

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

END HOMELESSNESS ST. JOHN'S AND FOOD FIRST NL PARTNER TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY

[St. John's, NL, December 3, 2020] End Homelessness St. John's (EHSJ), has partnered with Food First NL to address food security during the COVID-19 pandemic for our most vulnerable neighbours. As partners, EHSJ will provide Food First NL with \$127,000 in funding to bolster their efforts through the Food Helpline so they can continue to coordinate and distribute emergency food support services throughout our community.

"The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted just how significant the gaps are for our most vulnerable neighbours" says Doug Pawson, Executive Director of End Homelessness St. John's. "We recognize the importance of not only having a home during the pandemic – but also how important food security is when trying to stay home safely. With the support of the housing and homeless-serving community, EHSJ is able to provide funding to Food First NL to leverage their existing resources to ensure emergency food support and services can be mobilized quickly and efficiently throughout the winter and spring months."

End Homelessness St. John's, through the Government of Canada's *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* has received \$2.5 million to coordinate a pandemic response for the homeless-serving sector in St. John's. As part of the funding, EHSJ, through consultation with members of its Community Advisory Board, has agreed that investing in the efforts to support food security issues will help ensure many of our most vulnerable neighbours can access food while staying safely in place.

The NL Food Helpline is a telephone "warm line" service operated by Food First NL in partnership with the Jimmy Pratt Foundation. From Monday to Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM, individuals and organizations can call 709-703-4544 for help accessing food. Helpline staff can connect callers to local programs, arrange deliveries and in some cases provide supplemental food supports directly. The line is reachable through 811 or at helpline@foodfirstnl.ca

"Since May, the Food Helpline has been a vital part of the response to the food insecurity crisis created by the pandemic, with the vast majority of calls coming from the St. John's area," says Joshua Smee, CEO of Food First NL, "One key role the Helpline has played is to support people who are running into gaps in the emergency food system. Those gaps might be related to how often you can access support, what kinds of food you can access, or how that food can get to you. The support provided by End Homelessness St. John's will allow us to once again provide a backstop to ensure that people in the city receive the support they need during a winter that will be difficult for many."

"Food security, much like affordable housing, rests upon having enough income to provide for basic needs" says Pawson. "With federal measures like the CERB now exhausted, and provincial Income Support programs not providing enough money to make ends meet, especially as disruptions in supply chains result in increased costs, we know many people throughout the community who were struggling before the pandemic will require additional supports to maintain their safety during the second wave."

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