

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg est. 1919

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END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

[www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)

IN HONOUR OF JOSEPH ZUKEN AND HIS LEGACY OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM

## Awareness-Raising Activities (Advocacy Toolkit)

This section is comprised of some ideas that the Campaign 2000 Youth Action Committee has created with and carried out over the years to raise awareness in Toronto about poverty. They are some concrete ways to present the issue of child and family poverty to people in a different light, with the goal of getting people interested and inspired to take action.

### Child Poverty Statistics Game

The following is a simple Quiz-type game to help “shock” people into understanding the issue of child and family poverty in Canada. This could be used at the beginning of a workshop or presentation to get people interested and involve them. Anytime there is competition people usually get much more involved than if they are listening to a lecture. Here’s how to do it:

- Split the participants up into groups, depending on the size of your audience.
- Give them fun ways to respond by either running to write the answer on the board, writing it on a piece of paper and holding it up – be creative and make it fun!
- Pose the questions, read the possible answers, and allow them time to decide on their response
- After each team answers, tell them the real answer, and elaborate a little further.
- Try to have prizes!
- Materials needed: Paper and pens/chalk or marker if you have a board, prizes

Answers are in **bold**.

1. *How many children in Canada live in poverty?*

- a) 100 000
- b) 500 000
- c) **638 000** (as of 2007)
- d) 1 000 000

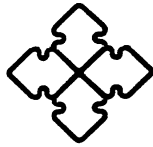
2. *How many children in Toronto live in poverty?*

- a) 1 in 300
- b) 1 in 30
- c) 1 in 15
- d) **1 in 3**

3. *Out of the top 24 developed countries in the world, where does Canada rank in terms of the percentage of children living in poverty? (1<sup>st</sup> being best)*



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- a) 5<sup>th</sup>
- b) 17<sup>th</sup>
- c) **19<sup>th</sup>**
- d) 24<sup>th</sup>

4. How does the United Nations describe Canada's efforts at reducing child poverty?

- a) "Situation improving greatly."
- b) "Change starting."
- c) **"Children still waiting."**
- d) "Canada will eliminate child poverty by 2010."

### ACT-out Child Poverty in Canada

The following is a dramatic skit that you can perform to educate your peers about child poverty in Canada. It makes the issue of poverty personal, beyond statistics. It is a different way of demonstrating the poverty problem in Canada.

This skit can be performed anywhere, as it doesn't really require any props. All you need are five people, and an audience willing to watch.

#### **CAST:**

- Narrator (*when the Narrator "snaps" his/her fingers, everyone else in the scene freezes. The Narrator will be making an explanation to the audience. When the explanation is over, the Narrator "snaps" his/her fingers again, and the scene resumes*).
- Lucas
- Hallie
- Lucas' Mother
- Hallie's Father

#### **SKIT:**

##### SCENE 1:

**Hallie:** Guess what?

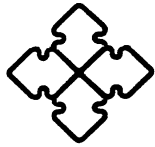
**Lucas:** What?

**Hallie:** I got an A on my history test!

**Lucas:** Really? Wow. What a surprise...



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**Hallie:** Uh huh... and...?

**Lucas:** And what?

**Hallie:** Aren't you going to tell me what you got?

**Lucas:** No... it's okay...

**Hallie:** C'mon! I'm sure it isn't that bad!

**Lucas:** Try a D minus.

**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** Lucas is hungry and tired. He doesn't have the energy to do well in school and isn't growing properly. Why bother doing well? He can't afford to go to university anyways.

**Hallie:** What?! But we studied together!

**Lucas:** I know... It's just that... I don't wanna talk about it.

**Hallie:** Why not?

**Lucas:** It's none of your business.

**Hallie:** What's your problem?

**Lucas:** Sorry, I've just had a lot on my mind lately.

**Hallie:** Alright, whatever you say. By the way, did you get that phone yet?

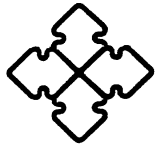
**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** Hallie and Lucas are best friends. But just because they go to the same school, doesn't mean their lives are the same. What Hallie doesn't know is that Lucas can't spend his money on a cell phone.

**Lucas:** Hallie, I already told you. My mom doesn't want me getting a cell phone. I mean, it's not like I really need one, right?

**Hallie:** Okay, if you say so!

**Lucas:** (Coughs and wheezes)





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**Hallie:** Are you okay?

**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** Lucas is twice as likely to suffer from asthma and four times as likely to suffer from health problems than other kids his age.

**Lucas:** Yeah yeah, I'm fine. I gotta go, I'll talk to you later.

**Hallie:** Alright, bye!

### **SCENE 2:**

**Hallie:** Hey, sorry I'm late. Where's mom?

**Dad:** Oh, she's out shopping. So how was school?

**Hallie:** Okay.

**Dad:** That's it? Just okay? You know, Hallie, you never talk to us anymore.

**Hallie:** I just don't see what the big deal is. It's just school, what's there to talk about?

**Dad:** Well, with that attitude, you can forget about getting your driver's license.

**Hallie:** What? That's not fair! I'm 16, I'm supposed to get a driver's license!

**Dad:** Well you sure aren't acting 16. You won't even tell us how your day was. And you expect to get a license?

**Hallie:** Why do you always say stuff like that?

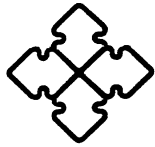
### **SCENE 3:**

**Lucas:** Hey dad.

**Father:** Bad day?

**Lucas:** Just like every other. Mom...?

**Father:** What?



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**Lucas:** Can I get a cell phone?

**Father:** We've been through this before...

**Lucas:** Yeah, and –

**Father:** And nothing! You know we can't afford stuff like that.

**Lucas:** We can't seem to afford anything!

**Father:** Well, I'm sorry, but that's life! Look, I work three jobs to put a shelter over your head and clothes on your back, and this is all the thanks I get?

**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** Lucas' father is struggling to make ends meet. He makes about \$11,000 a year. Rent costs him almost \$1,000 a month.

**Lucas:** Thanks for what? This? (*Referring to food on the table*) Maybe I'd like to have a decent meal for once!

**Mother:** Decent? What, this isn't good enough for you?

**Lucas:** Do you know what it's like for me? To know that I have to go to the food bank while my friends get to eat out?

**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** Although youth like Lucas make up just 26% of Canada's population, they make up more than 40% of our food bank users.

**Mother:** And you think this is my fault? All I get is \$3000 from the government for having you! I wouldn't even need it if your lousy father hadn't left me when I was pregnant!

**NARRATOR:** *\*snaps\** **FREEZE!** The federal government provides Lucas' mom with an annual \$3,000 Child Tax Benefit. But even with this supplement, she still has less than \$6.00 a day to spend on food, clothing and other necessities.

**Lucas:** So this is my fault?! Well I'm sorry that I was born!

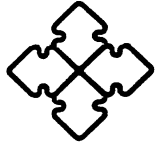
#### **SCENE 4:**

(*Hallie calls Lucas on the phone.*)

**Hallie:** Lucas?



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**Lucas:** Hi Hallie.

**Hallie:** You won't believe the argument I had with my parents!

**Lucas:** Huh?

**Hallie:** They aren't letting me get my driver's license!

**Lucas:** That's a shame.

**Hallie:** Argh, I know! It's not fair! (Silence) Lucas... Are you okay?

**Lucas:** Yeah, never been better. Hallie, by the way, I was wondering if you could print out my English assignment for me. My... uhh... printer ran out of ink.

**Hallie:** Oh okay. Just email me your file and I'll print it.

**Lucas:** Oh... actually, my... uhh... Internet isn't working either.

**Hallie:** Again?!

**Lucas:** Yeah, I know... Could I just read you what I wrote, and you type it up for me? I'm sorry if I'm being such a bother.

**Hallie:** Nah, that's alright. It's not as if I have anything better to do.

**Lucas:** Thanks.

**NARRATOR:**

Lucas is living in poverty. And the worst part is, it wasn't supposed to be this way.

In 1989, the Canadian government unanimously agreed to end child poverty by the year 2000. It is now 2009, and the poverty rate remains the same as it was in 1989. Child Poverty has doubled in Toronto and its surrounding regions since 1988. They government did not keep their promise.

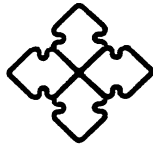
Hopefully, for most of you, this is not the reality. But it is for many other children. But there is good news. And the good news is that you can change this number.



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### The Jelly Bean Jar

This is sort of a spin-off of that old game “Guess how many jelly beans are in the jar”. Its purpose is to give a sort of visual representation of the poverty rate, while at the same time, getting the public or audience involved and engaged. See attached photo for what it looks like.

Materials: Jelly Beans, a large jar, possibly a sign (see photo below)

- Purchase jelly beans of two colours, let’s say red and blue.
- Take the poverty rate of Canada or of your city or province, let’s say for instance 1 in 6.
- Fill the jar with 5 parts blue jelly beans and 1 part red jelly beans (for every 5 blue jelly beans, put in 1 red jelly bean).
- Ask the audience or passers-by what they think the red jelly beans in the jar represent. Once they figure it out (or you tell them), you could ask them to guess the actual ratio of red to blue.

### Poverty Rates (LICO after tax, 2006)

Canada: 1 in 9

Ontario: 1 in 9

Toronto: 1 in 4

British Columbia: 1 in 6

Saskatchewan: 1 in 7

Manitoba: 1 in 8

New Brunswick: 1 in 9

Quebec: 1 in 10

Newfoundland and Labrador: 1 in 11

Nova Scotia: 1 in 11

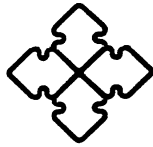
Alberta: 1 in 14

Prince Edward Island: 1 in 25

Calgary: 1 in 7



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Source: Campaign 2000 National Report Card on Child and Family Poverty. *Family Security in Insecure Times, The Case for a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Canada, 2008.* [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)

### The Shopping Cart Display

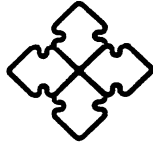
This activity is used to demonstrate the struggle to make ends meet for a family on a low income.

Displaying both shopping carts with the large difference in food sends a very strong visual message of the disparity in income that exists in Canada. (See photo)

Materials: a lot of food, two shopping carts, two signs

- Determine what the current Low-income cut-off (LICO) after tax income is for a four person family (2006 figures are below).
- Determine what proportion of their income an average family of four with this income will spend on food per week. Say for example that the average family of four at the LICO after tax income spends \$100 on food every week, then bring about \$100 worth of groceries.
- Fill a 2-wheeled shopping cart that some people bring to the supermarket with the amount that a low-income family buys per week
- Do the same thing for a family with an average income in Canada.
- Place both shopping carts side by side at your booth or presentation or workshop, and showcase it with a sign, indicating that one shopping cart is how much food a family in poverty buys per week, and the other cart is how much food the average family buys per week.





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LICO-AT large urban, couple two children, 2006 = \$32,556

LICO-AT large urban, lone parent one child, 2006 = \$20,956

Average family income two parents with children, 2006 - \$76,400

Average family income, lone parent, 2006 = \$40,300

Source: Income trends in Canada: <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/101/cst01/famil21a-eng.htm>

Note: Information about average food expenditures is available at Statistics Canada for a fee, if you search for average household expenditures. The Heart and Stroke Foundation has the average prices of healthy food by city and province at:

[http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikIQLcMWJtE/b.4959411/k.CA9/2009\\_Report\\_Card\\_Map.htm](http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikIQLcMWJtE/b.4959411/k.CA9/2009_Report_Card_Map.htm)

Alternatively, you could also contact your local Social Planning Council for this information.

Written by Jerome Liu (member of Campaign 2000 YAC – Youth Action Committee)



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