



# HUNGER COUNT MONTREAL 2013

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

November 2013

## Hunger Count Montreal 2013

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## About Moisson Montréal

Founded in 1984, Moisson Montreal is a major center for the 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:

- More than **200 community organizations** across the Island of Montreal are serviced on a regular basis (and 76 sporadically) by Moisson Montreal throughout the year;
- According to the 2013 Hunger Count, **137,347 people, 37,897 of whom are children** 0-17 years of age (28% of the beneficiaries), receive food aid each month through partner organizations;
- Close to **12.9 million kilos of foodstuffs** and other basic products were distributed (an increase of 23,6% in one year) representing a **value of \$ 71.5 million**;
- Moisson Montreal works closely with **233 agri-food businesses** to effectively collect their donations;
- In 2012, **5,787 volunteer** put in more than **71,370 hours** to help us continue our mission, which represents 40 full-time employees.

### EXTRAORDINARY LEVERAGE EFFECT!

Every 1 dollar received allows Moisson Montreal to redistribute **17 dollars' worth of food**. For example, a donation of \$ 15 enables us to distribute \$ 255 worth of food, which is an amount sufficient to feed one family of four with healthy and nutritious food for over 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 accredited partner 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](http://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.

In order to keep increasing the quantity, quality and diversity of food distributed to accredited partner organizations, Moisson Montreal constantly continues to expand its operations. In 2013-2014, many projects are put forward, such as the supermarket meat recuperation project and the food transformation project.

***Our Values:  
Respect, Integrity, Fairness, Solidarity, 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.

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 2013, **201** out of **205** direct organizations completed the Hunger Count survey, thus the Hunger Count received a **98.0%** participation rate. The four (4) organizations that did not respond did not have to complete the questionnaire due to the temporary closure of their organization during this selected period. Please note that another group, comprising 76 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, bi-weekly, 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 (ex. Meals on wheels)
- 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 2013: Key Results

### General Information

- ❖ In March of 2013, **201 organizations** received services from Moisson Montréal. **100% of these organizations** filled out the Hunger Count questionnaire. Four (4) other organizations were not required to complete the questionnaire due to the temporary closure during this period.
- ❖ Overall, **135,347 people** required some type of emergency food assistance from the 201 organizations that completed the Hunger Count compared with 142,142 in March of 2012;
- ❖ Overall, **3,337 households** declared having used a food bank for the **first time** in 2013, compared with 4,833 in March of 2012;

### Key Results: Foodstuff Program

- ❖ **69,920 people** used the Foodstuff Program in March of 2013, compared with 64,214 in 2012, a **8.9% increase (5,706 people)** compared with March 2012;
- ❖ Organizations offering Foodstuff Programs were able to fill **148,054 requests for aid** in the month of March 2013;
- ❖ **59.2%** (41,393) of people who used the Program were adults versus **59.1%** in 2012;
- ❖ **40.8%** (28,536) of people who used the Program were children versus **40.9 %** in 2012.

### Key Results: Meal Program

- ❖ 385,143 portions of food were served in March of 2012, of which:
  - **305,143** were meals, including cooking collectives, meal on wheels portions, etc.;
  - **80,844** were snacks.
- ❖ The number of people who used the Meal Program is estimated at **65,421** compared with 77,928 in 2012, which represents a variation of 12,507 people (a 16% decrease).

## 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 intervene 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. (Table 1). 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.

**Table 1: Principal service offered by the partner organizations**

Principal Service	Organizations	%
Primarily food-related (Ex., food counter/emergency food-aid/food baskets, cooking collectives, soup kitchens, meals on wheels, etc.)	121/201	60,2 %
Primarily non-food-related (Ex., shelter, day center, other services, etc.)	80/201	39,8 %

### Present Throughout the Territory through Partner Organizations

Table 2 (page 9) represents a breakdown of the 201 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 (31 organizations) and in Southwest Montreal (23 organizations).

**Table 2: Analysis of organizations served by Moisson Montréal, per borough, March 2013**

Borough	Number of organizations	Percentage
Ahuntsic/Cartierville	8	4.0%
Anjou	2	1.0%
Côte-des-Neiges/Notre-Dame-de-Grâce	11	5.5%
Dorval	1	0.5%
Lachine	6	3.0%
Lasalle	4	2.0%
Mercier/Hochelaga/Maisonneuve	17	8.5%
Montreal-East	2	1.0%
Montreal-North	9	4.5%
Pierrefonds/Roxboro	5	2.5%
Plateau-Mont-Royal	19	9.5%
Pointe-Claire	3	1.9%
Rivière-des-Prairies/Pointes-aux-Trembles	6	3.0%
Rosemont/La Petite-Patrie	11	5.5%
Saint-Laurent	9	4.5%
Saint-Léonard	3	1.5%
South-West	23	11.4%
Verdun	5	2.5%
Ville-Marie	31	15.4%
Villeray/Saint-Michel/Parc-Extension	15	7.5%
Westmount	1	0.5%
Confidential/Others	10	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Massive Work Load Requires the Contribution of our Fellow Citizens.**

The 201 organizations that completed the Hunger Count 2013 questionnaire reported that nearly 57% 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 3: Breakdown of organizations per service offered in March 2013**

Service offered	Foodstuff	Meal or Snack Program
Number of organizations	161/201	140/201
% of all respondents	80.1%	70.1%

Note: The total exceeds the total number of respondents (201) 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 2013. The total number of people who used the Foodstuff Distribution Program in March 2013 is 69,926 compared with 64,214 in 2012, which represents an increase of 5,712 people (8.9%).

**Table 4: 2012-2013 variations in the age of people using the Foodstuff Program in March 2013**

Age Group	Number of people 2013		Number of people 2012		Variation (in % points)
Children (0-17 years old)	28,536	40.8%	26,264	40.9%	+ 8.6
Adults (18-64 years old)	37,654	53.9%	34,739	54.1%	+8.9
Adults (65 and over)	3,739	5.3%	3,211	5.0%	+16.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,929</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>64,214</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>+8.9</b>

Comments: There is a slight increase in the number of adults 18 to 64 years of age seeking assistance from the Foodstuff Program as well as in the number of children 0 to 17 years old. It is important to note that these two groups represent an important proportion of the users, 40.8% in 2013. However, there is a greater increase in the number of users who are 65 years old or older.

## 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 **26,046**. Note that for each question, households that did not respond were excluded in an effort to present a clearer illustration of the actual situation.*

**Table 5: Composition of households using the Foodstuff Program in March 2013**

<b>Household composition</b>	<b>Percentage 2013</b>	<b>Percentage 2012</b>
Two-parent families	34.4%	34.2%
Single-parent families	22.4%	21.9%
Couples with no children	11.9%	11.8%
Single individuals	31.3%	32.1%
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Comments: We notice stability in the composition of households using the Foodstuff Program between 2012 and 2013. Although it is important to note the slight increase within the single-parent families group, which is of 0.5% in 2013.

**Table 6: Main sources of income for households using the Foodstuff Program in March 2013**

<b>Sources of income</b>	<b>Percentage 2013</b>	<b>Percentage 2012</b>
Social assistance	59.8 %	63 %
Employment	11.1 %	10.8 %
Student loan and/or bursary	3.7 %	3.6 %
Pension income	7 %	7.4 %
Employment insurance	4.6 %	4.6 %
No income	6.9 %	6.2 %
Other income	4.3 %	3.9 %
Private plan or CSST	2.6 %	0.5 %
<b>Total household respondents</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Comments: Even if we notice a slight decrease from 63% in 2012 to 59.8% in 2013, people living on social assistance continue to make up the largest group of the Foodstuff Program users. The proportion of households whose primary source of income is employment has increased from 10.8% in 2012 to 11.1% in 2013. This confirms a trend that more and more workers call on the Foodstuff Program to fulfill their basic needs.

**Table 7: Housing conditions for households using the Foodstuff Program in March 2013**

<b>Housing conditions</b>	<b>Percentage 2013</b>	<b>Percentage 2012</b>
Homeowner	2.3 %	3.4%
Rental housing	63.3 %	60.8%
Social/subsidized social housing	25.3 %	25.2%
Band-owned housing	0.1%	0.2%
Emergency shelter	1.4 %	3.7%
Group home or youth centre	1.6 %	0.8%
Living on the street	2.6 %	3.4%
Temporarily living with family or friends	3.5 %	2.5%
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100%</b>

Comments: We can perceive many changes in the housing conditions between 2012 and 2013. Social housing tenants remain stable; however we can observe important variations within the other spheres. We can note that 89% of the households benefitting from the Foodstuff Program are tenants of private or social housing.

## 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 8: Number of meals and snacks served in March 2012**

Portions served	Number of portions 2013	Number of portions 2012	Variation 2012-2013 (%)
Meals	242,579	385,153	(37%)
Snacks	80,844	74,624	8.3%
Cooking Collectives	29,428	N/A	N/A
Meals on Wheels	10,637	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>385,987</b>	<b>459,777</b>	<b>(16%)</b>

*\*Many organizations only responded to the total number of portions served, which explains why the amount of portions does not equal the total.*

Comments: In 2012, the “Meals” category included the Cooking Collectives and Meals on Wheels services, which explains the absence of data for those two sections. In 2013, we wanted to put forth the scope of services in both these categories. That is why this year it was decided to extract the numbers of portions served for the services of Cooking Collectives and Meals on Wheels.

**Table 9: Household composition of users of the Meal Program, 2012-2013 comparison**

<b>Household composition</b>	<b>Percentage 2013</b>	<b>Percentage 2012</b>
Two-parent families	21.2%	22.5%
Single-parent families	19.5%	17.0%
Couples with no children	8.9%	9.0%
Single individuals	50.4%	51.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Comments: Following the trend since at least 2008, single individuals remain the group of respondents which call on the Meal program most frequently. This group of users constitute more than half (50.4%) of the people making use of the Meal Program in 2013.

### **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 against hunger. We asked that same question to the organizations that filled out the Montreal Hunger Count questionnaires. The six (6) recommendations that came up most frequently were as follow:

1. Increase the availability/accessibility of rental housing;
2. Increase the number of affordable housing possibilities;
3. Increase the support for mental health issues;
4. Increase the provincial minimum wage;
5. Increase pensions for seniors;
6. Increase social assistance benefits.

Within the framework of the Hunger Count 2013, the organizations recommendations towards public policy remain quite similar from year to year, but at different levels. For example, although it is still a priority in the list of proposals, increasing welfare is no longer mentioned as the main proposition by community organizations.

## Summary

The number of people using emergency food aid through Moisson Montreal's partner organizations remained mostly stable between 2012 and 2013, which corroborates what the report of the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released in October 2013<sup>1</sup>. As noted, one in eight people (1/8) is considered to suffer from chronic hunger worldwide. These findings, although still problematic, marked a hope in achieving the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG): Zero Hunger Challenge. Although the prevalence of undernourishment tends to reach a level close to the target by 2015, the achievement of these objectives would require significant and immediate efforts. The report highlights the fact that the availability of food does not automatically allow better access to food and its use, as observed in Canada. Social protection and improving food distribution and other additional programs should be prioritized.

It is clear that the problem of hunger is a big issue on the Island of Montreal. **It is important to note that the problem of hunger is likely more widespread than illustrated in the Hunger Count, which only recognizes the assistance, applied through Moisson Montréal's partner organizations during one month throughout the year.** When we know that as of May 1, 2013, the minimum wage in Quebec is of \$ 10.15 ( Commission des Normes du Quebec) and that the average housing price in Montreal is \$ 907 per months<sup>2</sup>, you can still imagine that a greater number of Montrealers experience hunger every day.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3434e/i3434e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2013/07/02/002-frapru-logements-sociaux-prix-principal-fleau.shtml>