



## Cross-Canada Update on Poverty Reduction

With Canada's first federal poverty reduction strategy under development, the Campaign 2000 network has been actively engaged in shaping the strategy while vocally calling for action and the adoption of solutions to eradicate poverty. **The Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS) consultation has now been extended until August 31, 2017.** Visit the federal [Poverty Reduction Strategy link](#) to participate in the consultation and emphasize the need for urgent action to eradicate poverty in Canada!

### Organizing for a Strong Poverty Reduction Strategy

Poverty remains at dire levels in Canada. Nearly one in five children (18.5%) live in poverty with their families while a total of 4.9 million people live in poverty across the country. Our 2016 national report card, "[A Road Map to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty](#)" contains the latest facts about poverty and practical solutions. The report card was released on Parliament Hill in collaboration with reports from seven dedicated provincial partners. The report cards received extensive media coverage that included our call for government to address the root causes of poverty in the CPRS. Read one of the media stories published in the *Toronto Star* on Nov. 24, 2016 entitled [Sobering child poverty stats inspire call for renewed action](#).

We greeted the February announcement of the CPRS consultation process with a [commitment to come to the table](#) to inform the strategy while underlining the need for a strong federal vision and role to ensure its success. Our [response to budget 2017](#) in March recognized significant investments in affordable housing and early learning and childcare, but noted that the roll out of funding was slow relative to the immediate need. The glaring absence of funding to equalize spending for child welfare and social services for First Nations children on reserve remains unacceptable and is non-compliant with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal rulings. In addition, Budget 2017's lack of dedicated funding toward the CPRS raised concerns about government's commitment to the strategy. We have been advocating to ensure 'positive signals' from government translate into strong anti-poverty actions.

In March, Campaign 2000 returned to Parliament Hill to release the report, [“Estimating the Cost of Raising Children: Setting the Agenda for Canada”](#) at a breakfast for MPs and Senators. Campaign 2000 received support from the Muttart Foundation and the Canadian Home Economics Foundation to partner with University of Manitoba faculty members Dr. Sid Frankel (Campaign 2000 steering committee) and Dr.

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“The cost of raising children is referenced by politicians of all stripes seeking to support families, but how do we know if policies and programs are helping or helping enough if we have no standard to compare them to?”

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- Dr. Sid Frankel

Karen Duncan and Nazarbayev University’s Dr. Dana Bazarkulova to explore the methodology for crafting sound and reliable estimates of the cost of raising children in Canada. Campaign 2000 called on government to calculate official estimates because they are central to crafting evidence-based child poverty reduction policies. An accessible summary of the issues and our recommendations can be found in this [infographic](#).

Campaign 2000 contributed its leadership and expertise to three submissions to the CPRS process.

In the spring, Campaign 2000 [steering committee members](#) completed a brief paper focused on measuring poverty, entitled [“Measuring Poverty, Meeting Targets.”](#) Agreement on how to accurately measure poverty is central to the CPRS’ success and the credibility of targets and timelines. With no official income poverty line, debates about the rate and prevalence of poverty are too common in Canada. For this reason, our measurement and data subcommittee was pleased to have the opportunity to present our brief and recommendations to the Honourable Jean Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Economist in Residence, Dr. Miles Corak.

We also contributed to the completion of a submission on action needed to address LGBTQ+ poverty in Canada. In partnership with University of Toronto professor Dr. Lori Ross, we co-wrote a submission on behalf of the Canadian Coalition Against LGBTQ+ Poverty, an emerging new group comprised of university faculty and community groups across Canada. To learn more and read the submission, click [here](#).

In June, our network focused on building momentum and expectations for the CPRS. We held 4 coordinated public forums in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Charlottetown to engage hundreds of people to raise their voices to inform a strong CPRS. On June 12, we connected all participating cities via Skype to discuss their local needs and their expectations for strong federal vision and leadership against poverty. To read a summary of input collected at the Toronto session, click [here](#). The sessions were timed to coincide with the release of Campaign 2000’s comprehensive submission to the CPRS that includes policy actions to reduce poverty for children, families, seniors and working age adults. Read our submission in [English](#) or [French](#) or the [summary infographic](#) along with [media coverage](#).



Above left: The Toronto Panel addresses poverty issues at Campaign 2000's June 12 public forum. Right: Group work at Campaign 2000's cross-Canada CPRS forum on June 12.

## Other Important Developments

In January, United Way Centraide Canada's "Ask the Expert Series" featured Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000's national coordinator. Check out the interview in the piece, ["What Happens When Kids Don't Get the Best Start in Life?"](#)

Immediately following the 2015 federal election, Campaign 2000 worked with its long-time national childcare partners to meet with government and engage the childcare workforce, researchers and parents to keep early childhood education and care on the government's agenda. Campaign 2000 has always included universally accessible, high quality childcare as a core solution to child and family poverty. While budget 2017's investments in childcare were welcome, we believe that policy shifts are required within the multi-lateral framework announced in June to poverty-proof childcare in Canada. Evidence shows that childcare best supports low income families in a universal system, with benefits akin to those associated with mixed income public schools. We also noted that the optional extension of maternity/parental leave to 18 months is not a substitute for infant child care and will disproportionately benefit higher income families.

The Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 14 [Oh Canada! Our Kids Deserve Better](#) was also released in June. UNICEF's global report, [Report Card 14: Building the Future](#), reveals that Canada ranks 25th out of 41 rich nations when it comes to child well-being. When compared against 21 indicators related to progress towards the global Sustainable Development Goals for children and youth, Canada ranks in the middle – a place it has held for more than a decade. In terms of poverty, Canada ranks 32 of 41 rich countries for its high levels of relative poverty. Further concerns highlighted in the report include Canada's high levels of child homicide, suicide and bullying.

## Looking Ahead

We anticipate the release of new Long-Form Census data on incomes so we can once again track poverty trends among groups disproportionately affected, including Indigenous and racialized people, immigrants, people with disabilities and women. Our national and provincial report cards will be released in late November and will include a special collaboration on Parliament Hill.

We look forward to further organizing and collaboration with partners in relation to the CPRS, and more broadly. We anticipate the announcement of the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the CPRS, originally planned for Spring 2017, shortly.

Importantly, we expect the CPRS to be announced prior to Budget 2018 and expect a robust strategy with bold federal leadership and vision that is supported by investment in the short and long term.

## **Dignity for All Actions for the CPRS Consultations**

The [Dignity for All](#) campaign co-leads [Canada Without Poverty](#) (CWP) and [Citizens for Public Justice](#) (CPJ), which have been working over the past year preparing for and engaging in consultations for the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS), which started in February.

In order to reach people broadly, particularly people with lived experience of poverty, our main action for the CPRS consultations was an easily accessible online form that allowed people to add their recommendations. These forms were submitted directly to the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). By the end of the consultations, we had **864 submissions** of our online form from people from coast-to-coast-to-coast, including many with lived experience of poverty.

CWP and CPJ also engaged communities and groups across the country in the consultation process and on broader policy issues. CWP [travelled to all three territories](#) to meet with those experiencing and working on poverty in the North to discuss poverty and human rights – meanwhile CPJ coordinated meetings with national churches and faith community representatives.

CWP and CPJ held meetings with MPs, ESDC staff, and Minister Duclos' staff, including participation in the National Poverty Roundtable with Minister Duclos and several national stakeholders. CWP conducted a campaign entitled [This is Poverty](#), which encouraged persons with lived experience of poverty to submit videos on their recommendations for the strategy – these were compiled in [a final report](#). CPJ also submitted a brief called [Flourishing Together](#).

Following on the CPRS consultations, Dignity for All is now looking ahead to [Chew on This!](#), our annual public outreach event that takes place on **October 17**. This year, we will highlight what we heard from people through the CPRS consultations and will continue to push for a rights-based CPRS. We hope you will [join us!](#)



*Iqaluit during CWP's visit to connect with partners and conduct human rights workshops in the North.  
(Contributed)*





Above-left: Chew on This! materials from 2016; Right: from the National Poverty Roundtable with Minister Duclos (contributed)

### Donate to Campaign 2000

With poverty reduction strategies in place or being developed in most provinces and territories, and now at the federal level, we're continuing to make progress. Your ongoing support is crucial at this time of the year. With your renewed support, we can keep the momentum going. Please send your donation today to **Campaign 2000, c/o Family Service Toronto**, 202-128A Sterling Road, Toronto, ON M6R 2B7 or [donate online](#) through Canada Helps. **Thank you for your support!**

## Updates from Regional Partners

### British Columbia

#### Provincial Election

BC voters elected a minority Liberal government on May 9, which then collapsed soon after following a non-confidence vote. As a result, the province currently has a new minority NDP government, formed through an [agreement](#) with the BC Green Party that includes a commitment to implement a BC poverty reduction strategy. The PRS includes addressing affordable housing, support for mental health and addictions and income security. The NDP election platform promised that the plan will be legislated with targets and timelines.

The [agreement](#) also commits them to:

- Strike a Fair Wages Commission aimed at moving the minimum wage to at least \$15 per hour;
- Restore funding to Adult Basic Education and English language learning;
- Improve access and reduce the cost of post-secondary education for students;
- Invest in childcare and early childhood education to improve quality, expand spaces, increase affordability and ensure accessibility (NDP platform endorsed BC's \$10 a Day child care plan);

- Implement a basic income pilot;
- Eliminate regressive MSP premiums.

The BC Liberals, prior to losing a non-confidence vote, also made many new promises in their [throne speech](#) that were not present in their election platform - committing them to support several poverty reduction measures. All three parties have now promised to support welfare rate increases. See [party responses](#) to First Call's election questions and the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's (BCPRC) post-election [Thank Your MLA lobby](#).

BC advocates were very active in the pre-election period, including publishing a powerful report, [Sharing Our Realities, Life on Disability Assistance in British Columbia](#), launching a ["We Can't Afford Poverty" campaign](#) that engaged children. Advocates are now busy working with the new government to give our best advice on how to implement these many commitments.

Several groups around BC and one BC MP hosted consultations and made submissions to provide input to the federal poverty reduction strategy, including [First Call](#) and the [BCPRC](#).

### Other Poverty-Related Campaigns

The [Living Wage for Families Campaign](#) momentum continues with the certification of several local governments, including the [City of Vancouver](#), the Vancouver Police Department and Park Board, and the commitment from the [Yuułu?if?ath – Ucluelet First Nation](#). Living wages have been calculated for [21 BC regions](#).

After winning the [elimination of the clawback of EI maternity benefits](#) for income assistance recipients, the BC government announced the [end of additional clawbacks](#) as of April 2017, including the CPP disabled contributor's child benefit. It is estimated these changes will benefit approximately 1,000 children and 600 families every year.



*Photo: Adrienne Montani (First Call--first left), Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson, Deborah Littman (Metro Vancouver Alliance), Deanna Ogle (Living Wage for Families Campaign Organizer) at a press conference announcing City of Vancouver living wage certification. (Contributed)*



## Alberta

### Recent Developments

Alberta's NDP government has continued to take action in many key areas to address poverty, including:

- Developing a new, and likely improved, affordable housing strategy, which is expected to be released to the public this summer. (More info here: [http://www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca/housing/affordable\\_housing\\_strategy\\_engagement.html](http://www.seniors-housing.alberta.ca/housing/affordable_housing_strategy_engagement.html))
- Launching a new Early Learning and Child Care Centres program, which provides funding to new and existing centres to improve affordability, accessibility, and quality of care. (More info here: <https://www.alberta.ca/early-learning-child-care-centres.aspx>)
- Continuing on the path to a \$15 per hour minimum wage by 2018. It will increase from the current \$12.20 per hour to \$13.60 per hour on October 1, 2017. (More info here: <https://work.alberta.ca/employment-standards/minimum-wage.html>)
- Eliminating basic mandatory school fees for things like taking the bus and required classroom materials. Money that school boards were receiving from families is being replaced by public funding. (More info here: <https://www.alberta.ca/school-fee-reduction.aspx>)
- Freezing post-secondary tuition rates. While good for affordability, unfortunately the government decided not to fund institutions for their resulting shortfall in revenue. (More info here: <https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=43633A6F4A998-D732-B325-27015D560CDC8089>)
- Considering free post-secondary tuition for low-income families, similar to Ontario or New Brunswick. (More info here: <http://www.metronews.ca/news/calgary/2017/03/24/alberta-government-looking-free-tuition-models-during-review.html>)

### Upcoming Reports for Release in 2017

- Annual child poverty report co-published by Public Interest Alberta, Edmonton Social Planning Council, and Alberta College of Social Workers will be released in November 2017 in coordination with Campaign 2000.
- Living wage reports for Edmonton and Calgary will be released imminently by Edmonton Social Planning Council and Vibrant Communities Calgary, respectively.
- Public Interest Alberta's annual low wage fact sheets will be released in September 2017. (Find last year's fact sheets here: <http://www.pialberta.org/lowwagereport2016>)

## Saskatchewan

### What's New

There is little good news from Saskatchewan. The Province introduced an austerity budget in the spring, featuring cuts to everything from hearing aid programs to funerals for people in poverty. Many of these cuts have been reversed, due in no small part to the organized opposition put together by [Stop the Cuts SK](#). No action has been taken on the provincial poverty reduction strategy introduced last February, which isn't necessarily surprising; the plan emphasized that action would need to wait until the economy had recovered, and the austerity budget suggests the Province's real support for its priorities is tepid.

### Looking Ahead

Two projects are worth mentioning which will be launched in October. The first is an *Act to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatchewan*, a draft piece of legislation being put together by a collection of anti-poverty organizations. The

second is an update of the 2015 [Poverty Costs](#) campaign, which will feature new figures on the economic cost of poverty in Saskatchewan. Upstream is going to make updating these figures an annual event, and may produce a nationally-focused set of numbers in 2018.

## Manitoba

### **Made in Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy**

In its April 17, 2017 budget, the Government of Manitoba promised a Made-in-Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy to be released late in 2017. This is to include a community-based consultation process. However, details of this consultation have not been released.

Meanwhile, the government missed a deadline required in Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Act that a renewed strategy be released by the end of May 2017. It also froze Manitoba's minimum wage at \$11 per hour, allowing only inflationary increases. Make Poverty History Manitoba and Campaign 2000 Manitoba advocate a minimum wage of \$15.53 per hour (indexed to increases in LICO Before-Tax threshold since 2014).

In June 2017, the government began to reveal a major austerity program, with many of the service and benefit cuts aimed at the poor. For example, a significant decrease was announced and immediately implemented in the portion of the Rent Assist housing benefit program for those living in poverty, but not receiving social assistance (largely the working poor and seniors.) This alters the calculation used to determine the size of the monthly subsidy, from 25 to 28 per cent of the monthly income and decreases the benefit for a single parent with two children from \$119 to \$49.

Winnipeg Harvest, a Campaign 2000 partner in Manitoba, plans to release the 2017 Acceptable Living Level report in September. Current and former clients of Winnipeg Harvest will compare the amount of money needed to purchase basic necessities with the income provided by welfare or a minimum-wage job.

### **Cross-Canada Public Forum on Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Several of Campaign 2000's regional partners and steering committee members in Manitoba, including Winnipeg Harvest, the University of Manitoba and others, worked closely in organizing and hosting a lively public forum on Monday, June 12, 2017. Called *Shaping Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*, the Winnipeg forum formed part of the national Campaign 2000 efforts to offer opportunities to community members to share their thoughts and concerns as well as propose workable solutions in this important dialogue. Apart from discussions on local issues and strategies, it also offered the participants a chance to speak directly with organizers and participants from other sites, such as Toronto and Charlottetown, PEI. The Winnipeg forum brought together more than 30 participants from various organizations and community groups. Key speakers spoke passionately about the need to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Canada, including University of Manitoba professor Sid Frankel and Damon Johnston, President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

## Ontario

2017 has been a busy year for Ontario with lots of policy changes. Ontario Campaign 2000 has been active in supporting the many different initiatives and campaigns advocating for positive changes to end child and family poverty.



## **Anti-Racism Act**

The Ontario government passed the Anti-Racism Act in June. This embedded the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate in law and will enable the province to mandate race data collection and anti-racism impact assessment frameworks to inform the effectiveness of programs and policies.

## **Basic Income Pilot**

Ontario Campaign 2000 made a [submission](#) to the Basic Income Pilot in January, emphasizing that the Pilot should focus on ending poverty and that no one should be worse off as the result of a basic income program. The province announced details of the initial stage of the Pilot in May and pilots will be launching in Hamilton, Brantford, and Brant County, Thunder Bay and surrounding area and Lindsay in 2017. Plans are still being made to have a separate, parallel Pilot with a First Nations community.

## **Child Care**

In early 2017, Ontario Campaign 2000 wrote a [submission](#) to the Ontario Early Years and Child Care Strategy focused on the need for a universal child care program that is accessible, affordable, equitable and high quality. The Ontario government announced the policy framework in early June. It consists of investing \$1.6 billion to build 45,000 new licensed child care spaces in the province over the next 5 years. This commitment is part of the plan to have 100,000 more licensed child care spaces for children aged 0-4.

## **Housing**

In June, the Ontario government passed the Rental Fairness Act. This Act expanded rent control to all private units, inclusive of units created on or after November 1, 1991 (these units were previously exempt from rent control guidelines). Other protections within the Act include the creation of a standard lease, and protection of tenants from eviction through the possible abuse of the "landlord's own use" provision.

## **Fight for \$15 & Fairness Campaign**

In early June, the Changing Workplaces Review final report was released and the Ontario government announced Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act with proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act. The Bill includes increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by January 1, 2019 and other workplace changes, including equal pay for equal work for casual, part-time, temporary and seasonal employees; scheduling changes; overtime pay; employee misclassification; paid vacation; paid emergency leave as well as changes to the Labour Relations Act. Ontario Campaign 2000 made a submission in July to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs supporting the \$15 minimum wage and calling for amendments to a few areas within the Bill.

## **Child Support Payments**

As of February, the Ontario government is no longer clawing back child support payments from parents on social assistance (OW and ODSP). Previously child support payments were treated as income and deducted from benefits.

## **Youth in Care Age Raised to 18 Years**

In June the province passed the Supporting Children, Youth and Families Act. This Act rose the age of protection to 18. This will assist in youth being able to access services.

## Workshops on Child and Family Poverty

Ontario Campaign 2000 has been doing workshops on child and family poverty with different groups and created a specific workshop for students in teacher's college to learn about poverty in the classroom. We are also hosting workshops this summer for youth and adults to engage people on poverty in Canada and the province and how to engage in solutions to end child and family poverty in the province.

## Quebec

Recent policy developments in the province threaten to hamper the progress of poverty reduction efforts as initially identified in 2002's *Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion*.

### Bill 70: The Fight Continues

[Bill 70](#) was given assent in November 2016. The act requires new beneficiaries of social assistance to participate in a professional reintegration program (Objectif Emploi), or else they risk [losing up to half of their monthly social assistance \(from \\$628 to \\$404 monthly\)](#). This requirement applies to both individual recipients and adults in families receiving social assistance. The Act has been largely criticized as workfare in disguise, and an attempt by the government to save money by targeting the most

vulnerable. The *Coalition pour un Québec sans pauvreté* launched [a campaign against Bill 70](#) in response and has been actively and loudly opposing the Bill and its sponsor, Minister François Blais.



*"Social Assistance is a right. An obligation is not a choice. No to Bill 70" (Photo taken from online sources)*

### Service for Young Children and Their Families

In the past year, the non-profit child care sector and parents adjusted to the new fee schedule with a sliding scale according to income and budget cuts which have had an impact on program planning and staffing. Led by *L'Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance* (AQCPÉ), [the sector](#) welcomed the province's new law, [Bill 143](#) that recognized early childhood services as the first link in the education chain.

Furthermore, the province recently announced [100 new pre-kindergarten classes](#) for four-year olds. Debates about the best way to provide services for young children and their families continue. In contrast to expanding kindergarten to younger children, many are recommending that the childcare centres now serving these children and their families be strengthened so that there is better access. The 2017-2027 Quebec Infrastructure Plan allocates \$530 million for expansion of child care.

### New Reports:

- Emploi Québec, 2017: [Ministerial Strategy for Labour Market Integration of First Nations and Inuit People](#)
- Desjardins, March 2017: [La pauvreté au Québec, une réalité encore présente](#)
- Canada Without Poverty, 2016: [Québec Poverty Progress Profile](#)

## **Nova Scotia**

### **Poverty Reduction in Nova Scotia**

With the development of what everyone hopes will be robust federal poverty reduction and federal housing strategies, money in the provincial budget to develop a provincial poverty reduction strategy and the announcement of a United Way/Halifax partnership on poverty reduction, there has been quite a lot of talk lately about poverty and poverty reduction among agencies and advocacy groups in Nova Scotia.

In addition, though details have not yet been formally announced under its transformation initiative, the Department of Community Services appears ready to start making some positive changes to its Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program. None of the changes have yet been officially announced because in the wake of the May election, the Department has a new Minister, but we understand they involve developing a standard household rate that aims to reduce means testing and paper work required to qualify for IA. This should also result in increases for individuals and families who due to means testing do not currently receive the full rate. It is also proposed to include a telephone and bus pass or money for transportation (now deemed 'special needs' for those who qualify on health grounds) in the standard household rate. Changes will also be made to the amounts people can earn before money is clawed back. While the changes sound promising, there was no general increase in income assistance rates, in the Nova Scotia child benefit or other provincial tax benefits targeted to low income individuals and families in this year's provincial budget. We understand that under the transformation process no increases are envisaged until 2019/20. Also, there is no word on whether child support and CPP payments will continue to be deducted from income assistance.

Members of the Community Society to End Poverty (CSEP-NS) understand that the proposed ESIA changes will soon be put before stakeholders as part of what has been a lengthy two-year consultation process.

### **Community Partnerships**

To this end, the Community Society to End Poverty (CSEP-NS) with a province-wide contact list but whose board is primarily based in Halifax, has initiated discussions with several like-minded provincial and regional organizations to develop a province wide alliance or network to build capacity. The goal is to jointly influence the proposed government poverty reduction agendas and ensure they move in a positive direction. Like most groups of this kind, CSEP-NS is working on a shoe-string and in order for it to succeed in its aims in the long term, the coalition will need both resolve and tenacity (which it has), but also financial resources.

Activity at federal, provincial and municipal levels on the promise of poverty reduction initiatives and the ESIA changes have meant that community groups and organizations pushing for action for a number of years have been very busy over the past six months or more with meetings, consultations, writing briefs and making recommendations. Since we are all anxious to see words and promises come to fruition and turn into real action and policy change, there is still a lot to be done and no doubt the high level of activity will continue as the new government initiatives emerge.

## New Brunswick

### A Broad Range of Poverty Reduction Initiatives

In April 2016, the Human Development Council initiated E-petition 291 which called on the government to designate Saint John a demonstration site under the national Poverty Reduction Strategy. The petition was presented to the House of Commons in early June. We await a formal response.

In the meantime, Saint John is one of six communities in the federal Tackling Poverty Together (TPT) project. According to the government's website: "TPT is a research project in six communities across Canada. It aims to assess the impact of poverty reduction programs locally in communities that have identified poverty as an issue, while learning directly from people who know first-hand what it's like to live in poverty.." A final report is imminent.

The provincial government has also singled out Saint John for special treatment. In May, it announced that it is investing \$10 million over five years to create a fund aimed at ending generational poverty in Saint John. The Social Innovation Fund will support innovation projects and initiatives that strive towards ending generational poverty in Greater Saint John. All initiatives that receive support from the fund will be evidenced-based and evaluated to determine their potential impact and scalability.

In February, the provincial government announced a new post-secondary education grant program, Tuition Relief for the Middle Class (TRMC). It builds on the Tuition Access Bursary (TAB) of 2016 that offered upfront, non-repayable assistance for students with gross household incomes of \$60,000 or less attending publicly funded college programs or undergraduate university programs in New Brunswick.

The provincial fixed election date is Sept 24, 2018.

### A Family Plan Framework

The New Brunswick government has released a Family Plan Framework which is meant to build on the goals and achievements of both their Economic Growth Plan and 10-year Education Plans. [The Family Plan](#) addresses seven key areas, including poverty reduction.

## Prince Edward Island

### Signs of Hope

Members of the MacKillop Centre for Social Justice and PEI Coalition for a Poverty Eradication Strategy were pleased that there are increased signs of hope that progress will soon be made on a provincial Poverty Eradication Strategy. Three events in particular have given the community that hope.

The coverage of the Child Poverty Report Card, *Lingering too Long*, has helped to increase public awareness that a Poverty Eradication Strategy is necessary. This coverage has increased public understanding of the extent of poverty and the need to strengthen the social safety net.

In April, the Charlottetown Guardian devoted an issue of its daily newspaper to poverty in the province. This generated a tremendous wide-spread public response.



The third hopeful sign was the public's response to the June 12 workshop to generate feedback to the federal government on its poverty reduction strategy. The turnout was great, given the time of year, and there was a high level of interest and concern. Working in partnership, this workshop was organized to take place on the same day as the national public forum that took place in Toronto and one of the key leaders in Charlottetown, Mary Boyd gave a brief presentation via Skype to a cross-country audience on June 12.

### **Cross-Canada Forum on Shaping Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy**

In addition, members held a special meeting with the Minister of Family and Human Services, who is aware of the work and research of this group. The provincial government appointed a special staff person to consult groups about poverty and what is needed in a federal poverty reduction strategy. This staff person, Sharon Cameron, attended the June 12 meeting where many suggestions were made and forwarded to the federal government. Participants in Charlottetown also had a chance to connect with the national forum that was held in Toronto which included a webinar component with speakers from BC, Manitoba, Ontario and PEI. The public is anxiously awaiting the federal report on the CPRS, and at the same time, also calling for increased provincial government commitment.

## **Newfoundland and Labrador**

### **Brief Update from CSC NL on Consultations**

The Community Sector Council NL (CSC NL) and the Vibrant Communities initiative hosted a very well-advertised public poverty summit on March 1, 2017 with a wide range of stakeholders (service providers, business reps, community groups, provincial government and city personnel). The local MP spoke about Federal initiatives. Part of that was a consultation for feedback to the federal process.

The Campaign 2000 NL community partner, CSC NL also convened Citizen Voices (people with lived experience) for a consultation. Both have been fed back to the process.

### **2017 Budget Highlights**

While Newfoundland & Labrador has been largely applauded in the past for its successful 2006 poverty reduction strategy, the province entered its second year of large cuts to public spending, coupled with the highest unemployment rate in the country, at [14.9%](#). The 2017 budget provided some relief on the personal taxes levied in 2016, but continues to demonstrate a meager focus on eliminating poverty in the province.

### **Social Safety Net:**

- \$42.6 million to implement Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement Finance;
- \$1.7 million to implement disability component of NL Income Supplement Finance;
- \$7.8 million for the Supportive Living Program to support community-based initiatives that enable individuals with complex needs to overcome homelessness.

### **Housing:**

- \$16.6 million for improved social and affordable housing in 2017.

### **Education:**

- The post-secondary tuition freeze will be maintained during 2017;

- Approximately \$6.7 million will go to student employment programs which enable employers to hire high school and post-secondary students.

### Early Childhood Education and Care:

- \$2 million to be added to the base amount of \$12.5 million to broaden the eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy Program;
- \$672,000 allocated for the Inclusion Program, which provides support to assist in the accommodation of all children in regulated child care;
- \$3.5 million to implement child amount component of NL Income Supplement Finance.

### New Reports:

- End Homelessness St. John's - [EVERYONE COUNTS: St. John's Homeless Point-in-Time Count 2016](#)
- [Budget 2016-2017 Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiatives](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador's 2017 Budget Highlights](#)

## Yukon

### Poverty Reduction

A July news release stated that the Government of Yukon hosted a poverty reduction and housing forum called **Expanding the Connection: Poverty and Housing** on July 12, 2017 in Whitehorse. The public forum brought together community champions and government and non-government officials in an attempt to broaden understanding of the connection between housing and poverty. On the evening before the forum, the public attended a documentary film on homelessness in southern Alberta called *Where is Home?* (Image above taken from online sources)



### What's in the Provincial Budget for Women and Children?

The Government of Yukon's provincial budget for 2016-2017 announced budget items for initiatives related to women and children and some investment in affordable housing. More specifically, the budget put aside \$525,000 for the Women's Directorate, covering areas such as:

- \$271,000 over three years for the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre to host a new Legal Advocate for women;
- \$84,000 for the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre to support *A Safe Place*, a low-barrier drop-in program that provides for women and children;
- New gender equality indicators website that provides statistical and qualitative information on the status of women in the territory;
- \$150,000 for Aboriginal Women's Initiatives to support Aboriginal women's organizations in developing projects;

- \$20,000 for the Violence Prevention Initiative to complete work on three deliverables:
  - a toolkit to help managers address domestic violence in the work place;
  - a style guide insert for communicating violence accurately and clearly;
  - an online training model to introduce response-based practices to Government of Yukon professionals that work directly with clients.

## **Affordable Housing**

The Budget also plans for \$7.264 million investments for affordable housing; \$450,000 of which will go to rental assistance for working households paying more than 30% of their household income towards shelter (which includes children in the household). In addition, \$416,000 will go towards housing improvements and programs that benefit victims of violence.

In April, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Planning Group on Homelessness and various volunteers led the first Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count in Whitehorse. The project is funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy and takes a snapshot of the number of homeless people on a given day. The PiT Count included a focus on youth and aboriginal homelessness. The results from the PiT Count will be publicly available, with the intent to improve the national response to homelessness.

## **New Reports and Resources**

- Homelessness Partnering Strategy Coordinated Point-in-Time Count  
<http://homelesshub.ca/pitcounttoolkit>
- Vulnerable People at Risk: Forum and Business Roundtable Summary. A joint initiative of the City of Whitehorse and Kwanlin Dün First Nation  
<http://www.city.whitehorse.yk.ca/home/showdocument?id=6096>

## **Northwest Territories**

### **An Enhanced NWT Child Benefit and Other Related Programs**

The territorial government has amended the Income Tax Act to provide an enhanced NWT Child Benefit, effective July 1, 2017. The benefit will now be pro-rated. Families with income under \$30,000 will receive the full benefit and decreasing amounts will be paid to families with a maximum income of \$80,000. Approximately 1,400 families will receive this new benefit for the first time. For more information, follow this link: <http://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/nwt-child-benefit>.

In October 2016, [CBC reported](#) new rules for calculating income assistance for families in NWT in the wake of the introduction of the CCB. This includes eliminating children under 18 from income support for food and clothing. In summer 2016, NWT joined [all provinces and territories in a commitment to no claw backs of the CCB from social/income assistance](#). Advocates in NWT are monitoring the final outcome of changes in child benefits, including the uptake on programming through the filing of income tax returns.

The territorial government is introducing a junior kindergarten program for four year olds. It is a free program and will be available in all 49 NWT schools starting September 2017. It has been available in about 20 schools since 2015 so the change is to make the program universal.

The NWT Housing Corporation conducted a survey of residents about their housing needs. About 10 per cent of the whole NWT population responded, producing a robust data set. The report is available [here](#). The next step is to create policies and programs that reflect the submissions.

Alternatives North completed its Living Wage program by distributing decals to employers recognizing their membership. The program is now on hiatus because of a lack of funding.

The territorial government continues to host an annual anti-poverty round table with territorial, municipal and aboriginal governments, non-profit, business and lived experience participants. At the last round table, the discussion focussed on indicators that will measure progress on reducing poverty.

### Working in Partnerships on Poverty Reduction Strategy

In addition, Canada Without Poverty's Michele Biss visited [Yellowknife](#), Whitehorse and Iqaluit to gather information for that group's submission on the federal Poverty Strategy. Read her blog about the trip [here](#).

Alternatives North and other partners in the poverty reduction movement took part in various federal poverty reduction consultations. Alternatives North produced a submission that is available [here](#).

## Nunavut

Nunavut is in dire need of effective and immediate strategies for poverty reduction. Recent coalition meetings and community action reflect this need. In February of this year, the Government of Nunavut (GN) announced a [\\$2 billion budget](#) for 2017/2018, along with a promise to focus on reducing poverty and enhancing education opportunities for Nunavummiut's. The Minister of Family Services released a [report](#) on major accomplishments of the poverty reduction division and the community from 2014-2016.

### The Makimaniq Plan 2

In early May, the Nunavut roundtable on Poverty Reduction (NRPR) released [the Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction](#), providing **8 long-term outcomes** (see image on the right, taken from online sources) to alleviate poverty in the territory and specific responsibilities that the members of the roundtable will share during the next five years (2017-2022). The plan is based on community engagement, and outlines indicators to measure the results of the strategy, such as reduced crowding in public housing. The roundtable meets once annually, with evaluations and outcomes of the strategy expected to be reported.





## Food Insecurity

A recent [nation-wide report card](#) on food stated that the territory was by far the most affected by food insecurity in Canada and called for “remedial action.” Increasing access to country foods remains a top priority, as many community organizations have demonstrated. For example, NGO Feeding Nunavut successfully completed its first implementation of the [Harvester Support Program](#) in a remote high Arctic community, aimed at increasing access to traditional livelihoods and country food. The program gave hunters supplies in exchange for a portion of their harvested meat, which was distributed back to the community free of charge. In a similar vein, the GN’s [Country Food Distribution Program](#) funds municipalities for the utilities and maintenance cost of community freezers or other country food infrastructure. The GN allocated \$2 million in 2015/2016 for these initiatives.

## Special Thanks to All the Contributors

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