



END CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA  
[www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)

## **ECP Now!** News from Campaign 2000 May 2008

### NATIONAL

**HUMA**, the **parliamentary committee on Human Resources and Social Development** is holding hearings on a **national poverty plan**. Stakeholders will be invited to discuss what the federal government should do to reduce poverty and whether to adopt a national anti-poverty strategy with clear targets and goals. MPs want witnesses to focus on **recommendations for solutions and strategies rather than on the fact of poverty**. Organizations or individuals have the option of submitting a written brief only or asking to appear as a witness. As of this writing the committee is debating whether to travel across the country. To ask to appear or to learn more on submitting a written brief, contact HUMA Committee clerk, Jacques Mazaide, Tel: (613) 996-1542, E-mail: [HUMA@parl.gc.ca](mailto:HUMA@parl.gc.ca). Some hearings will be televised on Parliamentary Channels. If a meeting is televised, it is also offered via webcast, at <http://parlvu.parl.gc.ca/parlvu/guide.asp?view=&cat=&target=2008-4-8&event>

New reports from Statistics Canada highlight the growing income gap, lack of improvement in child poverty rates and the continuing high incidence of poverty among lone-parent female-led families (single mothers). For **Census 2006 Incomes** data released May 1 see <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/080501/d080501a.htm> (Earnings, income and shelter costs) and <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/release/income.cfm> (Income and earnings). For **Incomes in Canada 2006**, Statistics Canada annual reporting of SLID data released May 5, see <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/080505/d080505a.htm>.

**The First Ministers** met in January 2008 and Campaign 2000 wrote to them all to ask for support for a **poverty reduction strategy**. Replies were received from premiers in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, detailing provincial work to reduce poverty and are posted at [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca). For the opinion piece published the same day in the *Toronto Star* – Eliminating Poverty Makes Economic Sense – see <http://www.thestar.com/comment/article/292990>.

### AROUND THE COUNTRY – What’s Happening in...

#### ...British Columbia

Despite BC owning the highest provincial child poverty rate for the last four years, neither the throne speech nor the budget had any substance for low-income families. The opposition has identified poverty reduction as an issue and the **major action on poverty reduction is in the community** sector with, in addition to our report card, Victoria and Surrey hosting **Vibrant Community** initiatives, BC Federation of Labour leading a **\$10 Now minimum wage campaign** and the BC Medical Health Officers Council active in anti-poverty advocacy. The **Living Wage Campaign** is well underway with roundtables completed and scheduled and a report on what constitutes a living wage for a two-parent family with two children due in June [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org). The **Still Left Behind** report examines the inadequacy of income assistance rates in BC in meeting the costs of daily living, online at [www.sparc.bc.ca/](http://www.sparc.bc.ca/). The **Poverty Olympics** took a satirical look via “street theatre” at what the 2010 Olympics means to those in Downtown Eastside Vancouver: [povertyolympics.ca/](http://povertyolympics.ca/) and [www.raisetherates.org/](http://www.raisetherates.org/). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Raise the Rates Coalition have released **Living on Welfare in BC: Experiences of Longer-Term ‘Expected to Work’ Recipients**, a ground-breaking new study that reveals how people living on welfare are forced to make ends meet under new welfare rules and low rates. Download the report here: <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/Reports/2008/04/ReportsStudies1869/index.cfm?pa=BB736455>.

#### ...Alberta

Recent Alberta reports show the gap between government-delivered and community-based services has widened leaving the most vulnerable citizens without proper assistance and **federal child care funds have gone to general revenue**, rather than the intended increase in childcare spaces, while childcare in Alberta remains in crisis. For more updates: [www.pialberta.org](http://www.pialberta.org)

### ...Manitoba

The **Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (PRC)**, meeting since June 2007 has identified four priority initiatives: improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal youth; enriching supports for elementary schools in low-income and high-risk neighbourhoods; scaling up the impact of asset building programs, and supporting the continued existence of inner-city recreation centres. Last September, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg launched a **Raise the Rates** campaign and over 10,000 people have signed a petition in favour of raising and indexing social assistance rates, see [www.spcw.mb.ca](http://www.spcw.mb.ca). **Feminization of poverty**, the Social Planning Council's editorial for International Women's Day, is available online at [www.winnipegfreepress.com/subscriber/westview/story/4138802p-4730083c.html](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/subscriber/westview/story/4138802p-4730083c.html). In December 2007 the Minister of Family Services and Housing announced a 10-point, \$84 million action plan to revitalize current Manitoba Housing units that does not include plans to build more public housing.

### ...Ontario

It's a high energy time in Ontario with the anti-poverty movement growing and expanding pressure on the Ontario government to keep its promise to develop an effective **Poverty Reduction Strategy** by year end. Campaign 2000 along with 100 other organizations formed the "**25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction**" to press for action. Large public forums – 300 in January and 500 on April 14 – gave **25 in 5** front page coverage in the *Toronto Star*, radio coverage, and attention from lead Minister Deb Matthews, see [www.25in5.ca](http://www.25in5.ca). Communities across the province are preparing for government consultations which began in May, and a growing number are developing local poverty reduction strategies. Preparatory workshops are happening in 18 communities, see [www.povertywatchontario.ca](http://www.povertywatchontario.ca) for updates. The **2007 Ontario Report Card on Child & Family Poverty** was released on April 2 with good media coverage and some hard questions in the legislature, readable at [http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/house-proceedings/house\\_detail.do?Date=2008-04-02&Parl=39&Sess=1&locale=en#P277\\_32565](http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/house-proceedings/house_detail.do?Date=2008-04-02&Parl=39&Sess=1&locale=en#P277_32565). Campaign 2000's Jacquie Maund ably debated Finn Poschmann of C.D. Howe, and Minister Deb Matthews and Newfoundland's lead poverty reduction minister Shaun Skinner on TVO's The Agenda: [http://www.tvo.org/cfmx/tvoorg/theagenda/index.cfm?page\\_id=7&bpn=779140&ts=2008-03-03%2020:00:48.0](http://www.tvo.org/cfmx/tvoorg/theagenda/index.cfm?page_id=7&bpn=779140&ts=2008-03-03%2020:00:48.0)

### ...Quebec

The **Collective for A Poverty-Free Quebec** (le Collectif) has launched a petition calling on the Quebec government to: set minimum wage at \$10.17/hr with annual indexation; increase social assistance and ensure annual adjustments to meet the Market Basket Measure (\$13,267/year in 2007 for 1 person); and ensure each citizen access to public services like health and dental benefits. Demands were based on 2 years of grassroots consultations with low-income people across Quebec. A previous petition secured 200,000 signatures and led to Quebec's **Act to Combat Poverty & Social Exclusion**, see [www.paurvrete.qc.ca](http://www.paurvrete.qc.ca). The 2008 Quebec budget introduced the **Employment Pact** which includes training at minimum wage and \$200/month supplements for welfare recipients, [www.finances.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.finances.gouv.qc.ca) for details.

### ...Nova Scotia

Community-based organizations, progressive policy analysts and several key Members of our Legislative Assembly pressured the government of Nova Scotia to legislate a poverty reduction strategy (PRS) and in fall 2007, Bill 94, a private member's bill introduced by the Liberals passed second reading. In January 2008 a PRS Working Group was formed, legislated to make recommendations by June 2008. The Departments of Community Services and of the Environment & Labour are responsible for development of the PRS. Several community groups continue to monitor the actions of the PRS Working Group and Darcy Harvey, Chair of the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Strategy Coalition, which brings together over 30 groups many of which provide direct services to Nova Scotians living in poverty, is on the PRS Working Group. A major concern is the lack of gender analysis in documents the government is tabling for use by the Working Group and the absence of information regarding how it will be financed. The Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Coalition released a report prior to Bill 94 with the results of a broad consultation, see [www.cahhalifax.org](http://www.cahhalifax.org).

### ...PEI

In early October 2007, following a meeting with the P.E.I. Health Coalition, Doug Currie, Minister of Health and Social Services committed to develop a structure including an office and staff person as a preliminary to establishing a **Poverty Reduction Strategy**. Since then the **Poverty Reduction Office** has been doing background work on the realities of poverty in the province: analyzing poverty, discussing measures of poverty

and creating a draft proposal to for other Ministers and Deputy Minister. The **Market Basket Measure** is favoured. The Newfoundland and Labrador poverty reduction model is seen as the best fit for P.E.I. due to similarities in culture, poverty rates, wage rates and unemployment rates. Newfoundland and Labrador has a population of 3.8 times the size of P.E.I., but the two provinces have similar poverty rates. At present the starting level for social assistance recipients is \$8,688.00 although some recipients receive increases based on certain needs. In 2005, 51.2 percent of Islanders earned less than \$20,000. Food Bank use continues to rise. An analysis of Charlottetown Food Bank users in 2007 revealed that 33.7 percent were on social assistance, 23.7 percent were workers and 29.2 percent earned the major part of their income from Employment Insurance.

### **...Newfoundland and Labrador**

The provincial government continues to resource and promote the **Poverty Reduction Strategy** – including announcing measures to improve child and family life - and reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the lowest provincial poverty rate in the 2008 Throne Speech. In January's province-wide government hearings on moving the **minimum wage to \$10 an hour**, advocates indicated the need to move from **minimum wage to living wage** in the face of new prosperity heralded by oil production. **Vibrant Communities St. John's** is moving into implementation of six collaborative initiatives. The **Citizen's Voice Network** initiative is a forum for people who have experience living on low income or in poverty to learn, share information, discuss issues and work together to impact local decision-making and policy development.

### **New Reports**

- Ontario Campaign 2000 released its **2007 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario: The Road Ahead: Poverty Reduction in Ontario** April 2<sup>nd</sup>:  
[http://www.campaign2000.ca/rc/rc07/2007\\_ON\\_Report\\_Card%20Engl\\_Mar2008.pdf?x=115291](http://www.campaign2000.ca/rc/rc07/2007_ON_Report_Card%20Engl_Mar2008.pdf?x=115291) or visit [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca).
- CRRU's **Child Care Space Statistics 2007**, presents provincial/territorial data on the number and breakdown of spaces in regulated child care as of March 31, 2007, updates *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada* (2006) which presented Canadian child care data as of March 31, 2006. [Child care space statistics 2007](#)
- Alternative federal Budget in Brief 2008 –  
[http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/National\\_Office\\_Pubs/2008/AFB2008/AFB2008\\_Budget\\_in\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/National_Office_Pubs/2008/AFB2008/AFB2008_Budget_in_Brief.pdf)
- National Housing Report Card 2008 -- <http://wellesleyinstitute.com/files/winationalhousingreportcard.pdf>

### **DONATE TODAY AND HELP US CONTINUE THE WORK**

**Campaign 2000** continues to push for a comprehensive national poverty reduction strategy and effective provincial poverty reduction strategies. We're working to make sure poverty is squarely on the national political agenda in the next federal election, and to spread the word across the country. Your support is crucial to our success. Donations to Campaign 2000 receive a charitable receipt through Family Service Association of Toronto, our host. It's easy to donate online by clicking [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca). Or, send a cheque payable to **Campaign 2000** to **Campaign 2000, Family Service Association of Toronto, 355 Church Street, Toronto, ON M5B 1Z8**

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*ECPNow!* provides updates on activities to reduce and end child and family poverty in Canada with news and views, political analysis, commentary on party platforms and government action (and/or inaction), and links to the latest research and reports. To unsubscribe from **ECPNow!** at any time, please e-mail us at [liyugu@fsatoronto.com](mailto:liyugu@fsatoronto.com). Thank you.

**Campaign 2000 is a program of the Family Service Association of Toronto**



**FAMILY SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO**

*For People. For Change.*