

SUSTENANCE BEYOND THE SURFACE:

A Deep Dive into Food
Insecurity and its Root Causes



Scarborough Food Security Initiative
Feed Scarborough

2023

A vibrant still life photograph of fresh produce. In the foreground, there are several ripe red and yellow cherry tomatoes, a large peach, and a bunch of green leafy vegetables. Behind them, a wicker basket is filled with more produce, including orange and yellow bell peppers, a purple radish, and some mushrooms. To the right, there are several large red tomatoes and a bunch of green herbs. The background is a bright blue sky with some clouds, and a person is visible in the distance, working in a garden or field.

*"Food is a fundamental human right,
essential for the dignity and well-being of
every individual. To afford food we need
other basic needs to be obtainable."*

SUMAN ROY, FOUNDER

IN THIS REPORT.

Disclaimer	4
Foreword	5
Executive Summary	6
Figures	7
Report Snapshot	9
Income & Employment	12
Housing	17
Immigration	25
BIPOC Community	30
Methodology	34
Letter to our Minister	36
References	38
Acknowledgements	39

DISCLAIMER.

We believe that immigration, housing, and adequate income are fundamental human rights, comparable to the right to food, and are all equally important for the growth and stability of Canada's success. Individual perspectives on this matter may differ, and comprehensive policy decisions should be based on thorough research, expert insights, and inclusive societal deliberation.

In the pursuit of Canada's success, we advocate for a society that upholds the dignity and well-being of all its residents, regardless of their background or circumstances. The right to immigrate to a safe and welcoming country is a reflection of humanity's inherent desire for a better life and a key factor in enriching cultural diversity and enhancing social cohesion.

Equally important is the recognition that housing is a basic human right, as it serves as a foundation for security, privacy, and overall well-being. Access to adequate and affordable housing not only fosters stability for individuals and families but also contributes to healthier communities and better educational outcomes.

Furthermore, ensuring that all individuals have access to an adequate income is paramount to eradicating poverty and social inequality. A guaranteed minimum income or fair wages for labor is instrumental in supporting citizens to meet their basic needs and participate actively in the economy, driving overall prosperity and sustainable development.

We advocate that these rights should be treated with equal importance, as they are interwoven and mutually reinforcing. The path to crafting effective policies must involve engaging diverse voices, expert opinions, and thorough research to arrive at comprehensive solutions. It is our sincere hope that acknowledging these rights and working towards their realization will foster a more compassionate, inclusive, and prosperous Canada.

FOREWORD

I am privileged to introduce this enlightening paper that delves into the underlying causes of food insecurity, with a special focus on housing, immigration, and income.

The pages ahead will unfold a compelling narrative, shedding light on how inadequate housing, infrastructure needs around population growth, and income disparities intertwine to perpetuate food insecurity. Our aim is to promote a deeper understanding of these interconnected issues, urging us all to approach this topic with compassion and empathy.

Every day, numerous individuals face the burden of not having enough to eat, and their struggles are multi-faceted. The lack of affordable and stable housing disrupts the foundation upon which food security can be built, leaving vulnerable populations even more exposed to hunger.

When I immigrated to Canada with the hope of safety and opportunity, I too was faced with the crippling effects of food security. Immigration is key for Canada and for those who thrive to achieve more. The compassion, dignity, and opportunities given to me have shaped where I am and the impact organizations like Feed Scarborough have.

Each story and statistic presented in these pages represents a life, a person facing challenges that test their resilience. We must remember that compassion and empathy are essential ingredients in our collective effort to eradicate food insecurity and build a more just and caring society.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the authors and contributors who have poured their expertise and dedication into this paper. May it ignite a spark of change within each of us, inspiring us to advocate for policies and initiatives that empower those facing hard times and uplift our entire community.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suman Roy'.

Suman Roy, Founder and Executive Director
Scarborough Food Security Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Food security in a community is crucial because it ensures that all members have access to sufficient, nutritious, and affordable food. It promotes physical and mental well-being, reduces hunger, and fosters social cohesion, contributing to the overall prosperity and sustainability of the community.

COVID-19 has significantly affected food security in various ways. The pandemic disrupted food supply chains, leading to shortages, price fluctuations, and distribution challenges. Lockdowns and restrictions also impacted people's ability to access food, especially vulnerable populations, resulting in increased levels of food insecurity and hunger. We operate across 6 food bank locations but within this report we included five food bank locations which are Cliffside, Markham, Rouge Park, Kennedy-Eglinton and we opened our newest food bank location at Clairlea in March 2023. In the month of June 2022, we had 9,684 visits. In this past month of June 2023, we had 20,590 visits. That's a **112.6% increase in visits to our food banks** (figure 1). This makes one thing clear: Our Scarborough residents are struggling.

Between May-June 2023, we conducted grassroots research within the Scarborough community to capture a demographic snapshot of our food bank clients. We surveyed 676 individuals across our 5 food bank locations (figure 2). In this report, we outline our findings along with policy recommendations within income, employment, housing, immigration, and empowering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

According to Immigration Levels Plan, Canada aims to welcome 1,450,000 new permanent residents by 2025. **We know from our data that three quarters of Feed Scarborough food bank clients are newcomers that have been in Canada for less than 1 year.** This means immigrants are struggling to meet their most basic needs, and we need to work to better support their growth in Canada.

We are calling on the Minister of Immigration Marc Miller PC MP, Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow as well as any policymakers to respond to amplify our findings and consider the implementation of our policy recommendations.

FIGURES

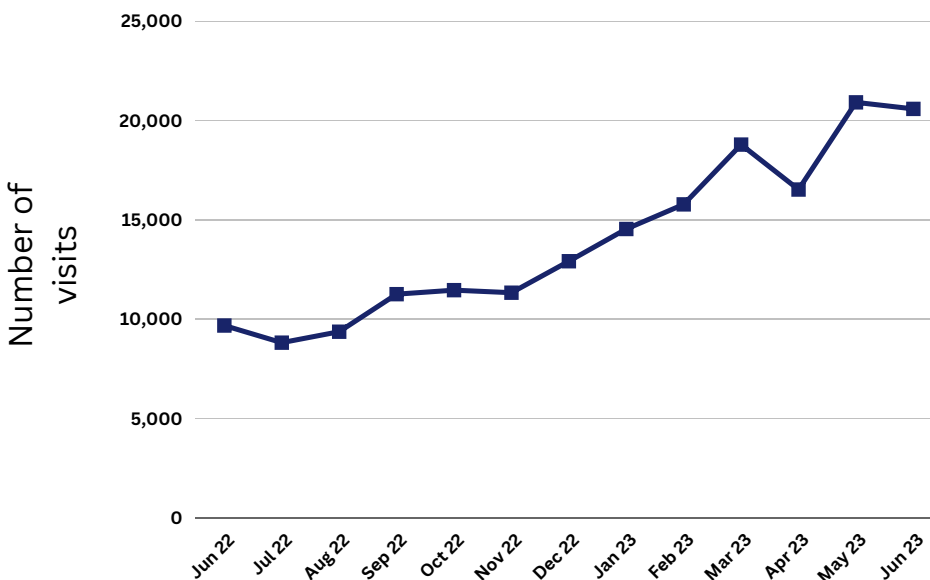


Figure 1: Total number of visits per month across all 5 food bank locations between June 2022 - June 2023.

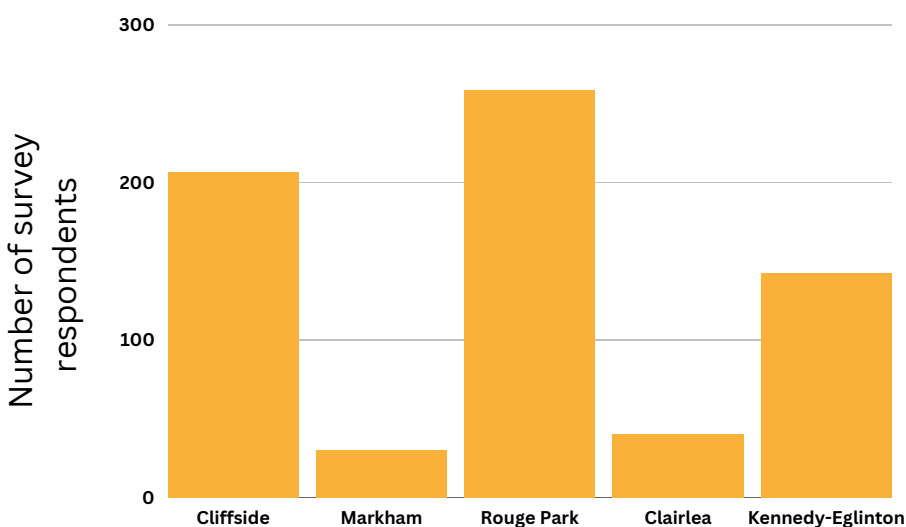


Figure 2: Number of clients surveyed per food bank location between May 20th-June 30th, 2023.

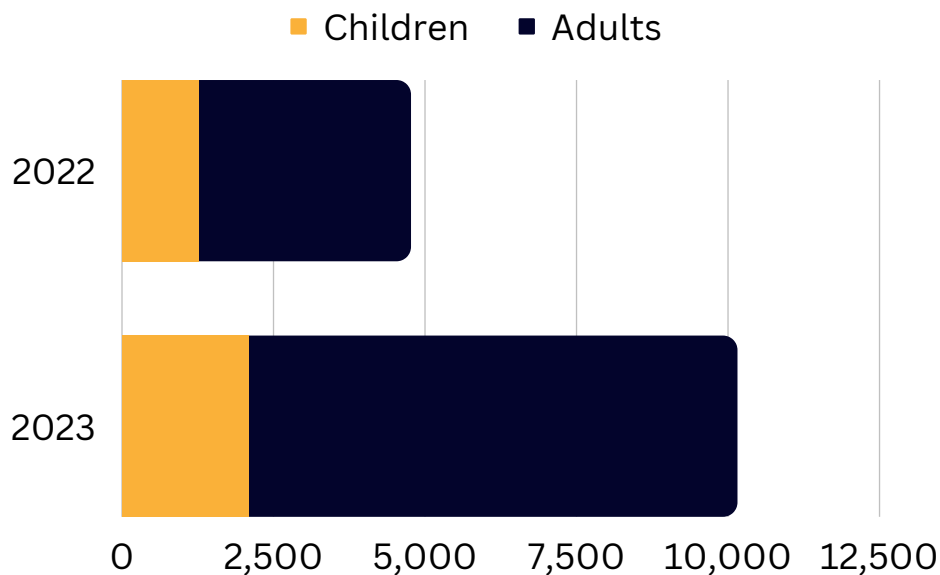


Figure 3: Total number of unique clients registered at the time of May 20th - June 30, 2022 vs number of unique clients registered between May 20th - June 30, 2023

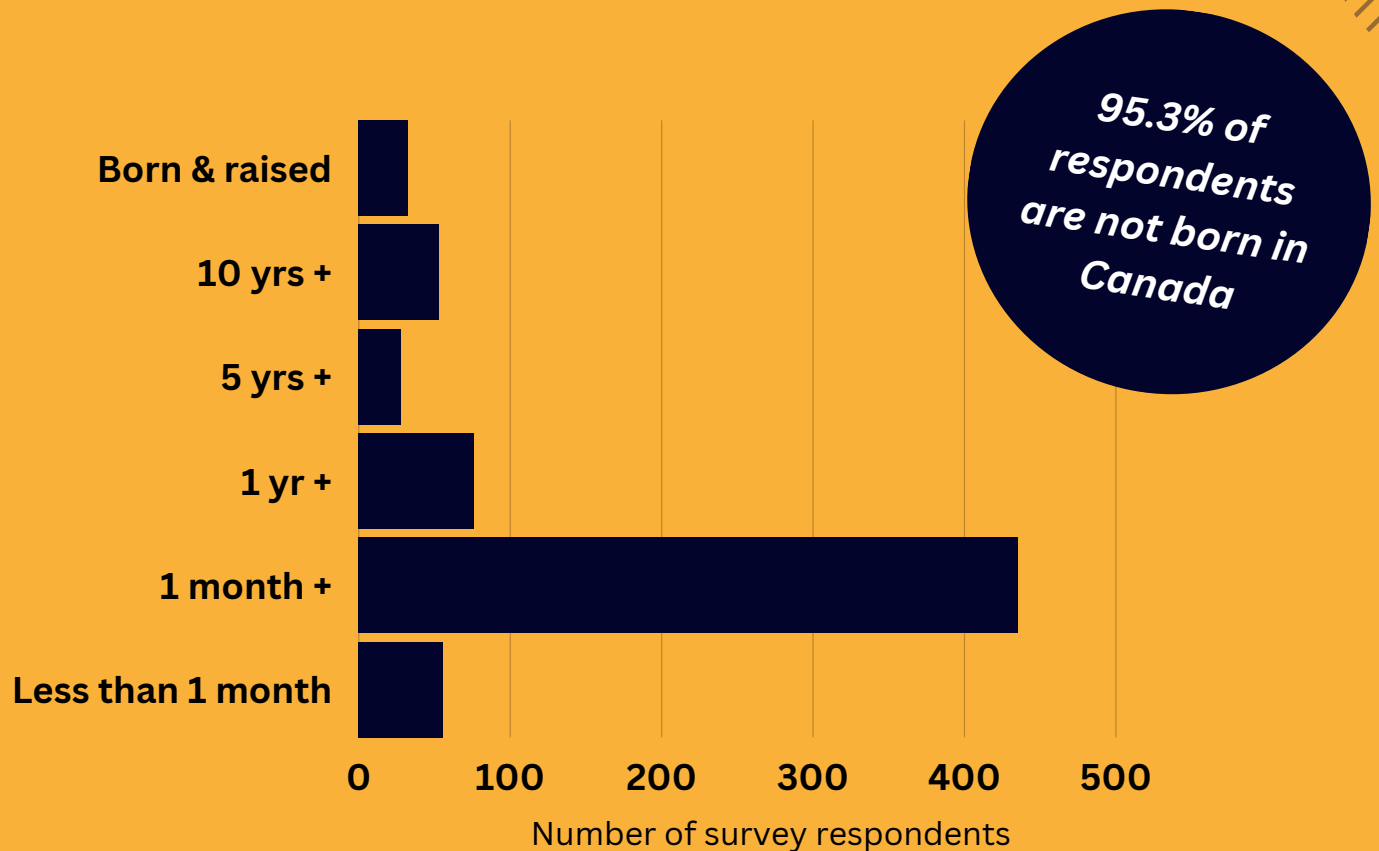
Link2Feed is a database used to capture client intake data, demographics, visits as well as other metrics for food banks. We generated a report to capture the total number of unique children and adults registered across our five food bank locations between May 20 - June 30, 2022. The report showed a unique total of 1,261 children, and 3,497 adults. This means that 26.5% of unique clients registered with Feed Scarborough food banks between May 20th - June 30, 2022 were children. This is a significant percentage to note because according to the Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth (CHSCY), 15.3% of Ontarian children 1 to 17 years old lived in food-insecure¹⁶ households in 2019.

We ran another Link2Feed report for May 20 - June 30, 2023. A unique total of 2,088 children and 8,057 adults were registered at Feed Scarborough food banks within that timeframe. While this means a decrease in percentage of registered children from 2022 (26.5%) to 2023 (20.6%), **a total increase in unique individuals registered jumped 113.2%.**

Please note that a unique individual registered is different from a visit. A visit is the number of times a user comes to a food bank location for food, which also includes all members of their household.

REPORT SNAPSHOT

How long have you been in Canada?

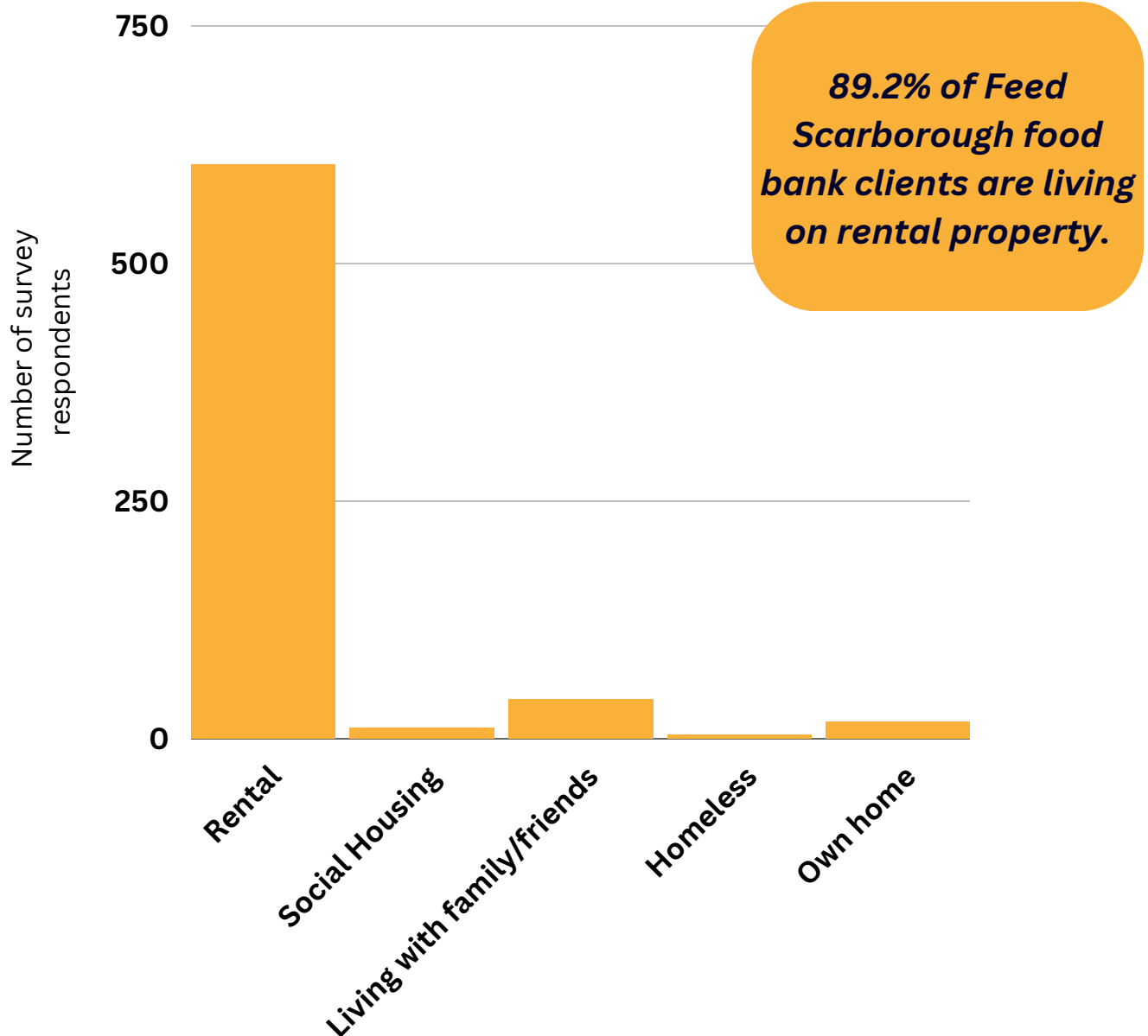


Roughly three-quarters (**72.4%**) of our Feed Scarborough food bank clients have been in Canada for **less than 1 year**.



REPORT SNAPSHOT

What is your current living situation?



According to Daily Bread Who's Hungry Report, almost all survey respondents (96%) were living below the poverty line.

Source: Nothwehr, B. Akeileh, O. Dyson, D. (2022). Who's Hungry Report: A story of a system under strain. DailyBread.ca



INCOME & EMPLOYMENT

Of the 676 survey respondents, **28.1%** (190 individuals) reported being employed either full time, part time, contract, or temporary work. This is significant to note because this shows that employment doesn't guarantee food security [1]. This is consistent with the findings from the Daily Bread Who's Hungry 2022 Report which outlined 33% of their food clients report employment as their primary source of income, yet 58% reported low income (from either employment or social assistance) as their reason for accessing a food bank because income is insufficient.

Precarious employment and income are most common in low-income communities. In addition, a study conducted by PROOF at the University of Toronto included 331 families in their longitudinal analytic sample and found a change in income was significantly inversely associated with severity of food insecurity [2].

"Not having a work permit as a political refugee in Canada really puts me in a tough spot. I have to rely on the government just to get by, and it's frustrating not being able to live on my own terms."

--- Client, Cliffside Food Bank

Scarborough Food
Security Initiative
Feed Scarborough

Employment doesn't guarantee food security.



But this still means **71.9% of our food bank clients are unemployed**. According to our data, 33.7% (228 individuals) rely on family support, 13.5% (91) rely on their savings, 12.6% (85) are on social assistance, 9.5% (64) are using personal loans, 1.6% (11) are on ODSP, 0.6% (4) rely on monetary scholarships and bursaries, 0.4% (3) reported no income at all. Transnational family support for recent immigrants is seldom discussed within the food bank realm and in research literature, **yet one third of our food bank clients have indicated they receive transnational financial support from their families back home in order to meet their basic living needs**. It is important to note that **23% indicated they rely on their savings and/or personal loans** which can lead to increases in debt. The average household debt in Canada in 2022, excluding mortgages, was roughly \$21,100 [3]. A considerable percentage (14.2%) are on social assistance and/or ODSP. This aligns with the Food Banks Canada 2022 report which stated 22.7% of clients that accessed a food bank in Ontario were on social assistance (cite). Feed Ontario calls this “legislated poverty” because the assistance given, with median being \$1150 a month, is set below Canada’s Poverty Line [4].



RECOMMENDATIONS: INCOME & EMPLOYMENT.

THE ISSUE

The minimum wage in Ontario as of July 2023 is \$15.50. An increase to \$16.55 has been announced for October 2023.

**RECOMMENDED: INCREASE MINIMUM
WAGE TO \$24.35 BY 2025.**



PROPOSITION

The living wage in the Greater Toronto Area is \$23.15, which is a 4.8% increase from 2021 [5]. The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is used as the official measure of income poverty and (as of 2022) the official poverty line threshold for a family of two adults and two children is \$51,468. According to Maytree, a dedicated social policy institute in Toronto, the poverty line for a family is \$55,262 [6].

THE ISSUE

Canadians do not have any Universal Basic Income program. It was piloted with success in provinces like Ontario.

RECOMMENDED: INTRODUCE A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI) PROGRAM.

PROPOSITION

Year over year clients visiting foodbanks have grown significantly. Community members have to make a choice between housing and food. UBI will mitigate the effects of purported massive job losses from automation, streamline the chaotic plethora of government schemes, or empower people by redirecting natural resource-related revenues from public coffers to citizens.

THE ISSUE

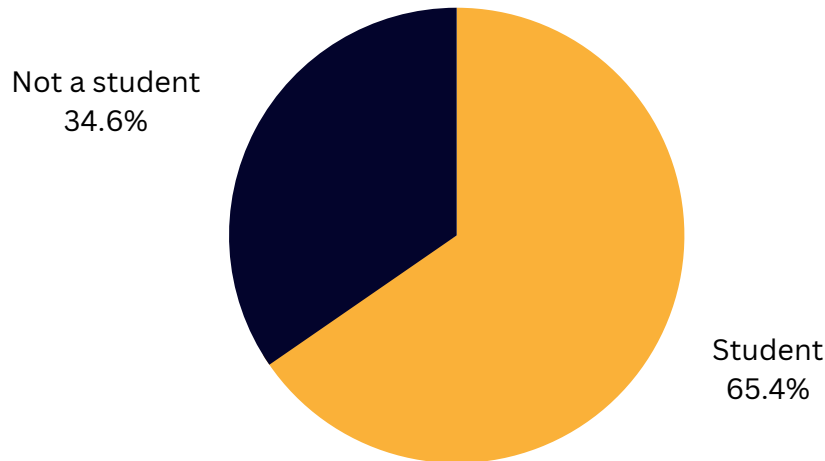
ODSP provides roughly \$1,200 per month, an amount significantly below Toronto's official poverty line of \$2,060 per month for a single adult [7].

RECOMMENDED: SET FIXED RATES FOR ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES ACCORDING TO THE MARKET BASKET MEASURE OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

PROPOSITION

According to Daily Bread's 2022 Who's Hungry Report, forty-five percent of respondents with disabilities sometimes or often did not have enough food to eat, and over one-third (35%) of people with disabilities went hungry at least one day per week. 65% of those who often did not have enough to eat were people with disabilities [8].

Are you currently a student?



THE ISSUE

Lack of employment support for International Students.

RECOMMENDED: EXTEND THE CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

PROPOSITION

Two thirds of our food bank clients are students, many of them are international students. Providing equal opportunity to gain experience, and increase income potential in line with domestic students strengthens our workforce and builds our economy.

81% of the Toronto CMA's social and affordable housing stock was built before 1989, with just over half of the stock (53%) in good or excellent condition.

Source: Toronto Housing Data Book, Toronto.ca

Scarborough Food Security Initiative
Feed Scarborough

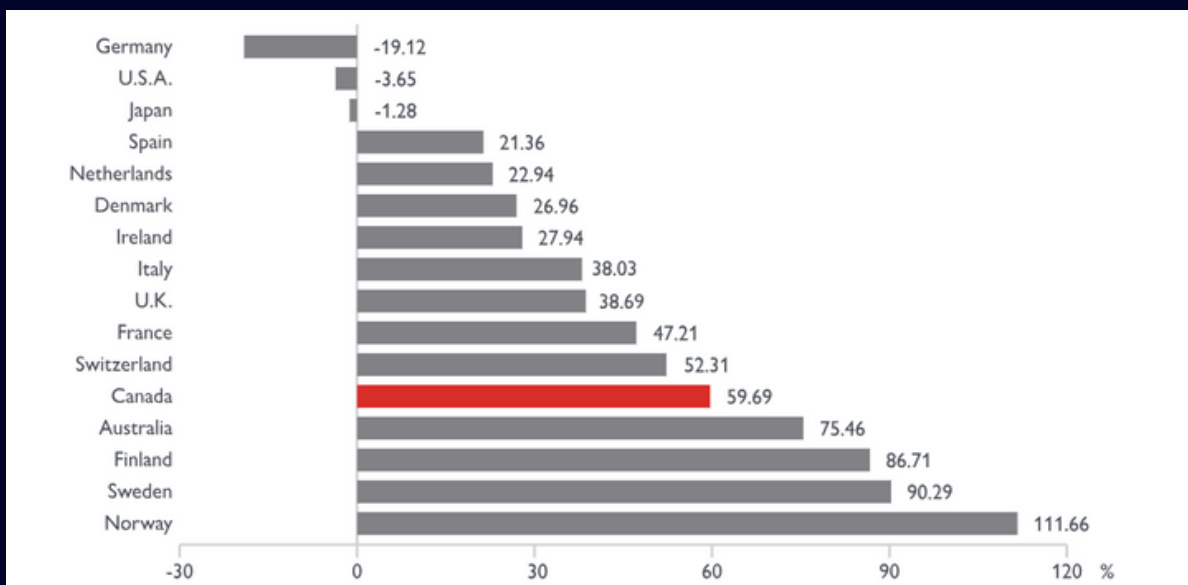


Figure 4: Increase in household debt in proportion to disposable income, 2000-2020.
Source: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/blog/2022/governments-alone-cannot-fix-canadas-housing-affordability-challenges>

HOUSING

Of those accessing our food banks, **almost 89.2% (603 individuals) are living in a rental property**, 6.1% (41) are living with family or friends, 2.5% (17) own their home, 1.6% (11) live in social housing, and 0.6% (4) are homeless.

Housing affordability is defined as spending 30% or less in before-tax income [8]. Food insecurity is 4 times more prevalent in renters than homeowners. Homeownership provides owners with certain financial advantages, such as access to home equity loans or lines of credit, which can act as a safety net during financial difficulties [9].

The cost of housing can significantly impact a household's budget. If a large portion of income is dedicated to housing expenses, there may be less money available to purchase nutritious food, leading to compromised food security.

**Scarborough Food
Security Initiative**
Feed Scarborough

**Canadian
household debt is
now worth more
than the entire
country's economy
at a shocking 107%.**

Source: Canada Mortgage and
Housing Corporation

Access to shelter is a human right.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced programs, such as CERB, which provided temporary relief but the government has not addressed the underlying issues of housing affordability. Homeownership provides a level of stability and long-term security, as homeowners typically benefit from building equity and having fixed mortgage payments. **Renters, on the other hand, are subject to rental market fluctuations and the possibility of rent increases or eviction.** The uncertainty and lack of stability associated with renting can increase the risk of food insecurity [9], especially if sudden changes in housing circumstances occur... such as the COVID-19 pandemic.





RECOMMENDATIONS: HOUSING.

THE ISSUE

A 1.6% vacancy rate in Canada. In June 2022, CMHC had projected Canada would need to build 3.5 million additional housing units by 2030 to make housing affordable for all – requiring the pace of housing starts to more than double its current level.

**RECOMMENDED: INCREASE IN
GOVERNMENT OR SOCIAL HOUSING
STRUCTURE TO SUPPLY 5 MILLION UNITS
BY 2030.**



PROPOSITION

CMHC estimates a total of 22 million housing units will be needed by 2030 to achieve housing affordability for everyone in Canada. Housing inventory needs to be geared to population incline and immigration approvals.

THE ISSUE

According to Daily Bread's Who's Hungry Report (2022) 87% of food bank clients live in unaffordable housing, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on rent. The Canadian Housing Benefit was a one-time-payment of \$500 to help low income renters. The applications closed March 31, 2023.

RECOMMENDED: REINSTATE ACCESS TO THE CANADIAN HOUSING BENEFIT.

PROPOSITION

Implementing an interim benefit until 2030 that supports low-middle-income households in areas where average rent exceeds 30% of average incomes. This benefit will subsidize the remaining rent after 30% of income until housing affordability has been met.

To afford a 1 bedroom rental in Toronto someone would need to make \$89,360 annually for it to be considered affordable housing.



Greg Park. June 2023 Toronto Rent Report. Liv Strategies Inc.

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL HOUSING IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch Government has a social housing model that applies a point based system. The social housing point system is used to determine the maximum rent a landlord can charge for a particular rental property. **It sets a cap on the rent**, which is based on various factors related to the property's size, amenities, location, and overall quality. The goal is to prevent excessive rent increases and provide affordable housing options to the population.

The total number of points a property receives determines its maximum permissible rent. Landlords are not allowed to charge more than the specified rent cap, which is directly linked to the property's point score. Rents for social housing properties can typically only be increased once a year, and any increase is usually limited to a certain percentage defined by the government.

THE ISSUE

According to Rentals.ca, Toronto saw annual rent growth of 22.4% in 2022. Rent is no longer determined by what the unit offers or the financial feasibility of the renter. In 2023, Ontario had rent control of 2.5% on units built before November 15th, 2018. The 58,682 units built since 2019-2022 according to The City of Toronto's Housing Data Book are not covered under Ontario's rent control.

RECOMMENDED: AMENITY DRIVEN POINT SYSTEM TO DETERMINE A PRICE SCALE FOR UNITS BUILT AFTER NOV, 15TH 2018.

PROPOSITION

With no guidance on unit pricing for currently 58,682 units in Toronto plus project units built in the coming years, this will curb the unreasonable price per unit available and justify rent based on what the unit offers.

THE ISSUE

Currently, the City of Toronto takes months to respond to new building and/or housing permit applications. Public and private developers lose money the longer they wait for permit approvals. Thus, they may increase costs of the new buildings and/or houses to recuperate their previous losses. This adds to the housing affordability crisis.

RECOMMENDED: EXPEDITE RESPONSE TO ZONING AND PERMIT APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING BUILDERS.

PROPOSITION

We recommend expediting that process by reducing at least 50% of application wait time. Reducing wait times for permit and zoning application approvals, reduces expenses for developers. If changes to an application need to be made, municipal government officials should work collaboratively with developers to advise for changes for a successful application resubmission.

We have to create a new growth strategy at the city policy level that results in more equitable outcomes across the city, and that includes prioritizing building more housing.

*Graig Uens, Director of Planning at
Batory Planning + Management*





“ —

I left Afghanistan when the Taliban took over. I was 15 years old, and I had to leave everything behind. I lost my mom during the civil war, and it's been really hard without her, now I'm here trying to start over with my brother. I spend my time studying English so I can talk to people more easily. The food bank helps me out with fresh produce I couldn't afford otherwise. My dad is in Edmonton, but we'll be together in Toronto soon. Right now, I'm staying with my older brother, and he's mostly supporting me. **I'm determined to make my mom proud and build a better life here.**

— ”

--- Client, Cliffside Food Bank

Canada aims to welcome 1,450,000 new permanent residents by 2025.

Source: Supplementary Information for the 2023-2025 Immigration Levels Plan,
Canada.ca



IMMIGRATION

Of all our survey respondents, **95.3% are not born in Canada**; 7.7% (52 individuals) have been in Canada 10 years or more, 4% (27) 5 years or more, 11.1% (75) 1 year or more, **64.3% (435) 1 month or more**, and 8.1% (55) individuals have been in Canada for less than a month. **According to the Daily Bread Who's Hungry 2022 report, almost one quarter of newcomer clients reported being hungry at least one day a week due to lack of money for food within the past three months at the time they were surveyed.**

Immigration status also affects median income levels [11]. Immigrants may encounter difficulties in finding suitable employment due to factors such as language barriers, differences in educational qualifications, and limited social networks. Limited job opportunities or lower wages can make it harder for immigrants to afford an adequate and nutritious diet, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity. Many immigrants come to Canada for a better quality of life and/or education.

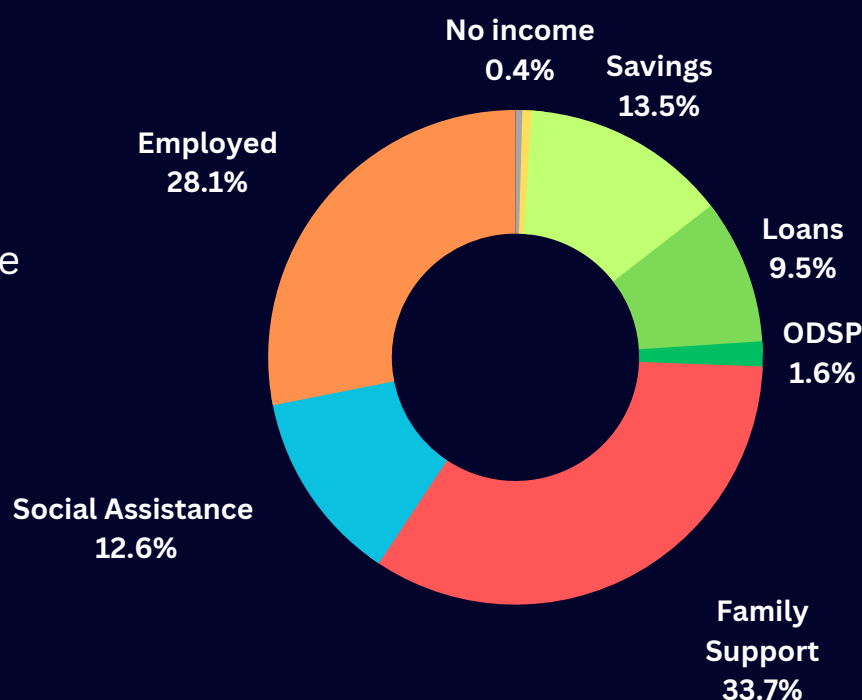
**Scarborough Food
Security Initiative**
Feed Scarborough

"I rely on this food bank, but due to exams, I couldn't visit for two weeks. I ran out of essentials like milk, eggs, and tomatoes. Transit takes 2-3 hours, so I sometimes buy very little from the grocery store or go hungry."

--- Client, Clairlea
Food Bank

Of the survey respondents **65.3% (442) indicated they are students**. International students or immigrants on student visas face financial constraints due to high tuition fees, living expenses, and limited opportunities for employment. They are often restricted by visa regulations that limit the number of hours they can work, making it challenging to earn enough income to cover their living expenses, including food costs [12]. Financial limitations can lead to difficulty in accessing an adequate and nutritious diet, increasing the risk of food insecurity.

Figure 5:
Reported
primary source
of income for
Feed
Scarborough
food bank
clients.



**Roughly three quarters (72%) are unemployed.
Half of them rely on family support just to get by.**



RECOMMENDATIONS: IMMIGRATION.

THE ISSUE

There are a number of additional licensing examinations internationally credited immigrants must face, depending on the profession.

RECOMMENDED: INTRODUCE A FOREIGN-TRAINED PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION.

PROPOSITION

Immigrants and refugees face many employment barriers, thus fewer opportunities for income. Many of these barriers are due to the stringent system in place failing to recognize foreign credentials.

THE ISSUE

Canada Job Bank is an online tool used to apply to any vacant jobs across Canada.

RECOMMENDED: CREATE A SEPARATE SECTION ON CANADA JOB BANK WEBSITE FOR NEWCOMERS.

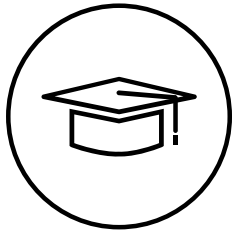
PROPOSITION

It will allow for easy access to newcomers to apply for entry level jobs.

Scarborough Food Security Initiative
Feed Scarborough

THE ISSUE

International students and refugees must pay \$250+ to take the English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP) examinations.



RECOMMENDED: WAIVE THE TESTING FEE FOR INDIVIDUALS RE-TAKING THE EXAMS.

PROPOSITION

Immigrants who speak English as a second language may struggle to find suitable employment or face discrimination based on language skills. They must take the English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam or the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP) exam, and achieve a decent score. This comes with a significant financial burden for individuals. The financial burden becomes even greater when individuals must pay fees again for re-examination if unsuccessful the first time.

THE ISSUE

There are no current housing benefits in place to incentivize integration in rural communities.

RECOMMENDED: IMPLEMENT A REFUGEE BENEFIT PILOT PROGRAM (RBPP) TO INCENTIVIZE MIGRATION TO LESS DENSE MUNICIPALITIES BY PROVIDING HOUSING BENEFITS.

PROPOSITION

Roughly three quarters of our food bank users have been in Canada for less than one year. The majority of refugees initially settle in major cities like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, where housing affordability has been a significant concern.

BLACK, INDIGENOUS, & PEOPLE OF COLOUR COMMUNITY

Of our survey respondents, 93.3% identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Colour; with the top three ethnic backgrounds being 68.9% (466 individuals) South Asian, 8.7% (59) Black, African Canadian, or Caribbean, 6.7% (45) Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish. Black and POC communities often face higher levels of poverty and economic disparities compared to White populations. Factors such as limited job opportunities, wage gaps, and systemic discrimination can contribute to financial instability and make it more challenging to afford an adequate and nutritious diet [13].



Diversity is important because it enriches our perspectives, fosters innovation, and empowers us to build a more inclusive and united world.

Scarborough Food
Security Initiative
Feed Scarborough



Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity [14]. These health disparities can be linked to limited access to healthy food options, nutritional education, and healthcare services, further increasing the risk of food insecurity.

"I'm 28 years old. I came alone from Nigeria in April 2023. I wanted a better life for my children. I go to Centennial College.... that's how I came... on a student visa. Everything is hard... actually, it has been really hard. I'm a student, I have limited time to work. The program I'm in is stressful. I go to school Monday to Friday. I don't have a job. Even if I did, I wouldn't have the time. I get money from my family back home. I wouldn't know what to do if I didn't have their support."

— Client, Clairlea Food Bank



RECOMMENDATIONS: BIPOC COMMUNITY.

THE ISSUE

There is inadequate funding available for food banks to diversify food options for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the community.

RECOMMENDED: ALLOCATE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES TO ORGANIZATIONS DELIVERING EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAMMES IMMEDIATELY, WHOSE VISION INCLUDES: ALL PEOPLE IN CANADA ARE ABLE TO ACCESS A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF SAFE, NUTRITIOUS, AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE FOOD.

PROPOSITION

According to Daily Bread's Who's Hungry survey results, 70% who reported not having enough to eat were racialized [8]. Using Canada's Food Policy to ensure that BIPOC communities are receiving sufficient access to appropriate amounts of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food.

THE ISSUE

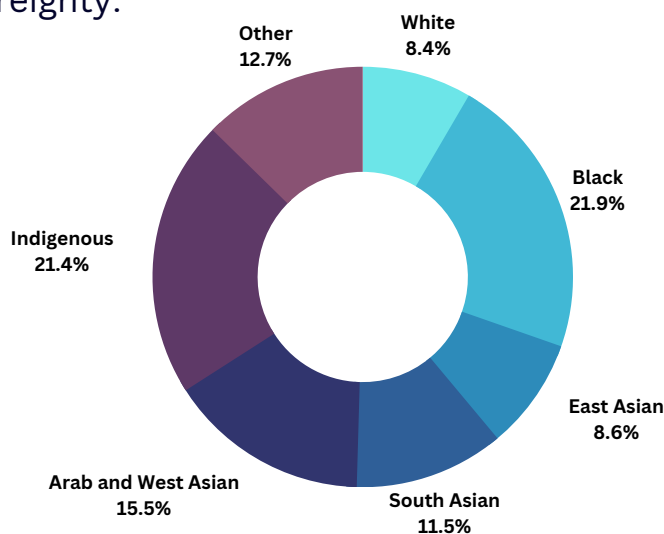
In 2020, the Government of Canada announced an Indigenous Community Support Fund. This fund provided Indigenous leadership and organizations with the flexibility needed to design and implement community-based solutions to prevent, prepare, and respond to the spread of COVID-19 within their communities. In March 2023, the program closed and is not longer accepting applications.

RECOMMENDED: RESTRUCTURE AND RE-OPEN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND AS NEEDS-BASED FUNDING FOR ANY AND ALL FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES FOR INDIGENOUS-CENTERED ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS .

PROPOSITION

An overwhelming number of research studies prove that Indigenous Peoples are most vulnerable to food insecurity due to social, historical, and systemic racism [14]. Forced displacement has caused resource depletion, environmental degradation, and restrictions on traditional practices. It is imperative that the government implements this recommendation in order to prioritize their right to food sovereignty.

According to a report published by PROOF at University of Toronto, Across Canada, 28.2% of Indigenous households and 28.9% of Black households are food insecure, while only 11.1% of white households are food insecure.

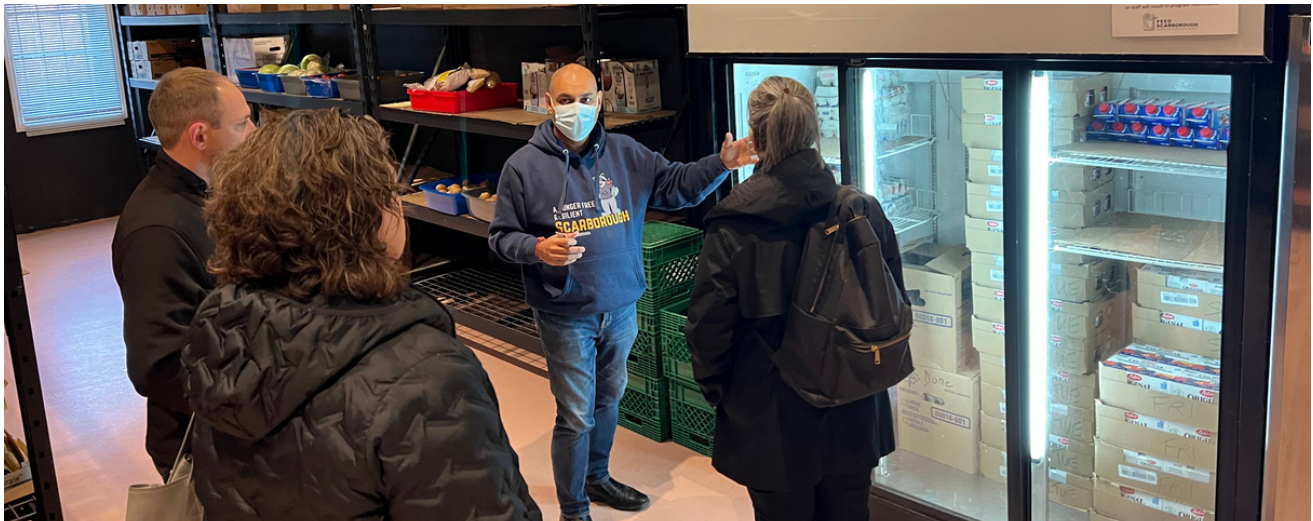


METHODOLOGY.

The data was collected between May 20 - June 30, 2023. Out of the 10,145 registered clients, we sampled 676 clients. A trained member collected responses verbally from the participants which was manually inputted on a secure Google Form. Google translate was utilized for individuals speaking Urdu and Spanish. Any person-identifying data was not collected to protect anonymity.

Link2Feed is a database used to capture client intake data, demographics, visits as well as other metrics for food banks. The database was utilized to capture the number of registered food bank clients between the timeframe of May 20 - June 30, 2022, as well as number of registered clients between the timeframe of May 20 - June 30, 2023. We also generated a report to capture food bank visits month to month between June 2022 - June 2023 across all our five food bank locations.

Please note that a “visit” is the number of times a user comes to a food bank location for food, which also includes all members of their household.



WORDS FROM OUR CLIENTS.

"I came as a refugee with my children, and I work a part time job. It's been difficult recently because there are not enough shifts at my work to reliably count on. It's also hard to support my children financially while also carrying out my other duties as a mother. The fruits and vegetables this food bank provides help, my children, a lot."

"I'm from Nepal. I go to this food bank because it's close. There just isn't enough money to buy everything at a grocery store."

"I'm an international student from Bangladesh. I've been here for a month and a half and I like Toronto so far, but my financial situation is getting harder. I came here with 2 kids, so I often still need to buy things from the store."

"I'M FROM INDIA. IT'S SO HARD TO LIVE HERE WITH NO JOB AND HOMESICKNESS. I'M COMING HERE BECAUSE I HAD TO MOVE TO SAVE MONEY."

"Before the war in Ukraine started, I worked at a law firm. I have degrees in law, physics, and astronomy. It's quite tough for newcomers as if you don't have a job letter, companies know you don't have options."

TEMPLATE LETTER: A CALL TO ACTION.

Mail: Marc Miller
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Email: Marc.Miller@parl.gc.ca

[Insert date here]

Hon. Marc Miller
(Address)
(City and province)
(Postal code)

Dear Hon. Marc Miller MP Minister of Immigration,

I am writing to you on behalf of [your organization name] and from [your city, province]. I am expressing my concerns and strongly urge you to implement a stronger support system for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that come to Canada for a better life.

According to the 2023-2025 Immigration Levels Plan, Canada aims to welcome roughly 1.5 million immigrants and refugees by 2025 to address labor shortages in Canada. We must take into account the pressure it will put on the housing market. As you are aware, earlier this July we had a little over 300 refugee claimants and asylum seekers sleep outside on the streets of Toronto. While the \$212 million going into the Interim Housing Assistance Program will be a temporary help to provide short-term housing until March 2024, we still need a permanent support program to enable immigrants and refugees to flourish and self-sustain. It is unjust to allow immigrants and refugees into Canada without having the infrastructure to support them fully. According to Toronto city officials, roughly 45% of newcomers who call the shelter intake system get turned away. This is not okay and unacceptable. Canada needs to do better.

TEMPLATE LETTER: A CALL TO ACTION.

I am strongly encouraging you to take action. Please consider my following suggestions:

1. Currently it takes the IRCC roughly 6 weeks to grant a work-permit. Then, it takes a couple more weeks to assign a SIN number. You must work with the IRCC and Ms. Manon Brassard to streamline and expedite this process so refugees and immigrants are able to self-sustain quicker.
2. Dedicate funding for 500,000 rent geared towards income (RGIs) housing in Ontario by 2025.
3. The federal government of Canada has announced \$4 billion into the Housing Accelerator Fund, a one-time application window for 2023. You need to work with local governments in Toronto, and across Canada, to make HAF more accessible and the application process as smooth and barrier free as possible.
4. According to a report from the Canadian government, the majority of refugees initially settle in major cities like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, where housing affordability has been a significant concern. You must work to fund and implement the Refugee Benefit Pilot Program in order to incentivize integration in rural communities.

I urge the government to allocate resources and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement these support systems. As a compassionate and forward-thinking nation, I believe we have the capacity to provide a safe and nurturing environment for immigrants and refugees to flourish.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and taking my concerns into consideration. I look forward to receiving a response from you on this matter.

Sincerely,
(Your name)
(Your organization)
(City, Province)
(Phone number)

REFERENCES.

1. Morissette, R., & Picot, W. G. (2005). Low-paid work and economically vulnerable families over the last two decades. Statistics Canada, Analytical Studies.
2. LOOPSTRA, R., & TARASUK, V. (2013). Severity of Household Food Insecurity Is Sensitive to Change in Household Income and Employment Status among Low-Income Families. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 143(8), 1316–1323. <https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.113.175414>
3. Chawla, R. K., & Uppal, S. (2012). Household debt in Canada. Statistics Canada.
4. King, A. Quan, A. (2022) Hunger Report: The Deepening cracks in Ontario’s Economic Foundation. [Feedontario.ca](https://www.feedontario.ca).
5. Ontario Living Wage Network. (2023.) [Ontariolivingwage.ca](https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca)
6. Laidley, J. Tabbara, M. (2023). Welfare in Canada, 2022. [PDF]. Available from [Maytree.com/welfare-in-canada](https://www.maytree.com/welfare-in-canada)
7. Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0066-01 Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds for the reference family by Market Basket Measure region, component and base year. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110006601-eng>
8. Nothwehr, B. Akeileh, O. Dyson, D. (2022). Who’s Hungry Report: A story of a system under strain. [DailyBread.ca](https://www.dailybread.ca)
9. McIntyre, L., Wu, X., Fleisch, V. C., & Emery, J. C. H. (2016). Homeowner versus non-homeowner differences in household food insecurity in Canada. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 31(2), 349–366. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-015-9461-6>
10. Fafard St-Germain, A.-A., & Tarasuk, V. (2020). Homeownership status and risk of food insecurity: examining the role of housing debt, housing expenditure and housing asset using a cross-sectional population-based survey of Canadian households. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 19(1), 5–5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-019-1114-z>
11. Statistics Canada, & Statistique Canada. (2023). Immigrant status and period of immigration by income and highest level of education: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts [Data set]. Open Data Canada.
12. Esmaeilzadeh, R., Ahmad, N., & Naveed, A. (2018). Do Immigrants Catch-up with the Natives in Terms of Earnings? Evidence from Individual Level Data of Canada. *International Migration*, 56(5), 204–242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12458>
13. Liu, R., Urquia, M. L., & Tarasuk, V. (2023). The prevalence and predictors of household food insecurity among adolescents in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 114(3), 453–463. <https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-022-00737-2>
14. Tait, C. A., L’Abbé, M. R., Smith, P. M., & Rosella, L. C. (2018). The association between food insecurity and incident type 2 diabetes in Canada: A population-based cohort study. *PloS One*, 13(5), e0195962–e0195962. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0195962>
15. Bratina, B. (2021). Food security in northern and isolated communities: ensuring equitable access to adequate and healthy food for all. House of Commons, Canada.
16. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Food insecurity among children using the Canadian Health Survey of Children and Youth. 2nd ed. Toronto, ON: King’s Printer for Ontario; 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

We would like our generous sponsors and partners for their unwavering support within this past year.

We would like to thank Talia Bronstein from Daily Bread for her feedback and support on this report.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Urban Alliance Youth Policy Fellowship for facilitating this placement for Deena Hassan, and allowing the creation of the report to be possible.

The PDF version can be found on our website:
<https://scarboroughfoodsecurityinitiative.com>

Hassan, D. 2023. Feed Scarborough Sustenance Beyond the Surface: A deep dive into food insecurity and its root causes. Survey Data Report. Toronto, ON.

Data collected by: Sanakausar Ughratdar
Report written by: Deena Hassan
Pamphlet created by: Andrew Priestley
Produced & edited by: Suman Roy & Robin Sagi

For all media inquiries, please contact:
Suman Roy - Executive Director
Scarborough Food Security Initiative (Feed Scarborough)
Telephone: 416-580-7563
Email: suman@feedscarborough.ca

Reproduction is authorized for non-commercial purposes on condition the source is acknowledged.



WEBSITE

VOLUNTEER

DONATE



**A HUNGER-FREE
RESILIENT**

SCARBOROUGH

@FEEDSCARBOROUGH

WWW.FEEDSCARBOROUGH.CA