

FEDERAL ELECTION TOOLKIT



Cut Canadian Food Insecurity in Half by 2030

Food Banks
Canada



Banques alimentaires
Canada

Why this election is so important?

From a food banking perspective, Canada stands at a critical juncture. The state of food banking in our country is changing rapidly as food insecurity reaches record heights. The most recent data reveals a stark reality: **almost one quarter (23%) of people in this country are living with food insecurity.** Even more shocking is that this figure is likely an underestimate of the real number of people experiencing food insecurity today.



In 2024, food banks reached a sombre new milestone with more than 2 million monthly visits, nearly double the rate seen only five short years ago. Demand has undeniably reached a crisis point, with many food banks unable to meet the need.

Unfortunately, many challenges remain. For several years now, people in Canada have faced rising rent and mortgage costs, along with skyrocketing living expenses, all while wages haven't kept pace. Our social safety net, once a source of pride, has eroded significantly over the past few decades. And most recently, political challenges with our neighbours to the south have become an unexpected distraction for our governments and left people feeling uncertain about the economic future of Canada.

The federal government has introduced several measures to combat these issues, including advancements in affordable childcare and school food, pharmacare, and a National Housing Strategy. However, the impacts of these programs may not be felt for many years, so they do not address the immediate needs of people who are struggling today, and they may not be felt by all. The urgency of the situation cannot be overstated. People are skipping meals, taking on unsustainable debt, and stepping further away from a life of dignity.

More needs to be done. The government chosen in this election by the people of Canada will have the power to lift us up or to let us sink. In other words, the choices that Canadians make this election will have ripple effects that will last for years to come.

As we head into this federal election, Canada finds itself at a crossroads.

The choice is clear: do we want to retain a Canada in which food banks see more than 2 million visits a month and millions more people live on the edge of needing a food bank, or do we choose to build a more resilient Canada with social policies that leave no one behind? This election is not just about politics; it is about the kind of country we want to be. It is about ensuring that every person in Canada has the opportunity to live with dignity.

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SECTION I

What You Need to Know Before the Election

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OUR CALL FOR CHANGE

There is little doubt that the 2025 federal election will be unlike any election we have seen before. It comes at a time when Canada is facing challenges on many fronts – from trade wars to housing crises and food-insecurity crises – all of which will influence how people vote.

Most importantly for our network, this election will also determine whether we continue as a country that allows over 2 million food bank visits every month or move toward a future Canada in which no one gets left behind.

To that end, our network must be entirely focused on a specific call for change that we repeat across the country every time we meet a political candidate, a community member, or the media.

This is why we are encouraging all of our network to consistently ask their community members to add their voice to our call for:



ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO COMMIT TO REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY IN CANADA BY 50% BY 2030.

And to include steps in the platform that demonstrate how they will achieve this.

This toolkit will provide you with all the tools you need to make this call for change heard far and wide throughout this election, and ultimately, to make sure that when people head to the polls to vote, they do so with food insecurity and food banks in their mind.

 [CLICK HERE](#) TO ADD YOUR VOICE NOW

 See [TOOLA](#) for details on OUR CALL FOR CHANGE // See [TOOLI](#) for additional policy recommendations



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FOOD BANKING NETWORK

In a matter of weeks, Canadians will go to the polls to decide who forms the next federal government. This election presents a critical opportunity for the food banking network to influence political discourse and push for meaningful change to reduce the long-term need for food banks.

Food insecurity is one of the most pressing challenges facing people in Canada today. It is a non-partisan crisis that demands urgent and meaningful action from every candidate and party. Communities across the country are grappling with continuously rising need, while governments are failing to address deepening inequalities.

Food banks, which are now recognized as crucial pillars in communities from coast to coast to coast, are overwhelmed. When governments do not provide adequate support and create policies that meaningfully address inequalities, people turn to food banks as their unofficial safety net. But food banks cannot solve this challenge alone and they are buckling under the pressure of current demand. They are not the answer to poverty; they reflect the depth of the crisis, not its solution.

This election is an opportunity – an urgent call – to change the conversation and drive action. Food insecurity must dominate the election agenda. We have an opportunity to hold candidates and parties accountable by demanding that they commit to real solutions that address its root causes. And once a new government is in place, we will push to make those commitments a reality.

People in Canada cannot wait. The time to act is now. Together, we can ensure no one is left behind in the fight for a Canada in which no one goes hungry.

WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE DURING THE 2025 FEDERAL ELECTION

The food bank network includes thousands of people and organizations in communities across the country. If we work together during the upcoming election, we can:

- 1.** Inform election candidates and the public about food bank use in your community and throughout the country.
- 2.** Develop new relationships with candidates running for office in your community.
- 3.** Bring increased attention to the root causes of food bank use – specifically, the growing food-insecurity crisis in Canada.
- 4.** Encourage all political parties and candidates to commit to action on reducing food insecurity.

This guide contains tools to allow your food bank to participate in the democratic process and help you make the issues that matter to you, and those we support, a key part of the electoral debate. As a member of the food bank network, you are a first-hand witness to the impacts and trends that underline food insecurity. **You offer a valuable perspective that, along with the tools in this document, can be used to further our common goal of reducing poverty and food bank use across Canada.**



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT HUNGER IN CANADA

The following statistics from the [HUNGERCOUNT 2024](#) report show that food insecurity is continuing to increase sharply – to the point where the need for food banks is spiralling out of control. It took 25 years for food bank visits in Canada to reach 1 million visits a month, but just 5 years for that figure to double. This data can help you build your case when you are informing candidates about the urgent need to act on this issue.

TOP 3 FINDINGS TO SHARE

 **2 MILLION**
FOOD BANK VISITS EACH MONTH

 NEARLY **1 IN 4**
(23% OF) CANADIANS
ARE FOOD INSECURE

 **1 IN 3**
OF FOOD BANKS RAN OUT OF
FOOD BEFORE DEMAND WAS MET

ADDITIONAL STATS

- 1 in 3 food bank visitors are children
- 70% of food bank clients live in market rental housing
- Approximately 1 in 2 (45.5%) food bank clients are from racialized communities
- Nearly 1 in 5 food bank clients are employed but still can't make ends meet – this represents a 50% increase in just two years

While these figures paint a portrait of the national situation, it is also important that you **use local data** to inform the candidates and public in your community about the realities of food bank use and food insecurity. ([TOOL J](#) explains how to get statistics related to your federal riding. You can also use Food Banks Canada's [ADVOCACY TOOLKIT](#) for a step-by-step guide to getting a Link2Feed report.)

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR CHARITIES DURING THE ELECTION

Your organization can do many things during the election period to help bring attention to hunger and food bank use. **Since your organization is most likely a registered charity, you must follow some very strict and important guidelines during the election.**

GENERAL RULES

- As a registered charity, you are required by law to act in a non-partisan way – that is, you act in a politically neutral way.
- Your organization, and any representatives speaking on its behalf, **cannot publicly endorse or oppose** a specific candidate or specific political party.
- Your organization cannot display posters or literature or make public statements supporting or opposing any candidate or political party, either online or at your location.
- People associated with your organization – employees, board members, volunteers, etc. – **can** help political candidates or parties in a **personal** capacity. However, they **cannot** link this work to your organization’s work in any way.
- All candidates from all federal political parties with official status – that is, the Conservative Party of Canada, New Democratic Party, Liberal Party of Canada, and Bloc Québécois if you are in Quebec – must be given the same opportunity to participate in any event that you are hosting or are closely involved in. In addition, you can choose to include candidates from other political parties – for example, the Green Party of Canada – in your activities.
 - If you host a debate during the election period, you **must** invite all candidates from the official federal political parties to participate. They may choose to not participate, but they must be invited.
 - If you invite one candidate to visit your organization – for example, for a tour, a meal, etc. – you **must** invite the other candidates from each of the major federal political parties. The visits do not have to be at the same time, and it is fine if not all the candidates choose to visit, but they must be invited.

THIRD-PARTY STATUS AND ELECTION ADVERTISING RULES

- A third party is any person or group that wants to influence elections **and is not** a political party or candidate.
- Third parties must work independently of political parties and candidates.
- Organizations must register with Elections Canada as a third party if they spend more than \$500 in paid elections advertising – including issue advertising – in a pre-election or election period (see below for details on what qualifies as elections advertising). Organizations must register as a third party as soon as they meet the expense threshold.

WHAT COUNTS AS ELECTION ADVERTISING?

- Election advertising is the sending of paid advertising during the election period that directly or indirectly promotes or opposes a political party or candidates. A registered non-profit organization must not promote or oppose a political party, either directly or indirectly.
- Election advertising also includes issue advertising, which is sending paid ads to support or oppose an issue or position on an issue that is strongly associated with a particular party or candidate.
 - **Example:** The Conservative Party is strongly associated with the removal of the carbon tax. Ads supporting or opposing this policy during the election period would be considered issue advertising.
- As a general rule, your organization’s activities during the election period must all be politically neutral and focused on the policies, not on the candidates or political parties.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Imagine Canada webinar recording: *[Playing by the Rules: Election Guidelines for Charities and Nonprofits](#)*
- Elections Canada: *[Political Financing Handbook for Third Parties, Financial Agents and Auditors – November 2024](#)* and *[Frequently Asked Questions – Tools for Third Parties](#)*

When in doubt, please contact **Isaac Smith**, Manager of Government Relations and Policy, at isaac.smith@foodbankscanada.ca to discuss your questions.

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What Your Organization Can Do During the Federal Election

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INFORMING AND ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC

As a food bank, you are a vital community space and can help people – especially vulnerable people – vote in elections. We know that food banks have different capacities, so in this section we have outlined activities you can do and the levels of commitment they require.

Network Objective

We have two objectives when it comes to engaging with the public in the run-up to this election:

1. We want to **get the word** out about our call for change through:
 - a. Social media (e.g., Instagram, Facebook)
 - b. Public media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers)
2. We want to **educate our community** about how to vote with food banking and food insecurity in their minds.

Activities to Consider

1. Promote our campaign on social media

Objective: Get the word out



Effort level: Easy (5–30 minutes)   

Most, if not all, politicians these days use social media as part of their communications and elections strategies. See **TOOLL** for a list of resources and tips for posting effective messages on social media, including a social media guide with pre-designed posts and text to make the process as easy as possible.

If you are **short on time**, you can visit one of Food Banks Canada’s social media pages and share our content.

2. Promote our campaign through public media

Objective: Get the word out

Effort level: Moderate to difficult (30 minutes–5 hours)  

While social media is the best way to engage your existing audience using the resources you already have, it may not help you reach new audiences. Public media still has a far reach and is a good way to expose a whole new group of people to the realities of food bank use and food insecurity. Consider sending a media release (see **TOOL K**), inviting media to the food bank, or writing an op-ed (see the Food Banks Canada **ADVOCACY TOOLKIT** for tips).

3. Educate your community

Objective: Educate your community

Effort level: Easy to Difficult 🍁🍁🍁➡️🍁🍁🍁

Throughout the campaign period, our goal is to make sure we inform as many people as possible about the realities of food banking and food insecurity in Canada and that they have all the information they need to vote with those realities in mind.

Elections Canada offers multilingual resources, including Indigenous languages to help you understand every part of the election process. Food Banks Canada will also provide educational resources for you to use in your food bank location and online after the election dates are announced. In the meantime, here is some **information you could share**:

GETTING INFORMED

- Information about party promises (see **TOOL H**)
- How to sign Food Banks Canada's call for change (see **TOOL A**)
- Key Stats about Hunger in Canada (see **PAGE 9**) / Our Policy Recommendations (see **TOOL I**)

PREPARING TO VOTE

- [How to register](#) to vote.
- [How to vote](#)
- [FAQs on registration](#).
- [Voter checklist](#)

ELECTION DAY INFORMATION

- The election date
- [Accessibility support](#)
- [Voter ID information](#)
- [Find your electoral district](#)

Do you want to ask if your food bank could be selected as a polling station? See the [polling place suitability checklist](#) and [submit your request](#) on Elections Canada's website.

INFORMING AND ENGAGING CANDIDATES

As a food banker, you see hunger first-hand every day. But with so much happening right now, food insecurity may not be top of mind for all candidates during this election period. As Canada's food bank network, our job is to make food insecurity and surging food bank use a key issue this election.

Network Objective



We have two objectives when it comes to political candidates this election.

1. We want to **inform candidates** about:
 - a. The current state of hunger in Canada.
 - b. The causes of food bank use.
 - c. The policy solutions that can reduce food insecurity.
2. We want to **engage candidates** on the issues by asking them:
 - a. To commit to reducing food insecurity by 50% by 2030.
 - b. How they, and their party, will work to make this commitment a reality.

Activities to Consider

1. Create a candidate information packet

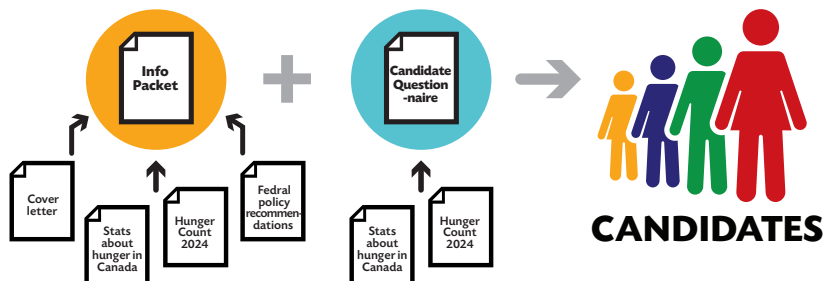
Objective: Inform candidates

Effort level: Moderate (1–2 hours)  

An information packet is a collection of information about your food bank and the issues you face daily. It will inform candidates and help make sure that hunger and food banks are not forgotten during the election period.


An informed candidate is more likely to support our call to reduce food insecurity.

See **TOOL B** for a step-by-step guide for how to create an information package.



2. Send out a questionnaire to candidates

Objective: Engage candidates


Effort level: Moderate (2–3 hours) 

If you cannot host a debate, sending a questionnaire – or a list of questions – about food bank use and food insecurity to candidates is a good way to learn about their knowledge of and views on these issues. Partnering with local organizations can help reduce your workload.

See **TOOL F** for more guidance.

3. Host a candidates' debate

Objective: Engage candidates


Effort level: High (6–10 hours) 

Hosting a debate can help cut through election noise and highlight food insecurity and food banking as a key election issue. It is a chance to inform candidates, press them on solutions, and build relationships that can help you advocate for change when a new government is formed.

See **TOOL E** for a step-by-step guide to holding a debate.

4. Invite candidates to visit your food bank

Objective: Inform candidates

Effort level: Moderate (1–2 hours) 

Inviting candidates to visit your food bank gives you a chance to show them first-hand how food insecurity impacts their community. Building your relationships with candidates now makes it easier to follow up with them once they have been elected. Planning a visit around an activity – for example, a meal, packing hampers, or meeting with volunteers and clients – can encourage more meaningful discussions.

See **TOOL D** for tips on hosting a visit.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Elections Canada – www.elections.ca
(for useful information about the candidates in your riding)

Conservative Party of Canada – www.conservative.ca

New Democratic Party of Canada – www.ndp.ca

Liberal Party of Canada – www.liberal.ca

Green Party of Canada – www.greenparty.ca

Bloc Quebecois – [*Bloc Québécois*](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Things change very quickly during an election period and there are always many moving parts. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or if there is anything you would like to discuss throughout the run-up to the election. We are here to help in any way we can.

Elections can be daunting for many organizations, but they are also a good way to get our message out there and to try to encourage lasting change at the federal level. As always, wherever there are challenges, there are also opportunities.

Thank you.

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OUR CALL FOR CHANGE

The centrepiece of our election campaign is our call for change. We are asking you and the public to join us in our mission to get every party to:

- 1. commit to reduce food insecurity by 50 by 2030, and**
- 2. to include steps in the platform that demonstrate how they will achieve this.**

By clicking the link below or scanning the QR code, anyone can put their name behind this call for change and be one of the thousands of people in Canada who are demanding that we end hunger in Canada once and for all.

Join the call for change – Food Banks Canada



INFORMATION PACKAGE TEMPLATE

An information package is a collection of information about your food bank and the issues you face daily. Use it to inform candidates and help make sure that hunger and food banks are not forgotten during the election period.

An informed candidate is more likely to support our call to reduce food insecurity.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR INFORMATION PACKAGE

- A cover letter (see **TOOL C** for a customizable template)
- Data about hunger in Canada (see **PAGE 9** for key statistics and **TOOL J** for access to data specific to your electoral riding)
- A copy of (or link to) **HUNGERCOUNT 2024**, which provides a national overview of food bank use in Canada
- Food Banks Canada's 2025 policy recommendations (see **TOOL I**)
- Your most recent annual report (if applicable)
- Other important information relevant to your food bank and community (see **TOOL J**)
- Your contact information

QUICK TIPS

- If you're making a printed package, it's a good idea to include a table of contents in your cover letter.
- If you're connecting with a candidate via email, keep your email as short as possible. Candidates are bombarded with information and so they are more likely to read short emails.
- Be sure to send your information package to all candidates running for office in your area.
- We've drafted a template for your cover letter, but we recommend you customize the letter with local stories and data. National trends are important, but community experiences are powerful.
- Ask for a response. Don't be afraid to follow up with any candidate who does not respond within two weeks.
- Have printed copies ready in case the media or candidates/campaign teams visit your organization unexpectedly.

DRAFT COVER LETTER TO CANDIDATES

[LOGO]

[Insert Mission Statement]

Dear [Candidate's Name],

My name is [insert your name] and I am contacting you from [insert organisation name] to discuss the alarming trends that we have been seeing in our community lately.

[Insert organisation name] is a food bank located in [find mnl/prv/fed riding].

We [list services offered at the food bank].

As you are likely aware, our organization and other food banks like ours have been overwhelmed by demand in recent months and years. We are working tirelessly each day to ensure that people in our community have the food they need to survive. They include an increasing number of working people and seniors, who are increasingly turning to food banks when their limited and often fixed incomes do not stretch far enough. Between the lingering impacts of the pandemic and more recent struggles arising from inflation and the increasing cost of living, it is clear to us that food insecurity has reached crisis levels across Canada and in [insert community name].

Figures in Food Banks Canada's *HungerCount 2024* report revealed that every month, food banks are visited 2 million times. This is almost double the number of visits in 2019, and food banks are collapsing under the strain.

We have seen a number of alarming trends at our location as well. Some key information is that:

- [list 2-5 stats from a recent Link2Feed report, from page 9, or using Tool J]

We know food banks cannot solve this crisis alone. Policy is the only solution to food insecurity and food banks use. **This is why we are calling on all parties to commit to reducing food insecurity by 50% by 2030.** To achieve this goal, we need leadership that moves beyond partisanship and embraces a Team Canada approach to tackling poverty and food insecurity at their core.

Why do we care so much? Because behind each one of these stats is a real person. We invite you this election period to engage with and commit to working for Canada's food-insecure.

- [Select one request based on your outreach strategy]

- **Receive an information pack:** We have gathered important information about the reality of food insecurity in Canada and in [insert community name]. We hope you will review it and share how you plan to help work towards real solutions.
- **Complete our candidate questionnaire:** We are asking all candidates in [insert riding name] to respond to our questionnaire about their views on food insecurity. We will publish responses to help our community understand where you stand and how you plan to help reduce food bank use.
- **Participate in a debate:** We are organizing a debate on food insecurity at [insert location] on [insert date and time] and invite you to join the conversation with your fellow candidates.
- **Visit our food bank:** We invite you to visit our food bank to see first-hand the challenges our community faces. This could include a tour, sharing a meal, volunteering, or meeting with those directly affected.

Food banks were only ever meant to be a temporary urgent relief system. They have now become a lifeline for far too many people in Canada. And that lifeline is fraying. I hope we can count on you to work with us on finding solutions to this increasingly urgent problem. We hope you will stand with us in building a Canada in which no one goes hungry.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization Name]

[Contact Information]

SITE VISITS

Food bank visits give you a chance to show candidates first-hand how food insecurity affects their community. Building relationships with candidates now makes it easier to follow up with them once they have been elected. Planning a visit around an activity – for example, a meal, packing hampers, or meeting with volunteers and clients – can allow for more meaningful discussions.

INVITING CANDIDATES

- Remember to invite all candidates from all major federal parties (Conservative, NDP, Liberal, Green, and Bloc Québécois if you are in Quebec).
 - They don't all need to accept, but you must invite each official party to avoid any perceived bias.
 - You could also invite all candidates, rather than limiting your invitations to the major parties. Lesser-known candidates may have more freedom to talk about hunger and food bank use as part of their campaign.
- It is a good idea to send the invitations by email so that you have a record that all major parties were invited.
- Clearly outline the purpose, schedule, and time commitment in your invitation.

QUICK TIPS

- If your organization has the capacity, we recommend that you invite the candidates for a meal as part of their visit. This will give you a solid period of time in which to inform each candidate about your work and the issues you face in your community.
- You could also invite candidates to meet volunteers, help sort food, harvest food, attend a cooking class, or help pack hampers to get a hands-on understanding of your work.
- Make sure you have prepared and printed an information package with the policy recommendations so that the candidates and their campaign teams leave the meeting with the information you want them to remember (see **TOOL B** for an information package template).
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. This is a good opportunity to find out what the candidates think and to stimulate their thoughts about some of the difficult decisions they may be tasked with in their future role as an MP. You can use the candidate questionnaire tool (**TOOL G**) to help you make a list of questions.
- Thank the candidates for their time and efforts and let them know you look forward to working with them in the future.

HOSTING A FEDERAL ELECTION DEBATE

Hosting a debate can help cut through election noise and highlight food banking and food insecurity as an important issue. While a debate can be time-consuming to organize, it is a good way to:

- stimulate important discussions,
- provide an opportunity for the people you serve to have their say, and
- increase your organization's profile within your community.

Food Banks Canada has created this guide to take you through the process for setting up a debate step by step.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Consider these three things before you begin to plan a debate:

1. You can greatly reduce the time required to set up a debate by inviting like-minded organizations to co-host it.
2. During the 2025 federal election period, **Food Banks Canada will be available to help** all food banks and provincial associations that wish to host election debates. We can help you plan a debate, contact the major political parties, share details about the debate with the public, and help you manage media interest.
3. Remember, as a registered charity, your organization **cannot show any form of preference** for one candidate, one party, or one party's platform over another. All staff representing your organization must always be politically neutral. See the [Rules and Regulations For Charities During The Election](#) for more information.

PHASE ONE: SETTING UP FOR THE DEBATE

Here are some early steps to take to increase the profile and success of your debate.

1. **Create an organizing committee and begin planning**
When: Ideally two months before voting day (the earlier the better)

We recommend that you create an organizing committee within your organization, or in partnership with other community organizations, to organize the logistics of the debate before the campaign period.

2. Book a venue

When: As soon as you decide to host a debate

Confirm the time and place of the debate and then book it. The debate could take place at your location or wherever there is adequate space – for example a local hall, community centre, library, etc. Debates can also be held virtually on Zoom, but it is easier to build relationships with candidates in person.

3. Confirm a moderator

When: As soon as you have a time and place for the debate

Choose a moderator and ensure that they are politically neutral. The chair of your board, local media personalities, or other respected community figures are often a good fit.

4. Invite candidates

When: As soon as you have a time and place for the debate

Invite all candidates to the debate:

- All candidates have a campaign manager. They should be your first point of contact (unless you know candidates personally, in which case direct contact would be appropriate).
- Most candidates from the major parties will have a website during the election period that includes a contact phone number and email. Elections Canada (www.elections.ca) will also have these details if you need them.

Remember, **candidates from all major parties** must be given an equal chance to take part.

5. Send out a media alert

When: Once candidates have confirmed their participation

Send a media alert and invite your local media (see **TOOL K** for a template media alert). Consider calling all local media outlets directly to suggest they run a story about the upcoming debate.

6. Continue to promote the debate

When: Once candidates have confirmed their participation and continuing up to the debate

Promote the event on social media and to your email list (if you have these). Social media can be a great way to reach a lot of people in your community. Make every effort possible to publicize the event so that there is good attendance from members of your community, your organization's staff, board, volunteers, clients who have been helped by your programs, and members of the public.

It is also a good idea to reach out to organizations in your community to ask them to publicize and attend the debate, and to contribute to the open question period.

PHASE TWO: OUTLINING THE DEBATE FORMAT

This debate format will help you ensure that each candidate is treated equally and fairly. It will show everyone involved that the process is neutral and objective. A debate involving three candidates should last for 80–90 minutes. You may have to adjust the timing slightly if there are more candidates.

1. Introduction/Moderator's Welcome (5 minutes)

- The moderator introduces the candidates and briefly explains the debate format, rules, and focus.
 - These details should also be shared with the candidates and/or their campaign team in advance of the debate.
 - Candidates should be welcomed in order of their number of seats in the current House of Commons: Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Green, other.

2. Opening Statements (9–12 minutes)

- Each candidate has 3 minutes to introduce themselves and present their opening statement.
- The order in which the candidates make their opening statements and answer questions must be picked at random in an open display (e.g., picking names from a hat in front of the participating candidates' campaign managers).

3. Main Debate (40–50 minutes)

- **Moderator questions** (roughly 10 minutes per round)
 - Each candidate has 90 seconds to respond.
 - Each candidate has 1 minute for rebuttals.
 - Repeat 3 to 4 times.
- **Audience questions** (roughly 15 minutes)
 - Select audience members to ask questions. This should be done in a fair way, like in order of who puts their hand up first. These questions be related to the issues and topics laid out in the moderator’s opening statement. The moderator is in charge of making sure questions are on topic.
 - Each candidate has 1 minute to respond.

4. Closing Statements (6–8 minutes)

- Each candidate has 2 minutes to present their closing statement.

5. Conclusion (5 minutes)

- The moderator thanks the candidates and the audience and concludes the debate.

PHASE THREE: THE DEBATE

Phases one and two will help you picture how the debate might look and what you will need to get the process started. You will have to consider a variety of smaller points as well. For example:

- **What questions you will ask: TOOL G** shows several options for debate questions that will cover a broad range of issues relating to food insecurity. You may choose to add more or use your own.
- **Controlling access to the event:** You will need a way for the public to register to attend. You will also need to take registration and confirm people’s identity when they arrive.
- **Security:** This is likely not a concern, but you may need to hire professional security or ask for volunteer police personnel to attend. Consider if you want to have bags checked or to have metal scanners in place.
- **AV:** Does your venue have AV equipment or will you need to rent some?
- **Accessibility:** How will you make your event accessible to everyone?
- **Follow-up steps:** After the event, you will want to follow up with the candidates to gather their feedback and assess the impact of the event.

We strongly recommend reaching out to Food Banks Canada if you are thinking about hosting a debate. **Dana Vreeswijk**, Policy and Advocacy Officer can be reached at dana.vreeswijk@foodbankscanada.ca

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

If you cannot host a debate (see **TOOL E**), sending a questionnaire – or a list of questions about food bank use and food insecurity to candidates is a good way to learn about their knowledge of and views on these issues. Remember that partnering with local organizations can help reduce your workload.

STEP-BY-STEP QUESTIONNAIRE PROCESS

1. Create the questionnaire

- Use the debate and questionnaire questions listed in **TOOL G** as a starting point.
- Make sure your questions are narrow and specific. If a question is too broad, the candidate may be able to avoid actually answering it.
- Ask specific, open-ended questions that let candidates give detailed answers.
- It can also be good to include simple questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
- Keep it brief. Be mindful of the candidates’ busy schedules. Try to keep it to 10 or fewer strong questions.

2. Send the Questionnaire

- Send the same questionnaire to all candidates running for the same seat.
- Include a cover letter. (See **TOOL C** for a customizable letter.)
- Contact campaign managers first, unless you know the candidates personally.
- Set a deadline for when you expect a response – three to four weeks is reasonable. Tell candidates about this timeline and how you will publish their answers.
- It’s okay if the candidates only answers some of the questions.

3. Publish the results

- Publish the results on your website or social media accounts.
- Publish the results from all the candidates at the same time. Do not edit, paraphrase or comment on responses.

WHAT IF CANDIDATES DON’T RESPOND?

If you have reached out several times and have received no response, you can list “did not respond” as their response to each question.

SAMPLE DEBATE AND CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

These questions can be used for a debate or be sent to candidates for them to respond. If preparing for a debate, it is a good idea to send candidates the questions ahead of time, so they have an opportunity to develop their responses. The goal of the debate and questionnaire is to highlight each candidate's and their party's position on a given issue, and also to put the parties and the candidates in a position to think deeper about hunger and poverty.

Before you ask a question, give some background information that is related to the question.

Here are some suggested background comments and related questions that Food Banks Canada believes will yield thoughtful responses from candidates.

1. Each month, food banks across Canada receive more than 2 million visits from community members in need. Our community is no different [**add local data if desired**]. This shocking level of need is reflective of a much greater food-insecurity crisis, as nearly 1 in 4 people in Canada are now food insecure. As such, food banks across the country are calling on all federal parties to introduce a plan to reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2030.

My first question is this: What will your federal party do to significantly reduce the number of people experiencing food insecurity in Canada, and will your party commit to meeting the target for 2030?

2. The high cost of housing is consistently listed as one of the main reasons why people need a food bank. This challenge is especially true for renters, who represent roughly 70% of food bank clients. While recent actions taken by the federal and provincial governments are promising, it will take a long time for them to have a direct impact on the cost of housing for people in our community.

What will you and your party do, in both the short and the long term, to help reduce the cost of housing in general, and more specifically, for low-income people looking for a safe, yet affordable place to live?

- 3.** A recent report showed that only about 1 in 3 unemployed workers in Canada are receiving Employment Insurance. The lowest rate in history. In the early 1990s, that figure was more than 80%. Not only that, but low-income workers are also worse off than they were in then because wages have failed to keep up with the rising cost of living. The result? 1 in 5 food bank visits are now coming from people in Canada's workforce. This is a record-high rate.

What will you and your party do to fix our EI system? How will you make sure there are good, well-paying, permanent jobs in our region and throughout Canada?

- 4.** **What do you believe is the most pressing social issue in our region? What will you and your party do to address this issue?**

- 5.** One of the most worrisome trends that food banks continue to see across the country is the increase in single adults needing help. This group of people, who are working-age and live alone, have essentially become the "forgotten poor" in our communities as there are very few social programs to support them.

What will you and your party do to better support low-income working-age adults who live alone so that they no longer need the support of their local food bank to make ends meet?

- 6.** Indigenous and racialized individuals are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and represent a disproportionate number of food bank users.

What will you and your party do to promote equality both within our community and elsewhere? How will your efforts work toward reducing poverty and food insecurity among Indigenous and racialized communities in Canada?

- 7.** In most communities across Canada, only 5% of people receive provincial disability benefits. That's about one in twenty people. Despite this, they make up 30% of food bank visitors. People with disabilities are one of the hardest hit communities when it comes to food insecurity. While recent advancements in the Canada Disability Benefit are promising, the amount of support, concerns around clawbacks, and restrictions on accessing the benefit remain large concerns.

Do you and your party plan to increase the CDB amount to better support Canadians with disabilities? What other steps will you take to make sure people with disabilities are financially secure and can live with dignity?



ONLINE PARTY PLATFORM MONITOR

During the election, Food Banks Canada will be constantly monitoring and updating a Party Platform Monitor that will list what each party is promising regarding policies that can impact food banks and those we support.

This will be an evolving document and we will share more details when the platform goes live during the election.

Party Platform Monitor



FOOD BANKS CANADA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The food bank network is coming together this election period to call for one central recommendation:

THAT ALL PARTIES COMMIT TO REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY BY 50% BY 2030

and outline in their platforms how they will achieve this plan.

If you need more policy recommendations, Food Banks Canada recommends sharing the following.

1. Rebuild Canada's Social Safety Net

- a.** Ensure all federal benefits are indexed to inflation and that agreements with provincial governments explicitly forbid clawbacks of provincial social supports for new federal benefit programs such as the CDB.
- b.** Make single adults with low incomes a priority consideration in all future poverty-reduction measures, including an expanded and modernized EI, to ensure that this population is no longer left behind.
 - i.** As part of this, commit to a clear timetable for when your government would bring forward EI modernization reforms.

2. Solve the Affordable Housing Crisis

- a.** Commit to examining the potential for a national rent assistance program, delivered in collaboration with the provinces and territories as part of the federal-provincial housing agreements.
- b.** Introduce new investments to build more supportive housing for people who have mental and physical health issues, particularly among populations that are marginalized or living with low incomes.
- c.** Double the Canada Rental Protection Fund from \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion.

3. Help Workers with Low Incomes

- a. Permanently broaden the EI qualifying definition of “employment” to include self-employed and precarious work.
- b. Offer improved support to workers who are currently employed and have a low income.
- c. Immediately expand the Working-While-on-Claim (WWC) provisions in EI to allow workers to retain more of their income from temporary/part-time work while on EI without losing benefits or having their income clawed back.
- d. Review and reduce the number of qualifying “hours of employment” needed (currently between 420 and 700 hours of insurable employment) to better reflect the nature of modern jobs and working situations.
- e. Extend the maximum duration of EI benefits beyond 45 weeks to 52 weeks, followed by a staggered reduction in cash benefits while retaining access to non-cash EI supports (such as training and education) so that people are not forced into our broken and grossly inadequate provincial social assistance system once their EI benefits run out.

4. Address the Unique Challenges of Food Insecurity and Poverty in the North

- a. Examine options for improving the design of the Northern Residents Deduction (NRD).
- b. As part of the federal government’s Critical Minerals Strategy, there must be a clear focus on the development of community infrastructure in Northern communities – for example, housing, educational institutions, and broadband Internet – so that residents benefit from these resource projects, and on the development of incentives and strategies to retain capital in the North and reduce the reliance on temporary workers.
- c. Offer additional training for remote work skills and funding for the procurement of work-from-home supplies.

For a full view of Food Banks Canada’s policy recommendations, see

[Policy Recommendations - Food Banks Canada](#)



INTERACTIVE FEDERAL RIDING DATA MAP

1. Click the link or scan the QR code on your smartphone.
2. Find your federal election riding on the map.
3. Read statistics related to housing affordability, unemployment, child poverty, and more, all specific to your area.

Easy as 1-2-3!

Poverty Vulnerability Map





SAMPLE MEDIA ALERT

[Location, month day, 2025]

Media Advisory

FEDERAL ELECTION CANDIDATES WILL DISCUSS SOCIAL ISSUES IN LOCAL DEBATE

News media are invited to attend a federal election debate where [organization names] will host local election candidates to debate issues related to food insecurity and food bank use.

Date:

Time:

Where:

Who: Moderator
Candidate 1
Candidate 2
Candidate 3
Etc.

[description of the organization or organizations that are hosting the debate]

Contacts:

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Most, if not all, politicians these days use social media as part of their communications and elections strategies. Below are some basic guidelines to follow if you are thinking about using social media as an organisation to engage in the election and promote the network's policy recommendations.

Check your inbox! Food Banks Canada will also send a social media guide with pre-written posts to make using social media as easy as possible. If you're **short on time**, visit one of Food Banks Canada's social media pages and share our content.

DO'S

- Have a clear, targeted message.
- Create a plan for what you want to communicate before you start – and stick to it.
- Talk about specific ideas and suggest policy solutions that you feel would help your community.
- Bring your organization's unique message into the policy narrative. Considering using stories and stats that are specific to your area to engage your audience with these larger policy asks. (See **TOOL J** for how to find statistics related to your federal riding.)
- Have fun, use emojis!
- Avoid grammar and spelling mistakes. Have a second set of eyes review your content before you publish it.
- Use alt text for followers who have disabilities.
- If you're referencing an article or external link, be sure to include the relevant link.

DON'TS

- Favour one candidate or one party over another. Everything you write must always be neutral. The Canada Revenue Agency increases its monitoring during the election period and charities can face stiff penalties if they make partisan statements during this time.
- Share posts by other people or organizations unless you are sure that what you are sharing does not breach your requirement to be politically neutral.
- Link your social media content to political articles.
- Endorse a candidate or a party – directly or indirectly – even if they say they support similar policies.

If you have any doubt about what you are posting during or before the campaign, please contact Dana Vreeswijk, Policy and Advocacy Officer, at dana.vreeswijk@foodbankscanada.ca

2025



Cut Canadian Food Insecurity in Half by 2030



foodbankscanada.ca    **@foodbankscanada**