



Take the Child and Family Poverty Quiz

Test your knowledge about child and family poverty in Canada and learn more about what needs to happen to ensure the well-being of children and families.

Child and Family Poverty Quiz

1. Twenty years ago parliamentarians in the Canadian House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate child poverty in Canada.

TRUE Back on November 24, 1989, MPs from all parties passed a resolution to “*seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000*”. However, with no real plans, goals, or targets by the federal government, the child poverty rate has come down slightly over the last two decades since 1989. It stands at 9.5% (in after-tax terms), or about 1 in 10 children (637,000) who still live in poverty in Canada.

What’s significant is that on Nov. 24th, 2009 the House of Commons passed a new resolution as follows: “That, with November 24th, 2009 marking the 20th anniversary of the 1989 unanimous resolution of this House to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000, and not having achieved that goal, be it resolved that the Government of Canada, taking into consideration the Committee’s work in this regard, and respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction, develop an immediate plan to eliminate poverty in Canada for all.”

It is time to call on the government of Canada to develop and implement a national poverty reduction strategy.

2. Canada is one of the signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

TRUE Both the Federal and provincial/territorial governments ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which commits Canada to ensuring a healthy standard of living for all its children. Best Interests of the Child is a central principle in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While Canada officially recognizes that children under 18 are persons with rights, many programs need updating to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- **What needs to be done?**

Adequate income for families, including income support, is necessary to achieve a healthy standard of living. Closing the child benefit gap is needed to ensure that parents working full time, full year can lift their families out of poverty and that those unable to work can live in dignity. A full child benefit of \$5,400 (\$2009), coupled with fair minimum wages, is necessary to achieve substantial poverty reduction. With the maximum now at \$3,416, the benefit level is about two-thirds of what is needed. It will also be necessary to reconcile the Universal Child Care Benefit (a universal taxable income transfer for children under 6) and provincial child benefits into the development of a full child benefit for all low-income children.

3. When the economy as a whole does better, then everyone in the country benefits financially.

FALSE Even when the economy was booming, prosperity didn't benefit everyone equally. As Canada attempts to climb out of the recent recession, it is even more crucial for our governments to make additional public investments in the social security of Canadian families.

4. According to the latest statistics available, for every \$1 earned by the poorest 10% of families with children, the richest 10% of Canadians earned more than \$11.

TRUE For every \$1 earned by the poorest 10% of families with children, the richest 10% earned \$11.84 in 2007. Clearly, the wealth generated during good economic times was not distributed equitably among Canadian families.

Additionally, the average annual income for the poorest 10% of Canadian families with children stayed flat at \$20,290 (based on the latest available data for 2007). In contrast, the average income for the richest 10% of families with children grew to \$240,191.

What needs to be done?

Governments at all levels must restore tax fairness to the system and must avoid across-the-board tax measures that disproportionately benefit wealthier Canadian families and entrench inequality.

5. Raising the minimum wage would help reduce poverty in Canada.

TRUE Government welfare programs aim to move people off social assistance and into jobs, but with low wages and poor working conditions, social assistance poverty is often replaced by labour market poverty. No matter where you live in Canada, the minimum wage does not bring a full-time, year-round minimum wage worker up to the poverty line. Throughout the 21st century, 4 out of 10 (40%) of low income children lived in families where at least one parent worked full-year, full-time but could not rise out of poverty. Working poor parents are stuck in poorly paid jobs with few, if any, benefits or opportunities for education, training and advancement.

What needs to be done?

--Minimum wages need to be increased to at least \$11/hour with indexation by 2011 while increases to worker tax credits, like the Working Income Tax Benefit, are put into place at the same time. A worker tax credit of \$200 per month would benefit parents who are unable to find or to take on full-time work year-round.

--Restore EI (employment insurance) eligibility requirements to 360 hours with benefit levels based on the best 12 weeks of earnings for all regions of Canada.

6. Government-supported child care spaces are available for most children in Canada.

FALSE For nearly two decades Campaign 2000 has consistently called for a universal system of early childhood education and care services (ECEC) for Canada, but we have made only limited progress. Regulated child care grew from 371,543 spaces to 867,194 for 0-12 year olds (1992-2008), yet space is available only for a fraction of children. UNICEF's minimum benchmarks recommend that 25% of children under 3 years and 80% of children 3-5 years should have access to ECEC; however, space exists for only 20.3% of 0-5 year olds in Canada.

What needs to be done?

The federal government must re-assert federal leadership, including significant federal funding to provinces and territories that is tied to direct operating funding for a publicly-managed universal early childhood education and child care system to create affordable, high quality programs.

7. Canada's strong emphasis on equality has helped reduce child poverty for all historically disadvantaged groups, including children of immigrants, of Aboriginal identity, in racialized families and those with a disability.

FALSE Persistent social and economic inequality in Canada based on gender, race, length of time in Canada and ability is reflected in disproportionately high child poverty rates among families that face barriers of systemic discrimination.

CHILD POVERTY RATES AMONG SELECT SOCIAL GROUPS

- 1 in 2 for Aboriginal children under the age of six not living in First Nations communities (49%)
- Almost 1 in 2 for children in recent immigrant families (48%)
- 40% of children in lone-mother led families live in poverty
- 1 in 3 for children in racialized families (33%)
- 1 in 4 for children with disabilities (27%)

Source: Statistics Canada's *Canada Census 2006* and StatsCan's *Aboriginal Children's Survey 2006*.

What needs to be done?

- Appropriate poverty reduction targets, timetables and indicators for Aboriginal families, irrespective of where they live, must be developed in coordination with First Nations and urban Aboriginal communities.
- Proactive strategies, including employment equity in the public and private sectors, are needed to level the employment playing field for racialized communities and other historically disadvantaged groups.
- A guaranteed income system for persons with disabilities, equivalent in adequacy and design to that for seniors, must be established.

8. Almost 13% of Canadian households are in core housing need, meaning they live in housing that is either unaffordable, substandard, overcrowded or all three.

TRUE The number of households living in core housing need rose during the early 1990s and has remained at about 1.5 million since 1995. The federal government's role in housing has been steadily eroding since the 1980s, culminating with a decision in 1993 to cancel all federal spending on new housing supply.

Declining federal and provincial government supports combined with declining private sector involvement have led to a crisis in affordable rental housing across Canada.

What needs to be done?

- The federal government needs to engage with partners (including provincial, territorial, municipal and First Nations governments, the non-profit and private sectors) to create a national housing strategy that reflects the needs of local communities.
- Affordable housing is a key component of poverty reduction and an essential social infrastructure program. This must be recognized in expenditures of governments at all levels.

9. Poverty is too big of a problem to solve and no country has ever been successful at reducing poverty before.

FALSE While Canada's child poverty rate remains high at 9.5%, other countries have been successful in bringing down their rate. Britain serves as an example of how poverty reduction can happen through the creation of strategies with firm commitments, timetables and goals. Encouragingly, more and more provincial governments across Canada are beginning to develop and implement strategies in their poverty reduction efforts, including Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba.

What needs to be done?

All orders of government (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and First Nations) need to meet to develop a coordinated poverty reduction strategy.

10. Poverty is a complex issue that should only be dealt with by the government and professionals.

FALSE You/We can all work together and contribute to a better future for all children. Every person in Canada has a right and a responsibility to speak up and speak out against poverty because it affects us all. You can do your part by taking one or more of the following steps:

- Learn about how discrimination hurts all children and young people
- Learn about the [United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Children](#)
- Make sure the views of children and young people are heard
- Support an organization that is fighting child and family poverty: [Campaign 2000's partners](#)
- Speak out against abuse and violence against children and young people
- Talk to your government representative about making spending on children and young people a REAL priority in the next budget.