



Campaign 2000 e-Bulletin Summer/Fall 2015

Working for a National Poverty Eradication Plan

+ Scanning the Federal Scene

Campaign 2000 is pleased to offer an update on our regional partners' recent anti-poverty work that coincides with October 17th, the UN International Day for Poverty Eradication. Our active coalition remains committed to the eradication of child and family poverty in Canada and our partners continue to spearhead vital anti-poverty efforts from coast to coast to coast.

Since January 2015, Campaign 2000 and its coalition partners have focused on preparing our communities and coalitions for the October 19th Federal Election. Progressive groups have animated public discussions on child poverty, income inequality, gender inequity, child care, and many more issues.

Campaign 2000 seized the opportunity to put a renewed spotlight on shameful levels of child and family poverty in Canada. Our November [2014 national report card](#) marked 25 years since the 1989 all party resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. The most recent data show that 19.1% of children in Canada still live in poverty – nearly 1 in 5 - and over 1.3 million children in total. A staggering 40% of Indigenous children live in poverty. We highlighted the deplorable situation of children and families in low income in the lead up to the election.

Pre Election Work

In February 2015, all parties voted to support [Motion 534](#), a private member's Motion put forward by MP Rathika Sitsabaiesan. The motion received almost unanimous support (with the exception of one No vote) and called on all MPs to work towards eliminating child poverty in Canada by developing a national poverty reduction plan. Just in time for March break, Campaign 2000 sent an [open letter to all party leaders](#) calling on them to [issue a national anti-poverty plan](#) as part of the federal election campaign. We followed up on this request in meetings we attended with our regional partners and Keep the Promise partners with individual MPs and party representatives from all parties through the spring and summer.

Child and Family Poverty Emerges as an Election Issue

By the spring, an early debate about supporting families was underway with several child benefit proposals announced by the Conservative, NDP and Liberal parties. The debate had the strong potential of providing Canada the opportunity to shed its shameful record on child poverty for good. Campaign 2000 reviewed the proposals put forward at that point, translating our analysis into a Toronto Star Op Ed entitled ["Use the federal campaign to fight child poverty."](#) just as parents began receiving back-dated payments of the Universal Child Care Benefit in July.

Supporting Election Organizing by our Partners

Over the summer, we distributed our partners' timely election resources through our networks. Resources included CCPA's Income Inequality platform ["Good for Canada,"](#) Citizens for Public Justice's [Election Bulletin; Tax Sheets,](#) and Bill [C-43 Study](#) on

the impact on refugee claimants of minimum residency requirements in accessing social assistance. We supported the development of [#VoteToEndPoverty](#) election resources by Ontario Campaign 2000 partners and supported [Up for Debate](#), an alliance of women's organizations that called on all parties to address women's issues and gender justice during the campaign. Finally, we underscored the need for federal action and responses from all parties on issues including [child care](#), [housing](#) and [food security](#) through infographics we shared through our social media accounts. The infographics coincided with partner campaigns including, [Vote Child Care 2015](#), [Vote Housing for All](#) and [Chew On This!](#) which highlighted the need for a national anti-poverty plan in the face of widespread food bank usage in Canada.

Mapping Child Poverty: A Reality in Every Federal Riding

No riding in Canada is immune from child poverty, according to research released on Oct. 8th from *Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty in Canada*. A striking new series of maps demonstrates that child and family poverty persists in every riding nation wide. With over 1.3 million children living in poverty in Canada, the issue affects all Canadians and must be addressed by all parties before election day on October 19th.

This is the first time that child poverty rates have been mapped by riding from coast to coast to coast. Click on all the interactive maps and maps in pdf format on our website for more info on child poverty by riding and by region at: <http://www.campaign2000.ca/> or read below: Campaign 2000 Media Release about this story in [English](#) and [French](#); our [Research Backgrounder](#) and learn about trends, our analysis and recommendations; and see our [newest infographic](#) highlighting the reality of child poverty in every riding/community across Canada. Feel free to share widely! We are on twitter, @Campaign2000, and on Facebook as Campaign 2000.

Released on the eve of Thanksgiving, [the child poverty by riding maps](#), along with our [analysis of each federal party's anti-poverty platforms](#), received substantial national media coverage through the Canadian Press, [Toronto Star](#), [CBC's the Exchange with Amanda Lang](#), [Huffington post](#), and many other print and online posts.

Dignity for All Releases National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada

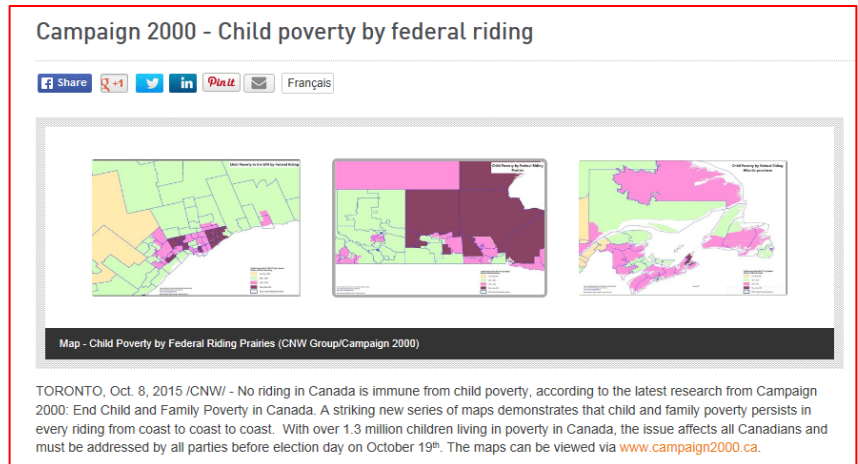
Dignity for All, a collaborative campaign between Citizens for Public Justice and Canada Without Poverty, released their much-anticipated **National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada** in early February. Campaign 2000 contributed to this plan as it was developed over 5 years of consultations. The call for a national anti-poverty plan has been supported by over 15,000 Canadians to date.

Canada Without Poverty Releases New Poverty Progress Profiles

Despite the absence of action by the federal government, provinces and territories across Canada are reporting successes on issues ranging from homelessness to health to income supports. Canada Without Poverty has developed its third edition of [Poverty Progress Profiles](#) – a look at what each province and territory is doing to address poverty. Read them in full at: <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty-poverty-progress-profiles/>

Laurel Rothman's Retirement

After 17 years of providing leadership to the Campaign 2000 Network as its National Coordinator while also serving as the Director of Social Reform (which is now called Social Action and Community Building) at Family Service Toronto, Laurel decided





to step down and start her next adventure – retirement, at the beginning of January, 2015. Since then, she has been busy spending time with her children and grandchildren while doing other enjoyable activities. As well, we are delighted that Laurel still volunteers her time and knowledge to be involved in the work of Campaign 2000. On behalf of all the partners and friends of Campaign 2000, we want to say a big thank-you to Laurel and wish her all the best and Happy Retirement!

Keep the Promise

Keep The Promise (KTP) gave itself two years to re-ignite public and political commitment to ending child poverty in Canada. We imagined a campaign by children, with children and for children. Our goal was to engage children across the country, to give voice to their experience and perspective on the issue, and to cultivate a new generation of leaders who will continue to advocate for the rights of children to adequate housing, good food, accessible education and safe conditions for play and learning.

It's been a busy two years in which *KTP* engaged over 1000 children in 75+ schools from every province and territory across Canada. The students studied the issues, participated in national and regional summits, learned from each other, completed a wide range of related curriculum activities, developed and implemented their own anti-poverty projects in their local communities, met with politicians to discuss the issue and engaged the conversation with the adults in their circles. The Canadian Teachers' Federation has committed to engaging 40 more schools in 2015-16. *Keep The Promise*, working in partnership with Campaign 2000 and the Canadian Teachers' Federation, has sparked the creation of a set of video, print and curriculum resources that will support the work of teachers and students in the years ahead.

KTP was able to generate significant coverage of the issue around the 25th anniversary of the 1989 commitment to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. There was strong coverage in the Toronto Star, on the CBC and on Global TV, as well as in many regional media outlets where *KTP* children were active. In addition, we generated 1000+ followers on our social media channels (our website, Facebook and Twitter) with strong activity over the past six months. *KTP's* videos calling Canadians to action are showing regularly on the Rogers, Shaw and CBC cable networks.

During the *KTP* campaign, the federal government adopted Motion 534, which renewed its commitment to end child poverty. As well, all the federal parties have in their platforms policy initiatives designed to address this issue. We believe that the campaign, especially the meetings between *KTP* children and party leaders, contributed to this renewed attention to the issue.

Many groups and organizations became partners with *KTP*, including the Canadian Teachers' Federation, Campaign 2000, the Ottawa Catholic School Board, Citizens for Public Justice, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Rogers, Innovate By Day, Socially Good, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, the Canadian Council of Muslims and Jews, the Canadian Council for Reform Judaism and many others who were new to the issue. Together, they represent a powerful network of advocates who will continue to work for an end to child poverty in the years to come.

Sadly, the rate of child poverty in Canada has risen since 1989, from 1 in 7 children living in poverty, to 1 in 5. So the work must continue. Keep The Promise has inspired and engaged a web of champions who will keep on pushing until we, together, as a nation, finally keep our promise to our children.



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**, 202-128A Sterling Road, Toronto, ON M6R 2B7 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

City of Vancouver's living wage motion passed unanimously

On July 8, Mayor Gregor Robertson's [motion](#) calling on the City of Vancouver to become a certified Living Wage Employer was passed unanimously. As part of its work to reduce child poverty, [First Call](#) has hosted the [Living Wage for Families Campaign](#) since 2009, working with unions, the [Metro Vancouver Alliance](#), and other community groups. Our [joint report](#) with the [CCPA-BC Office](#) calculates the 2015 living wage rate in Metro Vancouver to be \$20.68/hr.



BC government eliminates the child support clawback

Starting September 1, 2015, the government will stop clawing back child support from 5,400 of BC's most vulnerable children—a significant public policy win. The February BC budget [announced](#) an **end to the clawback of child support from single parents on income and disability assistance**. Since 2007, First Call's Child Poverty Report Card has recommended that government end this clawback. Our [joint submission](#) with [Single Mothers' Alliance](#) and [Community Legal Assistance Society](#), calling for an end to the policy, supported by many community organizations, opposition MLA Michelle Mungall, parents' stories and dialogue with the Minister at First Call's coalition meeting on Dec. 2014, played important roles in convincing government to change this harmful policy.

Ministry announces policy changes for parents on welfare

In March 2015, the BC government [announced](#) families with children on income assistance will be able to keep up to \$400/month in earnings (up from \$200), effective September 1, 2015. On March 11, a more significant change was announced: the [Single Parent Employment Initiative](#) (SPEI). This program will allow single parents on income assistance to stay on benefits while they take an approved education or training program for up to 12 months. Their child care, tuition and transportation costs will be paid for by the ministry. If they get a job after the training, their child care will continue to be covered for another year.



Additional changes announced in July will exempt bursaries, scholarships and grants related to educational or training costs from clawback for SPEI participants, and eliminate the clawback of Canada Pension Plan Orphan's Benefits from single parents on welfare (worth on average \$235/mo).

Community advocacy

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition continues to mobilize public support for a provincial poverty reduction plan, including the Opposition's [Poverty Reduction and Economic Inclusion Act](#) which was re-introduced in May 2015 in the BC legislature and the [\\$10/Day Child Care Plan](#) proposed by BC's child care advocates. In February 2015 the First Call Coalition issued an [open letter](#) to Premier Clark and Minister Cadieux about BC's track record on child poverty, in response to a [letter](#) from Minister of Children and Family Development Stephanie Cadieux about the 2014 BC Child Poverty Report Card found at [still1in5.ca](#).

Community conversations and research focusing on youth homelessness

First Call, the Representative for Children and Youth Office, McCreary Centre Society, Public Guardian and Trustee, and the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks partnered with Vancouver Foundation to host five [Fostering Change](#) community conversations with a focus on preventing homelessness of youth leaving foster care at age 19. McCreary also just released their new survey research on [homeless and street involved youth](#), which should inform program and policy responses.

Alberta

Change is the operative word to describe Alberta in 2015. You could almost say there were two earthquakes in Alberta this year. The first was the dramatic drop in oil prices that underpins both provincial government revenues and the broader economy. The second was the defeat of a 44-year Conservative dynasty and the election of Alberta's first NDP government on May 5, 2015.

A number of changes in keeping with the NDP platform have already been implemented. To stabilize revenues in the longer-term, progressivity was restored to the personal income tax system, and corporate taxes were raised from 10% to 12%. Conversely, a health care levy and several unpopular user fees introduced in the last Conservative budget were eliminated. About \$1 billion in planned expenditure cuts (mostly in health care, child protection and education) were also restored. The minimum wage will increase by \$1 to \$11.20 per hour on October 1 with a plan to reach \$15.00 per hour by 2018.

Among other commitments, the new government hopes to implement an Alberta Child Benefit in the coming year and a \$15 per day child care plan in the longer-term, among other social policy commitments. As a refreshing change, voluntary sector groups are being included in pre-budget consultations for the first full budget which will be brought down in the fall.

Another major change involves many of Campaign 2000's Alberta partners. Joe Ceci, formerly the coordinator of Action to End Poverty in Alberta, is now the Minister of Finance. Lori Sigurdson, Professional Affairs Manager for the Alberta College of Social Workers, is now the Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation and Labour. Bill Moore-Kilgannon, formerly with Public Interest Alberta, is now the Chief of Staff for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

New reports and resources from Alberta:

- Restoration of program funding: <http://alberta.ca/Budget.cfm>
- Minimum wage increase: <http://work.alberta.ca/employment-standards/minimum-wage.html>

Saskatchewan The most significant piece of news took place in mid-August 2015. The Saskatchewan Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction (AGPR) presented its final recommendations for the provincial poverty reduction strategy to Social Services Minister Donna Harpauer on August 24. The provincial government will now begin the process of considering these recommendations as it works to develop Saskatchewan's Poverty Reduction Strategy. However, they have not provided any timelines moving forward with the strategy. Most noteworthy are the ambitious goals set out in the recommendations, specifically the inclusion of a pilot project on basic income. Click [here](#) to read it in full.

Meanwhile, Poverty Costs is a partnership dedicated to advocacy for a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in Saskatchewan. In 2014, the partnership conducted a social marketing campaign to create awareness about highlighting the economic and social costs of poverty. The annual cost to the province was estimated to be \$3.8 billion.

The Poverty Costs team was busy this past spring, working in response to the government's October announcement of a commitment to a poverty reduction strategy. In December, an Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction was appointed to develop recommendations for the strategy. Poverty Costs subsequently carried out a community consultation to gather input from individuals with a lived experience of poverty. Participants identified a need to focus on systemic changes, including access to safe and affordable housing, employment opportunities, supports for training and education, improved supports for childcare, a universal guaranteed income, and minimum wage and social assistance indexed to the cost of living. The full report is available [here](#).

Recommended Vision

"We envision all of Saskatchewan committing to actions that will reduce, and ultimately eliminate, poverty in our communities."

Recommended Target

Using the 2012 Market Basket Measure, the Province aims to reduce poverty in Saskatchewan by 50 per cent by the end of 2020.

For more information on Poverty Costs, please visit www.povertycosts.ca or email povertycosts@gmail.com.

Manitoba

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPCW) has been providing research along with logistical and policy support to the Make Poverty History Manitoba (MPHM) coalition. MPHM decided to concentrate on mobilizing widespread community support around the need to raise Employment and Income Assistance rates in Manitoba, particularly to better reflect social housing costs. As a result of the work of the coalition, the Manitoba government announced an historic increase in EIA Rent Assist rates in Budget 2015. It also expanded the program to assist low-income families not on EIA. Josh Brandon, an SPCW community animator, developed a short primer on what the changes will mean to share with frontline workers and anyone else interested, [Rent Assist for non-EIA recipients: Changes to Manitoba Budget 2015](#). The goal is to circulate the report to increase uptake of the new benefits amongst families who are struggling to balance the rent versus food conundrum.

Building on the success of this strategy and an updated poverty reduction plan by the CCPA's Manitoba office, *The View from Here*, MPHM, with the continued organizational support from the SPCW, has developed another targeted strategy to ensure that poverty reduction will be addressed during our 2016 provincial election.

Ontario

Ontario Campaign 2000 has been working on a number of key initiatives over the past year, seizing opportunities to continue our advocacy work on several fronts, ranging from deputing at the Changing Workplaces Review public consultation, to calling for an end to the hold-back of child support payment, to mobilizing around Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign, and leading a youth-focused project called **Youth Mobilizing to End Poverty**.

The Changing Workplaces Review

In early spring this year, the Ontario government announced specific plans for public input with the goal of amending the Employment Standards Act (ESA 2000) and the Labour Relations Act (1995) in an effort “to best protect workers while supporting businesses in our changing economy”.

A series of public consultations were held in regions across the province, which provided an important opportunity for the government to hear from workers, unions, and community organizations about how the Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act need to be updated and strengthened in order to better protect workers.

Meanwhile, workers across the province have been organizing to send a clear message to the government that our labour laws have not kept up with changing employment relationships and have been weakened by exemptions, loopholes, and inadequate enforcement. A number of studies and news reports were published early this year to highlight the issue of precarious employment and the need for better protection of vulnerable workers. Read the Workers' Action Centre report, [Still Working on the Edge: Building Decent Jobs from the Ground Up](#), for an analysis of current issues with the ESA and a full set of recommendations for change.

Ontario Campaign 2000 also joined many individuals and groups in making a deputation in June expressing our concerns about the increasing numbers of precarious jobs and the worrying trend of low-income children from working poor families. Read its written submission [here](#) for a full list of our recommendations.

Ontario Government Being Challenged in Court over “Clawback” of Child Support Payment

The Ontario government has been retaining child support payments from parents living on social assistance. The practice hurts the children the most. A Sept. 14th editorial in the Toronto Star quoted Anita Khanna of Campaign 2000 in our call for an end to the hold-back of child support payments for parents on social assistance. [Stop clawing back child support payments from social assistance recipients: Editorial](#)

Earlier in the week, the widely-circulated Toronto Star also reported [a story](#) about a class action court case launched by a father in Ottawa re the hold-back of child support. Ontario Campaign 2000 worked closely last year with our partner, Income Security Advocacy Centre, sending [an open letter](#) to the Ontario government signed by over 40 organizations and calling for an end to the hold-back of child support for lone parents on social assistance.

Fight for \$15 & Fairness Campaign

More than 50% of jobs in Toronto and Hamilton are unstable, temporary or part-time, according to a 2013 report, [It's More than Poverty](#), released jointly by United Way Toronto and McMaster University. Based on interviews with more than 4,000 workers, the report documents the significant impact precarious work has on workers' health, family well-being and community life.



Ontario Campaign 2000 and its partners have joined Workers Action Centre and other coalitions in pushing to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour through monthly activities and petitions. We believe Ontario needs a minimum wage of \$15 to bring workers and their families 10% above the LIM After Tax poverty threshold.

Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to End Homelessness

Affordable housing is an important part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which concluded in 2008 that the province needed to work with its housing partners to make it easier for families to find and maintain affordable housing.

The province has wrapped up public consultations that were launched in April to ensure that Ontario continues to make progress in meeting the housing needs of Ontarians. This input, along with input from the Expert [Advisory Panel on Homelessness](#), will be included in an update to the strategy, which will be completed by the end of 2015.

Campaign 2000/FST's [Youth Mobilizing to End Poverty Project](#)



Image of a youth poster and a video from a series of posters and videos, created through the *Youth Mobilizing to End Poverty* project

Family Service Toronto & Campaign 2000 worked with a group of energetic and creative youth volunteers from Toronto and surrounding areas aged 13-24 in creating both digital short videos and posters that highlight the need to end Child and Family Poverty in Canada. Youth voices are important to consider when you cast your vote in the October federal election.

We have been releasing and posting Campaign 2000/Family Service Toronto's youth-made digital short videos and posters from September 21, leading up to election day of Oct. 19, 2015. Videos and posters are being released in the 26 days leading up to the federal election to signify that it has been 26 years since the House of Commons voted unanimously to end child poverty by the year 2000.

To check out all the newly released posters and videos, please visit the home page of Campaign 2000:

<http://www.campaign2000.ca/> Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#)

Quebec

The Liberal austerity budget of 2015-16 failed to move forward on implementing its Plan d'action gouvernemental pour la solidarité et l'inclusion sociale, 2010-2015. Anti-poverty advocates were dismayed with the complete lack of measures to address poverty. At the same time there were no budget provisions that would make those with high incomes share in the economic pain.

By reducing the categories of eligibility for **social assistance** and ending funding for assistance of last resort, the budget was seen by advocates for poverty reduction as increasing rather than reducing economic inequality. The government claimed to be encouraging the return to work by social assistance recipients but in fact made cuts to measures that assist employment. Budget references to social assistance fraud were criticized as encouraging prejudice against the poor.

As announced in the 2014-15 budget **child care** fees for publicly-funded non-profit programs were raised from \$7 per day to \$7.50 per day. Going forward there will be a sliding scale: families with incomes below \$50,000 will still pay \$7.50 while those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000 will pay \$8 per day with additional increases for the highest earners.

The housing advocacy network FRAPRU reports periodically in its *Dossier noir* on affordable housing developments using Statistics Canada figures. Its September 2014 report paints a worsening situation. Housing costs are increasing faster than incomes. There is growing housing unaffordability especially for those in core need (those spending at least 30% of income). Single renters now form about 50% of renters and they spend proportionately more of their incomes on housing than do families. Particularly in core need are single parent families, women, immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities, aboriginals and Inuit.

In Quebec 11% of rental housing is subsidized. Though very limited rental housing is being created there continues to be a huge gap between need and supply. The government says it is examining all housing programs for efficiency and outcomes in order to look for savings which is a cause for concern. Federal investment in housing programs until 2019 is only \$57.7 million which will provide for only 700 homes. With government withdrawal from existing social housing agreements the number of subsidized units continues to decline.

The Campagne pour une société juste with representation in all regions of Quebec announced a new campaign to challenge government's preference for austerity measures rather than investment in a more equal society through poverty reduction. For more info, visit: http://www.frapru.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Dossier-noir-2014VF_web.pdf & <http://www.pauvreté.qc.ca/>

Nova Scotia

The 2015-16 budget continued this provincial government's focus on cutting the deficit and most departmental budgets were frozen. For the second year in a row there was no increase in income assistance allowances. The budget also cut grants to several community-based organizations serving people with disabilities. It also resulted in the closure of some local Department of Community Services (DCS) offices and cut staff and hours of operation at others.

Earlier this year, the DCS announced that it was proceeding with plans to 'transform' the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program first proposed under the NDP government. It says the goals of transformation are to improve quality of life and resilience; increase social/community inclusion; increase skills for enhancing self-sufficiency; and increase labour market attachment. The Department hired a consulting firm with expertise in developing automated systems to assist in developing a new system. A process of stakeholder engagement is now underway and this will be followed by broader consultation, including with those on income assistance, in the fall. It is estimated that the whole transformation process will take about 3 years.

A Halifax based coalition, the Benefits Reform Action Group, made up of people in income assistance and local agencies, held several public town hall meetings to identify issues that should be addressed under the transformation process. The Community Society to End Poverty held a provincial meeting at the end of June to discuss the proposed transformation in the context of the current inadequacy of the income assistance system.

In the meantime DCS is also in the process of consulting on proposed changes to the Child and Family Services Act. Amongst other things, it proposes to increase the age under the legislation from 16 to 18. It also expands the meaning of 'neglect' under the Act to include things that worry anti-poverty activists, given the inadequacy of income assistance. It is therefore turning out to be a very busy summer for anti-poverty advocates as well as women's and family issues advocates.

On a more positive side, a new group called Health Providers Against Poverty has recently formed. This organization brings together a wide range of health providers, including physicians, to advocate on poverty issues related to the social determinants of health.

Just before the election was called, Peter MacKay finally announced (for the second time) money for a Housing First project in Halifax. [Adsum for Women and Children](#) pointed out early on that homeless women and children are often invisible. The organization has advocated for the inclusion of homeless women and children in the project and they, as well as YWCA Halifax, is participating in the project.

New Brunswick

It's been a little more than a year since New Brunswick launched its second five year poverty reduction strategy. The first plan, Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, ended in November 2014 and in June 2015 a report assessing its impact was released. Although the ambitious income poverty reduction targets were not met, a number of actions were undertaken by the new Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) that led the Tamarack Institute and Vibrant Communities to single out ESIC for an award in the category of provinces and cities working together in partnership at its recent poverty summit.

The new poverty reduction plan, Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019 (OPT2) was released in May, 2014 – just four months before the provincial general election which saw the one term Progressive Conservatives replaced by the Liberals.

Unlike the first plan, OPT2 lacks specific targets and timetables and instead sets a direction that stresses the need to “foster, encourage and support” existing and future initiatives that would promote economic and social inclusion.

The next provincial budget will determine the priority and urgency of poverty reduction. A Strategic Program Review has been underway in Fredericton and drastic cuts in government expenditures are not out of the question as New Brunswick comes to terms with its dire financial situation.

- **Links to related reports from New Brunswick:**

- ❖ [The Impact of New Brunswick's 2009–2014 Economic and Social Inclusion Plan Summary](#)
- ❖ [The Impact of New Brunswick's 2009–2014 Economic and Social Inclusion Plan](#)
- ❖ [New Brunswick receives two awards on poverty reduction from national organization](#)

New Brunswick is poised to become the eighth province to regulate the Payday Loan industry. Instead of holding a regulatory hearing, the Province has requested comments on proposed regulations. The Human Development Council responded with a brief that recommends “cherry picking” the best features of provincial regulations in Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. The brief can be found here.

The Human Development Council was invited to appear before the Senate Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee in May to speak about Senate Bill S-210 – An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, which would reduce the criminal rate of interest from 60% to 20%.

Prince Edward Island

PEI saw a provincial election in May 2015 and a Liberal government was elected with a new premier. During the campaign, the PEI Coalition for a Poverty Eradication Strategy communicated with all political parties to get a commitment for a Poverty Eradication Strategy and hosted a workshop with Dignity for All, making sure that their report was personally handed to the party leaders.

In the Speech from the Throne the new premier made the following promises: to amend the income Tax Act to assist 12,000 lower income Islanders, more than 2,000 of who will no longer pay income tax; to tackle the problem of food insecurity “where levels are higher than the national average” by providing enhanced school breakfast and lunch programs. “More fundamentally,

we will begin to work on a new multi-year plan which will look at our family and human services and how we can collectively work to reduce poverty in our province.”

The Coalition wrote to the new premier outlining some of the problems that concern us most and underlining the need for a poverty eradication strategy. We also sent him information on the federal proposals for national child benefits. He replied and assured us that poverty has been actively on the government’s mind. He stated that the programs outlined in the party platform and in the Speech from the Throne are being followed up through legislative and administrative programs. He pointed out again that his government is committed to providing the necessary supports to those struggling most. He promised to share our concerns with the Minister responsible. “Your suggestions will serve as a useful reference as our work unfolds.”

The PEI Coalition will now seek a meeting with the Minister responsible. Its members regard some of the government promises as band-aid solutions and are determined to underline the importance of a Poverty Eradication Strategy with a strong federal child benefit as a centrepiece.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Since the government issued its *Progress Report on Poverty Reduction* in 2014, input on priorities for action was elicited from the public and shareholder groups from around the province and a summit was held in March 2015.

2015 Budget

The 2015 budget reported \$185 million investment in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This includes \$25 million in funding for **early learning and childcare** initiatives. Measures for **people with disabilities** include \$400,000 for an accessible vehicle program so that people with disabilities can acquire or adapt a vehicle. \$200,000 in grants was allocated for communities and organizations to make facilities and events more accessible for people with disabilities.

Starting in 2015 The **Low Income Tax Reduction** program will eliminate provincial income tax for individuals with net income up to \$18,955 or for families with net income up to \$32,052. Partial tax reductions will be received by individuals with net income up to \$23,318 and for families with net income up to \$38,840. This is an increase of \$1.1 million to the program from the previous year. As well, \$422,000 was allocated to provide **youth** outreach programs and **services** to vulnerable and high-risk youth.

After consultations with community-based organizations the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corp. released in February 2015 a report “**A Road Map for Ending Homelessness**” in which it agreed to adopt a “housing first” policy. A steering committee will work with the government agency to move toward action on homelessness.

2015 Government Announcements and Policy Updates

In March of 2015 the government announced a program to strengthen mental health services for children and youth and in August 2015 another announcement ended student loans and launched a part-time incentive grant program. As of July 2015, the provincial government has increased the cap on **dental services** from \$200 to \$300 and \$750 to \$1,500 for dentures. The **minimum wage rate** is set to increase on October 1st from \$10.25 to \$10.50 per hour.

The **HST credit** for low income individuals and families will be enhanced to offset the increase in provincial HST rates starting in 2016. There will also be an income threshold increase with the result that the number of eligible families will increase from approximately 58,000 to 127,000. The **Residential Energy Rebate Program** introduced in 2011 to help offset costs of the rising price of fuel used to heat their homes **ended** July 1st, 2015.

Operating grants for **child care centres** have been increased so that more families now receive the subsidy rate. \$500,000 has been allocated to seek to leverage additional funding from the private sector and the federal government to develop and implement a physical activity program for school-aged children.

The Territories

YUKON

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) continues to play an active role in Yukon and coordinates a number of initiatives and programs to fulfill its anti-poverty mandate. These include a Housing Task Force, Food Network Yukon, Research and Education Working Group, the Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, as well as programs such as Whitehorse Connects and Sally & Sisters/Soeurs. To learn more about YAPC and its work, visit: <http://yapc.ca/news>

Poverty and Homelessness Action Week (PHAW)

Held every October, PHAW is designed to raise awareness and promote action to end poverty and homelessness in the Yukon. Started in 2005, PHAW has grown to include activities sponsored by a wide cross section of organizations, individuals, businesses, churches, schools and the media. PHAW 2015 took place October 13th to 18th this year. This year's theme is 'Leading to End Poverty'. Events included the third annual Bring A Blanket, Leave a Blanket Community Movie Night at Shipyards Park, Whitehorse Connects, much conversation about the upcoming Municipal & Federal Election and a Free Swim at the Canada Games Centre to honour International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.



Yukon Budget 2015-2016

The Yukon government released its budget in April 2015.

Some highlights for children, families and women include:

- significantly increasing the Yukon Child Benefit;
- mirror the federal Children's Fitness Tax Credit to create a Yukon Children's Fitness Tax Credit;
- \$281,000 over 3 years for the provision of a Woman's Legal Advocate;
- \$450,000 to be allocated over 3 years starting in 2013 to support Aboriginal women's organizations, in response to the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit recommendations of 2012;
- October will see the launch of an interactive website by the Women's Directorate showcasing a current profile of women's equality in Yukon based on indicators like health, education, economic security, leadership, child care, safety, arts and athletics.

The announcement also included budget allocations for health services and housing programs. For full details, visit: <http://www.finance.gov.yk.ca/2666.html>

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

A second anti-poverty round table with delegates from around the NWT was organized by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) at the end of 2014. Aboriginal governments, non-government organizations (NGOs), municipalities, relevant GNWT departments, the private sector and other NWT stakeholders were consulted on ways to reduce and mitigate the impacts of poverty. (Roundtable notes are online at <http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/td201-175.pdf>)

The discussions, along with previous consultations, fed into the development of [*Working Together: An Action Plan To Reduce and Eliminate Poverty in the Northwest Territories*](#), a document released by the Minister of Health and Social Services in June. The priorities include health and wellbeing, housing, sustainable communities, and integrated services.

For the second year the GNWT allocated \$500,000 to community based anti-poverty projects. Information about the funded projects is included in the action plan or can be found on an [interactive map](#) as information becomes available.

The small committee that advised the GNWT on this action plan and reviewed applications for anti-poverty funding for the past two years was disbanded this spring. It's not clear if another committee with members from outside government will be established to advise the government on anti-poverty measures, though the government has committed to annual roundtables.

While there was nothing explicit in the anti-poverty action plan for people living on income assistance, the GNWT increased the allowances for food, incidentals and clothing. Rates vary by community and family size, but as an example, the food allowance for a family of four in Yellowknife increased from \$571 to \$685 each month in April. By 2018-19 that same family of four will receive \$952 per month, an overall increase of 67%. The goal is to increase food benefits to allow for the purchase of healthy foods in all NWT communities, according to a food basket measure developed in cooperation with the NWT Bureau of Statistics. This is the first food allowance increase for income assistance clients since 2007.

The NWT government decided this past summer to not claw back the Universal Child Care Benefit retroactive payments from income assistant and public housing clients, a decision that may set a precedent allowing people to keep more of their incidental income, now deducted after reaching \$1,200 each year.

Alternatives North, the social justice coalition that coordinates the No Place for Poverty alliance, used anti-poverty funding to determine a living wage calculation for Yellowknife. The calculation places a living wage at \$20.72. Alternatives North will launch a living wage campaign this fall and hopes that its work can offer a model for other NWT communities.

NUNAVUT

The very high cost of food in Nunavut resulting in widespread food insecurity and hunger are long-standing issues in Nunavut. In March 2015 Statistics Canada found that one third of households lack access to safe and healthy food, four times the Canadian average. An Inuit Health Survey found that an alarming 70% of Inuit households were not able to access safe, healthy and appropriate food. Use of food banks has continued to grow.

A grass roots group Feeding My Family has played a role in pushing the government to take action on food security. A few years ago they started protests against poor quality food and price gouging in retail outlets and more recently have called for boycotts. One target of protest has been the federal government's Nutrition North program which subsidizes retailers. The claim that savings have not been passed on to consumers was supported in November 2014 by an Auditor General's report.

The Nunavut Food Security Coalition met in Iqaluit in March 2015 to track implementation of its Strategy and Action Plan of 2014-2016. There has been movement in two areas. The Nunavut Department of Health is partnering with the Northwest Company and Arctic Cooperatives on a Core Recipe Project. This involves education on how to select and prepare nutritious food which would substitute community-prepared food for store-bought food. As well as promoting health the Project addresses the high cost of food.

The [Food Security Coalition](#) is also developing policies that would make it easy and safe to serve country food in government facilities and programs.

The lack of decent, affordable housing continues to be a crisis in Nunavut whose population grows at a much greater rate than the national average. Overcrowding and run down housing has been cited in reports on poor children's health and a high rate of infant mortality. There is little private housing development so government funding is essential. Due to widespread poverty, a large proportion of Inuit families are housed in public units.

The Nunavut Housing Corporation is responsible for implementing the Nunavut Comprehensive Long Term Housing Strategy. Under its control are 5123 units of public housing which are managed by 25 local housing organizations. There is also a staff housing program of 1424 units for government employees whose rent is subsidized if it exceeds 30% of income.

In its [2013-14 annual report](#) the NHC announces \$100 million in federal funding for housing construction, a positive development though it falls very short of addressing the huge need. Construction had been started on 213 units in 12 communities. The NHC's business plan of 2013-16 aims to increase Inuit employment in the NUC and in the construction industry through internships, mentorships and on-the-job training.

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