



Campaign 2000 e-Bulletin

Summer 2014

Working for a National Plan to Make Canada Poverty-Free

+ Scanning the Federal Scene

Marking 25 years of Canada's all-party resolution to end child poverty

The lack of up-to-date data on low income children and their families is a growing challenge. “*Canada’s Real Economic Action Plan Begins with Poverty Reduction: 2013 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*” remains the most recent data (still the statistics for 2011) showing that 967,000 children – about 1 in 7 – lives in poverty. That’s more children and their families in poverty in 2011 than in 1989 when all MPs unanimously resolved to end child poverty in Canada. It is most disturbing that 4 in 10 of Canada’s indigenous children live in poverty. Because the new Canada Income Survey (CIS), described by Statistics Canada as the ‘successor’ to the former Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, has not yet released data on low income people for 2012, it’s difficult to know what progress may have been made in the past year. We do know that in this period of slow economic growth, families continue to experience economic instability. Four out of five jobs created since the economic crisis are classified as temporary; food insecurity among families is high with 1.1 million children experiencing food insecurity, and children continue to use food banks in disproportionately high numbers. In this context, it was particularly distressing that there were no new advances for children in Canada following the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review in 2013.

As our partner, UNICEF Canada noted, Canada declined the recommendation to develop a national strategy to combat poverty, stating that the provinces and territories have adopted their own strategies. Clearly, the need to continue our collective work from coast to coast to coast is paramount as we approach 25 years since the House of Commons made its pledge to end child poverty in Canada.



Welcome to our new partner Keep The Promise!

Keep The Promise (KTP) is a two-year campaign led by a coalition of individuals and organizations committed to ending child poverty across Canada. *KTP* was inspired by the social activism of June Callwood (1924 – 2007) who worked closely with Campaign 2000 and others on child poverty, the HIV-AIDS community, PEN, the Canadian Civil Liberties’ Association and many others. Many of you may recall the cross-Canada photo exhibition *Child Poverty . . . A National Disgrace* that we worked on with June. When June’s friends and allies came together to honour her activism, they decided that child poverty was her unfinished legacy. With the intent of providing ‘value-added’ energy and resources to re-awaken the public consciousness about child poverty and build on the work of Campaign 2000 and others, they decided that the voices of children needed to be better heard in the discussion on child poverty. A partnership between **Campaign 2000**; **Canadian Teachers’ Federation**, who is our long-standing Campaign 2000 partner; and **Keep The Promise**, as well as many other organizations and individual volunteers, has resulted in creative tools and resources for teachers and students in grades 5– 8. The goal is to link classroom

learning with community social action projects that will be illustrated on www.imagine-action.ca, CTF's teacher platform for social justice programs. A selection of schools and teachers will convene in a Student Summit in Ottawa on Nov. 18 – 19, 2014 to share experiences, learn about civic engagement, meet with representatives of all political parties and then continue their work back home in their communities. Be prepared to hear from these young activists as they reach out to community partners. Please check out www.keepthepromise.ca and encourage any students, teachers, principals or schools that you are associated with to get involved!

James Moore and Report Card release

Some may find it ironic that it was Industry Minister James Moore, BC Conservative, whose Dickensian comments on poverty were trending on Twitter in mid-December! In response to First Call's Report Card on Child Poverty in British Columbia showing yet another year of having the highest child poverty rate in the country, Moore responded to a radio interviewer that the federal government would leave this issue to the provinces. When pressed, he asked if it is the government's job to feed people their breakfast. Needless to say, this set off a barrage of comments and later prompted him to say that he regretted his "insensitive comment" and offered his apologies. National Coordinator Laurel Rothman, and First Call's Coordinator Adrienne Montani, among others, commented on many television and radio programs. First Call's Dr. John Millar partnered with Laurel to write an Op Ed "Poverty costs us billions of dollars every year" which was published widely including on ipolitics.ca and in the Hill Times. Click on the weblink below to read the joint op-ed:

<http://www.ipolitics.ca/2013/12/11/how-poverty-is-killing-us/> And you can read the Huffington Post article here:
http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/12/16/moorechristmas-james-moore-child-poverty_n_4453216.html

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association launches 'Housing for All' campaign

Our partner CHRA re-asserts its belief that all people in Canada, no matter their income, deserve decent, safe housing they can afford and is calling on the federal government to reinvest in the social housing programs which meet that need. CHRA reminds us that social housing must have federal funding in order to be affordable. As federal funding through operating agreements is scheduled to end, it's essential to call for federal re-investment in social housing and avoid the risks of homelessness. Go to <http://housing4all.ca/> and add your voice today.

All-Party Anti-Poverty Caucus (APAC)

This all-party Parliamentary group re-convened in March and continues to provide an important forum for solution-oriented strategies, information-sharing and collaboration with non-governmental groups and individuals on poverty-related issues. The new Steering Committee consists of: Hon. Art Eggleton, Senator (Independent – Liberal); Hon. Rev. Don Meredith, Senator (Conservative); Hon. Judy Sgro, MP (Liberal); Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet, MP (NDP); Brad Butt, MP (Conservative); Chris Charlton, MP (NDP). Initiated in 2012, this group brings together a range of organizations committed to finding and promoting important measures to eradicate poverty in Canada. Their fall agenda is being finalized.

Leilani Farhani appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing

Congratulations to lawyer, social worker and anti-poverty leader Leilani Farhani, Executive Director of our partner Canada Without Poverty (CWP) who was recently appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. Farhani explains this role as "*... it's almost like public office but on a world stage. You're responsible for monitoring the status of housing rights globally. ... I want to contribute to a better understanding as to why a human rights framework is so important. ... My belief is that it's only once we understand housing as a human right — as an entitlement of some sort — that we will start to make change.*" Her plan is to continue at CWP while in her unpaid role as special rapporteur. (comments adapted from interview in the Ottawa Citizen and personal communication with Ms. Farhani.)

Donate to Campaign 2000

With poverty reduction strategies in place or being developed in most provinces and territories, 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**, 355 Church Street, Toronto, ON M5B 1Z8 or donate online through Canada Helps at <http://www.campaign2000.ca/aboutus/donate.html> **Thank you for your support!**

Updates from Regional Partners

British Columbia

Bill M212: Poverty Reduction and Economic Inclusion Act

On May 6, 2014, Nelson-Creston MLA Michelle Mungall introduced *Bill M212: Poverty Reduction and Economic Inclusion Act* in the BC Legislature. The bill calls on government to adopt a provincial poverty reduction plan. Read the [news](#) in *The Province*. A Poverty Reduction Act was previously presented in the BC legislature in March 2010 but did not pass a second reading before the legislature session closed. First Call and many other groups have [written](#) to Premier Clark urging passage of the bill. The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition is running a [campaign](#) in support of *Bill M212*.

Community Poverty Reduction Strategies

Two years ago, the BC government announced “community poverty reduction strategies” as pilot projects in seven BC communities. These projects were to be led by the Ministry of Children and Family Development in partnership with the Union of BC Municipalities, and were deliberately focused at the level of engaging 10 to 15 families in each community with the help of a halftime consultant. On May 13, they released the first progress report on these projects. First Call Provincial Coordinator Adrienne Montani expressed First Call’s disappointment with the community poverty reduction strategies in a June 16, 2014 [Op Ed in the Vancouver Sun](#).

Child Support Clawback Campaign

Since 2002, the BC government has been clawing back every dollar of child support paid to families on social assistance. According to the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, approximately 4,000 single parent families received child support payments that were clawed back from their income assistance payments in 2013. First Call and our allies have been advocating about this issue for a number of years and the campaign is gaining momentum. Michelle Mungall, Opposition Critic for Social Development, has raised it in the legislature, parents have gone to the legislature, and allies, such as BC ACORN, have held a number of rallies. There has been a [wealth of media coverage and letters](#) written in support. Government has said they may review the policy.

2013 Child Poverty Report Card

BC was once again ranked the worst in Canada with the highest level of child poverty, using LICO and MBM measures. First Call set up a special website www.worstincanada.org to profile the 2013 [BC Child Poverty Report Card](#). The report received [wide media coverage](#) including this cartoon of Premier Christy Clark by Bob Kreiger.



Community Advocacy

[First Call](#) and other partners in the [BC Poverty Reduction Coalition](#) continue to focus their attention on mobilizing public support for a provincial poverty reduction plan. This mobilization includes the [\\$10/Day Child Care Plan](#) proposed by the [Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC](#) and the [Early Childhood Educators of BC](#) (now endorsed by thousands of individuals and [organizations](#)), an increase in welfare rates (see a summary of the work of the [Raise the Rates Coalition](#)), and other policy solutions such as our [Living Wage for Families Campaign](#). Members of local chapters of the Federation of University Women’s Clubs all around BC have collected signatures on petitions, written letters, visited their MLAs and hosted public forums on child poverty. The Public Health Association of BC has also released a new [Statement on Poverty and Inequity](#) and the BC Healthy Living Alliance’s report [On the Path to Better Health](#) confirms “the dramatic effects of poverty on our health”.

Alberta

The 2014 Alberta Budget consisted of partially refunding many of the programs and services that had been drastically cut in the previous year’s budget. In a few cases, such as investments in homeless support services to the provincial 10 year plan to end homelessness, there were some real increases after a year of freezes and cuts.

The most dramatic political development happened in March with the resignation of Premier Alison Redford. Redford had been the author of the Conservative government’s promise to end child poverty in 5 years [Update: Redford has since also resigned from her seat as MLA for Calgary-Elbow]. Former federal Cabinet minister Jim Prentice is favoured to win the leadership race in

September and become Alberta's next Premier. Whether the child poverty elimination promise will be kept will not be known until the fall. In the meantime, work at the bureaucratic level continues, though with a focus on process rather than tangible policy commitments and investments: <http://povertyreduction.alberta.ca/>

Several Alberta municipalities continue work on their poverty reduction or elimination strategies. The City of Calgary and the United Way of Calgary have begun implementing the plan to halve poverty rates by 2023: <http://www.enoughforall.ca/> The City of Edmonton has elevated its poverty strategy to that of a Mayor's Task Force co-chaired by Mayor Don Iveson. Work is underway to implement the strategic framework: http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/eliminating-poverty-in-edmonton.aspx Visit the Action to End Poverty in Alberta Facebook page for updates on plans and actions in other Alberta communities.

Campaign 2000 partner Public Interest Alberta has launched a campaign called **Alberta Could** calling for fair progressive and corporate taxation. One of the innovative features of the campaign is an online clock that shows how much additional revenue could be collected, and how that revenue could be used to properly fund vital services for Albertans. Check it out: <http://albertacould.org/>

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan remains one of the few provinces without a comprehensive anti-poverty plan. A number of community coalitions are working with the aim to reduce Saskatchewan poverty.

As Charles Plante of Upstream pointed out in the *Comprehensive Poverty Reduction Factsheet*, "there is no silver bullet in the fight against poverty. Poverty has multiple causes, and requires multiple solutions. In short, poverty is complex. But poverty is not so complex that we should simply throw up our hands; instead, concerted action gets results." Upstream is a movement to create a healthy society through evidence-based, people-centred ideas. Check its website for more info: http://www.thinkupstream.net/about_upstream.

Meanwhile, a number of new reports have been made available publicly by various groups in the province, including the following:

- Upstream Saskatoon reported that poverty costs Saskatchewan \$3.8 billion per year: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/zrfqysga1ynrks4/tkldCpnWK2>
- City of Regina *Housing Data: Statistics and Trends* released June 2014: <http://www.regina.ca/opencms/export/sites/regina.ca/residents/housing/.media/pdf/housing-stats-2014-final-public.pdf>
- "A Living Wage for Regina" by Paul Gingrich, Brian Banks & Simon Enoch: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/living-wage-regina>
- Saskatoon Health Region Health Status Reporting: *Better Health for All Series* released March 2014 https://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/locations_services/Services/Health-Observatory/Documents/Reports-Publications/2014_SHR_HSRMessage_phase1.pdf
- U of Regina students raise \$25000+ in 5 days for the homeless, March 2014 <http://5days.ca/regina/category/5-days-for-the-homeless/>

Manitoba

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPCW) and partners are holding community meetings to monitor and review the Manitoba ALL Aboard Poverty Reduction Action Plans. The Manitoba Government is implementing their "Sustainable Employment and Stronger Labour Market Strategy" to move single parent women from EIA (The Employment and Income Assistance Program) to training and work. The provincial government will be increasing the minimum wage by another \$.25 in October 2014 to \$10.70 per hour. July 1, 2014 saw the introduction of Rent Assist, a portable housing benefit for low income Manitobans. EIA General Assistance and Disability recipients will receive \$70 more per month, families with children \$50 more, and working families up to \$230 per month.

Other updates include:

- City of Winnipeg is holding budget consultations with opportunities for citizen led meetings.
- CCPA is updating the [View from Here Community Poverty Action Plan](#).

- CCPA and partners released the Alternative Municipal Budget for Winnipeg. This was followed up by SPCW holding consultations in three parts of the city on what the public want in a City Budget for 2015/16
- City Watch (a monthly forum organized by SPCW) is planning Mayor's forum and information campaign for the City election October 22.

Other recently-released reports and papers:

- Social Planning Council released a paper [Options for Increasing the Incomes of Manitobans Using EIA](#) and is meeting with government to create a joint working group for a transparent and accountable EIA rates setting process following the Ombudsman's recommendations.
- Winnipeg Community Sport and Recreation Committee released their [Everyone Can Play: A Guide to Recreation Subsidies](#). www.wprc.ca Social Planning Council Winnipeg released the companion [Winnipeg Children and Youth Recreation Guide](#). www.spcw.mb.ca

Ontario

Ongoing partnerships and coalition work has kept poverty on the political radar in Ontario. Ontario Campaign 2000 mobilized its partners to participate in government consultations around the second phase of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy and partnered with the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction to prepare our allies. We also continued our role on the steering committee for the Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage. To date, the campaign has won a 75 cent increase in the minimum wage to \$11/hour that took effect on June 1st and is continuing its mobilizing for \$14/hour in order to lift workers 10% above the poverty line.

In the spring, we partnered with Income Security and Advocacy Centre, a province-wide legal clinic, on two important initiatives. In advance of the 2014 budget, we crafted an [open letter](#) calling for an end to the dollar-for-dollar reduction of child support from single parents' social assistance income. The letter was signed by over 40 organizations from across Ontario. We also worked with a planning committee of self-advocates who are mothers to plan a Mother's Day Breakfast to celebrate the anti-poverty advocacy of mothers and caregivers living in low income as part of Family Service Toronto's centenary events. Participants created a [list of actions](#) that the Ontario government could take to improve their lives which was sent to all party leaders during the Ontario general election in June 2014.

In the lead up to election-day on June 12, 2014, Ontario Campaign 2000 [surveyed the anti-poverty platforms of all three parties](#) who voted unanimously for the Poverty Reduction Act in 2009. The election was a nail-biter, and in the end the Ontario Liberal Party was elected with a [majority mandate](#) under Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Our November 2013 report card, "Beyond Austerity: Investing in Ontario's Future" called on government to make investments in the policy areas proven to lead to reductions in child and family poverty. Some have argued that the latest election results signal Ontarians' rejection of large scale austerity measures – we look forward to the release of the second Poverty Reduction Strategy in September 2014 and will be pushing for further policy action to address poverty and inequality in Ontario.

Quebec

In June 2014, Quebec's Premier Philippe Couillard's first [budget](#) included an increase in childcare fees in relation to the rate of growth in the cost of the program; this means that fees for the publicly-funded non-profit childcare programs in Quebec will be raised from \$7 a day to \$7.30. As the cost of operating the program increases, fees will increase as well. Even though the increase may seem modest, it can make a significant impact on low income families, where \$7 a day is already too high a cost. "The budget also confirmed the Liberals will expand the program to 250,000 available spaces from the current 220,000 by 2022, by creating 6,300 new spaces this year and 4,000 every year thereafter until the goal is reached" ([Lalonde, 2014](#)). Expansion of the program is needed. However as it grows the cost will also increase, which could have significant impacts on families and children living in poverty.

In Early 2013 the Department of Education in Quebec announced a targeted kindergarten program being offered to a limited number of four-year-old children. "Initially 1,200 4-year-olds from areas where parents have low incomes - and often have not finished their schooling themselves - will be admitted to the program, with 1,200 a year added until about 8,000 disadvantaged children across the province are in the program" (Dougherty, 2013). Some tension has arisen in the childcare community with the implementation of this program as some see it as "setting up a two-tier system that will 'ghettoize' children in the kindergarten-at-4 program". (See more details: <http://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/03/quebec>)

introduce-kindergarten-disadvantaged-4-year-olds) As well the scope and reach of the program will also be limited with the equivalent of one class per school board being offered.

It is worth noting that the Comité consultatif de lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale (Consultative Committee on Poverty and Social Exclusion) has released a number of key reports, including a recently-released progress report called "[Poverty, inequality and social exclusion in Quebec](#)." It also publishes online bulletins that address specific issues. The Committee's online bulletin http://www.cclp.gouv.qc.ca/index_en.asp released in May 2014 entitled "Living alone in poverty" reflects on the main issues and recommendations made by the Comité in 2010 in its analysis of the effects of ageing alone on poverty and social exclusion. The bulletin calls for more attention and for recommended changes.

Some solutions being discussed include raising the income of people living alone and in poverty, abolishing social assistance categories, greater access to decent housing at an affordable cost, providing drug insurance and legal aid and continuing the fight against prejudice. This bulletin continues to stress important issues in a way that is clear and purposeful.

Our anti-poverty friend and ally le Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté in June 2014 released a report about what anti-poverty actions it has been taking. Available in French, you can find it here: <http://www.pauvrete.qc.ca/?Une-action-retentissante> (then click on Soupe au caillou) to get more details.

Nova Scotia

The Liberals beat the NDP in the October 2013 election partially on a promise to cut government spending through across the board spending cuts to every Department—the only exceptions being the politically sensitive fields of Education and Health. Though the Community Society to End Poverty advocated with the government to make exceptions in the case of income security programs administered by the Department of Community Services (DCS), the 2014 budget implemented the cuts. As a consequence, there were no increases in welfare benefits, the poverty reduction tax credit, or the affordability tax credit as had occurred on a modest basis under the NDP. However, the new government did increase the income threshold for the Nova Scotia Child Benefit so that more very low income families, including the working poor, now qualify for this very modest benefit. The minimum wage, set at the LICO for a single person living in Sydney, N.S., under the NDP also continues to be pegged to cost of living increases. Given these very limited responses to poverty, it is unclear what the status of the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Strategy will be under the new government—as limited as it was in the first place.

Advocacy groups were partially successful in getting the new government to restore changes in the Special Needs regulations which had been modified under the previous government, but the Department continues to operate strictly by the rules, demanding more verification of special needs from health professionals. Advocates also continue to push for changes within the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program. While we have been assured that DCS is working to remove service related barriers and create what it calls a "restorative approach", neither advocates nor those most impacted have yet been invited to participate in the development of such an approach.

Following the development of a single tier welfare system in the mid-1990s, which involved a service exchange agreement between the municipalities and the Province, Nova Scotia municipalities have had very little to do with the provision of social services. However, with the announcement of the federal Housing First initiative, the City of Halifax joined in a Partnership with the United Way, Capital Health, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia and Housing Nova Scotia to support the development of a housing first strategy for the City.

While the involvement of the City in poverty related matters is a positive step forward, community organizations serving the homeless and those with affordable housing challenges are concerned about the top down approach taken by the Partnership and what appeared to be a narrow definition of 'housing first' that intended to focus on people living on the street but largely exclude groups of homeless or near homeless, including women and children, who may not be living on the street but who are nevertheless in dire need of a safe, affordable place to call home. Furthermore, as initially announced, the Partnership lacked the involvement of service-based organizations on the one hand and the provincial Employment Support and Income Assistance program on the other. As critics pointed out, these absences from the strategic planning process would not be conducive to the identification of real barriers to safe, accessible and affordable housing. The Partnership has been responsive to this community critique and following consultation with members of service agencies and advocacy organizations, the strategic planning process opened up so that there will, hopefully, be more involvement from the community going forward. Time will tell as to whether this new approach will reap benefits for people in need. In the context of federal withdrawal from

affordable housing over the years, the absence of a real national housing strategy, and rising housing costs there will be challenges ahead for all parties involved.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick's second five year poverty reduction strategy – [Overcoming Poverty Together II \(OPT2\)](#) was released in May by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC).

ESIC is the Crown Corporation created in 2009 to oversee the implementation of the provincial plan. Its Board of Directors includes four vice chairs representing government, business, the non-profit sector and people who live or have lived in poverty. The Board includes the Leader of the Opposition or his or her designate.

The first five year plan was (relatively) ambitious. It contained 22 priority measures, the majority of which, according to ESIC, have been completed. For example:

- social assistance rates were raised, although a new category “designated” returned a two tiered system for single claimants that attempts to distinguish those who can pursue employment from those who present with obvious “barriers”;
- The minimum wage was raised to \$10.00 in April, 2012. Although the plan called for annual adjustments for inflation, the minimum wage has not increased and it now lags behind Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island;
- In September 2012, the province introduced *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision*, a vision and dental plan for children of low-income families;
- A prescription drug plan was introduced. The thorny issues of the amount that employers will contribute and the level of subsidy for low income families and individuals have yet to be decided;
- In April the government tabled legislation amending the Small Business Investor Tax Credit, to allow for the creation of Community Economic Development Investment Funds in order to provide greater access to capital for social enterprises and co-operatives.

Other social assistance reforms, including new wage exemption formulas, were among other improvements to the system.

According to critics, the new five year plan lacks specifics. While it affirms the priorities initially set out in 2009, its tone is aspirational. It contains 28 recommendations – 19 of them begin with either “Foster”, “Support” or “Promote”.

New Brunswick's provincial election dates are set in legislation. Voters go to the polls on the fourth Monday in September.

Prince Edward Island

Unfortunately, we haven't got any progress to report on Poverty Eradication. U. of Toronto professor Valerie Tarasuk's excellent work on Food Insecurity – that P.E.I. has the second highest rate of food insecurity in Canada, second only to Nunavut, that 25% of school children in the province suffer from food insecurity and that 81 to 84% of those who suffer from food insecurity in this province are from families that have someone working – made a small impact.

In response, the Department of Community Services and Seniors under pressure from many groups is proposing to increase the food allowance for Social Assistance recipients to 70% of Average Research Suggested Rates (RSR) in the Atlantic Provinces over the next 5 years. This will be the first food increase since 2009. At the end of the 5 year period, they will index food to the cost of living based on 70% of the RSR level.

This small province in the past year came up with a surplus of \$2.3 million in the social assistance budget which the Department handed over to the Treasurer. Because of that lost money, there will be a further \$2 million cut in the coming year amounting to an overall loss of \$4.3 million. Government has recently announced an increase of \$2.8 million in the Social Assistance budget but spread over 5 years. This amounts to about \$9.00 per month over the 2009 increase only for food. There are no increases to the other categories of social assistance such as shelter, transportation, household and personal and we expect that the lost \$4.3 million will have a noticeable negative impact.

Needless to say, we are shocked by this worrisome indifference to those trapped in poverty.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Originally promised for 2011, the government produced its *Progress Report on Poverty Reduction* in 2014. And for the first time since 2005, the Newfoundland and Labrador government's recent budget committed to borrow money to fund operations and

spending, according to CBC news. The representation from Citizen's Voice, a group of citizens who are part of Vibrant Communities – St John's, an Initiative of the Community Sector Council NL, was explicitly acknowledged in release of the Budget.

As some community partners across Canada have said, it's time to move to Newfoundland where the PC's are more progressive than the NDP and the Liberals in the rest of the country! Former Premier Danny Williams' 2003 pledge to transform Newfoundland and Labrador from the province with the most poverty to one with the least poverty within ten years was bold and appears to remain central on the public agenda.

Several initiatives recognize the need to increase the basic income rate and to support the entry and return of low income people into the work force:

- Implementation of the commitment of \$4.8 million to **raise the basic rate for people receiving Income Support by five per cent began on July 1**, with a projected investment of \$32.3 million over the following five years.
- A new **job start** program including a start up allowance of \$250. to assist people receiving income support with work expenses.
- An expansion of the **earned income support supplement (SESP)** to a maximum of \$340 for working single parents receiving income support.
- Income and supports subsidies for **persons with disabilities** to begin and maintain employment.

To address housing problems for low-income households there is **an additional \$9 million for a new rent supplement** program to provide 150 rent supplements.

The **prescription drug** program will cover 46,000 additional low-wage earners and their families as well as those with high prescription drug costs. Coverage is now extended for 6 months after employment is started.

Implementation of the **Poverty Reduction Strategy's \$6.1 Dental Program** includes an increase of the allowance to \$200, from \$150. However, the dentists and denturists of NL have not yet signed on to this program.

Additional subsidies for **regulated child care services** will be available to more low-income families and the number of child care spaces in rural and underserved areas will be increased.

Newfoundland and Labrador housing tenants with dependents will receive an **education incentive allowance** of \$50. per month for each child grade 7 and older and for adult students who attend school full time.

The **2014 budget** supported the Progress Report with an investment of \$170 million for new and continuing initiatives. The budget also increased the seniors' benefit and promised to implement full day kindergarten by the fall of 2016.

Statistics in the Report show a marked decline in low-income figures between 2003 and 2011 and, as of 2011, it shows a significantly lower incidence of low incomes in Newfoundland and Labrador compared with Canada as a whole. It is recognized however that the number of people living in extreme poverty has not declined.

While these investments will have an important impact, much remains to be done to reduce poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador. Check out these websites for full details:

<http://www.aes.gov.nl.ca/poverty/index.html>

<http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/antipoverty.htm#nl>

http://communitysector.nl.ca/sites/default/files/research_reports/2009/nl_report_final.pdf

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/families-students-seniors-get-boost-in-deficit-budget-1.2586913>

The Territories

YUKON

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) is working with others on a number of initiatives, including food security, poverty and homelessness actions. There is also a Housing Task Force with 50 members involved. It states that this group "educates,

advocates and acts on issues related to shelter and housing.” The Housing Task Force meets regularly to discuss and act on immediate issues raised by members of the community.

YAPC also leads an initiative called **Whitehorse Connects**. It provides an opportunity for those who are homeless, living in poverty or among the working poor to come together on a given day for a range of health and human services they may not otherwise access.

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition has a mandate to eliminate poverty in the Yukon through education, awareness programs, advocacy and action. More specifically, YAPC aims to

- Foster development of strategies and activities to reduce poverty in Yukon;
- The promotion of awareness of poverty in Yukon;
- To help provide a voice for Yukoners living in poverty; and
- Coordinate efforts and information regarding poverty among individuals and organizations within and outside Yukon.

To learn more about YAPC, please visit: <http://yapc.ca/>

Stories inspire positive emotions and strong communities (March 2014)

Twenty-five stories from nearly a dozen Yukon communities have been collected in a new publication called *Stories that Inspire: Working Together Towards Wellness*. The stories describe activities that promote health, happiness and positive relationships. The project is part of Pathways to Wellness, an initiative launched in 2012 to improve the health and well-being of Yukoners.

The collected stories cover a wide range of activities. These include promoting healthy eating through community greenhouses, preserving cultural heritage through traditional dance, harvesting from the land and restoring historic sites. They support a view of wellness that takes into account physical, emotional and spiritual well-being as well as learning, being productive, and cultivating solid, healthy relationships with others. Learn more: *Stories that Inspire: Working Together Towards Wellness* at www.yukonwellness.ca/stories.php To request a hard copy of this publication, email yukonwellness@gov.yk.ca.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

This is a landmark year for the reduction of poverty in the NWT because Northwest Territories moved from talking about poverty to spending money doing something about it.

In his February budget, the finance minister announced a two-year \$500,000 Anti-Poverty Fund that would be administered by a multi-sector advisory committee. Non-profits, aboriginal governments, municipal government and the territorial government sent representatives to the table. An open call brought 18 applications, most of which received at least some funding. It's worth noting that most of the applications appealed for money for food, whether cooking classes, soup kitchens or food in schools. Money is set to flow next month, September 2014.

The same committee administering **the Anti-Poverty Fund** is also developing a territorial action plan. The plan will implement the strategic framework tabled in the Legislative Assembly in June 2013. It's going to be challenging to bridge the economic, cultural and geographic divide of urban (Yellowknife) and remote community life with recommendations that work for all.

There are some common areas that need urgent attention, including additional affordable housing, licensed affordable child care, increased food security and income support reform.

In the fall, **Alternatives North** will be turning its attention to developing a living wage movement. Yellowknife is an expensive place to live. The cost of rent and other essentials continues to rise while incomes remain stagnant for low-income earners. **Alternatives North** believes that putting more money in people's pockets will provide long-term solutions to poverty for a segment of the population who live in need.

NUNAVUT

Nunavut making progress with its poverty reduction strategy

A number of important developments took place in Nunavut over the past year. First of all, in the spring of 2013, the Government of Nunavut passed Bill 59, **the Collaboration for Poverty Reduction Act**. The Act reinforces the collaborative

nature of the approach to poverty reduction in Nunavut, mandates several accountability measures and addresses poverty reduction funding for the territory.

More recently, more than 65 Nunavummiut from across the territory, who are part of the **Nunavut Roundtable for Poverty Reduction**, gathered in Rankin Inlet on May 12-14, 2014 to review progress on the five year plan and to discuss the theme: *Inunnguiniq: Parenting and Child Development*. A summary report of this gathering will be made available, so please check out their website for more details and updates:

<http://www.makiliqta.ca/en/resources/news/roundtable-gathering-rankin-inlet>

Launch of 2014-2016 Food Security Strategy and Action Plan

On Monday, May 5th, 2014, the Nunavut Food Security Coalition launched its 2014-2016 Strategy and Action Plan. Through the Nunavut Food Security Strategy, the Nunavut Food Security Coalition stated that it will seek to address many of the key determinants of food security through a wide range of initiatives, programs, and policies.

The Coalition has identified six key themes around which the Nunavut Food Security Strategy is structured: **Country Food, Store-Bought Food, Local Food Production, Life Skills, Programs and Community Initiative, as well as Policy and Legislation**. More details can be found here: <http://makiliqta.ca/en/action-plans/food-security-strategy-and-action-plan>

Welfare plays too big a role in Nunavut's income security system: report

Commissioned by Nunavut's Anti-Poverty Secretariat, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy's November 2013 report on poverty in Nunavut suggests the territory must gradually wean its residents off social assistance and at the same time beef up its income programs and child tax benefits to eventually replace welfare with a new concept called "basic income." Those recommendations from the report, which is entitled **Poverty and Prosperity in Nunavut**, respond to the Government of Nunavut's examination of its social policies aimed at low-income people. The good news, according to the report, is that Nunavut already has a range of income security programs in place. The bad news: too many Nunavummiut rely on it.



According to the Caledon Institute report, "poverty in Nunavut is a difficult problem that must be tackled from the perspective of both income support and services, and work and learning capability." It then goes on to conclude: "...This Social Vision sketches out a wide range of social programs in Nunavut in the areas of early childhood development, education and literacy, skills training, regional economic development, affordable housing and income security. The main focus is income security policy, a vital area in which both the Nunavut and federal governments play key roles." Click here to read the complete report: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/1027ENG.pdf>

✚ Special Thanks to all the contributors

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