

Joyeuses Fêtes à tous et à toutes!
Happy Holidays to All!
Thank you for another year of great partnership and working together!

Calling for a National Plan to Make Canada Poverty-Free

+ [Updates from the National Scene](#)

Activities on poverty reduction/eradication continued on a steady basis - meetings with MPs, supporting the Red Tent Campaign calling for a funded national housing strategy, and joining with our partners Canadian Association for Community Living and Council of Canadians with Disabilities in *End Exclusion* calling for dramatic changes to disability supports – to name a few.

On November 24th, Campaign 2000 released its 19th Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada, *Reduced Poverty=Better Health for All* in collaboration with the release of provincial report cards by partners in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Visit our website to download the new national and provincial Report Cards for 2010: <http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportcards.html>

Most recent figures show that nearly 1 in 10 persons, including 1 in 10 children, lived in poverty in 2008. These statistics do not reflect the current situation or the full impact of the recession and continuing economic disruption. Nor do they adequately show the shameful situation of First Nations communities where 1 in 4 children grows up in poverty. Media responded actively and widely to the reports. As *The Economist* wrote: The persistence of poverty amidst plenty is striking. When it comes to child poverty, Canada ranks 22nd-worst out of the 31 countries in the OECD wealthy nations.

Campaign 2000 welcomed MPs and partners at a breakfast on the Hill on Nov. 25. Presenters elaborated on the links between poverty reduction/eradication and better health for all. Dr. Lindsay Samson of Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario highlighted the importance of reducing inequality as a route to eradicating poverty and improving the health of all. Medicare isn't an excuse for letting children live in poverty, advised Dr. Michael Rachlis, MD and health policy analyst. The Hon. Monique Bégin, academic and former Minister of Health and Welfare, urged that Canada can do much better in eradicating poverty; in pursuing 'the art of the possible', she recommends beginning with funds for affordable housing and increasing the National Child Benefit. (Copies of the presentations available at www.campaign2000.ca)



Let's **Support the Report!** The recently-released HUMA Committee report, *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Toward Reducing Poverty in Canada* includes strong recommendations that could transform the role of the federal government in poverty reduction. Many of these – increasing the National Child Benefit to \$5,000, creation of a national public child care system in collaboration with the provinces and territories, a national housing strategy, significantly improved funding for Aboriginal communities and establishing a refundable Disability Tax Credit - echo those that Campaign 2000 has proposed.

Campaign 2000 is working closely with its partners and allies including Make Poverty History and Dignity for All to make sure that this report is implemented. **Send a message to HRSD Minister Diane Finley urging her to implement these recommendations and actively start to make poverty history!** Let's make sure this report does not get ignored. Go to: <http://www.campaign2000.ca/takeAction/supportthereport.html> or <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/act/support-the-report-help-make-a-break-through-on-poverty-in-canada> and send your letter today.

Following on our recent lobby of more than 90 MPs in all parties and all regions of Canada, we urge you to press your MP to support the HUMA Committee report that will firmly place poverty reduction/eradication on the public agenda. More details to follow in the new year.

[Updates from Regional Partners](#) (Thanks to our partners and friends who contributed these updates)

[British Columbia](#)

The release of the **BC Child Poverty Report Card** on November 24 had effective media coverage, though the provincial government once again responded defensively. The opposition NDP committed to introducing legislation for a poverty reduction plan in the spring [www.bcndp.ca/newsroom/new-child-poverty-report-card-reinforces-need-poverty-plan-says-james]. Several Liberal leadership candidates want to raise the minimum wage, and the Minister of Labour is currently engaged in a limited consultation with stakeholders on this issue.

The **BC Poverty Reduction Coalition** continues to gather strength and press for a legislated poverty reduction plan. The coalition is hosting public forums with Richard Wilkinson on income inequality in December. Mary Walsh's film *Poor No More* is touring the province. The **Living Wage for Families** campaign [<http://livingwageforfamilies.ca>] has gained momentum in Metro Vancouver, and several other municipalities are calculating their own living wage. A list of employers certified by the campaign has been released and continues to grow.

Victoria's *The Province* two-week series on child poverty, *Our Growing Challenge* [www.theprovince.com/news/growing-challenge] concluded with recommendations including increasing supports for young families and helping low-income earners. Two of First Call's early childhood provincial partners have released a plan for an integrated system of early learning and care which is receiving widespread discussion and interest [www.cccabc.bc.ca].

[Alberta](#)

Momentum is building in Alberta for a **comprehensive plan for reducing, preventing and eliminating poverty**. The Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta released the report, *Time for Action: Working Together to End Poverty in Alberta* on November 24th (www.pialbeta.org or www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca) There is support among municipalities to work with the provincial government, organizations and business to begin a public consultation process to develop a plan for Alberta. The Inter-City Forum on Social Policy (an umbrella group of municipal politicians from Alberta's 22 cities) and the Family and Community Support Association of Alberta hosted a large meeting of more than 100 people from around Alberta on November 26th to build more awareness and action on this project. The support of the provincial government for this initiative is still to be determined, but the Standing Committee on the Economy did unanimously pass a resolution calling upon the government to develop a made-in-Alberta poverty reduction strategy. The province continues with its 10 year plan to eliminate homelessness and is currently reviewing the minimum wage policy which has remained at \$8.80/hour since April 2009.

[Saskatchewan](#)

Campaign 2000's Sask. partner released its annual Report Card in late Nov. and received good media coverage. While the report card found that overall poverty rate for the province decreased slightly, nearly 20% of children under age six still live in a low-income household. For more details, visit Campaign 2000 website (under Report Card Provincial) to download a copy.

The **Poverty Free Saskatchewan Network** released their report *Let's Do Something About Poverty!* in October and received substantial media coverage in both provincial dailies, on radio and television. [<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/updates/lets-do-something-about-poverty>] Our web-site and facebook site have been running for the past month: www.povertyfreesask.ca; <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Poverty-Free-Saskatchewan/132532653468197>

The report has been distributed to most major unions, churches, NGOs and major businesses in the province. We definitely have the ear of government thanks to the media coverage we garnered, and the Minister of Social Services here has asked us to provide more information on other provincial anti-poverty strategies. The next stage is to consult widely with concerned

groups and citizens to develop a list of policy recommendations that we can take to government . We hope to begin this stage in the new year.

The community clinic in Saskatoon held a media event recently, joining many other activist organizations in **calling for a housing strategy** to meet the needs of the homeless locally and across the province. Food banks in the province recently released a new report, "Access and Affordability: Saskatchewan Food Banks Explore the Cost of Healthy Eating." <http://reginafoodbank.ca/images/fsrweb.pdf>.

Manitoba

Manitoba hosted the Council of the Federation Premiers' meeting on August 4 -6. To coincide, Campaign 2000 (in partnership with the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg) convened a Community Roundtable and Webinar to discuss what the provincial and territorial roles should be on poverty reduction. This meeting resulted in ***The Winnipeg Statement on Poverty Eradication*** which called on the premiers to establish a working group that would report back in a year with a joint federal-provincial plan to eliminate poverty. The Statement was broadly endorsed by those at the Roundtable and Webinar, including representatives of the federal Liberal, New Democratic and Bloc Québécois parties.

In August and September, Campaign 2000 met with **Manitoba MPs** and pressed them to take action to eradicate poverty. Conservative MPs Candace Hoepfner (HUMA Chairperson), Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary Department of Indian and Northern Affairs), Rod Bruinooge MP Winnipeg South, Steven Fletcher (Minister of Democratic Reform), and James Bezan, Anita Neville (LIB), and Pat Martin (NDP) accepted the request for meetings.

On November 18, Manitoba Campaign 2000 hosted a press conference to respond to the **HUMA report**. The report recommendations were favorably received and reflect an emerging consensus that poverty must be addressed as a national priority. Media outlets CJOB and the Winnipeg Free Press attended.

On November 24, Manitoba Campaign 2000 released the **Manitoba 2010 Child and Family Report Card**, "The Challenge for Manitoba's Provincial Government". Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger announced Manitoba had the second lowest child poverty rate in the country. The Report Card disputed the claim by illustrating the province used the Market Basket Measure, which is not based on a comprehensive concept which takes into account all aspects of poverty. The government's claim of more improvement than Canada as a whole was also disputed. City-TV, CBC radio, CBC Television and the Winnipeg Free Press provided coverage.

Ontario

Ontario Campaign 2000 released the 2010 Ontario Report Card entitled *Poverty Reduction: Key to Economic Recovery for Ontario Families* on November 24th. We received good radio coverage and some print coverage. Our report shows that child poverty rates are rising because of the recession, and calls on the Province to speed up investments if they are to meet the stated goal of cutting child poverty by 25% by 2013. www.campaign2000.ca/Ontario/index.html.

The 25in5 Network for Poverty Reduction released its report on **Year Two of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy** on November 29th. The detailed 22-page report tracks progress (or lack of) on each of the government's commitments. See www.25in5.ca.

On November 29 the Ontario government released the long awaited **Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy**. The plan includes important measures that will benefit those in social housing with reform of the Social Housing Reform Act, including changing the calculation of rent-geared-to-income to annual reporting. It also commits to explore creation of an Ontario Housing Benefit, a monthly benefit to help low-income tenants pay the rent. But the Housing Strategy fails to include targets, timelines or funding for a program to build affordable housing. Ontario Campaign 2000 partners and the Housing Network of Ontario are disappointed in the strategy and will continue to press the Ontario government for funding commitments for affordable housing in the 2011 budget. See www.stableandaffordable.com.

The Ontario government announced on November 30th that it will start the promised **Social Assistance Review** in January led by commissioners Frances Lankin and Dr. Munir Sheikh. As recommended by the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, the review will look not only at how social assistance should be transformed but also how it should connect to other income security programs at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. The review will take place over the next 18 months. Ontario

Campaign 2000 and partners in the 25in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction are calling for interim measures which would raise social assistance rates for adults by \$100/month while we await completion of the review. For further detail check on the review; see www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/index.aspx

After extensive lobbying from the community, the government pulled back on its plan to replace the **Special Diet Allowance** for people on social assistance with a new program. Special Diet will instead be discussed within the context of the Social Assistance Review. The Income Security Advocacy Centre is preparing a detailed analysis www.incomesecurity.org.

The Ontario government tabled in the Legislature on December 1st its second annual report on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, as required under the provincial reduction legislation passed last year. See www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/news/index.aspx to view their report.

The Put Food in the Budget campaign continues with a call for the Ontario government to immediately increase social assistance by \$100/month as a Healthy Food Supplement for every adult. Many community leaders have completed the "Do the Math Challenge" and lived for a week on a diet similar to people receiving social assistance. Across Ontario, 1,000 people have taken the Do the Math Challenge in eighteen communities. See <http://putfoodinthebudget.ca>.

Quebec

In late November, hundreds of people, including students, anti-poverty groups and union representatives marched through downtown Montreal to voice their anger and frustration at the Quebec government. The protesters want to send a clear message to Premier Jean Charest that eight months after the last budget, lots of vulnerable people refuse unjust measures such as service cuts and privatization.

Last June the Quebec government released its **second Action Plan to Combat Poverty (2010-2015)**. Le Collectif Pour Un Quebec Sans Pauvrete, the grassroots coalition of 35 organizations seeking to end poverty, criticized the announcement saying that it was not a plan to combat poverty. They note it includes no measures to support people without work, nor support for singles or childless couples. Almost half of the new \$1.3 billion funding committed to in the Plan is for a "solidarity tax credit" for low income households which just compensates for other tax increases. Social assistance rates have been indexed to inflation – but Le Collectif states that this is not a measure which combats poverty. It just prevents social assistance incomes from falling further behind the cost of living. The government plans to build 3,000 new affordable housing units, but this is far from the promised 3,000/year promised by Premier Charest in 2008.

Le Collectif claims that the government's Action Plan ignores the recommendations put forward by citizens during public consultations. In response Le Collectif held a rally on September 22 to protest the plan, and has launched a new campaign called "Return to Sender". www.pauvrete.qc.ca

Nova Scotia

On Nov. 24th, partners in **Campaign 2000** and **CCPA Nova Scotia** released its annual provincial Report Card, along with other provincial partners and Campaign 2000 National Report Card. As stated in its summary, similar to "...last year, this report card brings both bad news and good news. Child poverty in Canada still exists, although some progress has been made to reduce it. The Canada Child Tax Benefit and the National Child Benefit initiative has been a ready and effective tool for reducing poverty for families with children."

A month earlier, more than 200 people with diverse interests in reducing poverty, including low income people, those in service delivery and advocacy organizations, and provincial and other government officials shared learnings at the **multi-sectoral conference "Taking Action on Poverty" held in Truro October 28-30**. Keynote speaker Ed Broadbent called attention to the widening gap between the rich and the poor and for a return to a social justice approach in federal policy. The Community Coalition to End Poverty in Nova Scotia (CCEP-NS), Health Promotion Clearinghouse and the conference steering committee are following up on the ideas, issues and challenges that emerged during the conference. CCEP continues to work for a stronger poverty reduction strategy in Nova Scotia through ongoing advocacy with government ministers and officials and through public outreach and education.

The NDP government inherited a Poverty Reduction Strategy and appears to be working incrementally to make some improvements. However, it is not clear whether the recommendation of the 2008 Working Group on Poverty Reduction that the underlying assumption of income assistance as a 'system of last resort' needed to change fundamentally will be respected.

The 'overhaul' of the Employment Support and Income Assistance program promised in the PRS appears to be proceeding incrementally as well. Announced changes include: an end to the reduction of shelter benefits when a youth turns 19, if the youth is a college or university student living at home; a doubling in the amount of assets, such as savings – still less than during the mid-1990s - that applicants for income assistance can keep; and simplifying the application process so that applicants will only have to provide basic personal information once to be considered for a range of programs and services. There has also been some investment in the repair of existing public housing and in affordable housing through the federal government's infrastructure program. The government has also increased its investment in child-care. The **new economic development strategy, JobsHere**, depends to a large degree on skills development and sees job development in resource extraction, technical jobs and the finance sector. Relying heavily on growth in Halifax area with little about the poor economic environment in much of rural Nova Scotia, the strategy is disappointing in its lack of attention to reducing poverty and to social development policy.

Despite the recession, the government has honoured earlier commitments to **increase the minimum wage to \$9.65 as of October 1, 2010.**

PEI

During the Speech from The Throne on November 12 PEI heard the long awaited announcement that the government has committed to a **Poverty Reduction Strategy** – hopefully to be called Poverty Eradication. The speech recognizes that recession times "take their heaviest toll on the most vulnerable," and states that the government recognizes those needs. It states that we must guard against these people being left behind and promises to end the 'clawback' of the National Child benefit on April 1, 2011. All other provinces have already ended the clawback. The Speech then states, "More broadly, early in the new year, my government will release a Poverty Reduction discussion paper that will begin the process, in consultation with Islanders, of examining further options to improve the well-being of Islanders who are most vulnerable". Since then, the poverty reduction committee has had an encouraging meeting with the Deputy Minister in charge of this initiative.

New Brunswick

A provincial election in September resulted in a change of government to the Progressive Conservatives led by David Alward. The new government is weighed down by the size of the province's operating deficit and, at this point, is choosing spending cuts rather than tax increases as a way of balancing the books.

It appears that the province's **poverty reduction strategy remains on track**. It was codified in the Spring with the unanimous passage of the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* and, despite some early equivocation by the new minister of Social Development, recent statements are encouraging. Minimum hourly wages in New Brunswick are supposed to go up to \$9.50 in April and \$10 by September 2011 and last week the deputy premier clarified that the new government has no intention of changing anything in "Overcoming Poverty Together".

At the same time, a provincial hiring freeze has meant that existing staff and capacity will have to be redeployed from within government to meet the objectives set out in the Act. Three committees of the new Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation are now examining: social assistance reform, social enterprise and providing prescription drug coverage to uninsured residents. The deliberations are timely. The provincial unemployment rate in November was 10.3% (only Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador fared worse), local food bank operators report an increase in activity and social assistance caseloads have increased more than 6% from November 2009 to 2010.

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy includes a commitment to consult with the public about poverty and poverty initiatives every two years, with 2010 being a consultation year. Budget 2010 included \$134 million dollars to support more than 80 ongoing initiatives under the strategy. The Provincial Government held public consultations throughout the province from October 18 - November 10 to inform the next four-year Action Plan to fight poverty. In addition focus groups and round table sessions with vulnerable groups were held throughout the province.

The Newfoundland and Labrador government was told at a forum in Nov. that they need to take action amid a widening divide between the rich and poor, despite the boom in offshore oil revenues. The forum was the last of a series of meetings the

government has held as part of a review of its poverty reduction strategy, which has been a key priority for (then) Premier Danny Williams.

The Community Sector Council NL hosted day 1 of a provincial forum – *Connecting People, Organizations, and Communities: New Thinking For the Next Decade* designed to engage participants in sessions on current trends and future directions for the community (nonprofit) sector. One hundred twenty people from across Newfoundland and Labrador representing community groups, government departments and agencies, academia and the private sector participated.

On the ECEC front, NL has two initiatives on ECEC; the Department of Education held a series of public consultations on future developments in ECEC, and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services is working on a 10-year strategy to which the province has made a commitment.

THE TERRITORIES -- Northwest Territories

Alternatives North, a coalition of groups concerned with social justice, teamed with the YWCA and hosted a 3-day Poverty Workshop in Yellowknife in October. Participants included key decision makers from Government as well as stakeholders from across the Territory. The workshop was able to identify key recommendations for the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for the NWT. <http://www.alternativesnorth.ca/> Visit the website for more info on what the government has announced or done: <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/live/documents/content/HN100222.pdf>

Nunavut

In October, the Government of Nunavut launched a public engagement process (modeled after New Brunswick's) to develop a territorial poverty action strategy by the end of 2011. Premier Eva Ariak stated: "To reduce poverty is a priority for this government. Poverty affects us all, and it will take every one of us to meet this challenge. Together we'll ensure Nunavut has a realistic plan to reduce poverty over the next two years, and to eliminate poverty in the long-term."

Yukon

The Yukon Government just released two reports: the *Whitehorse Housing Adequacy Study* and the *Dimensions of Social Inclusion and Social Exclusion in Yukon 2010* as part of the creation of the Yukon Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, with other key stakeholders, provided input and advice from early April to mid-May, 2010 to the housing study, which was designed to address a long-standing need for statistical information on homelessness and housing challenges in the Whitehorse area. The study provides a snapshot of a vulnerable sub-population during a specific time period. The survey was created by the Department of Health and Social Services in partnership with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

The *Dimensions of Social Inclusion and Social Exclusion in Yukon 2010* report is a rich compilation of data using social indicators such as personal and community assets, access to necessities and participation in society. These documents are the foundation that will provide the information and evidence needed to develop the poverty reduction strategy expected by June 2011. Contact Mike McCann, Executive Director, Strategic Social Initiatives, Health and Social Services, (867) 667 5700, michael.mccann@gov.yk.ca for further details.

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 www.campaign2000.ca **Thank you for your support!**

Campaign 2000's E-Bulletin provides regular updates (3-4 times a year) on activities to reduce and eventually eliminate child and family poverty in Canada with news and views, political analysis, commentary on party platforms, government action or inaction, and links to the latest research findings and reports. To unsubscribe from *Campaign 2000's E-Bulletin* at any time, e-mail us at liyugu@familyservicetoronto.org. For more info, please visit www.campaign2000.ca and www.familyservicetoronto.org. You can also download previous editions of Campaign 2000 e-bulletin on our website at: <http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/enews.html>

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