



Facing the realities of poverty in Canada

Briefing note for Members of Parliament on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
October 2025

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Poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, and inequality are rising in Canada

- Since the pandemic, poverty has risen sharply in every province and territory and among every demographic group.¹ More than 6.5 million people live in low income poverty in Canada.²
 - Nearly 1.4 million children - roughly 1 in 5 - now live in poverty. Nearly half of children in lone-parent families, primarily led by women, live in poverty (45%). Indigenous, racialized, immigrant children and those placed in child welfare disproportionately live in poverty.³
 - More than 1.5 million Canadians with disabilities live in poverty. The poverty rate among adults with disabilities is 16.8% - twice as high as the rate for non-disabled adults. Though an important first step, the Canada Disability Benefit remains woefully insufficient and inaccessible.⁴
 - More than 1.1 million older adults live in poverty.⁵ Racialized seniors, those who live on their own and those with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.
- Nearly 10 million people - about 1 in 4 - experienced some kind of food insecurity in 2024, a shocking 15 per cent jump from the previous year.⁶ This figure likely underestimates the true number, as it does not include people living on reserves, where rates are known to be high.
- Between 2018 and 2024, the number of unhoused people in Canada nearly doubled, and the number in unsheltered locations⁷ quadrupled, with marginalized populations overrepresented.⁸
- Canada's income and wealth inequality remain stark, now at record highs. Families in the top 10% have 18 times more income after tax than families in the bottom 10%.⁹

The government is on track to miss its own poverty reduction targets

- Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy commits to cutting poverty in half from 2015 levels by 2030. However, the government's National Advisory Council on Poverty says Canada will not reach this goal without urgent action.¹⁰

Addressing poverty is a social and economic responsibility and morally required

- Governments in Canada have treaty and human rights obligations, including the right to an adequate standard of living. They are to devote maximum available resources to create the conditions in which all people can realize these rights, free from discrimination. This includes how we invest our resources, as well as how we generate the revenue needed.
- The social and economic risks of inaction are escalating. Faith in our democratic institutions is eroded when we are unable to address poverty, homelessness, food insecurity and inequality.
- Lower rates of poverty are associated with improved health and mental health, better educational outcomes, less crime and violence, and higher rates of employment and productivity. This also results in significant cost savings in health and justice systems.

The systems meant to protect people are fragmented and inaccessible.

- Decent work has been replaced by precarious, low-wage, and part-time jobs that don't guarantee a roof overhead and food on the table. The gender wage gap remains one of the largest in the OECD.¹¹
- Those who face barriers to working are left trying to survive on government benefits that reach as little as one-third of the poverty line.¹²
- Families in poverty remain excluded from affordable childcare access, and people with disabilities, youth exiting care and marginalized groups are expected to navigate a complex, inconsistent, and dehumanizing web of programs just to meet their basic needs.

We call on you to recommit to poverty reduction and to closing equity gaps

1. Renew and strengthen Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy by charting a realistic path to meeting our 2030 target. This 50% target should not be met by addressing shallow poverty alone. It needs to address deep poverty, working poverty, poverty legislated by income and disability assistance, and poverty among Indigenous and marginalized groups including racialized, 2SLGBTQI+, lone parents, those with disabilities and their caregivers, refugees, migrants and immigrants, seniors, among others. Elements of this path could include:
 - Strengthening existing benefits, including the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada Workers Benefit, GIS and the GST/HST credit, ensuring they are available to those with low or no income, and regardless of immigration status.
 - Delivering on promised EI reform and enhancing parental leave to protect newborns from poverty.
 - Establishing a national income floor such that combined benefits guarantee dignity.
2. Acknowledge poverty reduction not as an aspirational goal but as an obligation under international human rights law.¹³ Implement meaningful accountability mechanisms.
3. Implement recommendations related to poverty eradication in the TRC and MMIWG Calls to Action and Calls to Justice.
4. Increase the Canada Disability Benefit so it lifts recipients above the poverty line and expand eligibility beyond the requirement to qualify for the Disability Tax Credit.
5. Set a national target to cut household food insecurity in half and end severe household food insecurity by 2030.
6. Drastically increase investment in non-market, deeply affordable housing. Protect renters with tenancy supports, eviction prevention programs, and portable housing benefit.
7. Offer universal childcare on a \$0–\$10/day sliding scale model and ensure that service expansion has an equity lens to ensure that low-income children are fully included in the national childcare plan.
8. Expand pharmacare to include all essential medicines and assistive devices, ensuring inclusion for migrant workers, refugees and those with precarious immigration status.
9. Report on progress annually with data disaggregated by socio-demographic indicators.
10. Ensure community engagement and accountability by investing in community-led, localized data collection and poverty reduction planning and creating formal roles for people with lived/living experience in federal consultations and monitoring bodies.

As elected leaders, you hold the tools to make meaningful progress on poverty in Canada. We urge you to recognize this challenge as central to building a more inclusive, sustainable, and caring country and a more productive economy.

The substance of poverty reduction is as important as the numbers. Reducing poverty is not just about meeting statistical targets but about ensuring dignity, equity, and security for all Canadians.

Work with us to renew a bold federal strategy, rooted in rights, dignity, and the belief that poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, and inequality are solvable, not inevitable.

Endorsed by:

1. 2SLGBTQ+ Poverty in Canada Study
2. Advancement of Women Halton (AWH)
3. Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
4. Basic Income Canada Network
5. Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
6. Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty,
7. Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
8. Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)
9. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
10. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba
11. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Nova Scotia
12. Canadian Health Coalition (CHC)
13. Canadians for Tax Fairness
14. Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU)
15. Children First Canada
16. Citizens for Public Justice
17. Disability Without Poverty
18. Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre (DBNC)
19. Family Service Toronto
20. First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society
21. Human Development Council
22. Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC)
23. Jimmy Pratt Foundation
24. MacKillop Centre for Social Justice
25. Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security
26. Mazon Canada
27. National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL)
28. National Council of Youth in Care Advocates
29. Ontario Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty
30. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
31. Open Policy Ontario
32. Oxfam Canada
33. Prosper Canada
34. Public Interest Alberta
35. Right to Food
36. Rocksoup Greenhouse Foodbank
37. Sacred Circles Village
38. Social Commons
39. Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
40. Social Planning Toronto
41. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO)
42. UNICEF Canada
43. United Way of Bruce Grey
44. WomenatthecentreE
45. Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC)

¹ Statistics Canada. [Table 11-10-0135-01 Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.](#)

² Statistics Canada. [Table: 11-10-0018-01 \(formerly CANSIM 111-0046\) After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependents based on Census Family Low Income Measure, \(CFLIM-AT\), by family type and composition.](#)

³ *Ending Child Poverty: The Time is Now – 2024 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*, Campaign 2000, November 2024. Available at: <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ending-Child-Poverty-The-Time-is-Now-2023-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty-in-Canada-Nov-18-2024.pdf>

⁴ Disability Without Poverty & Campaign 2000. (2024, December 3). *2024 Disability Poverty Report Card: Canada earns an F on addressing disability poverty.* <https://campaign2000.ca/2024-disability-report-canada-earns-an-f-on-addressing-disability-poverty/>

⁵ *Ending Child Poverty: The Time is Now – 2024 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*, Campaign 2000, November 2024. Available at: <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ending-Child-Poverty-The-Time-is-Now-2023-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty-in-Canada-Nov-18-2024.pdf>

⁶ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0834-01 Food insecurity by economic family type](#)

⁷ “Unsheltered locations” are places not intended for human habitation such as streets, parks, cars or abandoned buildings.

⁸ Government of Canada. (2025). *Everyone Counts 2024: Highlights Report Part 1 – Enumeration of Homelessness.* <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/alt-format/pdf/homelessness-sans-abri/reports-rapports/pit-counts-dp-2024-highlights-p1-en.pdf>

⁹ Statistics Canada. (2025, July 16). *Distributions of household economic accounts for income, consumption, saving and wealth of Canadian households, first quarter 2025.* The Daily. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250716/dq250716a-eng.htm>

¹⁰ National Advisory Council on Poverty. (2024). *A Time for Urgent Action.* https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2024-annual/4877-NACP_2024-Report-EN-Final.pdf

¹¹ Scott, Katherine, 2025. *Time to push back against the silencing of women’s voices.* Available at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/time-to-push-back-against-the-silencing-of-womens-voices/>

¹² Laidley, J. and Oliveira, T. 2025. *Welfare in Canada, 2024.* Maytree. <https://maytree.com/changing-systems/data-measuring/welfare-in-canada/>

¹³ See Articles 2 and 11 of the *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which Canada signed in 1976.