

Campaign 2000 E-Bulletin
Spring Edition
June 2010



END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

Keeping Poverty Reduction on the Public Agenda

[Update on the Federal Scene](#)

Take Action to support Bill C-304, an act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians

Canada is closer than ever to having a **National Housing Strategy**. Bill C-304 is now up for Third Reading debate in the House of Commons. **It could be voted on as early as this fall.** Campaign 2000 has been in touch with all the parties and we understand that the Liberals, NDPs and a few Conservative MPs are supporting the Bill. More support is urgently needed from the Conservative and Bloc MPs.

Recognizing the need for federal leadership to end Canada's housing crisis, over 50 major Canadian labour organizations, human rights and anti-poverty groups (including Campaign 2000), municipalities and mayors to-date have endorsed Bill C-304.

We are urging you to take action and do the following (if you haven't already):

- Write to your MP and ask them to support Bill C-304. You can find your MP's contact info at www.parl.gc.ca
- Have your organization, faith-group, city council or community association endorse Bill C-304 and send your endorsement to MP Libby Davies (who initiated the private member's bill) at: House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6 or via email at daviel@parl.gc.ca.
- Sign the petition calling for a National Housing Strategy – For more info about the Bill and to download the petition, just click here: <http://www.libbydavies.ca/blog/2009/09/02/petition-libbys-national-housing-strategy-bill-c-304> Mail your signed petition to MP Libby Davies this spring/summer, postage free, and get it tabled in the House of Commons.

Show Your Support for the Senate Report on Poverty and Homelessness

The Senate Report, *In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* http://www.parl.gc.ca/40/2/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/citi-e/subsite-dec09-e/Report_Home-e.htm was passed unanimously at the end of April. The Harper government has 150 days to respond to the Senate Report.

Campaign 2000 is appealing to all of you and your networks to take action and show your support by:

- A) Writing a letter to PM Harper and to Diane Finley, Minister of HRSDC today, urging them to **support and implement the recommendations** in the report (sample letter available by emailing liyugu@familyservicetoronto.org)
- B) Joining the Senate Report Facebook Group (1,000+ supporters and growing) and show your support by clicking here:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=362410128255&ref=search&sid=617871061.3604426013..1&v=info>



Martha Friendly Receives the 2010 Rosemarie Popham Family Advocacy Award

We are delighted to announce that **Martha Friendly** of Childcare Research and Resource Unit (a long-time partner organization in Campaign 2000) has been selected to receive the **2010 Rosemarie Popham Family Advocacy Award**. Thank you to those of you who participated in this year's nomination process.

The Award will be presented on June 9th 2010 at the Family Service Toronto's Annual General Meeting. As you know, this award, created in 1999 and given by FST, honours Rosemarie Popham's outstanding contribution to advocacy and social policy development related to children and families in Canada. Rosemarie campaigned relentlessly for the eradication of poverty as Director of Social Action at Family Service Toronto and, as part of her role, as co-founder and national coordinator of Campaign 2000.

This year an unprecedented number of very strong applications were sent to our office, reflecting the vibrancy of advocacy work on behalf of children and families. The Selection Committee carefully reviewed and evaluated the nominations of the admirable change-makers from across Canada who contribute actively, expertly and effectively to improve life chances for children and youth. Above all, the Selection Committee was most impressed by the many contributions Martha Friendly has been making throughout her career as a relentless child care advocate/activist, especially her commitment to keeping Early Childhood Education and Care services on both the public and political agenda for several decades.

New Data on Poverty in Canada due in June, 2010

Campaign 2000 has learned that Statistics Canada is expected to be releasing the new *Incomes in Canada* data in mid-June. The data will be for 2008, so it may not show the full impact of the recent recession. We'll be sharing our analysis and response with all when it's released.

The 2010 G8/ G20 Summits in Canada

This summer, Canada will play host to two global summits in Ontario. In June 2010, leaders of eight of the world's wealthiest and most powerful nations – including Canada – will meet in Huntsville Ontario for their annual G8 Summit. Right after this meeting, the G20 leaders will gather in Toronto. **It is important that world leaders hear a strong message from Canadians to end poverty.**

Campaign 2000 joins our partner Make Poverty History in urging the Canadian government to come up with a national plan for poverty reduction with set targets and clear timetables. Find out more about these current campaigns by visiting: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/en/campaigns> & <http://atthetable2010.org/>

Upcoming Meeting of the Council of the Federation & New HUMA Committee Report on Poverty

The annual meeting of the Council of the Federation (what used to be known as the Annual Premiers' Conference) will take place on Aug. 4-6th, 2010 in Winnipeg, MB. As usual, Campaign 2000 will be releasing an Open Letter to all the premiers, with a focus on urging them to develop or implement a poverty reduction strategy while putting more pressure on the federal government to come up with a complementary poverty reduction plan that's long overdue.

Meanwhile, the HUMA Committee draft report on poverty is being discussed and finalized after two years of consultation and cross-country hearings in which many of us actively participated. Opposition MPs are expecting the report to be released in the fall.

Updates from Regional Partners

British Columbia

On May 21, a delegation of witnesses presented to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth at an all-day meeting on child poverty. Along with contributions from our partner, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, BC's Representative for Children and Youth requested that the Committee undertake a plan to eliminate child poverty.

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/> continues to identify allies and educate the public on their poverty reduction strategy for the province. The **Living Wage** for Families Campaign www.livingwageforfamilies.ca is making progress in their employer recognition process. **BREAKING NEWS:** the City of New Westminster adopted on

April 27th a living wage bylaw for city staff and contractors of \$16.74/hr – the first time in Canadian history that a municipality has set a wage floor above the provincial minimum wage. See www.acorncanada.org for more info.

A new **provincial budget** at the beginning of March brought more cuts to services for children and families, including over \$7 million in cuts to contracted services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the planned elimination of Success By 6 funding, and reduced access to dental care and medical services for very low income families and those on welfare and disability benefits.

The Winter Olympics brought Vancouver and BC's poverty struggles into the spotlight around the world. The Poverty Olympics (<http://povertyolympics.ca/>) held a successful event just prior to the official games with 600 community members and media to highlight the complexities of living in poverty and enjoy the creativity of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community. A Poverty Olympics Torch Relay made its way around the province, with photos and stories capturing the work of passionate advocates on the Poverty Olympics blog and in the media.

Northwest Territories

On February 11, 2010 the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories adopted a motion calling upon the Territorial government to create an Anti-Poverty Strategy. To date six Canadian provinces have adopted poverty reduction strategies - NWT is the first territory to take this step.

The Motion was adopted after 18 leading social justice advocacy groups, including our partner Centre for Northern Families in Yellowknife, and three NWT municipal Councils engaged in public appeals calling for an "integrated, fully resourced and cross-government approach to eliminating poverty in the NWT". Campaign 2000 on behalf of its partners supported this action by sending letters of support to NWT Premier and other key politicians.

Poverty reduction is especially important to the NWT because almost half of the population live outside major cities. In those smaller communities 50% of people are living in low income households. Half of the NWT population is Aboriginal with high poverty rates. For more information visit the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly website: <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/live/documents/documentManagerUpload/hn100210.pdf>

Alberta

Last year the government released a dramatic plan to end homelessness in Alberta in 10 years, committing \$1.2 billion in capital and \$2 billion in operating funds. This was the first plan to end homelessness at the provincial or federal level. However, the recent provincial budget did not deliver the funding needed to achieve this objective, according to the Edmonton Social Planning Council. The provincial budget commits to \$100 million/year during the first 4 years of the plan. See more info here: http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/images/stories/pdf/FACT_sheet_Alberta_Budget_February_2010.pdf

Two years ago the Province agreed to set the minimum wage by tying it to changes in average weekly earnings of Albertans. But in February they decided instead to freeze Alberta's minimum wage at \$8.80/hour, despite the lack of evidence that a 12 cent/hour increase (mirroring the average increase in weekly earnings) would hurt employers.

Public Interest Alberta has been a catalyst for the 'Join Together Alberta' initiative, a campaign that challenges the provincial government's unnecessary cuts to vital public services such as health care, education, and community human services. See www.jointogetheralberta.org. The organization played a key role in ensuring that the recent provincial budget did not cut as deeply as originally feared.

Saskatchewan

The most significant aspect of the March provincial budget was a huge cut to public service jobs which will translate into a 15% reduction in public service positions over four years. While the government calls these cuts "forward thinking and responsible", Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives expressed serious concern and cautioned that "the pursuit of efficiency at all costs leads to flawed policies with short-term gains."

An additional \$2 million for 235 additional child care spaces and 18 new Pre-kindergarten programs was also in the budget. But these spaces come at a cost to Saskatchewan's most vulnerable children. The Community Solutions Grant was cut, leaving many child care centres that serve inner-city children and vulnerable families with funding cuts of \$50,000 or more annually. The fund was in place to ensure that families had access to services like the Good Food Box, clothing banks, parenting support groups, services for teen moms, and programs for kids with diverse abilities. Saskatchewan continues to be the laggard in the country when it comes to ECEC with the lowest access rate and the lowest standards in the country. There is still no plan for improvement and Saskatchewan's children are paying the price.

To further complicate matters, this budget announced that community-based organizations (CBOs) would no longer be able to access the government program to lease CVA vans (central vehicle agency-operated by govt.), leaving CBOs with no way to transport clients. This is having a devastating effect on organizations that serve youth, Aboriginal people, early childhood programs, etc.

While it was encouraging to see increases to health care and aid for post secondary institutions and students, the meager increase (1%) for community-based organizations combined with significant public service job loss means that low income people will continue to struggle to access services and get assistance when they need it.

Manitoba

According to the Manitoba government, our province is ranked third-lowest in Canada for child poverty rates, using the Market Basket Measure (10%). The use of different poverty measurements is causing confusion so the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg hosted a **poverty measurement** workshop entitled "Measure-Up". This attracted a wide range of community leaders and their organizations in an engaging discussing on what poverty measure/s were needed to obtain a realistic picture of poverty in Manitoba. The two keynote speakers were Senator Art Eggleton (who spoke about the recently released Senate Subcommittee report *In From the Margins*), and Richard Shillington on the pros and cons of available poverty measures. The "Measure Up" report will be released shortly.

In response the Manitoba government has hosted their own poverty measurement workshops in support of their poverty reduction strategy, *All Aboard*. These public consultation sessions have involved open-invitation discussions with many community organizations on the efficacy of the Market Basket Measure as a useful tool.

Make Poverty History Manitoba has met with the NDP Caucus in Manitoba regarding the province's *All Aboard* poverty reduction strategy. Unfortunately, the province is still unwilling to specify **minimum targets and timelines for poverty reduction**.

In 2009 a group of concerned organizations, including the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, sent a complaint to the Manitoba Ombudsman regarding systemic problems with the administrative policies, regulations, and procedures of the **provincial welfare program**, Manitoba Employment and Income Assistance Program. **On May 26, Manitoba Ombudsman Irene Hamilton released this report on the Employment and Income Assistance Program. The report contains 68 recommendations for administrative improvement.** The Ombudsman's comment that "*As a program of last resort that provides assistance to those of us who cannot meet the costs of basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter, EIA is important to all Manitobans. It must be fair, equitable and designed to assist people to eliminate barriers that prevent them from overcoming poverty.*" has relevance for all provincial governments. The Ombudsman has requested a formal response from the department in accordance with the Ombudsman Act. The EIA report is available at <http://www.ombudsman.mb.ca> by clicking on "Reports and Publications" under the Ombudsman Division.

In association with various partners in the francophone community, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg released in April their very first **French language 'Poverty Barometer'** which detailed the unique expression of poverty in the francophone community in Winnipeg, and received extensive French media coverage.

Ontario

The spring budget included much needed funding to save child care services for low income families, but little else to address child and family poverty rates in Ontario.

Ontario Campaign 2000 and our **child care** partners had been actively lobbying the Province -our efforts were successful with an allocation of permanent annual funding of \$63.5 million to save over 7,600 subsidized child care spaces. Advocates continue to call for increases to base funding for child care and transition funding to support child care centres during the implementation of full day learning for 4 and 5 year olds which will roll out from 2010-2015.

Social assistance rates were increased by only 1% in the 2010 budget. Community advocates expressed strong concern about this and the planned elimination of the Special Diet Allowance, a monthly allowance to give dietary support to people on welfare with special food needs due to medical conditions. It will be changed into a nutritional supplement program administered by the Ministry of Health. For updates and actions on special diet, check www.incomesecurity.org

The report of the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council is expected in June with recommendations to the Minister regarding the scope and terms of reference for a review of Ontario's social assistance system.

In April The Stop Community Food Centre signed up 10 prominent Torontonians to raise awareness about low social assistance rates. For one week they lived exclusively off the contents of a food bank hamper. See more about this innovative campaign and support the call for a \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement for people on social assistance at www.dothemath.thestop.org

Housing advocates await the expected June release of Ontario's first Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. The Housing Network of Ontario released on April 19th a list of 5 Tests that outline what advocates will be looking for in that strategy: www.stableandaffordable.com The spring budget contained no new funding for housing beyond the 2 year \$600 million announcement in 2009. It introduced a tax credit of up to \$200/year for low and middle income families in Northern Ontario to defray energy costs.

The **25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction** is continuing its advocacy work; its recent provincial leadership forum in mid-May attracted hundreds of activists from across the country who set priorities for next year.

Québec

The government of Québec recently released its second **Action Plan for Solidarity and Social Inclusion 2010-2015**. This action plan builds on a number of measures (e.g. Child Assistance and the Work Premium) introduced under the first Action Plan covering 2004-2010, and adds other structural measures such as the Solidarity Tax Credit and an increase in funding (\$115 million) for the Fonds québécois d'initiatives sociales (FOIS), which will enhance support for local, regional and Aboriginal anti-poverty projects. Le Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté (a broad anti-poverty coalition) has expressed its concerns that this is not a plan to combat poverty.

The recent Québec budget included a new commitment of \$1.3 billion toward the new plan, but le Collectif states that less than half of this is really new funding (www.pauvrete.qc.ca). The budget included a new "solidarity tax credit" for low income households to help compensate for new tax and user fee increases. According to budget documents the new tax credit will provide on average \$174/year for the poorest households. It will be paid monthly and replace the existing Québec Sales Tax Credit, property tax credit and northern tax credit. But le Collectif says that the value of this new tax credit will be negated by tax increases and new user fees, so that low income people will be no better off at the end of the day. Québec's minimum wage rises to \$9.50 on May 1, but le Collectif is calling for it to reach \$10.69/hr.

A large rally organized by a new coalition against user fees and the privatization of public services was held in downtown Montreal on April 1st with 15,000 in attendance. A key demand by le Collectif is that all citizens must have access to free, universal and quality public services without user fees.

Last December the Québec government announced a new \$60.5 million 3-year plan to fight homelessness. The 70 measures in the plan are focused on five priorities: prevention to keep people off the streets, improved access to stable housing, better intervention, improved safety for those living on the streets, and a study of homelessness in 11 major Québec cities.

Nova Scotia

There has been very slow movement on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, "*Preventing Poverty and Promoting Prosperity*", which was first released in April 2009. Our new government is staying the course and the culture of the last government remains at senior levels of the decision making process, reports Paul O'Hara of the North End Community Health Centre. There is a nine department Ministerial Committee on Poverty Reduction; however there is no engagement of community and it does not appear the departments are engaged with each other.

(www.gov.ns.ca/coms/specials/poverty/documents/poverty_report_2009).

The **2010 budget** did include a tax credit to low income earners and elimination of taxes for any senior in receipt of the GIS. Those on social assistance will also receive about \$16.00 a month in a tax credit that will be paid quarterly. The government remains committed to the Federal Housing stimulus funding.

There is attention to poverty from the District Health Authorities and from Community Health Boards. Social determinants of Health are being articulated and we believe policy change is possible through this newly founded support.

Within community there is also greater collaboration and partnership development. **The Community Coalition to End Poverty** <http://www.cahhalifax.org/prs.htm> has a broad membership including faith, labour, women's organizations and the non-profit sector. We have met with the Ministerial Committee on Poverty Reduction and are developing relationships with the Public Health Association of Nova Scotia, and a recently formed Provincial Mental Health Coalition.

On May 27th, Tamarack and Vibrant Communities will be hosting a teleconference featuring Brenda Murray, Director, Policy Planning and Research, Community Services and Ulrich vom Hagen, Coordinator of Poverty Reduction to discuss details of the Nova Scotia strategy and progress being made. The provincial strategy builds a vision to 2020 which strives to break the cycle of poverty and create opportunities for all citizens of Nova Scotia by enabling and rewarding work, improving supports for those most in need, focusing on children and coordinating and collaborating change efforts.

PEI

The groups in P.E.I. continue their struggle for a **poverty eradication strategy**. We have prepared an extensive background paper explaining and defining the proposed strategy. On March 5 we met with the P.E.I. government caucus and asked them to give a definite answer with a time limit for a public announcement and a commitment to public hearings. The premier responded that "we need to have a poverty eradication strategy and we will have it." He said there are working groups on the strategy and that they have a plan. The Finance Minister asked us to give him three specific suggestions for inclusion in the provincial budget, which we did.

The MacKillop Centre for Social Justice appeared before the Legislative Committee to argue against the introduction of a **two-tier minimum wage** and remind members that PEI's minimum wage, the second lowest of any province, needs to be increased. The MacKillop Centre for Social Justice and *Poverty Bites* appeared before the Legislative Committee reviewing the Social Assistance Act and called for **replacing social assistance** with more universal programs in the direction of a serious poverty eradication strategy.

On April 24th, the province announced its new budget for 2010. The province is moving forward with a plan to revitalize the early childhood system. Half-day kindergarten, which had been delivered by child care centres, will be moving into the public education system this fall. Kindergarten will become a full-school day program staffed by early childhood educators who will now be required to complete a B.Ed. credential. As well, all early childhood services have been moved under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development. To implement this system, the province is increasing funding to the early childhood sector by 63%, from \$5.35 to \$8.7 million. There is also some measure to help "**Islanders in Need**", such as Social assistance shelter rates to increase by 2% effective June 1, 2010; and an additional \$256,000 to be allocated for non-government organizations.

New Brunswick

While provincial pundits and politicians are preoccupied with the Liberal government's decision to sell the bulk of our electric utility's assets to Quebec Hydro, the **provincial poverty reduction strategy** is quietly imbedding itself in government. Bill 39, the Economic and Social Inclusion Act received first reading on February 19, 2010 and should pass this session - and that's a good thing.

The Act creates The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, administered by a 22-member Board including 4 Ministers, Leader of the Opposition, 4 business representatives, 4 from the non-profit sector, 8 people who live/have lived in poverty and a President. It is charged with leading the implementation and evaluation of the Provincial Plan adopted last November, coordinating and supporting to-be-created community inclusion networks and managing a new Economic and Social Inclusion Fund. The Act is available at <http://www.gnb.ca/legis/bill/pdf/56/4/Bill-39.pdf>.

The objective of the Provincial Plan is that by 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50%, and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion. It's an ambitious target given that 13.5% of New Brunswickers aged 15 and over with income (77,000+) lived below LICO Before Tax (2006 Census).

Newfoundland and Labrador

The province is continuing its work on the Newfoundland poverty reduction strategy. In its March 2010 provincial budget, it slotted \$134 million for poverty reduction, which brings the total the province has spent on addressing poverty to \$482.7 million since 2006. Among the initiatives are modernizing housing units, continuing family violence intervention court and helping people qualify for a prescription drug program by increasing the income threshold. According to the local news report, Susan Sullivan, Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, expressed confidence the measures would break the cycle of poverty facing many, plus bring the province closer to its goal of having the country's lowest poverty rates by 2014. NDP Leader Lorraine Michael didn't share her enthusiasm. "A lot of the things they have listed under poverty reduction isn't poverty reduction. It's ordinary social programming," she said. Whatever category they might fall in, some of the measures were met favourably, especially increasing the income threshold for the provincial prescription drug program access plan.

The provincial budget includes funding of \$507,500 to be spent in consultations with parents, educators and community partners on the proposed framework components to help develop an **Early Childhood Learning Framework** for the province.

Donate to Campaign 2000

With provincial poverty reduction plans in 6 provinces we're continuing to make progress. Your ongoing support is crucial at this time - with your renewed support, we can keep the momentum going. Please send your donation today (payable to Campaign 2000, c/o Family Service Toronto, 355 Church Street, Toronto, ON M5B 1Z8) or donate online through Canada Helps at www.campaign2000.ca **Thank you for your support!**

Campaign 2000's E-Bulletin provides regular updates (3-4 times a year) on activities to reduce and eventually eliminate child and family poverty in Canada with news and views, political analysis, commentary on party platforms, government action or inaction, and links to the latest research findings and reports. To unsubscribe from **Campaign 2000's E-Bulletin** at any time, e-mail us at liyugu@familyservicetoronto.org . For more info, please visit www.campaign2000.ca and www.familyservicetoronto.org

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