute what donations allow. Most organizations say they cannot consistently meet specific dietary needs because supply varies.

Formal feedback systems are rare due to limited staff, time, and resources. Providers rely mostly on informal, day to day conversations to understand needs and adjust services.

VI. Shelters, Supportive Housing Providers and Food Insecurity

i. Role of Shelters and Supportive Housing Providers in the Food Security Network

Shelters and supportive housing programs play a crucial role in the food security ecosystem because they provide both safe accommodation and daily meals. For many individuals experiencing homelessness or crisis situations, receiving a meal represents much more than basic relief. It is often a first point of contact that opens the door to other essential supports.

According to PROOF (2025), approximately 29.5 percent of New Brunswick residents lived in a food insecure household in 2024. Based on Statistics Canada's quarterly population estimates, the province has around 869,000 residents. This means that about one in three people struggle to access sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food due to financial constraints.

This reality underscores the severity of the issue and highlights the importance of shelters and supportive housing providers within the wider support network. In a context where food prices continue to rise and income supports remain limited, these organizations play a dual role. They respond to immediate hunger while also contributing to longer term stabilization for individuals who are most vulnerable.

Their role extends far beyond meal provision. Shelters and supportive housing providers also offer a wide range of complementary services, including housing support, mental health assistance, employment guidance, and various forms of psychosocial support. These services strengthen the overall stability of the individuals they serve and, when possible, support their transition toward greater independence.

ii. Dependency and Resident Profiles

Programs distinguish between dependent residents, who rely entirely on provided meals, and independent residents, who prepare their own food but may still access donated items or shared kitchen resources.

Dependent residents represent a higher financial cost for supportive housing providers and shelters, since the organization must supply three full meals daily, along with snacks and beverages. These costs include not only food purchasing but also staffing, storage, and kitchen maintenance. Emergency shelters, whose guests are typically fully dependent on provided meals, incur these high operational costs immediately. Conversely, independent residents generally require less direct spending but may still depend on food donations or community food programs to meet their needs.

The resident population is diverse: single mothers seeking stability, adults living with mental illness, individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities, and youth in group or transitional homes who require daily meal support. Despite efforts by shelters and supportive housing providers, food quality and menu variety often fluctuate due to the availability of donations, seasonal access to fresh produce, and rising grocery prices.

iii. Financial Pressures and Policy Gaps

Many shelters and supportive housing providers receive operational funding from provincial sources such as the Department of Social Development, which includes only limited allocations for food. Increases in these amounts have not kept pace with the sharp rise in inflation and grocery prices. As a result, shelters and supportive housing providers are forced to make difficult budgetary choices, reducing menu diversity, cutting portions, or reallocating funds from other essential services to maintain meal programs.

In addition to provincial funding, some shelters receive targeted support from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) and related provincial offices. This funding typically supports organizations serving women, gender-diverse individuals, and survivors of violence, enabling them to maintain safe spaces, offer crisis intervention, and ensure food access for residents in emergency or transitional housing. However, this type of support is often project-based or temporary, which limits shelters' ability to plan long-term food programs.

According to the Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux (CIUSSS) de la Capitale-Nationale, a regional public health and social services authority, poverty is not the only explanation for food insecurity, but it remains one of the most significant causes. Other factors contributing to financial difficulties that can lead to food insecurity include poorly managed

spending, gambling addiction, substance use (alcohol or drugs), and mental health challenges. Individuals facing food insecurity due to a lack of financial resources are often forced to make difficult choices between essential needs. With limited budgets that barely cover rent, electricity, and other fixed expenses, food becomes the most flexible category, and the first to be reduced when ends do not meet. As a result, many people skip meals or rely on low-cost, low-nutrition options to survive.

This reality underlines the complex nature of food insecurity. Shelters and supportive housing providers are not only feeding people but also responding to a broader web of economic, social, and mental health pressures that heighten residents' vulnerability to hunger.

iv. Integration with Community Food Supports

While shelters and supportive housing providers are part of Greater Moncton's broader community food security network, their capacity to collaborate varies greatly depending on their mandate and clientele. They maintain important links with food banks, community food centres, charitable organizations, and health service providers to secure food donations, share surplus goods, and reduce waste. However, coordination among housing-based programs themselves is often more complex.

Unlike community food centres that operate openly, shelters must navigate confidentiality requirements and ethical boundaries tied to the populations they serve. For instance, a shelter or housing provider supporting women and children escaping violence cannot freely share information or referrals with programs serving individuals experiencing homelessness or addiction. Similarly, some organizations do not use shared systems such as Link2Feed due to privacy concerns or program-specific restrictions. These structural barriers can limit data sharing and reduce opportunities for direct coordination, even when their residents' needs overlap. Moreover, the populations served by different housing providers often have distinct and multifaceted needs that go beyond food, including mental health support, trauma-informed care, or reintegration services. This diversity makes it challenging to design one unified network for communication or resource-sharing among shelters and supportive housing providers.

Despite these challenges, many housing and food organizations maintain informal, trust-based relationships, contacting each other, when possible, to share excess food or refer clients to community resources.

v. *Broader Service Continuum and National Context*

Beyond food provision, shelters and supportive housing providers deliver a comprehensive range of essential and life-stabilizing services. These include:

- Daily breakfast, lunch, and supper served seven days a week.
- Take-away meals and water for non-residents in need.
- Laundry, shower, and hygiene services.
- Referrals and case management for housing, health care, and employment.
- Overdose prevention and response programs.
- Outreach services for individuals living unsheltered.

Meal services in the community also act as vital points of connection to other supports. Accessing a meal often means accessing safety, trust, and dignity. For instance, the breakfast program at St. George's Anglican Church provided not only meals but also showers, laundry facilities, and clean clothing. Its potential closure revealed how intertwined meal programs are with essential services and how central they are to preserving human dignity. In this context, food assistance cannot be separated from holistic care; individuals deserve not only a meal but also the opportunity to feel clean, respected, and connected to supportive services.

Together, these services demonstrate that shelters and supportive housing providers function as multi-purpose safety nets, bridging food access, health, and housing stability. For many individuals, a shelter is not only a place to eat or sleep but also a point of contact with social workers and health professionals, and a first step toward rebuilding independence and well-being.

A 2025 study by the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy found that over sixty percent of individuals and families entering shelters had previously used food banks (Jadidzadeh, Kneebone, & Burek, 2025). This evidence reinforces that food insecurity and housing instability are deeply interconnected. Food insecurity often precedes homelessness, while stable housing depends on access to adequate nutrition.

VII. Key Challenges and Barriers

i. Rising Costs and Inflation

Across Greater Moncton, organizations consistently identified the rising cost of food, fuel, and rent as one of the most pressing challenges. Inflation has made it increasingly difficult to maintain both the quality and quantity of meals. Many service providers have not received funding increases for several years, even as prices for essential goods continue to rise.

ii. Funding Limitations and In-Kind Dependence

Most community food programs rely heavily on short term grants, charitable donations, and in-kind food supports. This dependency limits long term planning and creates instability in service delivery. Some shelters and soup kitchens must adjust meal schedules or portion sizes based on the unpredictability of available donations, which directly affects the consistency of support for clients.

iii. Staffing and Volunteer Shortages

Staff shortages and volunteer burnout remain persistent issues. In the post pandemic context, a significant workload rests on a small number of core staff, leading to fatigue and high turnover. Reduced volunteer engagement, especially outside peak seasons, limits organizations' capacity to extend opening hours or provide personalized support.

iv. Infrastructure and Space Constraints

Several organizations operate in aging or inadequate facilities that were not designed for large scale meal preparation or food storage. Limited refrigeration and kitchen space restrict their ability to accept bulk donations and diversify meal options. These space constraints also hinder collaboration between programs that might otherwise share equipment and resources.

v. Collaboration and Data Sharing

Although many organizations share similar missions, confidentiality policies and differing client populations make data sharing difficult. For example, shelters that support individuals facing addictions or homelessness cannot always share client information with women's or youth shelters because of privacy considerations. As a result, coordination across the network is uneven and opportunities for stronger collective advocacy and integrated services are often missed.

vi. Limited Flexibility to Provide or Refer for Emergency Meals

During our fieldwork, we met with health and social service providers, including the Beauséjour Community Mental Health Centre, which is part of the Réseau de santé Vitalité. Through these discussions, we learned about the significant challenges they face when referring clients to food programs during emergencies. Many food banks and meal programs operate on fixed schedules, require advance registration, or do not have the capacity to accept same day referrals. This limited flexibility is particularly problematic for individuals experiencing acute crises, including mental health emergencies or unstable housing. These barriers highlight the need for stronger coordination between health services and community food systems, so that no individual is left without access to food in urgent situations.

vii. Transportation and Geographic Barriers

Individuals without reliable transportation face ongoing challenges in accessing food support, especially those living outside Moncton's downtown core. Limited public transit schedules and high transportation costs restrict participation in community meals and make it difficult for people with mobility or health challenges to collect food.

Geographic barriers also arise from food banks' service boundaries. Most food banks operate within designated catchment areas, meaning that individuals are expected to access support only from the food bank that serves their residential zone. For those living far from their assigned location, especially without a vehicle or affordable transit options, this requirement creates a significant barrier. Many people must choose between paying for transportation or going without food support, which deepens existing inequities.

viii. Administrative and Reporting Burden

Many smaller organizations that are mainly volunteer led struggle to meet reporting and administrative requirements from funders. These tasks often consume time and capacity that could otherwise be devoted to direct client work, program delivery, evaluation, or partnership building. Streamlining reporting expectations and providing dedicated administrative support would allow these organizations to focus on what matters most, supporting people in need.

ix. Broader Systemic Inequities

Ultimately, the root causes of food insecurity remain unresolved. Poverty, low wages, inadequate housing, and social inequities continue to drive demand for charitable food services. According to PROOF, more than one in four households in New Brunswick and one in three children live in food insecure conditions. These structural issues extend far beyond the reach of community food programs and reinforce the need for systemic solutions that connect income policy, housing, and social protection.

VIII. Recommendations

i. Integrating Food Security into New Brunswick's Coordinated Response

The New Brunswick Homelessness Task Force has established a vital framework for cross sector collaboration on complex social challenges. Its work recognizes that homelessness, poverty, and mental health are deeply interconnected and that meaningful progress requires addressing root causes rather than symptoms alone.

In Greater Moncton, food insecurity intensifies the vulnerability of individuals already affected by housing instability or mental health challenges. Community food programs perform essential work yet demand now exceeds what charitable networks can support on their own.

Incorporating food security into the expanded mandate of the Task Force would strengthen the impact of government investments, particularly those related to housing and the newly announced Mental Health and Addictions Court. Stable access to nutritious food supports recovery, emotional regulation, and treatment adherence, which are essential for successful diversion programs and long-term stability.

Clear governmental leadership is needed to align these initiatives. When food access, housing, and mental health supports operate together, New Brunswick moves closer to building communities where stability, recovery, and dignity are truly achievable.

ii. Addressing the Root Causes of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is not primarily a food distribution issue; it is an income and housing issue. Effective intervention requires policies that directly target the economic determinants of household instability.

The Provincial Government should consider aligning the minimum wage with the local living wage, currently estimated at 24.62 dollars per hour. Without the foundation of a guaranteed basic income, working households will continue to rely on emergency food services.

Provincial and municipal partners must accelerate investments in non market and affordable housing to ensure stable, accessible options for low and moderate income residents. Public policy must also address the high cost of utilities such as electricity and heating, which force many households to reduce food spending to cover essential bills. Reliable access to energy is critical to both wellbeing and food security.

iii. Stabilizing Food Procurement and Operational Funding

The current reliance on fluctuating donations and short-term grants is no longer sustainable. It has directly contributed to recurring food shortages across the region. To ensure stability, the Provincial Government must establish an annual funding minimum with cost adjustment, dedicated to food procurement. This funding should be indexed to inflation and adjusted for documented increases in demand, including the 140 percent rise observed over the last three years.

To address systemic inequities, the government should consider implementing a non-competitive stream dedicated to culturally appropriate foods. This would ensure equitable access for newcomers, racialized communities, and other groups whose dietary needs are often unmet.

Long term sustainability also requires covering essential operational costs, including utilities, rent, transportation, and fair staff wages. These supports are necessary to relieve pressure on frontline providers and strengthen the resilience of the provincial food security system.

iv. Operational Improvements for Efficiency, Accessibility, and Inclusion

To maximize impact and improve client experience, targeted operational improvements are required. These include expanding cold and dry storage capacity and developing a more accessible, coordinated distribution system aligned with existing transportation routes used by both clients and service providers.

Comprehensive training for staff and volunteers in cultural competency and inclusive practices is equally important. This ensures that all residents, including newcomers, racialized populations, and marginalized communities, receive support that is welcoming, equitable, and free from discrimination.

IX. Conclusion

The evidence presented throughout this report shows that food insecurity in Greater Moncton is not simply a service delivery issue. It is a deep-rooted social and economic crisis that affects nearly one in three households in New Brunswick. The current charitable food system, despite the extraordinary dedication of staff and volunteers, is operating beyond its capacity and cannot resolve problems driven by inadequate income, lack of affordable housing and rising essential living costs.

The findings highlight a significant structural vulnerability. The dependence on voluntary donations and short-term funding limits long-term planning, weakens cultural inclusivity in food distribution and places additional strain on overstretched organizations. The absence of a standardized needs assessment process, combined with the high cost of essential items such as halal proteins, creates unequal access to services and disproportionately affects those experiencing the most severe forms of food insecurity.

A structural transformation is required. The region must shift from an emergency, charity-based model to a coordinated, state-supported system of resilience. The five-part strategic plan outlined in this report provides a clear path forward. It calls for the creation of a permanent Food Security Coordination Table, the alignment of minimum wage with the living wage and public interventions to reduce the crippling cost of electricity and heating.

The plan also emphasizes the need for stable, inflation-indexed public funding supported by mechanisms such as the Local Food Purchase Initiative, aimed at stabilizing the regional food supply chain and supporting New Brunswick producers. This stability must be paired with operational reforms, including a fair and non punitive needs assessment process, to guarantee equitable resource distribution and uphold the dignity of all individuals seeking assistance.

The food insecurity crisis is fundamentally a crisis of political will. The wellbeing of Greater Moncton depends on our collective ability to build a food system that is equitable, coordinated and grounded in the principle that access to sufficient, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is a right. Implementing the five strategic recommendations presented here is an essential first step toward building a more stable, just and dignified future for the entire community.

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