



Take action on Tuesday, Nov. 24th, 2009

Alert/Reminder: Mark Tuesday, November 24th, 2009

As you may know, this Nov. 24th will mark the 20th year since the House of Commons' unanimous resolution to eliminate child poverty was passed back in 1989.

We've made progress, we've had setbacks... and our movement is achieving results. Yet, 1 in 10 children and their families still live in poverty (*Income in Canada 2007*). There's growing momentum with seven provincial governments now involved in poverty reduction.

Take action on Tuesday, November 24th, 2009. Stay tuned for more info and activities at www.campaign2000.ca

Upcoming Annual Meeting of the Council of the Federation 2009

Saskatchewan will host the 2009 annual summer meeting of the Council of the Federation, from August 5 to 7, 2009 in Regina, Sask. We urge you to write to your premier, asking them to make poverty reduction a top priority in their agenda. As usual, Campaign 2000 will write to all the premiers with our call to action. More on this to follow in early Aug.

Pre-Budget Consultations 2009

When Parliament returns in fall 2009, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance will begin its pre-budget consultations for 2009, with hearings in Ottawa and in selected communities across Canada (see below).

The Committee hopes to hold public hearings in **Ottawa** the weeks of **September 14, October 26 and November 2, 2009**, and to meet with Canadians in the following communities: Vancouver, British Columbia: September 28, 2009; Edmonton, Alberta: September 29, 2009; Yellowknife, Northwest Territories: September 30, 2009; Summerside, Prince Edward Island: October 5, 2009; St. John's, Newfoundland : October 6, 2009; Quebec City, Quebec: October 7, 2009; Regina, Saskatchewan : October 19, 2009; Winnipeg, Manitoba: October 20, 2009; Toronto, Ontario: October 21, 2009.

If you wish to make an **appearance** before the Committee during the pre-budget consultations, please send an **email** to the Clerk of the Committee, indicating three locations where you are willing to appear. All indications of your desire to make an appearance must be received by the Clerk no later than **Friday, 31 July 2009**.

The deadline to submit the accompanying **written brief** is no later than **Friday, 14 August 2009** in order that the brief can be translated and distributed to Committee members. You are able to submit a brief even if you do not wish to make an oral presentation. Briefs should be **no longer than five pages** in length, should include an **executive summary**, should contain a maximum of **three recommendations** that reflect your most important federal tax or program spending priority, and should – where possible – indicate the **expected federal cost** of your proposal.

Electronic requests to appear, as well as electronic or written briefs, can be mailed to: Jean-François Pagé Clerk, Standing Committee on Finance, 6-14 131 Queen Street, House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6 or emailed to: fina@parl.gc.ca

Canada's Disappointing Response to the recent UN Review on Human Rights

The United Nations Human Rights Council made more than 80 recommendations to Canada under the new Universal Periodic Review in early June, 2009; many of them called for more effective and accountable implementation of Canada's commitments under international human rights agreements. The complete recommendations of the U. N. Human Rights

Council Review of Canada for 2009 are available at: http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/inter/wrk_grp-eng.pdf. However, the Canadian government rejected or only partially accepted some recommendations, such as the following:

- To *develop a national strategy to eliminate poverty*, which Canada rejected because the government says **this is provincial jurisdiction**;
- To *withdraw Canadian reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly regarding the duty to detain children separately from adults*, which was not accepted due to two reservations Canada has to this Convention: Canada reserves the right not to detain children separately from adults where this is not appropriate or feasible, and Canada reserves the right not to apply the provisions of article 21 (concerning the best interests of the child in adoption) to the extent that they may be inconsistent with customary forms of care among Aboriginal people;
- We note, however, that Canada does accept a recommendation to undertake “measures to respond to the social and economic needs of Canadians. Canada acknowledges that there are challenges and the Government of Canada commits to continuing to explore ways to enhance efforts to address poverty and housing issues, in collaboration with provinces and territories.” Click here <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/pdp-hrp/inter/101-eng.cfm> for a complete response from the federal government;
- Canada accepted a recommendation to *seek to demonstrate that challenges presented by relationships between its federal, provincial and territorial governments do not present unnecessary obstacles to the fulfillment of treaty obligations*;
- To *continue policies and programs aimed at reducing inequalities that still exist between the Aboriginal, recent immigrants and other Canadians*, which Canada accepted.

Email Prime Minister Harper at pm@pm.gc.ca, expressing your support for a strong federal role in poverty reduction.

Bill C-418: A Private Member’s Bill on Children’s Commissioner in Canada

On June 11, 2009 in Ottawa, Marc Garneau, Liberal Member of Parliament for Westmount--Ville-Marie, tabled his first Private Member’s Bill today, which aims to ensure that Canadian children have a voice thanks to the establishment of a national Children’s Commissioner. The Bill just had its 1st reading in the House, and we’ll keep you posted on the progress of the Bill when the House reconvenes in the Fall.

Town Hall Meeting on Federal Role in Poverty Reduction, June 1, 2009



Campaign 2000 with the 25in5Network for Poverty Reduction and Family Service Toronto hosted a Community Town Hall Meeting on June 1st at Metro Hall in Toronto to coincide with the hearings held here by the federal HUMA Committee. We had a fantastic turn-out of appx.150 people and wonderful presentations from at least 35 people and groups.

Individuals and community groups — some by themselves and others with children or on wheelchairs, turned out at this event to share their personal stories of living in low income and how they cope with all the challenges and hardships on a daily basis.

Our presenters' honesty and willingness to "tell it like it is" was very effective. The key themes, such as on good jobs and employment equity, on the need for more income supports, more affordable housing, early learning and child care, were reiterated frequently. To get a flavour of how it went, just read the Toronto Star's article by clicking here: <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/644587>.

The very efficient report-writing team worked hard to capture many strong quotes and identified the key themes in a Community Report. On Tuesday, June 2nd at mid-day, Linda Coltman of Voices from the Street presented it to the HUMA Committee who received this politely and agreed to arrange to enter it into the record as protocol requires. For a copy of the complete community report and a glimpse of some great pictures capturing some of the spirit of the evening on Family Service Toronto's web, please visit: <http://www.familyserVICEToronto.org/whatsnew/townhallmeeting.html>.

Brief Regional Updates

Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island is laying the groundwork for a Poverty Eradication Strategy expected to be announced publicly before the end of 2009. The strategy was requested almost two years ago by the P.E.I. Health Coalition and received a favourable response from the Minister of Health and Social Services. The Health Coalition supplied information about similar strategies in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Ireland and Great Britain. Since then, Sharon Cameron, Deputy Minister of Social Services and community organizations have done background work. The MacKillop Centre for Social Justice, a low-income group called Poverty Bites and the Health Coalition have been among the front-runners in the community organizing workshops for the public and keeping regular contact with the various government agencies.

In February of this year the Premier, Robert Ghiz and Health and Social Services Minister Doug Currie paid a visit to a well-attended workshop organized by the MacKillop Centre and Poverty Bites and funded by the KAIROS Anti-poverty fund. Premier Ghiz was asked if the province is committed to a Poverty Eradication Strategy and he answered, "Absolutely."

Since then there have been follow up meetings with workshop attendees and with several government departments. Background research on Poverty elimination is being done, visits are being made to deputy ministers to underline the importance of having all Ministries of government on board and work is being done on indicators appropriate to the culture of P.E.I. There is a determination to have a made in P.E.I. Poverty Eradication Strategy.

Government has promised that it will make public its commitment to the strategy before the end of 2009. Once the announcement is made, we expect that there will be public hearings across the province to receive input from as many Islanders as possible and especially from people on low incomes.

Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia we are hoping to advance "poverty reduction" through proactively engaging our partners and the general public across the province. The Community Coalition to End Poverty is in the process of updating our "community framework to end poverty" which was released in October of 2007. Other documents include the Province of Nova Scotia "Bill 94 Working Group Report" released in June of 2008, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the defeated MacDonald government which was released just prior to the June 2009 provincial election. These documents are available online at www.cahhalifax.org

The newly elected NDP government committed in pre-election promises to work toward poverty reduction and the official Liberal opposition made a similar commitment.

We hope to draw on the support of community organizations, faith and labour groups as well as MLAs in targeted communities to work with us in facilitating community meetings to advance this goal.

Commentary from Pauline Raven, N.S.

Submitted to Halifax Chronicle Herald by Pauline Raven, C2000 Steering Committee Member NS and author of Nova Scotia's Child Poverty Report Cards

Abolition of poverty in Nova Scotia and the NS NDP win

The Nova Scotia New Democratic Party could bring big changes for the poor and for women.

It was the NS Liberals that forced the Conservatives to draft a poverty reduction plan during legislative sessions of the last government. The result was a document with few details, no timelines and no real plan for measurement of progress. Now, with a NDP majority government in power for the next 4-years or more, significant improvements in the lives of the poor and women should be seen.

There is no ambiguity in the NS NDP constitution. From the preamble onwards “the abolition of poverty and the elimination of exploitation” are noted as “achievable goals” that “must be the priority of any thinking and compassionate government.”

The NS NDP party’s commitment that “representation on all bodies of the Party, including the Officers, the Executive, the Council and its Committees, should be balanced in terms of gender” also bodes well for women. If the party’s principles are applied to its time in government this balance of women and men should help the Nova Scotia Government to better understand poverty and effect overdue change.

That’s good news.

Denise Peterson-Rafuse, MLA for Chester-St. Margarets, is the new government’s choice for Minister of Community Services. Peterson-Rafuse is a virtually unknown rookie with a biography that shows no involvement with issues related to social justice. Howard Epstein, MLA Halifax Chebucto, and first elected in 1998 has been assigned as her Ministerial Assistant, but only with regard to co-operative and other housing programs. If Peterson-Rafuse can quickly mount the steep learning curve ahead, maximize Epstein’s role, and adhere steadfastly to her party’s priority to abolish poverty, we could see significant changes for the poor before this government’s first term ends.

The test will be what Peterson-Rafuse recommends in the months or year ahead with regard to Nova Scotia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy. This document released in April and mandated through legislation was supported by all three parties. The previous government underscored that the strategy responded to a series of recommendations from a Poverty Reduction Working Group. However, those responses were so weak that they were close to meaningless.

While poverty activists should not expect the NDP to handle all of our province’s social and economic shortfalls in one term they can and should expect real progress on the abolition of poverty.

Ontario

In May the Ontario Legislature passed unanimously the *Poverty Reduction Act 2009*, which makes poverty reduction a permanent part of government business in the province. Every year the Minister responsible will have to table an update on progress on poverty reduction, and every 5 years the Ontario government must update its Poverty Reduction Strategy and set a new target, based on public consultation. Quebec and Ontario are the only 2 provinces with such legislation.

As part of its Poverty Reduction Strategy the Ontario government has started public consultations to develop a long term affordable housing strategy for Ontario. 12 meetings are being held across the province from June –September, followed by sectoral meetings with specific groups in the fall. To get more information and attend these meetings, check www.mah.gov.on.ca. A new network of housing advocates has been formed, the Housing Network of Ontario, to monitor the process and provide community input. See www.stableandaffordable.com for updates. Endorse the Housing Declaration that spells out what we want to see in the provincial housing strategy.

There is no progress on the government’s promised Social Assistance review. For updates see www.sareview.ca. A campaign led by the Social Planning Network of Ontario to provide a \$100 monthly Healthy Food Supplement to adults on social assistance is underway as organizations meet with their MPP to carry out a ‘do the math’ exercise showing how far rates are below adequate income. See www.povertywatchontario.ca for more details and to get involved.

In June the Pascal report was released outlining implementation plans for a full day Early Learning Program for 4 and 5 year olds as part of a seamless and integrated early learning system for children aged 0-12 and their families. Ontario

Campaign 2000 welcomed the report as bold and hugely encouraging - it takes Ontario in a direction that will support all families with commitment to high quality services available in each neighbourhood. For more detail see www.ontario.ca/earlylearning

Manitoba

On May 26, 2009 Make Poverty History Manitoba and the Manitoba Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released The new report is entitled *The View from Here: Manitobans Call for a Poverty Reduction Plan*, <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/reports/2009/05/reportsstudies2232/?pa=BB736455>, which is a 56-page analysis based on consultation and interviews with hundreds of Manitobans and has been endorsed by more than 70 organizations. The document calls for a coordinated comprehensive strategy with targets and timelines that would reduce child and family poverty by 25% in five years and 50% in 10 years (LICO-AT). In contrast, on May 21, 2009 the Government of Manitoba released an eight-page glossy document called *All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy*. It contains a useful statement of values and guiding principles, but has serious flaws. It mixes old and new announcements, lacks targets or timelines, and mentions some indicators which could be used but commits to none. The government will carry out a consultation, and the Make Poverty History Coalition will continue to advocate for the kind of poverty reduction plan envisioned in *The View from Here*.

Alberta

Despite the fact that Alberta continues to have a relatively strong economy compared to most parts of Canada, the provincial government is in the process of planning very significant cuts to much of the social infrastructure. As the province has for too long relied on the proceeds of the energy industry and has very low corporate and personal taxes (and no sales tax), the government now finds itself facing a serious budget deficit. The Premier has recently announced that they will never raise taxes. The current projected deficit has not altered the government's plan to subsidize the costs for oil and gas drilling with \$3 billion, nor change their \$2 billion taxpayer subsidy for carbon capture and sequestration for the energy industry. In this economic context, the Alberta government is unfortunately not very open to significant action on poverty reduction.

Public Interest Alberta and the Edmonton Social Planning Council are working with many key poverty organizations, United Ways and municipalities to build a provincial network of people to call for a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Five forums were held in cities around Alberta (Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge) in May and two more forums will take place in Calgary on October 20th and in Edmonton on October 21st. These *We Can Do Better Forums*, (<http://www.pialberta.org/events/wecandobetter>) bring together key leaders and community advocates from various sectors to explore the current situation in Alberta communities and ask what people would like to have included in a poverty reduction strategy for the province. There are many excellent and important community initiatives that are being supported by groups like Vibrant Communities in both Calgary and Edmonton, and front-line organizations working with people in poverty. They are doing all they can to address the increasing demand that is the result of the economic downturn.

British Columbia

The open letter effort to get political parties to commit to a poverty reduction plan with targets and timelines in the run-up to the May provincial election succeeded in getting general commitments in the BC NDP and Green Party platforms, but not from the BC Liberal Party. The election campaign also featured a Liberal Party rejection of the need for an increase in the province's \$8 an hour minimum wage. Despite this, British Columbians re-elected a Liberal majority government.

Child poverty has received significant media attention through a popular TV station's week-long news series, a news release from First Call about the 2007 statistics which again show BC as having the highest rate in the country (6 years in a row), and the public efforts of BC's Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, to get the Premier to meet with the Leader of the Opposition and herself to discuss the increasing vulnerability of the province's children due to poverty. So far the Premier is challenging the validity of the statistics and refusing to meet on this issue.

All of this makes the decision of the group behind the open letter seeking a commitment to a legislated plan to continue its work as a formal coalition even more important. The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition is aiming to mobilize the hundreds of signatory organizations to the open letter to keep up the pressure for a cross-government plan.

The Living Wage for Families Campaign in Metro Vancouver, hosted by First Call, continues to build. Community activists also continue to organize around the homelessness crisis and another Poverty Olympic Games in the lead up to the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. BC advocates are also working with partners across the country on a campaign to eliminate the burden of transportation loans on struggling refugee families.

Donate to Campaign 2000

We're continuing to make some progress, and with your on-going support, we can keep the momentum going. Your donation is greatly appreciated. Please send your donation 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! Enjoy your summer!

Campaign 2000's E-Bulletin provides updates on activities to reduce and end 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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