

August 2017



FOOD [IN] SECURITY: SAINT JOHN



Human Development Council

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Introduction

Hunger is a distressing challenge for many. The Food Insecurity Policy Research (PROOF), a University of Toronto-based research team, reports that in 2014, one in every ten Canadians faced some level of food insecurity; in Saint John, NB the rates were higher than average, affecting one in every five (PROOF, 2016).

Food insecurity is “the inability of individuals and households to access adequate food because of financial constraints” (PROOF, 2017). It is one manifestation of financial and material deprivation, one common feature in the experience of poverty.

This report seeks to examine the tip of the food insecurity iceberg in Saint John, by capturing a snapshot of the public's uptake of charitable responses to hunger, including food banks, soup kitchens, and community meals. Those who access charitable food initiatives are believed to represent less than one quarter of all those facing food insecurity (PROOF, 2017). Yet, we study this visible portion of the food insecure population not only as a way to sound the alarm against the prevalence of hunger in our city, but also in order to facilitate discussion of how best we, as a community, can respond to food needs.

We would like to preface this report by noting that the main cause of hunger locally is income poverty. Therefore, while this report does at times question whether or not food banks and other emergency food services are able to substantially reduce food insecurity by providing nutritious foods in an accessible and dignifying way, these questions are underpinned with the understanding that ‘filling a gap isn't the same as solving a problem’.

The many individuals who work and volunteer to feed the hungry in Saint John are doing their best, under extremely constraining circumstances, to fill a gap created by precarious employment, low wages and/or inadequate social assistance rates.

The four main food banks in Saint John, Romero House Soup Kitchen, and churches and community groups offering meals, gardens, and food purchasing clubs, are doing commendable and innovative work.

However, they cannot address the deprivation that brings residents to need their services in the first place (nor should they be expected to).

It is time to start a conversation about the emergency food infrastructure in Saint John, and to make realistic goals toward better food security for Saint John's most food insecure residents. This report will first provide a theoretical overview of food security and insecurity, and the charitable model that has come to be the core response to hunger.

Second, it will profile the emergency food programs that are currently made available in the city, while simultaneously outlining the demographics of those accessing food services.

A discussion will follow examining the effects of such a deeply reactionary system on individuals living in an enduring state of food emergency. Finally, the report will conclude with recommendations.

Literature Review

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (2015) defines collective **food security** as being met "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (UNFAO, 2015).

The FAO tracks four dimensions of food security food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability. These dimensions shed light on the complexities of food security and can guide our local understanding.

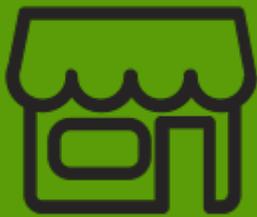
Food availability measures the *supply* (or quantity) of food available in a region. This might lead us to ask: "Is there enough food to go around in Saint John?"

Food access speaks to the *physical and economic barriers* to food. Relevant questions might be "Is food affordable in Saint John? -on social assistance? -on a minimum wage? Is food physically accessible within walking distance of priority neighbourhoods? -using public transit?"

Food utilization notes *how the food is taken up by the body* and by the family unit; it speaks to nutritional value of food and how nutritious food is allocated to children, adults, men, and women. Is the available and accessible food in Saint John nutritious? In families with children, are parents prone to sacrificing their healthy foods to their children?

And **Food stability** measures *how consistent access to food is* noting that if you have food today, but don't know where your food is coming from tomorrow or next week, you are not secure. How consistently do residents of Saint John have access to food? To food banks? How dependable are local incomes? Do many work contract work? - How accessible is EI?

Food insecurity can be understood as an inability to realize all four pillars of the UN's definition. In Canada, it is measured in the *Household Food Security Survey* – an optional module of the *Canadian Community Health Survey*. Results are categorized according to three experiences of food insecurity:



- **Marginal food insecurity**: worrying about running out of food and/or limiting food selection because of lack of food or money.
- **Moderate food insecurity**: compromising in quality and/or quantity of food due to a lack of money for food.
- **Severe food insecurity**: missing meals, reducing food intake, and at the most extreme going day(s) without food. (Tarasuk, Mitchell, & Dachner, 2016)

To be clear, food bank data does not capture these complex experiences of food insecurity completely (Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999). Because there is such a stigma surrounding accessing food banks (Riches, 2002; Purdham et al. 2016), many will refrain from accessing emergency food and will only turn to food banks as a last resort. The numbers contained in this report likely represent the more severe experiences of food insecurity. They are, indeed, the tip of the iceberg.

Food banks and soup kitchens first appeared as an ad hoc response to the growing rates of food poverty due to an economic recession in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Tarasuk, Dachner & Loopstra, 2014). These emergency food programs operate on a charitable model: volunteers donate their time, and the public helps fund them through donated cash and non-perishable foodstuffs. Their establishment was intended to be temporary until more long-term interventions could be created.

The first Canadian food bank appeared in Edmonton, in 1981, (Tarasuk, Dachner & Loopstra, 2014). Food banking and soup kitchens began taking on an institutional role as Federal and Provincial governments undertook deep cut-backs on social assistance programs and affordable housing. Government transferred the responsibility to provide food aid programs on to these charitable systems which validated them beyond temporary emergency service (Riches, 2002; Tarasuk, Dachner & Loopstra, 2014).

Presently, the onus of feeding the hungriest citizens falls on food banks and soup kitchens.

Methodology

In order to inform this report, we conducted unstructured interviews with coordinators and a handful of volunteers from Romero House and the four major food banks. We gathered a collection of operational details, to understand who uses their services and how often, and finally, what innovative practices does each service provider bring to promote greater food security.

Food bank coordinators were able to provide us with how many individuals made at least one visit in a month. An individual is entitled to one visit per month; however, certain circumstances may generate added household costs--such as higher utilities in the winter months--resulting in a need to make more trips. We were given a separate tally of these extra visits. They are accounted for in this report and are labeled as total visits.

.Romero House provided us with the total number of meals they have served for the past 20 years. They have collected these figures at the serving line in the soup kitchen as individuals request a meal at the counter.

In order to contextualize our findings with lived experience, we hosted a small targeted focus group with seven individuals who self-identified as experiencing or having recently experienced food insecurity.

The participants had all accessed a food bank and/or eaten at the soup kitchen. The focus group provided opportunity for participants to tell their stories, to outline why they had to depend on emergency food services, to share their experiences visiting food banks, soup kitchens, and other community supports, and to directly identify what supports would be required to reduce their food worry.

We contacted:



4 Major Food Banks

1 Soup Kitchen



11 Faith Community Service Providers

1 Focus Group



Food Insecurity in Saint John: An Overview

Despite the 2016 Census indicating that the population of Saint John is in decline, the four major food banks maintained steady figures, while Romero House saw two consecutive yearly increases. At a rate that is double that of both the Provincial and National *HungerCount 2016* figures. Saint John's food banks collectively helped over 3000 citizens a month in 2016. In the same year, Romero House Soup Kitchen served just under 80,000 meals—the highest year for meals served since they opened their doors 35 years ago.

Throughout, we aim to provide an overview of the emergency food services according to three continuous themes:

1) How it works? : Our food banks and soup kitchen relied on a core group of over 200 volunteers last year to run day to day operations. Volunteers take on tasks like preparing meals and food orders, clerical and administrative work, purchasing food, and routine maintenance: Handing out food and meals takes up a fraction of their time. Each food bank requires the Medicare numbers of each member of a household, as well as a proof of residence.

236 volunteers contributed
28,000+ hours in 2016 to
running the food banks and
soup kitchen

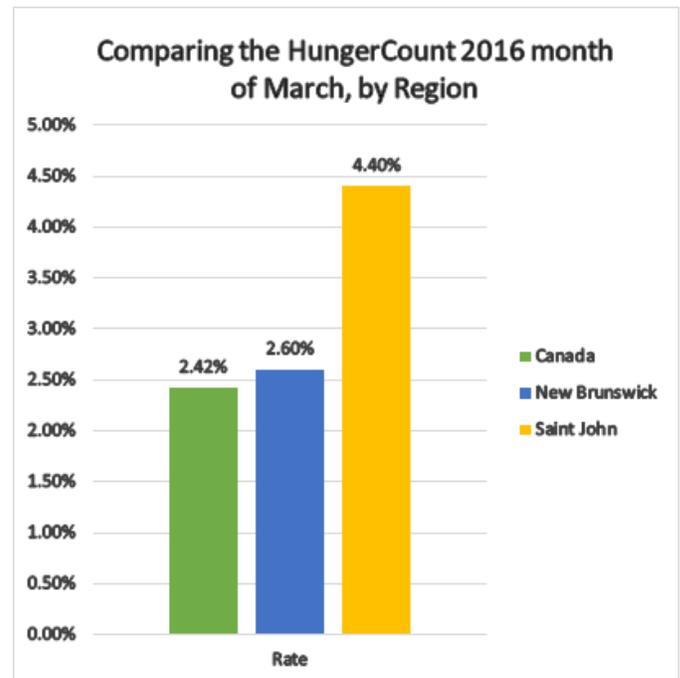


Figure 1: This figure reflects the *HungerCount 2016* statistics on Canada and New Brunswick profiles. We compared their month of March to our data.

“And if they don’t have certain food, then they need to find the money to go out and buy that stuff. You [the public] may not think that, but they most certainly would have to buy some things—most things maybe.”

David, Focus Group Participant



“Growing up, it was tough going to school with an empty stomach.”

Andrea, Focus Group Participant

1 in 3 individuals needing a food bank in Saint John are **children** under the age of 18.



2) Who is accessing services?

Children: Though children under 18 make-up less than 20% of the population of the City of Saint John, this age group makes up 33% of those seeking assistance from a food bank. Children who have diets consisting of salted, vacuum-sealed, non-perishable foodstuffs are at-risk of poor physical and mental health outcomes (PROOF, 2016) including chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma (PROOF, 2017). The quality and quantity of foods offered to children may also impact their ability to concentrate and learn in school.

Adults: They, too, are at a heightened risk for poorer mental and physical health status while being susceptible to chronic medical disorders (PROOF, 2017). There are several subsets of adult food bank users. Food Banks Canada's *HungerCount* (2016), for instance, portrays four predominant household types: single-parent families [male and female headed], two-parent families, childless couples, and single adults (see *"Household Types", table 1*). Single adults visit food banks most often.

3000

Individuals, on average, were assisted by a food bank each **month** in 2016.



3) Innovative practices: It is important to acknowledge that Saint John's food banks and soup kitchen are trying to ease the stigma of being in need, to prolong the days that a food hamper could last, and to find new solutions to long-term hunger. Admittedly, these agencies are limited in their own mandate and financial capacity; nevertheless, they try to dignify the process for receiving a food order, buy foods with greater nutritional value, and network with community groups to target the underpinnings of persistent food poverty.

"Meeting with the other [Food Bank] coordinators is really helpful in having the city tackle this issue. Working together makes a big difference."

Marian Goguen, Co-Coordinator, Saint John East Food Bank

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	All	Rural
% Single-parent families	18.7	16.5
% Two-parent families	18.2	18.5
% Couples with no children	13.0	15.6
% Single people	50.1	49.0

Table 1: New Brunswick profile of Household types frequenting food banks. Source - Food Banks Canada, "HungerCount 2016"

PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME	All	Rural
% JOB INCOME	10.9	11.2
% Employment Insurance	6.2	8.4
% Social Assistance	58.7	53.1
% Disability-related	7.4	9.4
% Pension	8.3	10.5
% Student	0.3	0.2
% No Income	4.1	4.8
% Other	4.2	2.4

Table 2: New Brunswick profile of the Primary Source of Income of households accessing food banks. Source - Food Banks Canada, "HungerCount 2016"

North End Food Assistance Association Inc.

How it works:

Every Tuesday, food orders designed to last 3 – 4 days are distributed by the coordinator and volunteers. One can expect to receive non-perishable food items, as well as some perishable items such as beef and eggs. The majority of the food found on the shelves is bought using either private donations, or grants secured by the organization—roughly 10% of their food is donated. The coordinator and the volunteers fill many roles. Someone must be present to accept donations, to do the books, to ensure the facility is cleaned and to search for deals on food. In 2016, around 2750 hours of volunteer time were necessary to ensure that day-to-day operations ran smoothly.

Who is accessing services?

In 2016, an average of more than 800 individuals were served each month, roughly 500 adults and 300 children. (see figure 3)

Children: One third of those receiving food assistance in the North End are children. Children required 268 more visits to this food bank than the previous year.

Adults: In contrast, adult uptake has decreased. Adults in the North End made fewer trips last year than in 2015. Food aid was needed on 1250 fewer occasions.

90% of the food on shelves is **bought** through donated funds



“It’s hard to afflict any sort of change when you have to make sure you can keep your doors open, and shelves stocked.”

Hazel Clarke, Coordinator, North End Food Association

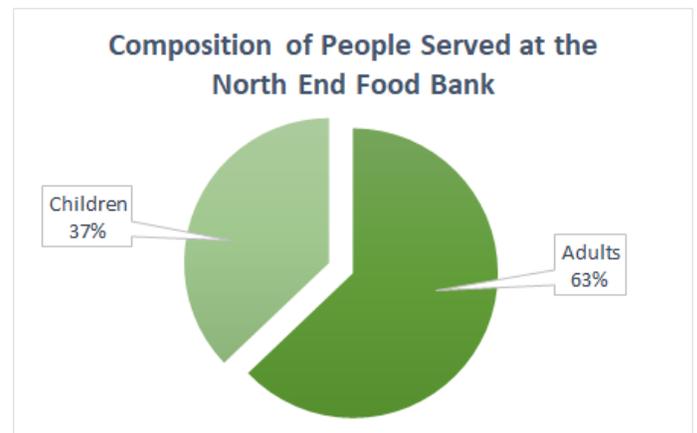


Figure 3: One in every three who need the North End Food Bank are children



Figure 2: In the pantry of the North End Food Bank after a busy day of operations. 90% of the food in this picture is purchased by the food bank.



Figure 4: The North End Wellness Center (New-C) offers several health services to the residents of the North End in Saint John. Source - Horizon Regional Health Authority Website "North End Wellness Center"

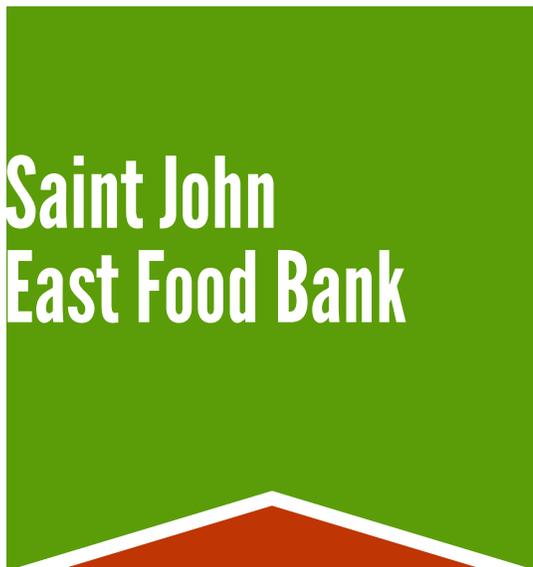
Innovative Practices:

Much of the North End Food Bank's innovation is tied to its close partnerships with other community organizations including Rivercross Baptist Church and the North End Wellness Centre (New-C). One great element that Rivercross contributes is the use of their bus for those in need who are not living within walking distance, or who have a physical disability. This makes the food bank more accessible.

The New-C (pictured in figure 4) provides holistic health services to North End residents, including the services of a dietitian, mental health and addictions specialists, and a nurse practitioner for general health needs. The New-C also provides a community connector whose job it is to combat isolation and work proactively at putting community members in contact with the services and supports that they need to get back on their feet and to thrive. At intake, the food bank coordinator may recommend that patrons visit the wellness centre.

How it works:

Each Tuesday and Friday, individuals from across the largest food bank service area are met by the two co-coordinators and a contingent of volunteers to collect a 4 day supply of emergency food. A food order includes the standard allotment of canned goods, while also incorporating a new variety of items such as chicken and pork that are purchased by the coordinators with donated funds. Nearly 70% of food that goes on the shelves at the East Side food bank is purchased with donated funds. Volunteers contribute an average of 373 hours a month. Various jobs such as preparing hampers, going out to make food purchases, doing the intake and cleaning are completely run on volunteer labour.



Who is accessing this food bank?

On average, over 600 individuals made visits each month in 2016: approximately 400 were adults and 200 were children. (see figure 6)

Children: Food orders benefited a child 2895 times in 2016 which is down 524 visits from 2015.

Adults: Adult use has decreased in 2016. Food from this food bank went to an adult 5512 times last year. This was down by over 1000 instances from the preceding year.

Innovative Practices:

Recently, the introduction of a partial client choice system has given back some agency to patrons. This format differs from the conventional process of acquiring a food order. When an individual's name gets called to receive an order, they begin the process by choosing from the client-choice section. Shelves are set up with items that cater to specific household needs such as: toiletries for men and women, lunch snacks for kids and meal replacement drinks. Overall, this new distribution system reduces the risk of waste while giving food aid that is relevant to a variety of household types.



Figure 5: A view of the Saint John East Food Bank from outside at their location on 105 Wilton Street, Saint John, NB.

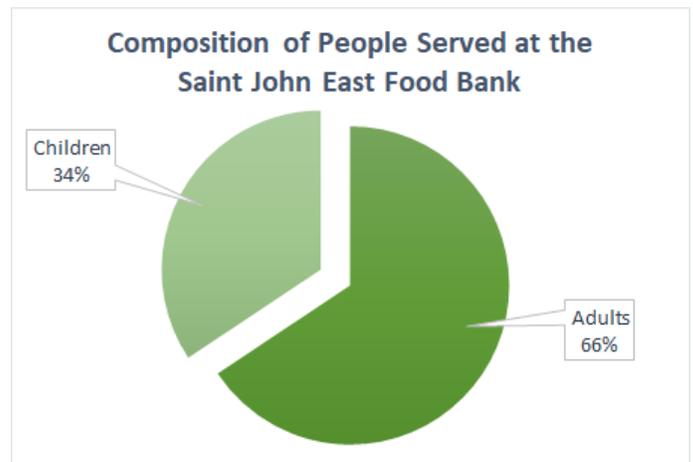


Figure 6: One-third of the make-up of patrons at this food bank are children.



How it works:

Saint John's central food bank is open on Wednesdays and Fridays. Patrons choose every item that goes into their 3 - 4 day supply of food because the Community Food Basket (CFB) functions on a full client choice model. Clients can choose canned goods, baked goods, meats and vegetables according to how many individuals are in their household. Around 70% of the goods in stock are purchased using donated funds and grants, and the rest comes by donation. The food bank is run by the coordinator and 51 volunteers who spend over 220 hours a month maintaining their inventory of food,



Figure 7: The sign hanging out front of the Saint John Community Food Basket at 245 Union Street, Saint John, NB. Source - Saint John Community Food Basket

managing and re-distributing incoming deliveries from Food Depot Alimentaire (the primary food recapture agency in NB) to the other food banks, clerical and administrative work, and above all, providing food assistance to the severely food insecure of the South-Central Peninsula.

Who is accessing this food bank?

Last year, on average, over 900 individuals, each month, called on the food bank. A little over 200 children and a staggering 700 adults were visiting monthly. (see figure 8)

Children: Child food bank use was the lowest in the city. Children make up about a quarter of the individuals served by the food bank. A child benefited from the Community Food Basket's assistance 2895 times last year.

Adult: The amount of adult access was the highest in the city at 9932 trips being made to the CFB in 2016. There are more adult patrons at the CFB than any other food bank in Saint John.

Composition of People Served at the Community Food Basket

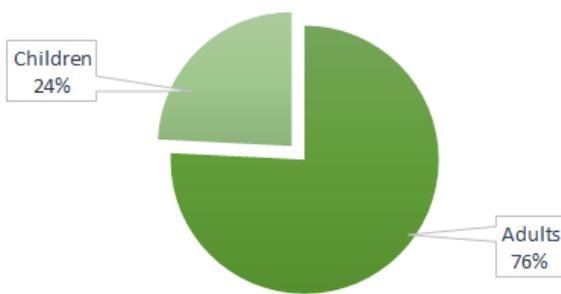


Figure 8: A different ratio of child to adult food bank dependents at the Community Food Basket. One-in-four are children due to the higher rate of adults.

Innovative Practices

In addition to hosting the client choice model, this food bank has implemented a recipe of the month option for clients to try. The idea is to combine ingredients found at the food bank and put them together—spices and all—in order to stretch orders.

The CFB also offers a very successful cart program. A fabric cart is sold to individuals for \$3. The price is not for turning up a profit; instead, they hope that it gives their patrons ownership. A benefit of these carts has been to make transporting grocery orders easier for clients moving over longer distances.



Figure 9 These carts (left) are sold at the Community Food Basket to visitors for a low fee of \$3. Source - Saint John Community Food Basket

West Side Food Bank Inc.



Figure 10: Above, the front window in which orders are placed and distributed at the West Side Food Bank.

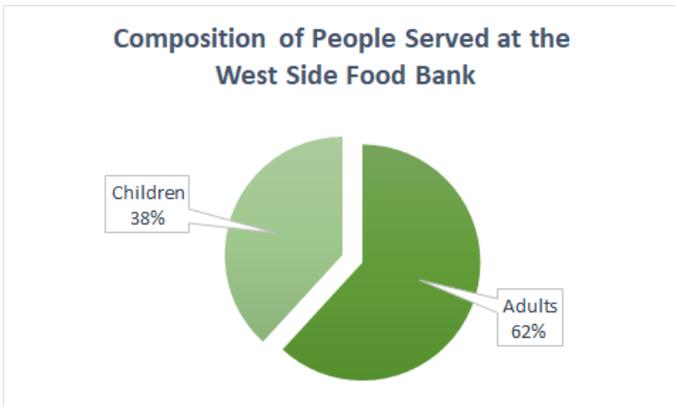


Figure 11: One in every three individuals being assisted with emergency food at this location are children.



Figure 12: The Carleton Community Center, which houses the West Side Food Bank and the Marketplace Wellness Center, pictured above. Source - Fundy Wellness Network Website

How it works:

The coordinator and volunteers from the Westside Food Bank serve food hampers year-round on Tuesdays and Friday from of the basement of the Carleton Community Centre. A food hamper is distributed based on the reported family size and each features a 3 – 4 day supply of non-perishable goods, along with a few specialty items such as meats and frozen vegetables.

Who is accessing this food bank?

Each month last year an average of 600 people were served: fewer than 400 adults and over 200 children . (see figure 11)

Children: Orders that went to households with children dropped in 2016. A child was assisted fewer 483 times than the previous year.

Adults: Total adult use was constant between 2015 and 2016.

Innovative Practices:

Forging partnerships has proven advantageous . The food bank works with three prominent stakeholders: the Marketplace Wellness Center next door, a nearby community garden, and the Carleton Community Center. The Marketplace Wellness Centre provides holistic services needed to mitigate the effects of food insecurity while also hosting direct connections to government services. Anyone who visits the food bank may be directed to speak with the nurses, doctor, social worker or dietitian.

The Carleton Community Garden allows individuals and families to grow their own fresh vegetables with their neighbours. Additionally, a section of the garden is maintained and cultivated to supply the food bank at the end of the growing season. Finally, the Carleton Community Centre

has on-site facilities to offer cooking classes throughout the year, especially when fresh produce is shared from the garden.



Figure 13: The Carleton Community Garden, sign pictured above, is located immediately outside of the Carleton Community Center.

Romero House Soup Kitchen

How does it work?

Since the doors opened at Romero House on March 8th, 1982, the organization has served a hot meal every day of the year to those in need—closing for only two days due to poor weather conditions. This soup kitchen begins serving hearty meals at 9:30 a.m. and continues until 1:00 p.m. Its few paid staff and endless crews of volunteers prepare enough food to fill 400 plates a day. Individuals who stopover for a meal are able to go to the counter as often as needed--it may be their only opportunity to secure a meal that day. Every food item, bill payment, and appliance repair is financed by charitable donations. Services will cease under two circumstances: running out of hungry individuals or running out of resources.



Figure 14: A photo of the outside of Romero House Soup Kitchen on 647 Brunswick Drive, Saint John, NB. Source - Romero House Soup Kitchen

Who is accessing the soup kitchen?

Soup Kitchen: Over the last 10 years, the number of meals provided has steadily increased. In 2015, for the first time in Romero House's history, the organization served nearly 70,000 meals—a record breaking number at that time. The following year, this record was surpassed by an additional 10,000 meals—nearly 80,000 meals were served in 2016.

School Children: Last September, Romero House began counting how many times children from nearby schools paid a visit. School-aged children ventured to the soup kitchen for snack foods and leftovers between 280 - 480 times a month.

Mobile Outreach: In the late hours of winter evenings, hot food, drinks, and warm clothing are distributed from a converted motor home that makes stops at several points around town. The Mobile served residents over 3500 times in 2016.

Innovative Practices:

Romero House has played host to several pilot programs and innovations related to poverty reduction and food insecurity in Saint John. The current Community Food Basket first established its organization in a vacant room at the soup kitchen. Other organizations such as Saint John's Legal Centre and the first free drop-in medical clinic also began in its community room. This tradition of providing targeted services to low-income populations continues with the offering of free medical services from Horizon Health nurses.

Romero House served its **two-millionth meal** in **August** of 2016.

2,000,000 + Meals



Since 1982

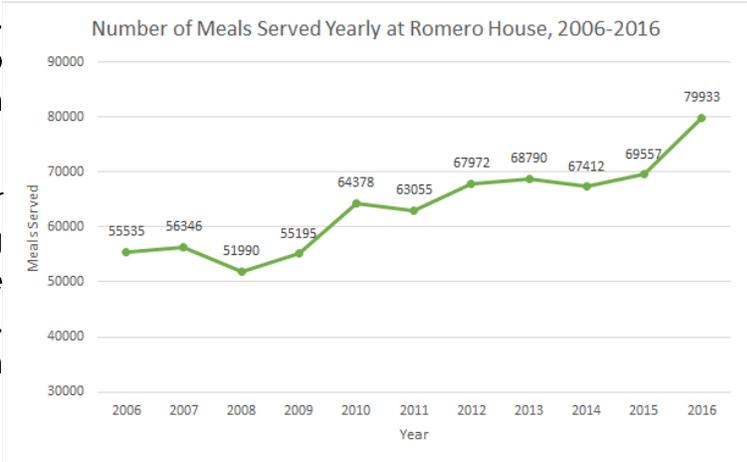


Figure 15: The amount of meals that have been handed out over the past 10 years have steadily increased, with record-breaking years twice in a row.

"A lot of people use it [Romero House]--A lot of people need it right now in this city."

Misty, Focus Group Participant '1

Other Contributions to Food Security

In Saint John, the four food banks and Romero House are the principle emergency food service providers. They are not alone in addressing the needs of hungry residents. Faith communities and other community groups have initiated programs to assuage chronic food insecurity.

Faith Community Contribution

Food security initiatives from faith communities commonly include community meals and/or a food pantry. Food pantries are comparable to food banks because they distribute donated or purchased grocery items. For instance, St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic food pantry located in the Waterloo Village, was accessed 1180 times in 2016. The community meals offered through churches are different from those at a soup kitchen. Romero House's target population is the severely food insecure demographic while a church dinner can appeal to the community at large. A community meal provides an inclusive environment for those who may feel isolated by food poverty. There are so many faith groups offering meals and pantries in Saint John that there is somewhere to go to eat every day of the week.

Innovative Community Initiatives

Saint John hosts a few innovative initiatives. Community gardens are designated urban agriculture spaces within neighbourhoods. Patrons of these green spaces can rent plots early in the season, and every member must maintain their garden, from sowing the seeds in May to harvesting the yield by early October. Each garden



Figure 16: The Salvation Army has been present in this community since 1885. They provide an array of services beyond food.



Figure 17: Food Pantry, Westside Anglican Mission. Here is an example of what a faith-community food pantry might look like.

Since 2014, the average amount of visits being made to St. Vincent de Paul's food pantry each month has nearly **tripled**.



is becoming more accessible for individuals with physical disabilities by incorporating raised beds for those who do find kneeling difficult. Often, a community garden may dedicate a plot for the purposes of growing fresh produce for the local food bank.

Food purchasing clubs help put healthy foods in to the hands of individuals by offering fruits and vegetables at wholesale prices. There are two main food purchasing clubs who support the other neighbourhood clubs across the city: Westside P.A.C.T. and the Saint John Food Purchasing Club. Each club has an order size that ranges in price from \$10 to \$25 with an overall retail value of \$15 to \$50 dollars depending on what foods are in season. Members regularly save nearly half of the cost of the produce's retail mark up. Collectively, around 200 individuals are monthly members to these clubs.

"It's important that we provide the service, but it's equally important to provide a relationship. [...] You can't really have the privilege of helping someone if you aren't friends with them"

Wendy Pottle, Compassion Ministry Lead, Saint John Vineyard Church



Figure 18: Raised beds at the Shamrock Park Community Garden.



Figure 17: An example of what comes in a food purchase club order, June 2017 order. Source - PULSE Inc.

Discussion: "Rent and a bag of Chips"

Prior in the 1980s, the concept of emergency food assistance was practically non-existent (Riches, 2002). Those who found themselves out of work had effective safety nets that could adequately reintegrate them back in to the economy. But, federal cost-sharing social assistance programs, such as the Canadian Assistance Program (Riches, 2002) were terminated in conjunction with a widespread recession. Rates of food emergency grew exponentially and individuals turned toward ad-hoc food charities in the absence of government social assistance. Food banks now assume an institutional role in the provision of food aid.

Re-defining "Emergency"

Our findings from both the unstructured interviews and focus groups with key informants support the conclusion that the principal cause of food insecurity is an inability to cover one's expenses. Individuals experiencing food insecurity are caught between paying their fixed expenses and purchasing food. Efforts are being made in Saint John to help those whose lives are consumed with meeting basic needs, to stretch what little they have further. For many, the problem is not about budgeting which implies that there is sufficient income in the first place: this is clearly not the case.

An informant we spoke with has an income of \$567.00 a month (the social assistance rate for a single adult). Of this total, \$450.00 is earmarked for rent, leaving less than \$120 for other expenses and necessities such as utilities and food. There were also the added expenses of caring for diabetes. There are times he finds himself when there is a stark choice--either to buy insulin or

"I remember growing up on the North End [...] the people looked out for each other—we were a community. It's all changed now."

- Volunteer, North End Food Bank

"To expect a single person to survive on \$567 a month [...] I pay 450 a month for a single apartment [...] do the math. That's a bag of chips and the rent."

--Steve, Focus Group Participant

"[My mom and I] just didn't have enough income to support us. We use the food bank once a month."

-Josh, Focus Group Participant

"I have clients who have a disposable income of \$26 a month after rent."

-Shelley McCready, Community and Family Services Coordinator, Salvation Army

"The rate of assistance inhibits the recipient from obtaining decent housing and there is little or nothing leftover to afford basic comforts such as food, clothing, personal items, prescription fees, transportation and in some cases, hydro, telephone, TV, etc."

-The late Carolyn McNulty, Founder and former Executive Director of Romero House (October, 2000)

"Once you take your rent, your phone—you've got to have a phone. You've got to get in contact with employers and that. That alone is like \$60. Then you're left with \$60. I don't think it's possible to survive on \$60."

-Aurelle, Focus Group Participant

"If [food banks weren't] there, imagine what the city would be. If there wasn't anywhere to eat, there would be a lot more stealing and a lot more crime."

-David, Focus Group Participant

"It's there if you need it, you can use it. At some point if you don't need it, you can pay it forward for someone else who is struggling."

-Shelley, Focus Group Participant

have something to eat.

Cases like this are common. Low wage earners, social assistance recipients and other people whose incomes are derived from benefit programs often require emergency food. Overcoming the barriers of food poverty is often an insurmountable feat. Our emergency food services have assumed the necessary role of being an essential food distributor for a group of neighbours who have fallen on hard times. Food aid has now evolved from a temporary measure to a permanent fixture for many.

Institutionalized Food Aid

Evidence of the institutional role that emergency food services play in New Brunswick is found in the province's Social Assistance policy manual:

"The client must take advantage of all available resources in the community (i.e. local food bank, soup kitchen, churches, Salvation Army, relatives and friends, etc.) or any other potential resources that may be able to meet their need" **[Government of New Brunswick, Social Assistance Policy Manual, ND, § 3.9.4.]**

This excerpt demonstrates how charitable food initiatives are now permanent fixtures in communities, contrary to their original mandates. According to charity tax returns, Saint John's four food banks and Romero House receive only 4% of their collective revenue from governments.

Recommendations

Contemporary responses to hunger concentrate too much on addressing the symptoms rather than the causes. While systemic long term solutions are needed, ending food poverty in Saint John requires a two pronged approach: meeting immediate needs and, ultimately, addressing inadequate household incomes. Here is how we suggest moving forward:

1) **Let's get together as a community:** Food insecurity is an issue that is not well understood in Saint John. We need to shift from operating in silos to sharing our information and coordinating our efforts. We need to start a discussion on food and food poverty in our community that includes the voice of lived experience. This report recommends that all stakeholders be invited to a Summit on Food Security for the purpose of defining a common agenda. This will help create the conditions for collective impact.

2) **Let's advocate for change:** Food security, ultimately, is an income based issue. Financial constraints prevent people from obtaining adequate and sufficient food. There is growing interest in a basic income for all Canadians. Pilot projects are underway and the federal government should be encouraged to implement a nationwide program. Our provincial government should follow the example of Alberta and Ontario and increase the minimum wage. Our local government should commit to paying a living wage to all its employees and use its procurement policies to insist that its suppliers pay their employees a living wage. It's time for a coordinated, comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. And it needs to be a priority for all of us - government (all three levels), business, communities and individuals.

Appendix: Saint John Food Services Directory 2017

Agency/Organization	Location	Phone Number	Hours of Operation	Months of Operation	Description of Service	North End
South End/Central Peninsula						
Grant Tiger	100 Prince Edward	635-8020	Mon-Sat 8 a.m. - 9 p.m., Sun 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Atlantic Superstore (North)
Salvation Army	227 Prince Edward Street	634-1633	(Hope Café) Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. (Mosaic) Tuesday (Video Café) Thursday (Y's Men) Sunday, 5 p.m.	All	Community Meal Community Meal Community Meal Community Meal	Salvation Army Crescent Valley Resource Centre North End Food Association Crescent Valley Resource Centre Nick Nicolie Centre
Romero House	649 Brunswick Drive	642-7447	9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	All	Soup Kitchen	Hope Mission
Community Food Basket	245 Union Street	652-2707	Wed and Fri 12 p.m. - 3 p.m. 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month	All	Food Bank Food Parity	Victoria Street Community Garden Shamrock Park Community Garden
Saint John Vineyard Church	204 Camarthen Street	648-0998	Manwich Mondays: 12:15 p.m. - 1 p.m. Breakfast: 3rd Wednesday of the Month, 9:00 a.m.m. Café: 2:00 p.m. - 6 p.m. Ladies Group: Friday 3:00 p.m.	All	Community Meal, High School Students Only Community Meal Community Meal Community Meal, Women Only	UNBS Community Garden Crescent Valley Community Garden Rockwood Park Community Garden
Trinity Anglican Church	115 Charlotte Street	693-8558	Monday 5:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	1 Rocky Terrace
Outflow	162 Waterloo Street	658-1344	Monday 6:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	
Saint John Vineyard Church (Outflow)	204 Camarthen Street		Monday 6:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	
Corner Stone Baptist (Winter/King's Square (Summer))	47 Leinster Street		Tuesday 6:00 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Sobers East
Outflow	162 Waterloo Street		Wednesday 6:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Walmart Supercentre
Outflow	162 Waterloo Street		Thursday 5:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Atlantic Superstore (East)
Outflow	162 Waterloo Street		Monday 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	June-July	Free Cooking and Nutrition Classes	On the Vine Heart & Produce
Oasis (Outflow)	162 Waterloo Street	632-5531	(Oasis) Tuesday - Thursday 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month, 12 p.m.	All	Community Meal, Women Only Community Meal, Women only, Kitchen 15 available for use on-site	East Food Bank Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Coverdale Centre for Women	148 Waterloo Street	634-1649	Wed 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Last Tuesday of the month, 4:30 pm - 6:00 p.m.	All	Community Meal, Seniors Only (+55)	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Church of St. Andrew and St. David	164 Germain Street	634-3092	Friday 7 p.m. 2nd Saturday of the month, 4 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Saint John the Baptist Church	54 Broad Street	653-6998	Friday 7 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Saint John Food Purchasing Club	116 Coburg Street	652-2437	Mon-Fri 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. 3rd Thurs of the month, 12 p.m.	All	Food Purchasing Club Food Parity, Community Meal	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Calvary Temple Church	83 Sydney Street	634-1688	All	All	Food Parity, Community Meal	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Rainbow Park Community Garden	290 Charlotte Street	642-7404	May-October	Community garden	Community garden	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Crown Street Community Garden	101 Crown Street		May-October	Community garden	Community garden	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Street Hope Community Garden	194 Charlotte Street	721-1788	May-October	Community garden	Community garden	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
North End						
Sobers North	149 Lansdowne Avenue	693-7944	7 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Sobers North
Atlantic Superstore (North)	630 Somerset Street	638-8054	7 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Atlantic Superstore (North)
Salvation Army	Crescent Valley		(Pancake Breakfast) Saturday All (PES) Monday - Friday, Noon	September- June	Free Community Meal, School Lunch Program, PES	Salvation Army
North End Food Association	211 Main Street	634-7403	Tue 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Mon & Wed 9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.	All	Food Bank	North End Food Association
Crescent Valley Resource Centre	130 Madalen Boulevard	693-8513	Wednesday 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Crescent Valley Resource Centre
Nick Nicolie Centre	85 Dunham Street	639-1640	Breakfast: Tue 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m., (Sept-June only) Lunch: Mon & Wed 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Nick Nicolie Centre
Hope Mission	211 Main Street	642-8060	Tue & Fri 9 a.m. & 12 p.m.	September - June	Community Meal, Snacks	Hope Mission
Victoria Street Community Garden	147 Victoria Street	658-2890		May-October	Community garden	Victoria Street Community Garden
Shamrock Park Community Garden	200 Visart Street	607-1547/642-1786		May-October	Community garden	Shamrock Park Community Garden
UNBS Community Garden	100 Tucker Park Road	633-8930/607-1879		May-October	Community garden	UNBS Community Garden
Crescent Valley Community Garden	35 Madalen Boulevard	693-4485/693-4985		May-October	Community garden	Crescent Valley Community Garden
Rockwood Park Community Garden	1 Rocky Terrace	646-0732		May-October	Community garden	Rockwood Park Community Garden
East Side						
Sobers East	40 East Point Way	633-2985	7 a.m. - 12:00 a.m.	All	Grocery store	Sobers East
Walmart Supercentre	450 Westmorland Road	634-6600	7 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Walmart Supercentre
Atlantic Superstore (East)	168 Robesley Avenue	648-1320	Monday-Saturday 7 a.m. - 11 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Atlantic Superstore (East)
East Food Bank	1350 Hickey Road	657-8463	8 a.m. - 9 p.m.	All	Grocery store	East Food Bank
Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)	105 Wilton Street	633-8298	Tue and Fri 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	All	Food Bank	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)	20 Edin Avenue	638-0120	Tues, 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.	All	Community Meal	Edin Avenue Baptist (E.A. Café)
St. Mary St. Bartholomew Church	646 Westmorland Road	696-3092	Group must book for availability	All	Community Cooking Classes	St. Mary St. Bartholomew Church
Madalister Drive Community Garden	335 Madalister Drive	651-1954	Saturday 4:30 p.m.	May-October	Community garden	Madalister Drive Community Garden
West Side						
Sobers West	1 Plaza Avenue	647-1460	24 hours	All	Grocery store	Sobers West
Walmart West	621 Fairville Boulevard	693-1668	Monday-Saturday 8 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.	All	Grocery store	Walmart West
No Frills	621 Fairville Boulevard	1-866-987-4453	Monday-Saturday 8 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.	All	Grocery store	No Frills
West Side Food Bank	120 Market Place West	635-1060	Regular Hours: Tue and Fri 1 p.m. - 3 p.m., Summer Hours: Tue 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	All	Food Bank, Food Banks Canada Certified	West Side Food Bank
Hilcrest Baptist Church	476 Lancaster Avenue	635-8000	Friday 11 a.m.	September- June	Free Community Meal	Hilcrest Baptist Church
Westside Anglican Mission	183 Duke Street (West)	608-0176	Sunday 4:30 p.m.	All	Free Community Meal, Food Bank, Not Food Banks Canada Certified	Westside Anglican Mission
Westside P.A.C.T.	200 Ludlow Street	672-0226	Monthly ordering, Pick-up 15 Thursday 10 p.m. - 2 p.m.	All	Food Purchase Club	Westside P.A.C.T.
Market Place Community Garden	1 Rodewy Street	672-1137/672-9789		May-October	Community garden	Market Place Community Garden

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