

## News release

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### **Moncton - Food Banks Canada's HUNGER COUNT 2011 Confirms a Continued Increase in Food Bank Usage in New Brunswick.**

“The Economic situation is not getting any better for New Brunswick’s poorer citizens! The latest report from Food Bank Canada’s HUNGER COUNT 2011 confirms an observation which the Common Front for Social Justice sees on the ground. More and more citizens have to rely on food banks to survive” says Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the NB Common Front for Social Justice.

In 2008, at the beginning of the Economic downturn, there were 15,638 food bank users in NB. Every year since then, there has been an increase in the numbers: 17,889 in 2009, 18,517 in 2010 and 18,539 in 2011.

“Within the last four years, close to three thousand more New Brunswickers were assisted by their local food bank. Most of the explanations for such increases can be found in the following facts:

- Loss of 6,000 full-time or part-time jobs in NB during the last year;
- Cutbacks in well-paying jobs in the provincial as well as in the federal public sectors;
- Delay in the projected minimum wage increase, scheduled for September 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, but to only be implemented by April 2012;
- Three-year rate freeze of most social assistance recipient’s income (no increase since October 2008).

Sadly, we foresee that the situation will continue to worsen in the coming years” continues M. John Gagnon, co-chair.

The HUNGER COUNT 2011 National report indicates that close to 50% (49.7%) of NB food bank clients are women and this applies for both in urban and rural areas. It is also important to note that one-fifth of users are single-parent families. We know that the majority of single-parent families are headed by a woman so it is very clear that the face of poverty in our province is definitely feminine.

It is not surprising that many working poor continue to need food banks. Indeed, more than 16% of users fall in this group (10% have a job and 6.4% receive Employment Insurance). This fact surely shows the need for an increase in our provincial minimum wage.

Finally, the bulk of citizens in need of food banks are those depending on social assistance. Approximately two thirds of them (65.6%) still use them, as they did in previous years.

Ms. McCaustlin concludes by saying “The Common Front for Social Justice deplores the numbers appearing in HUNGER COUNT 2011 and is proposing three recommendations that would lead to a change in situation:

- 1- An immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$10.00 an hour;
- 2- An increase in basic social assistance rates to match the Atlantic provinces’ average;
- 3- An immediate implementation of a \$50-Solidarity Food Supplement for all household units on social assistance.”

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*The Common Front for Social Justice is one of the largest democratic and popular organization in New Brunswick, with close to 75,000 group and individual members. The Common Front brings together individuals as well as local, regional and provincial organizations to work towards the eradication of poverty*