



CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY
CANADA SANS PAUVRETÉ

**Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child:
Reply to issues 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, & 142, and to articles 2, 4, 6, and
27**

Submission by

Canada Without Poverty

With

Campaign 2000

Citizens for Public Justice

&

Dignity for All Campaign

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Introduction

1. **Canada Without Poverty (CWP)** – founded in 1972, CWP is a leading national anti-poverty organization representing the voices of low-income people in Canada for over 40 years. CWP (formerly known as the National Anti-Poverty Organization) was the first NGO to undertake an oral presentation before the UN CESCR in 1993. With a pan-Canadian reach, Canada Without Poverty is often called upon by federal government committees and civil society to speak to poverty as it relates to various stages of the life-cycle and vulnerable demographic groups. Canada Without Poverty continues to promote the enforcement of economic and social rights as the fundamental basis for the relief of poverty and acts as a central resource point on ES rights in Canada.

2. **Campaign 2000** - Campaign 2000 is a cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Campaign 2000 began in 1991 out of concern about the lack of government progress in addressing child poverty. Campaign 2000 is non-partisan in urging all Canadian elected officials to keep their promise to Canada’s children. Campaign 2000’s coalition of 120 partners are committed to addressing the issue of child and family poverty and believe that the federal government has a responsibility to honour the all-party resolution to end child poverty.

3. **Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ)** - is a national, progressive organization of members who are inspired by faith to act for justice in Canadian public policy. CPJ promotes social and environmental justice in Canadian public policy, focusing on poverty in Canada, climate justice, and refugee rights. For more than 50 years, justice-oriented people of faith, along with churches and religious orders, have joined their

voices as Citizens for Public Justice. Together, we're working towards a better Canada. Public justice is the political dimension of loving your neighbour, caring for creation, and achieving the common good. CPJ works to keep public justice front and centre in public policy debates.

Child Poverty in Canada: An Overview

1. In Canada, 1 out of 5 children lives in poverty. According to a 2016 census, Indigenous children face poverty at a rate that is shockingly higher than any other group in Canada. For example, 53 per cent of First Nations children living on-reserve, 41 per cent of First Nation children living off-reserve, 25 per cent of Inuit children and 22 percent of Métis children, currently live in poverty. Similarly, racialized groups also face high levels of poverty with 22 per cent of racialized children and 35 per cent of former or current landed immigrant or permanent resident children living in poverty. In contrast, only 12 per cent of non-Indigenous, non-immigrant, and non-racialized children are experience poverty.¹
2. Geography contributes to disproportionate levels of poverty among Canadian children. Canada's northern regions face some of the highest levels of child poverty. Nunavut has the highest rate at 31.2 per cent, and the Yukon is the lowest at 11.9 per cent. The Canadian provinces also have varying levels of poverty. Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate at 27.9 per cent, and Quebec has the lowest at 15.2 percent. In addition, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia have poverty rates higher than the national rate.²
3. Research demonstrates that child poverty can have serious effects on children. These effects continue to impact individuals well into their adulthood. Studies indicate that children living in poverty are 3.5 times more likely to have conduct disorders, 2-times more likely to have chronic illness and twice as likely to have school issues, such as, hyperactivity and emotional disorders, compared to children who do not experience poverty.³ Child poverty also leads to medical issues including iron deficiency, obesity, type 2 diabetes, aggression and anxiety.⁴

¹ Sarangi, L., Colabro, C., Frankel, S., Friendly, M., Meisner, A., & Rothman, L. (2020). *2020: Setting the Stage for a Poverty-Free Canada*. Campaign 2000. Retrieved from <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/campaign-2000-report-setting-the-stage-for-a-poverty-free-canada-updated-january-24-2020.pdf>

² *Ibid.*

³ Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (n.d.). Child Poverty. Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/education-training-employment/child-poverty>

⁴ Gupta, R. P.-S., De Wit, M. L., & McKeown, D. (2007). The impact of poverty on the current and future health status of children. *Pediatric Child Health*, 12(8), 667–662. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/pch/12.8.667>

4. Child poverty is an affront to the rights and values adopted by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which recognizes that children require safety, love and special care to become adult members of society.⁵ Canada ratified the CRC roughly 30 years ago, but until child poverty is eradicated, children living in Canada will not be able to meaningfully realize their rights under the Convention.⁶ We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to implement effective human rights policies and create a plan that will end child poverty in Canada.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy

5. In the Committee's concluding observations on the third and fourth periodic report of Canada, the Committee recommended that Canada "...develop and implement a national, coordinated strategy to eliminate child poverty as part of the broader national poverty reduction strategy, which should include annual targets to reduce child poverty..."⁷
6. In 2018, the Federal Government released Canada's first ever Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), with the goal of achieving a 50 per cent reduction in Poverty by 2030.⁸ The PRS includes \$22 billion in new investments, and more importantly, the PRS recognizes that poverty is a violation of human dignity.⁹ While we welcome the foundational steps taken by the Government to tackle poverty, however, the strategy's focus should not simply be about *reducing* poverty. Instead, the Government of Canada should honour its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to *eliminate* poverty by 2030.
7. The PRS includes several policies that are relevant to help lift families out of poverty specifically the following:
 - a) The Canada Child Benefit: A tax-free monthly benefit to help families with the cost of raising children¹⁰

⁵ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html>.

⁶ The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Department of Justice - <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/fl-lf/divorce/crc-crde/conv2a.html>

⁷ United Nations. (2012, December 6). Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth Periodic Report of Canada. Retrieved from

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4&Lang=En

⁸ Social Development Canada. (2018, October 15). Government of Canada. Retrieved from

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- b) The First Nations Child and Family Services Program: A program to increase the safety and well-being of First Nations children and families on reserve.¹¹
 - c) The Early Learning and Childcare Program: Investments into affordable childcare spaces across the country through the Early Learning and Child Care Framework.¹²
 - d) The First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative: \$29.4 million in Government spending to improve childcare facilities on reserve and in Inuit communities that are in need of urgent repairs and/or renovations.¹³
 - e) Bill C-78: proposes amendments to certain family law processes and helping families obtain fair and accurate family support.¹⁴
 - f) The EI Special Benefit: Up to 35 weeks of benefits to allow for the care of critically ill children.¹⁵
8. In every Canadian province and territory, except Quebec, children are more likely than adults to live in poverty.¹⁶ While the policies listed above are positive steps towards helping low income families and children, the eradication of child poverty will require more than a patchwork of policies.

Recommendation

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPS AND IMPLEMENTS A PLAN TO ERADICATE CHILD POVERTY BY 2030.

I. Gender-Based Plus Analysis

9. The socio-economic factors that contribute to the existence and persistence of child poverty in Canada underscore the need for a child poverty eradication plan that is developed, implemented and reviewed using a Gender-Based Plus Analysis (GBA+). GBA+ undertakes an assessment of how diverse communities of women, men and non-binary people may experience the effects of policies, programs and initiatives.¹⁷
10. For instance, children six-years-old and younger are most likely to be impacted by the consequences of living in a low-income household. Mothers of newborn children often earn lower incomes the first few years after childbirth.¹⁸ Moreover, children in lone-

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Campaign 2000. (2018). 2018 Report Cards on Child and Family Poverty. Retrieved from <https://campaign2000.ca/1106-2/>

¹⁷ Status of Women Canada. What is GBA+? (2018, December 4). Retrieved from <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/index-en.html>

¹⁸ Statistics Canada. Census in Brief: Children living in low-income households. (2017, September 13). Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016012/98-200-x2016012-eng.cfm>

parent households are more likely to live in poverty than those living with two parents. Children living with lone mothers are more likely to live in poverty than those who primarily reside with lone fathers.¹⁹

11. The Federal Government states that the PRS was developed using GBA+.²⁰ However, the elements of the PRS most relevant to GBA+ are primarily mechanisms to monitor “...various dimensions of poverty...”. This mechanism weighs who is most at risk of poverty and aims to improve the understanding of the barriers faced by marginalized communities who are disproportionately impacted by poverty.²¹ For example, the Federal Government has created a Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Statistics at Statistics Canada...[to] help track the Government’s progress towards a more equal society. [T]he Centre will maintain a public-facing GBA+ data hub to support evidence-based policy development and decision-making...”.²²

12. Regarding tangible GBA+-based programs and spending, the Government has committed to directing 33% of its investments within the National Housing Strategy to projects that meet the needs of women and girls; and to increase funding in order to improve services that aim to improve maternal and child health for First Nations and Inuit communities.²³

13. Currently, GBA+ is only a consideration for Federal Public Servants,

“GBA+ helps to ensure that the development of policies, programs and legislation includes the consideration of differential impacts on diverse groups of women and men. In 2015, the federal Government renewed its commitment to GBA+ by mandating the Minister of Status of Women to ensure that government policy, legislation, and regulations are sensitive to the different impacts that decisions have on men and women.”²⁴

14. GBA+ has the potential to identify and break down barriers that contribute to poverty for marginalized groups and individuals, including but not limited to, Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S, and migrant communities. The impact of not strengthening GBA+ tool is clear: children and families who exist on the margins of Canada’s social,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Supra* note 8.

²¹ *Supra* note 8.

²² *Supra* note 8.

²³ *Supra* note 8.

²⁴ Auditor General of Canada. Status of Women Canada, Privy Council Office and Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat Action Plan (2016-2020) Audit of Gender-based Analysis (2015). Retrieved from <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acsc/plan-action-2016-en.PDF>

economic, political, cultural and financial institutions are living without dignity. It is not enough to state that GBA+ was considered while developing the PRS, instead, GBA+ must be applied in order to ensure that the PRS lifts everyone out of poverty.

Recommendations

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

- A) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A CHILD POVERTY ERADICATION STRATEGY USING GBA+;
- B) THAT GBA+ IS ADDED TO THE *POVERTY REDUCTION ACT*, AS A REQUIRED DETERMINANT OF HOW ANY POVERTY-RELATED POLICY IS DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED;
- C) THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONSULT WITH, AND TAKE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF WOMEN, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, LGBTQ2S+ PEOPLES, RACIALIZED PEOPLES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO STRENGTHEN GBA+;
- D) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S CONSIDERATION, USE OR LACK THEREOF, OF GBA+ IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND/OR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES IS TRANSPARENT.

II. Measuring Child Poverty

15. As part of the PRS the Federal Government established the Market Basket Measure (MBM) as Canada's Official Poverty Line. This was later entrenched in legislation in June 2019 in the *Poverty Reduction Act* (the *Act*).²⁵ The *Act* also mandates Statistics Canada (Stats Can) to review the MBM on a regular basis "to ensure that it reflects the up-to-date cost of a basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living in Canada."²⁶
16. On February 24th, 2020 Stats Can released a Report on the second comprehensive review of the MBM proposing updates to the methodology used to calculate MBM thresholds and subsequently update estimates of those living in poverty in Canada.²⁷ The updated measure is schedule to be established in June 2020.²⁸
17. Despite these improvements, the MBM still falls short of being an adequate or appropriate official measure of poverty for Canada. The most glaring shortcoming of the MBM is that these measurements are unavailable for people living on reserves, in the

²⁵ *Poverty Reduction Act* SC 2018, c 27.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Statistics Canada. Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure (2020 February 24). Retrieved at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/75F0002M2020002>

²⁸ *Ibid.*

territories, or in remote communities where individuals are experiencing highly disproportionate rates of poverty, food insecurity, and core housing needs.²⁹

18. Recognizing these shortcomings, Stats Can is working with the territories to develop custom MBM thresholds for these regions. In addition, the federal government has committed to consult with Indigenous peoples in order to identify and co-develop indicators of poverty and well-being, including non-income-based measures of poverty.³⁰ However, there is no set timeline for this process and questions remain as to how these measures will track Canada's progress in eradicating poverty.

19. In addition to these critical gaps in MBM thresholds, and despite the commitment to update thresholds regularly, the estimated cost of living used for the MBM will always lag at least two years behind real costs. This was made glaringly evident during the last update of the cost of shelter, for example, as the financialization of the housing market pushes rental rates up far beyond what inflation alone could account for.³¹ Furthermore, there will always be questions as to who decides what is considered to constitute a "modest, basic standard of living" (i.e. what is included in the basket) and what is added or omitted from estimates of disposable income.

20. It is critical to note that the MBM takes into account existing government transfers, benefits, and subsidies in determining disposable income and tells us how many people are able to afford the "basket" *post-interventions*. Statisticians have been adamant that the MBM *should not be used* to determine people's eligibility for social programs or benefits. Unfortunately, many anti-poverty advocates are concerned that provinces and municipalities have already been adopting the MBM as an eligibility threshold, given its status as Canada's Official Poverty Line.

21. Compared to other measures of low-income, MBM estimates of poverty rates remain significantly lower, even with the updated thresholds. Concerns that the MBM continues to under-report the incidence of poverty in Canada and overestimate progress in reducing poverty have been voiced by several anti-poverty organizations, leading them to call for multiple targets to be tied to other indicators such as the Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).³²

²⁹ Andrew Heisz. Interpreting low-income statistics for the on-reserve and territorial populations using Census and National Household Survey data (2019 April 16). Retrieved at:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2019001-eng.htm>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Djidel, S., Gustajtis, B., Heisz, A.; Lam, K., McDermott, S. Towards an update of the Market Basket (2019 December 6). Retrieved at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/75F0002M2019013>

³² Campaign 2000. Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy Brief: Measuring Poverty, Meeting Targets. (2017 May 9) Retrieved at: <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/May9-Campaign-2000-Measurement-Brief-Canadian-Poverty-Reduction-Strategy-Teleconference-.pdf>

22. In comparison to the MBM, the LIM-AT "...is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted after-tax income of households observed at the person level, where 'adjusted' indicates that a household's needs are taken into account."³³ A household is deemed to be low income if its income after tax "...is less than half of the median after-tax income of all households in Canada..."³⁴ The advantages of using the LIM-AT measure of poverty include that it is calculated yearly, its comprehensive, it adjusted based on household size, and it is used as a measurement of poverty in a variety of jurisdictions.³⁵ There are some limitations with this measurement, particularly, because it uses a national standard, it can fail to account for cost of living variances between regions and communities.³⁶ Despite limitations with the LIM-AT measurement, we believe it is the best measurement and that it can be supplemented with the MBM.

Recommendations

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

- A) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AMEND THE POVERTY REDUCTION ACT TO INCLUDE A TIMELINE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MBM MEASURES FOR ON-RESERVE AND REMOTE COMMUNITIES;**
- B) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AMEND THE POVERTY REDUCTION ACT TO ADOPT THE LIM-AT AS CANADA'S OFFICIAL POVERTY MEASUREMENT; AND,**
- C) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORK WITH TERRITORIAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE MBM IS NOT USED TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE.**

The Canada Child Benefit

55. In 2016, the federal government introduced the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). Its aim is to provide essential income support to families living in Canada. The benefit helps low- and middle-income families with the cost of raising children. According to the federal government the CCB aims to lift tens of thousands of children out of poverty.

56. Although the CCB benefits some children it broadens the gap between others. Take for example, the eligibility for the CCB is immigration status. This means that parents who have not regularized immigration status are not eligible to receive the CCB for their children.

³³ Statistics Canada. Low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT) (2011). Retrieved from: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/dict/fam021-eng.cfm>

³⁴ Simcoe Muskoka Health Stats. Low Income Measure (LIM) (n.d). Retrieved at: [http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/determinants-of-health/socioeconomic-characteristics/income/low-income-measure-\(lim\)](http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/topics/determinants-of-health/socioeconomic-characteristics/income/low-income-measure-(lim))

³⁵ *Supra* note 32.

³⁶ *Supra* note 32.

57. In Canada, non-permanent residents have a poverty rate of 42.9% compared to 14.2% for the general population.³⁷ Children of non-permanent residents are the most in need of financial support, yet, because of their status, these families are not eligible to collect the CCB, despite the fact that they reside in Canada. Non-permanent residents are required, by law, to contribute to the tax system, yet they are ineligible from collecting the benefits the tax-system creates.
58. Having a system based on immigration status is inconsistent with Canada's human rights obligations under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which requires that all children have an equal opportunity to benefit from available services without discrimination on the basis of their parent's status.³⁸
59. Immigration status should not disqualify any child from receiving benefits that could help lift them out of poverty. Canada must work to ensure that all children living in Canada receive the benefit of the CCB.
60. We understand that the South East Asian Legal Clinic and the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children will be making submissions about the Canada Child Benefit, we endorse those submissions.

Recommendation

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENSURES THAT THE CANADA CHILD BENEFIT IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL FAMILIES, REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

First Nations Children and Poverty

55. We understand that the First Nations Family and Caring Society will be making submissions regarding First Nations Children, we endorse those submissions.

Indigenous Children in Poverty

56. We understand that the Association of Canadian Friendship Centres following groups will be making submissions about Indigenous Child Poverty, we endorse those submissions.

³⁷ Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, Income Security Advocacy Centre & South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario. Pre-budget submission: House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (2018 July). Retrieved at: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/FINA/Brief/BR10006582/br-external/ChineseAndSoutheastAsianLegalClinic-e.pdf>.

³⁸ Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005). General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood. (accessed May 1, 2018). Retrieved at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f7%2fRev.1&Lang=en

Inadequate Social Assistance Rates

23. When implemented with the needs of recipients in mind, social assistance is an effective cash transfer that is concrete way to lift individuals and families out of poverty.³⁹ Over 450,000 children in Canada live in families that receive social assistance, yet, on average, the rates are far too low for families to live with dignity.⁴⁰ Across Canada, 70 per cent of households receiving social assistance are food insecure.⁴¹ In addition, since 1990, inflation has increased by 45.9 per cent, nevertheless, social assistance rates have not kept up with the costs of living faced by individuals and families.⁴² Overall, social assistance rates, as they currently are, keep recipients and their families well below the poverty line.⁴³

I. Social assistance in the territories

a) Yukon Territory (YT)

24. As of 2018, the average single parent with one child who receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in YT received \$34,003.00 annually, a couple with two children received \$50,489.00.⁴⁴ These amounts reflect a thirty-two-year all-time high for social assistance rates in YT.⁴⁵ However, the necessary income for a couple with two children who live in YK's capital, Whitehorse, was \$67,594.80 in 2018.⁴⁶ Retrieving the cost of living numbers for the other communities in YT is difficult, but due to their remote nature, it is expected to be more expensive to live in the smaller, remote communities.⁴⁷

b) North West Territories (NWT)

25. In 2016, the average single parent family that received social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in the NWT received \$32,423.00, a two-parent family

³⁹ Harding, A. (2018). *The effect of government transfer programs on low-income rates: a gender-based analysis, 1995 to 2016*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2018003-eng.pdf?st=oBFxkVoG>

⁴⁰ *Supra* note 16.

⁴¹ Falvo, N. (2017, May 9). Ten things to know about social assistance in Canada. Retrieved from <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2017/05/09/ten-things-know-social-assistance-canada/>

⁴² Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. (n.d.). Government Benefits. Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/education-training-employment/government-benefits>

⁴³ *Supra* note 16.

⁴⁴ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Yukon Territory. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/yukon-territory/>

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ CBC News. High housing, food costs drive up Whitehorse's living wage: report. (2018, October 2). Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/whitehorse-living-wage-report-1.4847943>

⁴⁷ Halliday, K. (2017, June 27). Campfire statistics on Yukon incomes and cost of living. Retrieved from <https://www.yukon-news.com/opinion/campfire-statistics-on-yukon-incomes-and-cost-of-living/>

with two children received an average of \$38,714.00.⁴⁸ These social assistance rates fall well below the needs necessary for an average family of four (two parents and two children)] to live in Yellowknife, the capital of the NWT. In 2015, it was estimated to be around \$86,029.00.⁴⁹ Although that amount was calculated five years ago, the cost of living in the NWT has only increased since then.⁵⁰

c) Nunavut (NT)

26. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in Nunavut received \$18,098.00, while a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$29,561.00.⁵¹ There is no comprehensive data available on the total cost of living in Nunavut, however reasonable inferences can be made about the difference between the cost of living and social assistance rates. As of 2019, 38 per cent of Nunavut residents receive social assistance⁵², and the rates of food insecurity are the highest in Canada, at 69 per cent.⁵³

II. Social assistance in the provinces

d) Nova Scotia (NS)

27. In 2019, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in NS received \$18,240.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$27,756.00.⁵⁴ Using the MBM threshold, a single parent single child family in NS requires \$27,046.00 to pay for their expenses. A couple with two children requires \$38,248.00 to meet their expenses.⁵⁵

e) New Brunswick (NB)

28. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in NB received \$19,978.00 and a two-parent family with

⁴⁸ Tweddle, A., Battle, K., & Torjman, S. (2017). *Canada Social Report: Welfare in Canada, 2016*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. Retrieved from https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2016.pdf

⁴⁹ Wiles, M. (2015, September 10). Yellowknife's 'living wage' is around \$20 an hour, says report. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yellowknife-s-living-wage-is-around-20-an-hour-says-report-1.3222828>

⁵⁰ Gleeson, R. (2018, January 3). High cost of living in Yellowknife and the N.W.T. still going up. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yellowknife-cost-of-living-1.4430361>

⁵¹ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Nunavut. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/nunavut/>

⁵² Bell, J. (2019, November 19). Minus housing costs, Nunavut welfare incomes look like southern Canada's. Retrieved from <https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/minus-housing-costs-nunavut-welfare-incomes-look-like-southern-canadas/>

⁵³ Nunavut Food Security Coalition .Rates. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.nunavutfoodsecurity.ca/Rates>

⁵⁴ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Nova Scotia. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/nova-scotia/>

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

two children received an average of \$26,505.00.⁵⁶ Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$25,747.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$9,907.00.⁵⁷

f) Prince Edward Island (PEI)

29. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in PEI received \$20,977.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$32,757.00.⁵⁸ Using the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs a minimum of \$27,234.00 to meet their needs, and a couple with two children need a minimum of \$38,514.00 to meet their needs.⁵⁹

g) Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)

30. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in NL received \$23,436.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$29,296.00.⁶⁰ Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$27,579.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$39,003.00.⁶¹

h) Quebec (QC)

31. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in QC received \$21,867.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$30,453.00.⁶² Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$25,493.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$36,052.00.⁶³

i) Ontario (ON)

32. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in ON received \$21,463.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$30,998.00.⁶⁴ Based on the MBM threshold, a single

⁵⁶ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: New Brunswick. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/new-brunswick/>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Prince Edward Island. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/prince-edward-island/>

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Newfoundland and Labrador. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/newfoundland-and-labrador/>

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Quebec. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/quebec/>

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Ontario. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/ontario/>

parent with one child needs \$29,991.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$42,414.00.⁶⁵

j) Manitoba (MB)

33. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in MB received \$21,764.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$29,918.00.⁶⁶ Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$26,466.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$37,428.00.⁶⁷

k) Saskatchewan (SK)

34. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in SK received \$21,087.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$29,955.00.⁶⁸ Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$27,456.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$38,829.00.⁶⁹

l) Alberta (AB)

35. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in AB received \$19,927.00, a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$29,238.00.⁷⁰ Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$29,111.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$41,170.00.⁷¹

m) British Columbia (BC)

36. In 2018, the average single parent family that receives social assistance and other federal and territorial transfers in BC received \$20,782.00 and a two-parent family with two children received an average of \$27,006.00.⁷² Based on the MBM threshold, a single parent with one child needs \$29,251.00 to meet their basic expenses, and a couple with two children needs \$41,367.00.⁷³

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Manitoba. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/manitoba/>

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Saskatchewan. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/saskatchewan/>

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Maytree. Welfare in Canada: Alberta. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/alberta/>

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Maytree. Welfare in Canada: British Columbia. (2019, November). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/british-columbia/>

⁷³ *Ibid.*

III. Effects of Federal Transfers on Social Assistance

37. While social assistance is within provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the Federal Government can and must exercise leadership to ensure that Canadian children and families can access a minimum standard of living. In 1966, the Federal Government developed a transfer program named the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP).⁷⁴ Pursuant to CAP, the Federal Government covered 50 per cent of provincial and territorial social programs, healthcare and education costs.⁷⁵

38. To receive CAP funding, the provinces and territories had to meet certain conditions. Conditions included the following:

...the prohibition of a minimum residency requirement for eligibility for welfare; the requirement that welfare systems incorporate an appeals mechanism; the requirement of a needs test to determine eligibility for financial assistance; and the maintenance and availability of records regarding the programs and services cost-shared under [CAP].⁷⁶

39. CAP conditions ensured that there were minimum, pan-Canadian standards that had to be met by recipient provinces and territories. For social assistance, a critical standard was that provinces and territories were required to provide social assistance to those “in need”. The needs-based assessment did not account for why the recipient needed welfare.⁷⁷ All that mattered was that recipients demonstrated a financial need.⁷⁸

40. Beginning in the 1990s, the Federal Government began lowering the percentage of costs it would share with the provinces and territories, eventually ending CAP altogether in 1995.⁷⁹ When CAP ended, the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments entered into the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) which was a block transfer from the Federal Government to the provinces and territories.⁸⁰

41. The CHST was then separated into the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and the Canada Social Transfer (CST).⁸¹ The CST assists provinces and territories with post-secondary

⁷⁴ Gauthier, J. (2012). *The Canada Social Transfer: Past, Present and Future Considerations*. Library of Parliament. Retrieved from https://bdp.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201248E

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Torjman, S., & Battle, K. (1995). *Can We Have National Standards?* Caledon Institute Social Policy. Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/487ENG.pdf>

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Supra* note 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

education, social assistance, social services, early childhood development and early learning and childcare.⁸²

42. The CST ushered in a period of weaker standards for the receipt of federal funds. For example, there is no longer a requirement that provinces provide social assistance to individuals in need. The Federal Government claims that the weakening of conditions provides the provinces and territories with more flexibility to meet the unique needs of their communities.⁸³ However, as the numbers show above, this has instead caused disparities in services that are critical to children in poverty, and the overall effectiveness of social assistance has been substantially weakened.⁸⁴ The over 450,000 children with families who receive social assistance in Canada deserve better.

Recommendations

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

- A) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENT HUMAN-RIGHTS BASED SERVICE DELIVERY CRITERIA THAT PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES MUST MEET TO RECEIVE FUNDING THROUGH THE CANADA SOCIAL TRANSFER;**
- B) THAT THE PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT’S ANALYSE AND ADJUST THEIR RESPECTIVE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS USING GBA+; AND,**
- C) THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDS THE CANADA SOCIAL TRANSFER ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES CAN PROVIDE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE COMMENSURATE WITH A DIGNIFIED STANDARD OF LIVING FOR RECIPIENTS.**

Housing for Low Income Families

43. Between 2019 and 2016, there was a 50 per cent increase in the number of families with children who used shelters.⁸⁵ Families with a single female parent tend to stay in shelters for longer, at an average of 50 days.⁸⁶ A report by Raising the Roof, a national organization dedicated to long-term solutions on homelessness, identified that millions of Canadians including children and their families are spending more than 50 per cent of their income on housing costs.⁸⁷
44. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity due to a variety of reasons including family violence, a lack of affordable housing, low wages, under

⁸² Department of Finance. What is the Canada Social Transfer (CST)? (2011, December 19). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/federal-transfers/canada-social-transfer.html>

⁸³ Department of Finance. History of Health and Social Transfers (2014, December 15). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/programs/federal-transfers/history-health-social-transfers.html>

⁸⁴ *Supra* note 39.

⁸⁵ Families with children swelling ranks of homeless, says Raising the Roof. (2016, February 15). Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/families-homelessness-1.3448832>

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

employment and low social assistance rates.⁸⁸ Some of the indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include unaffordable housing units, falling below the MBM poverty threshold, and experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity.⁸⁹

45. Housing insecurity has severe effects on children, including poor mental and physical development, higher risk of infectious diseases, poorer educational attainment, and dental health issues.⁹⁰ Access to safe, affordable housing is a necessary foundation for children in Canada to access their rights pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
46. In November 2017, the Federal Government released Canada's first-ever National Housing Strategy titled *Reaching Home* (the NHS).⁹¹ With the NHS, the Federal Government has undertaken to remove 530,000 families from housing need and cut chronic homelessness by 50 per cent.⁹² Further the Government recognizes that access to housing is a human right.⁹³ Finally, the NHS expressed a commitment to ensuring that housing is affordable for Canadians.⁹⁴
47. While the NHS is a step forward, particularly as a symbolic recognition of housing as a human right, there are concerns about its ability to meet one of its main goals, increasing access to affordable housing.⁹⁵
48. The Federal Government promises to build 100,000 of affordable housing units over 10 of years, but this is far too low to meet the needs of Canada's growing population.⁹⁶ In 2018, there were 37,000 new apartments built nation wide, but the demand increased by 50,000 units.⁹⁷ One of Canada's main political parties has proposed that 500,000 affordable housing units over 10 years would be more appropriate to address the dire

⁸⁸ Canadian Conservatory on Homelessness. Families with Children. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/families-children>

⁸⁹ Woolley, E. How does homelessness affect early childhood development? (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/families-children>

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Young, M. (2019, September 6). Policy Brief: National Housing Strategies. Retrieved from https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/margotyoung/policy_brief_national_housing_strategy

⁹² Employment and Social Development Canada, a Place to Call Home. Retrieved from: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/-/media/sf/project/placetocallhome/pdfs/canada-national-housing-strategy.pdf>

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Lim, J. (2019, June 18). Unclear if feds' \$55B housing strategy will lower affordable housing need: PBO. Retrieved from <https://ipolitics.ca/2019/06/18/unclear-if-feds-55b-housing-strategy-will-lower-affordable-housing-need-pbo/>

⁹⁶ Common, D., & Mancini, M. (2019, September 23). Soaring rents and house prices in Canadian cities make housing a key election issue. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/federal-election-campaigns-affordable-housing-1.5254614>

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

need for affordable housing units.⁹⁸ The Government has undertaken to invest in programs that will assist middle class individuals in purchasing homes, but these programs are not directed towards low-income families.⁹⁹

49. Further, the Federal Government is lowering rather than increasing spending on housing programs that benefit low-income families.¹⁰⁰ The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is responsible for facilitating access to affordable housing options for Canadians.¹⁰¹ The Government touted \$55 billion of investments in the NHS but the numbers work out differently than what the Federal Government is claiming.¹⁰²

50. According to the independent and non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Office¹⁰³, under the NHS federal programs that assist low-income households will see a \$325 million per year (14 per cent) reduction in spending compared to the 10 year average.¹⁰⁴ Within the Assistance for Housing Needs Portfolio, the NHS will result in a \$167 million per year (12 per cent) reduction in funding for transfers to provinces and territories.¹⁰⁵ Finally, there will be a \$175 million per year (30%) reduction in funding for federal community housing.¹⁰⁶ These reductions in spending are partially offset by \$200 million per year in new spending on rent subsidies.¹⁰⁷ Overall, it has been reported that the NHS actually only represents \$16 billion dollars in new spending directed towards housing over the next 10 years.¹⁰⁸

Youth Homelessness

51. We understand that A Way Home will be making submissions about youth homelessness, we endorse those submissions.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Segel-Brown, B. (2019). *Federal Program Spending on Housing Affordability*. Parliamentary Budget Office. Retrieved from [https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2019/Housing_Affordability/Federal Spending on Housing Affordability EN.pdf](https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2019/Housing_Affordability/Federal_Spending_on_Housing_Affordability_EN.pdf)

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Kagan, J. (2019, April 9). What Is the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation? Retrieved from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/cmhc.asp>

¹⁰² Bula, F. (2019, August 13). Experts question funding levels, rollout of federal housing announcements. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-experts-question-rollout-of-federal-housing-funds/>

¹⁰³ Parliamentary Budget Office. The PBO at a Glance. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/about--a-propos>

¹⁰⁴ *Supra* note 99.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Supra* note 102.

Recommendations

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DO THE FOLLOWING:

- A) INCREASE SPENDING IN AFFORDABLE PROGRAMS DIRECTED TOWARDS LOW INCOME FAMILIES;
- B) MAKE PUBLIC THE OUTCOMES OF THE CURRENT NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY IN LIGHT OF GBA+;
- C) WORK WITH PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES TO IMPLEMENT LAWS AND POLICIES TO LOWER THE COST OF RENTAL UNITS; AND,
- D) INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF PURPOSE-BUILT AFFORDABLE HOUSING RENTALS

Food Insecurity

- 52. Food insecurity is a severe problem in Canada. 1 in 8 households, struggle to put food on the table. This represents over 4 million Canadians, including 1.15 million children who are at risk of being food insecure.¹⁰⁹
- 53. Canadian households with children under the age of 18 have the greatest risk of experiencing food insecurity. Specifically, 1 in 6 children under the age of 18 live in food-insecure homes, which translates to 16% of all children under the age of 18.¹¹⁰

I. Food Insecurity in the North

- 54. The province of Nunavut has the highest level of food insecurity in the country with close to half of households unable to put enough food on their tables.¹¹¹ According to a 2012 Statistics Canada survey, over 62% of children living in Nunavut and 31.6% the Northwest territories live in food insecure homes.¹¹² Since 2011, food insecurity in Nunavut has only increased.¹¹³

II. Contributing factors to Canada's food insecurity problem

- 55. Food insecurity in Canadian households is closely linked to income. Low-income households are at a much higher risk of being food-insecure.¹¹⁴ But simply having a job is not enough to ensure that there is enough money to secure food, as over 60%, of food-insecure households rely on salaries and wages as their main source of income.

¹⁰⁹ Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2014). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012*. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Weber, B. (2019, May 21). Food insecurity increasing in Nunavut despite feds' program to fight hunger: study. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/5296820/food-insecurity-grew-nunavut/>

¹¹⁴ *Supra* note 109.

56. The lack of affordable housing is another major contributor to food-insecurity. Without access to affordable housing, Canadians must allocate the majority of their income to housing expenses which leaves very little to essentials such as food.¹¹⁵ Renters make up two-thirds of the food-insecure households in Canada.
57. The type of household is also a determinative to food-insecurity in Canada. Research indicates that nearly half of individuals who are unattached and living alone (or with others) have food-insecure homes. Single women represent close to 16% of lone parent families who don't have enough income to ensure that there is enough food on the table, compared to only 2% of male single parents.

III. Government responses to food Insecurity

58. The Federal Government has implemented various policies to respond to food insecurity up north and across Canada overall. Nutrition North Canada (NNC) is a subsidy program that was implemented in 2011, with the purpose of improving access to grocery items through providing subsidies to private businesses.¹¹⁶ NNC has been plagued with criticisms, and a recent study by the Canadian Medical Association has shown it to be ineffective.
59. While the spending on the program has increased from \$60 million in 2011 to \$99 million in 2018, rates of food insecurity have increased. For example, in 2010, prior to the launch of the NNC Program, food insecurity was deemed to affect 33% of families in Nunavut. In 2011, when the program was implemented, food insecurity rates jumped to 39%, and in 2014, the number increased to 46.8%.¹¹⁷
60. Some of the issues that have been identified with the program is that the Government's initial focus on subsidizing perishable foods caused the prices of non-perishable items to rise, leading to the costs of groceries remaining high for families.¹¹⁸ Another issue is that the program provides subsidies to retailers, and presumes that retailers will pass on those subsidies to consumers.¹¹⁹ Finally, in some communities there are only one or two retailers, this environment does not provide the competition necessary to give consumers meaningful choice.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵Quan, A., King, A., & Fortheringham, E. (2017). Hunger Report 2017. Retrieved from <https://feedontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Hunger-Report-2017.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Government of Canada. How Nutrition North Canada works. (2019, August 21). Retrieved from <https://www.nutritionnorthcanada.gc.ca/eng/1415538638170/1415538670874>

¹¹⁷ Dunham, J. (2019, May 21). Food insecurity in Nunavut increased after federal subsidy program: study. CTV News. Retrieved from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/food-insecurity-in-nunavut-increased-after-federal-subsidy-program-study-1.4430935?cache=yes?clipId=375756>

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Galloway, T. (2017). Canada's northern food subsidy Nutrition North Canada: a comprehensive program evaluation. *Int J Circumpolar Health*, 76(1). doi: 10.1080/22423982.2017.1279451

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

61. In August 2019, the Government announced changes to NNC, including an expansion of the items that will be covered, and increased compliance oversight through the development of a Northern-based compliance and audit review committee.¹²¹ It remains to be seen whether these steps will improve access to food for individuals and families in Northern Canada.

IV. Food Policy for Canada

62. In June 2019, the Federal Government released Canada's first-ever national food strategy named Food Policy for Canada (FPC). FPC's vision is to ensure that everyone in Canada can access "...a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious and culturally diverse food."¹²² As part of its vision, FPC has the following goals:

- a) To help Canadian communities access healthy food;
- b) To make Canadian food the top choice at home and abroad;
- c) To support food security in northern and Indigenous communities; and,
- d) To reduce food waste.

63. The goals of the FPC are laudable, but its potential impact on food insecurity remains uncertain.¹²³ The main barrier to food insecurity is financial, including the price of food and the income of consumers. A recent survey conducted by Dalhousie University suggests that 87 per cent of Canadians feel that the rising cost of food is outpacing their incomes.¹²⁴ Currently, the FPC does not include a plan to increase access to food by either lowering costs, or ensuring that families have enough to spend to purchase food.

V. The impact of the Canada Child Benefit on food insecurity

64. The Canada Child Benefit has been shown to assist food insecure low-income households in Canada.¹²⁵ In a journal article titled *Money Speaks: Reductions in severe food insecurity follow the Canada Child Benefit*, the authors described findings from their study of the CCB's impact on food insecurity in Canada. Based on their overall assessment of the program, the authors found that even a modest cash transfer to low

¹²¹ Changes and Updates to Nutrition North Canada. (2019, August 22). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2019/08/changes-and-updates-to-nutrition-north-canada.html>

¹²² Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2019, August 12). "Everyone at the Table!" Minister Bibeau highlights investments to improve access to local food as part of the Food Policy for Canada [Press release]. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2019/08/everyone-at-the-table-minister-bibeau-highlights-investments-to-improve-access-to-local-food-as-part-of-the-food-policy-for-canada.html>

¹²³ Two pieces added to national food policy: many parts still missing. (2019, June 19). Retrieved from <https://foodpolicyforcanada.info.yorku.ca/2019/06/two-pieces-added-to-national-food-policy-many-parts-still-missing/>

¹²⁴ Lao, D. (2019, December 17). Almost 9 out of 10 Canadians feel food prices are rising faster than income: survey. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/6303603/canadians-food-prices-rising-income-survey/>

¹²⁵ Brown, E. M., & Tarasuk, V. (2019). Money speaks: Reductions in severe food insecurity follow the Canada Child Benefit. *Preventative Medicine*, 129, 1–8. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.105876>

income households can make a substantive improvement to the ability of families to access food.¹²⁶

Recommendations

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

- A) THAT THE GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKES A REVIEW OF FOOD POLICY BEST PRACTICES AND USE THE SUBSEQUENT DATA TO OVERHAUL THE NUTRITION NORTH CANADA PROGRAM; AND,**
- B) THAT THE GOVERNMENT BUILDS ON THE SUCCESS OF THE CANADA CHILD BENEFIT IN ASSISTING LOW INCOME FAMILIES BY DEVELOPING CASH TRANSFERS TARGETED TOWARDS IMPROVING ACCESS TO FOOD.**

Access to Clean Drinking Water

57. In 2002, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment 15 on the right to water. Article I.1 states that "The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights". Comment No. 15 also defined the right to water as the right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.¹²⁷
58. Canada is considered one of the most fresh water-rich countries in the world.¹²⁸ The province of Ontario, which houses the Great Lakes, shares 18% of the world's fresh water surface with the US.¹²⁹ Access to safe, affordable and sufficient, drinking water is accessible to most non-Indigenous people in Canada, however the same is not true for many Indigenous peoples living in Canada. In fact, studies indicate that over 100 First Nations communities currently do not have access to clean drinking water.¹³⁰
59. Currently, 73% of First nation community water systems have medium to high risk contamination.¹³¹ With each single water advisory, as many as 5000 individuals lack access to safe, and clean drinking water. For some communities, water advisories date back over 20 years, for example the Shoal Lake 40 First Nation has been under water advisory since 1995.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *General Comment No. 15. The right to water. UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, November 2002.*

¹²⁸ Natural Resources Canada. Water. (2017, October 30). Retrieved from <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/earth-sciences/geography/atlas-canada/selected-thematic-maps/16888>

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch. Make it Safe Canada's Obligation to End the First Nations Water Crisis. (2016, June 7). Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/06/07/make-it-safe/canadas-obligation-end-first-nations-water-crisis>

¹³⁰ David Suzuki Foundation. Drinking Water Advisories. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://david Suzuki.org/project/drinking-water-advisories/>

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

60. A lack of access to clean drinking water has been shown to have serious negative impacts on children, families and communities.¹³² Issues can range from health issues, including gastrointestinal illnesses, increased risk of cancer and mental illness, to strain in relationships and breakdown in community functioning.¹³³
61. The Canadian government has committed to ending all long-term drinking water advisories by 2021. Although the government has taken some steps to alleviate the issue, many are simply Band-Aid solutions that result in further short-term advisories. The lack of safe and clean drinking water in First Nations communities is a direct violation of the UN-recognized human rights to safe water.¹³⁴ Canada needs to make more significant strides to ensure that they fulfil its commitment.
62. We understand that Human Rights Watch and Save the Children will be making submissions on access to water in Northern Ontario, we endorse those submissions.

Recommendation

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPS AND IMPLEMENTS A CLEAN WATER STRATEGY WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES THAT WILL ENSURE EVERYONE IN CANADA HAS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER.

Childcare

63. We understand that Child Care Now will be making submissions about Childcare, we endorse those submissions.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

64. We understand that the Native Women's Association of Canada will be making submissions about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and MMIWG, we endorse those submissions.

¹³² Bharadwaj, L., & Bradford, L. (n.d.). Indigenous Water Poverty: Impacts Beyond Physical Health. Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://openpress.usask.ca/northernhealthcare/chapter/chapter-4-indigenous-water-poverty-impacts-beyond-physical-health/>

¹³³ Human Rights Watch. Canada: Water Crisis Puts First Nations Families at Risk. (2016, June 7). Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/07/canada-water-crisis-puts-first-nations-families-risk>

¹³⁴ The Council of Canadians. Safe Water for First Nations. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2020, from <https://canadians.org/fn-water>