



Summary

# HungerCount 2003

*“Something Has to Give”:  
Food Banks Filling the Policy Gap in Canada*

Canada's Only Annual Survey of  
Food Banks & Emergency Food Programs

**The Canadian Association of Food Banks**

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## HUNGERCOUNT 2003 FACTS

- **MORE DEMAND NATIONALLY**
  - Number of people using a food bank in *one month* of 2003: **777,869**
  - Population of New Brunswick: **756,650**
  - Increase in use since 2002: **5.5%**; since 1998: **9.01%**; since 1989: **105.8%**
  - Number of food banks: **639 (482 in sample)**
  - Number of meal programs open in March 2003: **450**
  - Number of provinces & territories *without* a food bank: **0**
  - Years since Canada's first food bank opened in Edmonton: **21**
  
- **MORE DEMAND REGIONALLY**
  - Highest provincial per capita food bank use: **Newfoundland at 3.58%**
  - Percentage of food bank users in cities >100,000 people: **63.5%**
  - Percentage of food bank users in areas <100,000 people: **36.5%**
  
- **CHALLENGES MEETING DEMAND**
  - Percentage of food banks with difficulty meeting demand: **40%**
  - Number of pounds of food distributed in one month: **7.03 million**
  - Number of meals served in one month: **2.29 million**
  - Full-time equivalent jobs provided by volunteers in one month: **12,473**
  
- **MORE WORKING FAMILIES**
  - Percentage of food bank users with jobs: **12.9%**
  - Annual income of a four-person family needed to live in a large city at Statistics Canada's (2002) "low-income cut-off" level (LICO): **\$30,576**
  - Number of provinces/territories with minimum wage rates above the LICO: **0**
  - Percentage of food bank users receiving social assistance: **55.8%**
  - Number of provinces/territories with welfare rates above the LICO: **0**
  - Monthly cost of groceries for a 4-person family (Dieticians of Canada): **\$629**
  - Actual monthly amount a family receiving social assistance has in Ontario for groceries, after paying (CMHC) average rent: **\$203**
  
- **MORE HUNGRY CHILDREN**
  - Percentage of food bank users who are children: **39% (306,552)**
  - Likelihood that a food bank recipient is a child: **+2 in 5**
  - Years since the federal government promised to eliminate child poverty: **14**
  - Change in the number of hungry children since then (1989): **+155,552**

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Canadians "seriously concerned" about domestic hunger (Totum Research Inc., 2003): **67%**

Number of "food bank" mentions in Parliament from Jan/01 to June/02 (Hansard): **1**

Percentage of donations to CAFB spent on charitable work: **+90**

Amount of government funding for CAFB core operations: **\$0**

## **PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS**

### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

One of the highest rates of low-income in Canada is found in British Columbia, according to the federal government's Market Basket Measure, at 20% of the population. There is little surprise, then, to find that in 2003, the number of food banks rose to 88. In March 2003, 72,573 people used a food bank in BC – an increase of 2.4% since 2002, and an increase of 22.9% since 1997.

### **ALBERTA**

In Alberta, almost 12% of the population is “low-income”, using the Market Basket Measure. In March of 2003, 48,743 people visited a food bank. This is an increase of 5.3% since 2002, and a 29.7% increase since 1997.

### **SASKATCHEWAN**

Almost 14% of Saskatchewan's population is “low-income”, according to the Market Basket Measure. In March of 2003, 16,792 people visited a food bank, a 1.3% increase since 2002, and a 0.9% decrease since 1997.

### **MANITOBA**

In Manitoba, the Market Basket Measure shows 13% of the population to be “low-income”. In March of 2003, 38,584 people visited a food bank, a 9.1% decrease since 2002, and a 69.8% increase since 1997.

### **ONTARIO**

According to the Market Basket Measure, Ontario's poverty rate of 11% is one of the lowest in Canada, and yet the demand for food bank assistance has not declined. In March of 2003, 308,452 people visited a food bank, a 4.5% increase since 2002, and an 8.2% increase since 1997.

### **QUEBEC**

At almost 12% of the population, Quebec's low-income population is among the smallest in Canada, according to the Market Basket Measure. Yet 216,000 people visited a food bank in March 2003, a 9.9% increase since 2002, and a 22.7% rise since 1997.

### **NEW BRUNSWICK**

In New Brunswick, the Market Basket Measure found almost 14% of the population is low-income. In March of 2003, 18,875 people visited a food bank, an increase of 10.2% since 2002, and an 8.4% increase since 1997.

## **NOVA SCOTIA**

In Nova Scotia, the Market Basket Measure shows 16.1% of the population is low-income. In March of 2003, 20,263 people visited a food bank, a 9.9% increase since 2002, and a 25.2% increase since 1997.

## **PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND**

In Prince Edward Island, the Market Basket Measure shows 14.6% of the population is low-income. In March of 2003, 3,118 people visited a food bank, an 11.4% increase since 2002, but a 15.7% decrease since 1997.

## **NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR**

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Market Basket Measure finds 23.4% of the population is low-income, the highest rate in Canada. In March of 2003, 31,132 people visited a food bank, a 3.2% increase since 2002, though an 11.4% decrease since 1997.

## **THE TERRITORIES:**

### **YUKON, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT**

Market Basket measures of low-income are not available for the Yukon, Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut, but food bank operators can attest that this does not mean food insecurity does not exist in Canada's North. In March of 2003, 1,334 people visited a food bank, a 5.8% increase since 2002.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

To read the complete version of HungerCount 2003, go to the CAFB website at [www.cafb-acba.ca](http://www.cafb-acba.ca), or call 416-203-9241 to request a hard copy.