



HUNGER COUNT MONTREAL 2012

Report on the use of Emergency Food Aid services
on the Island of Montreal

October 2012

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About Moisson Montréal

Founded in 1984, Moisson Montreal is the largest center for commodity collection, sorting and distribution of food for emergency food aid on the Island of Montreal. More than 200 community organizations receive goods from Moisson Montreal to meet the food needs and demands of individuals and families that they serve.

OUR MISSION:

- Ensure an optimal food supply to the community organizations that provide assistance to people in crisis on the Island of Montréal.
- Foster the development of sustainable solutions to ensure food security.

STATISTICS THAT SPEAK:

- 142 142 people, of which 40,9 % are children, are helped each month through the organizations we serve.
- 10.4 million pounds of food and other essential commodities are distributed (value of \$ 55.9 million)
- Moisson Montreal collaborates with more than 150 food vendors.
- Nearly 4,000 volunteers take part in our activities, and represent an essential contribution which would symbolize nearly 40 full-time employees.

EXTRAORDINARY LEVERAGE EFFECT!

Every 1 dollar received allows Moisson Montreal to redistribute 15 dollars' worth of food. For example, a donation of \$ 15 enables us to distribute \$ 225 worth of food, which is an amount sufficient to feed one family of four with healthy and nutritious foods for one week. (as determined by the Montreal Diet Dispensary).

OUR BUSINESS:

- Receive, sort, store and distribute perishable and non-perishable food items
- Strengthen the solidarity chain, while listening and ensuring a presence with the recipient organizations
- Provide a stimulating learning environment and develop incentives for participants in various programs of social integration and employment
- Organize or participate in major activities in the fight against hunger like: The Great Food Drive for Children (organized by Moisson Montreal) as well as La grande guignolée des médias
- Ensure the creation and development of sustainable solutions for food safety, like for instance our Good Food Box program (www.bonneboitebonnebouffe.org)

OUR FACILITIES:

From 2008 to 2011, Moisson Montreal was the pilot project of the first major renovation venture ever undertaken by the *Coalition énergie et construction durable* for the account of an NPO. Thanks to the generosity and commitment of dozens of professionals and suppliers, Moisson Montreal now has facilities that are comfortable, well-appointed and optimal on the plan of energy efficiency.

Our Values:

Respect, Integrity, Fairness, People Helping People, Commitment

About Hunger Count

Hunger Count is an annual survey of food banks part of the Food Banks Canada (FBC) network that is conducted throughout the country in the month of March. The survey's aim is to measure the use of food banks by community organizations all across Canada. As the largest Canadian food bank in terms of foodstuff distribution and within the framework of this national operation, Moisson Montréal produces its own Hunger Count based on the data it collects from the community organizations it serves across the island of Montreal.

Hunger Count is divided into three components:

- I. Representation of food aid from a **FOODSTUFF DISTRIBUTION** perspective;
- II. Overview of food aid from a **MEALS AND SNACKS** perspective;
- III. **RECOMMENDATIONS** from community organizations to reduce hunger in Montreal.

However, due to the rather immediate nature of the collected data, the representation provided by Hunger Count is limited. The reason the survey is conducted in the month of March is because it best illustrates a time of year when food banks and community organizations are deemed to be operating normally. However, in practice the number and type of people seeking assistance change throughout the year due to a variety of factors such as time of year, economic conditions, activities provided by the various community organizations, etc. Nonetheless the Hunger Count document remains a very practical and informative tool that provides a better overall understanding of the needs of families and people seeking assistance from various emergency food aid services.

A FEW DEFINITIONS

Direct Organization:

Community organization supplied directly from Moisson Montréal on a regular basis, at least once per month. In March of 2012, **198** out of 206 direct organizations completed the Hunger Count survey, thus the Hunger Count received a **96.0%** participation rate. The eight (8) organizations that did not respond did not have to complete the questionnaire due to the infrequent or immediate nature of the services provided by Moisson Montréal. Please note that another group, comprising 65 community organizations, was not required to complete the survey due to the sporadic quality of their requests for assistance.

Foodstuff Distribution Program:

The Foodstuff Distribution Program is essentially a representation of the following list of services offered by organizations:

- Food baskets distributed on set dates (weekly, twice monthly, ,monthly, etc.);
- Community food shopping;
- Emergency food aid.

Meal Program:

The Meal Program is primarily comprised of the following food assistance services offered by community organizations:

- Prepared meals
- Snack distribution
- Cooking collectives and cooking workshops

Household:

One or more people living together under one roof. People may or may not be members of the same family.

Hunger Count Montreal 2012: Key Results

General Information

- ❖ In March of 2012, **206 organizations** received services from Moisson Montréal and **198 of these organizations** filled out the Hunger Count questionnaire. Eight (8) organizations were not required to complete the questionnaire due to the infrequent and immediate nature of the services provided by Moisson Montréal.
- ❖ Overall, **142,142 people** required some type of emergency food assistance from the 198 organizations that completed the Hunger Count compared with 148,460 in March of 2011 (a 4.25% decrease);
- ❖ Overall, 4,833 households declared having used a food bank for the first time in 2012, compared with 4,074 in March of 2011 (a change of + 18.6%);

Key Results: Foodstuff Program

- ❖ **64,214 people** used the Foodstuff Program in March of 2012, compared with 70,926 in 2011, a **9.4% decrease (6,712 people)** compared with March, 2011;
- ❖ Organizations offering Foodstuff Programs were able to fill **146,317 requests for aid** in the month of March 2012.
- ❖ **59.1%** (37,950) of people who used the Program were adults versus **62.6 %** in 2011;
- ❖ **40.9%** (26,264) of people who used the Program were children versus **37.4 %** in 2011.

Key Results: Meal Program

- ❖ 459,777 portions of food were served in March of 2012, of which:
 - 385,153 were meals;
 - 74,624 were snacks.
- ❖ The number of people who used the Meal Program is estimated at 77,928 compared with 77,534 in 2011, which represents a variation of 394 people (a + 0.5% difference).

Hunger: An Ever-present Issue of Concern

Moisson Montréal collects and redistributes foodstuffs to different community organizations across the Island of Montreal on a regular or immediate basis. We do not provide direct services to individuals and only intervenes through its partner organizations operating programs to assist low-income households. Emergency food aid programs may be our partner organizations' primary activity, while at other times it is but one activity among a range of services being provided, including the social integration of new citizens to orientation activities and job search assistance to support for pregnant women, and helping families in crisis, etc. In fact, emergency food aid is not an end in itself. On a larger scale, it is one of several measures that must exist to support individuals and families who seek a better quality of life and greater independence.

Present Throughout the Territory through Partner Organizations

Table #1 (page 8) represents a breakdown of the 206 organizations served by Moisson Montréal across the Island of Montreal. These organizations seek our services once or twice a week, every two weeks or even once a month, it all depends on their capacity to store or to distribute the foodstuffs supplied. On a more immediate basis, Moisson Montréal also meets a specific need in terms of supporting all organizations that plan cultural or recreational activities to break the isolation of certain groups of people. The following table illustrates the geographical analysis of organizations served by Moisson Montréal. The largest concentration of organizations is in Ville-Marie (34 organizations) and in southwest Montreal (25 organizations).

Table 1: Analysis of organizations served by Moisson Montréal, per borough, March, 2012.

Borough	Number of organizations	Percentage
Ahuntsic/Cartierville	11	5.3%
Anjou	2	1.0%
Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce	12	5.8%
Dorval	1	0.5%
Lachine	5	2.4%
Lasalle	3	1.5%
Mercier/Hochelaga/Maisonneuve	17	8.3%
Montreal-East	2	1.0%
Montreal-North	8	3.9%
Pierrefonds/Roxboro	5	2.4%
Plateau-Mont-Royal	18	8.8%
Pointe-Claire	4	1.9%
Rivière-des-Prairies/Pointes-aux-Trembles	6	2.9%
Rosemont/La Petite-Patrie	12	5.8%
Saint-Laurent	9	4.4%
Saint-Léonard	4	1.9%
South-West	25	12.1%
Verdun	7	3.4%
Ville-Marie	34	16.5%
Villeray/Saint-Michel/Parc-Extension	20	9.7%
Westmount	1	0.5%
Total	206	100.0%

Massive Work Load Requires the Contribution of our Fellow Citizens.

The 198 organizations that completed the Hunger Count 2012 questionnaire reported that nearly **42% of their work is performed by volunteers**, evidence that the vitality of organizations operating in social and community fields depends not only on adequate financing but on the social commitment and the solidarity of Montrealers.

The table below presents a number of organizations that provide a specific food-related service.

Table 2: Breakdown of organizations per service offered in March, 2012

Service offered	Foodstuff	Meal	Snack Program	Warehouse/Distribution Centre
Number of organizations	158/198	120/198	68/198	10/198
% of all respondents	79.8%	60.6%	34.3%	5.0%

Note: The total exceeds the total number of respondents (198) since one organization can provide more than one service.

Section I: Foodstuff Distribution Program

The table below presents a summary overview of people on the Island of Montreal who sought food aid in the form of foodstuff distribution in the month of March, 2012. The total number of people who used the Foodstuff Distribution Program in March, 2012 is 64,214 compared with 70,926 in 2011, which represents 6,712 fewer people (-9.4%).

Table 3: Changes in the age of people using the Foodstuff Program in March, 2012.

Age Group	Number of people 2012		Number of people 2011		Variation (in % points)
	Count	%	Count	%	
Children (0-17 years old)	26,264	40.9%	26,526	37.4%	+ 3.5
Adults (18-64 years old)	34,739	54.1%	39,293	55.4%	- 1.3
Adults (65 and over)	3,211	5.0%	5,107	7.2%	- 2.2
Total	64,214	100%	70,926	100%	

Comments: There is a drop in the number of adults seeking assistance from the Foodstuff Program and a proportional decrease in the number of seniors. Hypothetically, the decrease could be attributed to the aforementioned users switching to a meal program. However, even if the number of children using the Foodstuff Distribution Program has remained virtually the same in 2011 and 2012, they now represent a larger proportion of users (37.4% in 2011 compared with 40.9% in 2012).

Household Statistics

The following tables focus on the composition, income sources and housing conditions of households seeking assistance from the Foodstuff Program.

*Note: The total number of households surveyed is estimated at **32,531**. Note for that each question, households that did not respond were excluded in an effort to present a clearer illustration of the actual situation.*

Table 4: Composition of households using the Foodstuff Program in March, 2012

Household composition	Number of households 2012	Percentage 2012
Two-parent families	9,398	34.2%
Single-parent families	6,015	21.9%
Couples with no children	3,241	11.8%
Single individuals	8,804	32.1%
Total respondents	27,458	100%

Comments: Single and two-parent families represent a larger proportion of users– 21.9% and 34.2% respectively - than in 2011, when they represented respectively 20.6% and 27.1% of the total number of users. The combined total of these two groups of respondents is 56.1% in 2012 compared with 47.7% in 2011. As for single individuals, they now comprise a lower proportion of users in 2012 with 32.1% compared with 41.3% of total users in 2011.

Table 5: Main sources of incomes for households using the Foodstuff Program in March, 2012.

Sources of income	Number of households 2012	Percentage 2012
Social assistance	16,827	61.5%
Employment	2,964	10.8%
Student loan and/or bursary	975	3.6%
Pension income	2,019	7.4%
Employment insurance	1,260	4.6%
No income	1,698	6.2%
Other income	1,071	3.9%
Private plan or CSST	131	0.5%
Social solidarity	424	1.5%
Total household respondents	27,369	100%

Comments: As in previous years, people living on social assistance continue to make up the largest group of users; from 51.2% in 2011 to 61.5% of the total number of respondents in 2012. The proportion of households whose primary source of income is employment has dropped slightly from 13.3% of respondents in 2011 to 10.3% in 2012. Another recorded drop is in households whose primary source of income is a student loan and/or bursary: 9.4% in 2011 down to 3.6% in 2012 (2,376 fewer households). Data compiled between 2008 and 2011 illustrated a marked increase in this particular group of respondents; we should therefore wait for the results from the Hunger Count 2013 before confirming any kind of trend. Note that the student strike, which started in February 2012, may have had an impact on the group's results.

Table 6: Housing conditions for households using the Foodstuff Program in March, 2012.

Housing conditions	Number of households	Percentage 2012
Homeowner	767	3.4%
Rental housing	13,909	60.8%
Social/subsidized social housing	5,767	25.2%
Band-owned housing	50	0.2%
Emergency shelter	858	3.7%
Group home or youth centre	188	0.8%
Living on the street	774	3.4%
Temporarily living with family or friends	582	2.5%
Total respondents	22,895	100%

Comments: We are unable to compare 2011 with 2012 since data compiled for 2011 was on a per person basis rather than per household. In 2012, households in the rental housing market constituted the largest group of respondents. This corroborates the results obtained for 2011, where 65.0% of respondents reported the same type of housing conditions.

Section II: Meal Program

Some organizations provide their clientele with meals prepared on a daily or occasional basis by volunteers or employees working in the Meal Program. Users are occasionally required to pay a token amount for the meal. In some cases, the meal provided by the community centre is the only nutritious meal of the day. Other services are grouped together under the umbrella of the Meal Program as per the framework agreed upon for the Hunger Count, such as snack distribution, cooking workshops, cooking collectives, etc. The final step of these services is the distribution of prepared food portions.

Table 7: Number of meals and snacks served in March, 2012

Portions served	Number 2012	Number 2011	Variation 2011-2012 (number)	Variation 2011-2012 (%)
Meals	385,153	337,707	47,446	14%
Snacks	74,624	96,563	(21,939)	(22.7%)
Total	459,777	434,270	25,507	5.9%

Comments: We observed a marked rise in the number of meals served in the month of March, 2012 (385,153) compared with March, 2011 (337,707); representing a 14% increase.

Table 8: Household composition of users of the Meal Program, 2011-2012 comparison

Household composition	Percentage 2012	Percentage 2011
Two-parent families	22.5%	27.1%
Single-parent families	17.0%	20.6%
Couples with no children	9.0%	11.0%
Single individuals	51.5%	41.3%
Total	100%	100%

Section III: Recommendations and Conclusions

Every year, Food Banks Québec, through the Hunger Count operation, seeks to collect feedback from food banks and community organizations on government initiatives and public policies that would have the greatest impact on the fight to get rid of hunger. We posed that same question to the organizations that filled out the Montreal Hunger Count questionnaires. The five (5) most frequently answered proposals were as follows:

- Increase the number of affordable housing possibilities;
- Increase social assistance benefits;
- Increase the availability/accessibility of rental housing;
- Increase minimum wage in the province;
- Increase the availability of subsidized childcare.

Other priorities were also mentioned, such as easier access to employment insurance and improved orientation services for new citizens.

Summary

The number of people seeking emergency food aid through Moisson Montréal's partner organizations has remained somewhat stable from 2011 to 2012, which supports the conclusions published earlier in 2012, in a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)¹. As this document illustrates, hunger worldwide decreased in the early part of the millennium (2000 to 2007), however and according to FAO, the trend ended as the world entered an economic crisis, a rise in food prices, increased demand for bio-fuels and climate changes.

As we experience a very cautious economic recovery in Canada, we can't help but note that the issue of hunger is intimately related to poverty and remains a major concern across the Island of Montreal, witness to an economic polarization of households and an ever-widening chasm that separates the most financially secure ones from the poorest in both geographical and social terms. We should also stress that hunger is probably more widespread than what the Montreal Hunger Count actually represents since it only considers the support provided to Moisson Montréal's partner organizations. If 29% of Montreal's population lives under the before tax low income poverty level² and our partner organizations serve 7% of the overall population (which in itself is considerable), we can only imagine how many Montrealers go to bed hungry each and every day in silence.

¹ Source : <http://www.fao.org/hunger/hunger-home/fr/>, October 24, 2012

² Source : http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=8258,90427808&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL, October 24, 2012

Beyond the work that still needs to be done to ensure that optimum emergency food aid services are delivered, all the players involved in socioeconomic development, both locally and regionally, must focus their attention on developing sustainable solutions to provide Montrealers with the means to improve their quality of life in the long term, to take charge of their own lives and once and for all, to leave hunger behind.