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“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is **just one question**.

Tips to guide your way

Each topic includes boxes of information you can use for quick reference ...



This box suggests questions to ask your candidates



This box highlights the main issues of the topic



This box provides more information and links to supporting articles

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Child Poverty

Many families with children are living on incomes that fall well below the poverty line set by Statistics Canada. According to the most recent report card on child poverty in Canada, released by Campaign 2000 in November 2007, almost one child out of every six lives in poverty. Child poverty is unacceptable when we live in a country with so many resources. Tax cuts, like the recent GST reduction, mean we reduce our ability to fund government programs that help children. We can choose to elect a government who will pool our resources and use them to lift children out of poverty.

Government programs like the GST credit, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and Employment Insurance help reduce the rate of child and family poverty. Statistics Canada data from 2005 shows, with government transfer programs calculated in, the poverty rate is 16.8%. But if government transfers were taken away, the poverty rate would be as high as 26%. When we pool our money together through the tax system to allow for increased social spending, we can use these important government transfers to help those families that are in need.

The recent GST tax cut was estimated to reduce federal tax revenues by \$5.3 billion in 2007. The amount of money needed to bring all poor families with children up to the low-income line was approximately \$5.7 billion in 2003. By pooling our resources through the tax system into social programs, we could address problems that are the consequences of poverty, such as social exclusion, hunger, poor health, and homelessness. Canada as a whole can benefit when

we alleviate the societal impacts of poverty. Government transfers to low-income families have an enormous impact on reducing the poverty rate. Ask your local candidate how they will fight and end child poverty in Canada.

For More Information:

First Call BC
www.firstcallbc.org

Campaign 2000
www.campaign2000.ca

Coalition for the Rights of Children
www.rightsofchildren.ca

SPARC BC
www.sparc.bc.ca

Sources

Campaign 2000. 2007 November. *2007 report card on child and family poverty in Canada*. <http://www.campaign2000.ca/rc/> (12 Sept.2008)

Child Poverty: Key Points & Questions

Despite continued economic growth, Canada's record on child poverty is worse now than it was in 1989, when the House of Commons unanimously resolved to "achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000."

According to the most recent report card on child poverty in Canada, released by Campaign 2000 in November 2006, almost one child out of every six in Canada live in poverty.

Government transfers are key in helping families stay above the poverty line



What is your plan to ensure that child poverty in Canada is eradicated?

How will your party ensure that there is public funding to continue important services and programs that serve children and families?

Affordable Housing

The Canadian federal government has drastically reduced its role in building social housing and market rental housing since the 1980s. Because housing costs are rising across the country, and incomes are not keeping pace with the cost of living, housing insecurity is a major concern for a large portion of the population. In 2006, 1.5 million renters in Canada spent 30% or more of their household income on shelter. The federal government could choose to increase and maintain affordable housing for Canadians through a comprehensive national housing strategy and commit funding that matches pre-1980s levels.

The federal government cancelled all funding for new non-profit and co-op housing in 1993 and capped national social housing spending at \$2 billion a year. With promises of an additional \$1 billion for social housing under the National Homelessness Initiative of 1999, by 2006, only \$234 million had been spent. The introduction of Bill C-48 in 2005 did see a new, one-time allocation of \$1.4 billion to the May 2006 budget for affordable housing. However, with emergency shelters, transition housing, income supports for low-income families, and supportive housing units all needing sustainable funding, it is no wonder that the housing crisis continues to escalate. In 2001, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) identified 15.8% of Canadian households as being in “core need”. In 2008, four major cities in Canada (Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, and Calgary) identified close to a 20% increase in their homeless populations since 2005.

The federal government can choose to mitigate the affordable housing crisis by keeping and increasing programs like the Federal Homelessness Strategy, Federal Housing Repair Program, and the Federal Affordable Housing Initiative. They can also choose to reverse the policy decision of 1996 that locks in a rapidly decreasing annual housing funding cut, establish a minister responsible for housing, and adopt a comprehensive and fully funded national housing program. We can choose to elect a federal government that understands the importance of increasing affordable housing for Canadians. Ask your local candidate about their position on affordable housing.

For More Information:

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
www.chra-achru.ca

Wellesley Institute
www.wellesleyinstitute.com

Raising the Roof
www.raisingtheroof.org

Sources

C-48 is the amendment to the federal budget that added a further \$4.6 billion in social spending, including up to \$1.6 billion for affordable housing. See http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Parl=38&Ses=1&Mode=1&Pub=Bill&Doc=C-48_4&File=24 for the bill itself.

Wellesley Institute. 2008 Feb. *National Housing Report Card*. <http://wellesleyinstitute.com/files/winationalhousingreportcard.pdf> (1 Sept. 2008).

Statistics Canada. 2006 June 6. *Changing patterns in Canadian homeownership and shelter costs, 2006 census*. www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/shelter/pdf/97-554-XIE2006001.pdf (1 Sept. 2008).

Affordable Housing: Key Points & Questions

Funding for major federal housing and homelessness programs will expire in fiscal 2008.

Very little new affordable housing stock is being built and there has been an erosion of existing market rental housing stock through conversion, demolition and redevelopment.

Incomes are not keeping pace with rising housing costs, leaving many people at risk of homelessness.



Will your party extend existing federal housing and homelessness programs beyond 2009?

What role does the federal government play in addressing the housing affordability crisis in Canada?

How will you ensure a range of housing options exist for people on fixed incomes?

Child Care

Canadian families with children deserve to have access to high quality child care and early childhood education. Lack of child care spaces and high child care costs are putting many families in a desperate situation, especially in cases where the household is run by a single parent, or caregivers are balancing more than one job to make ends meet. A universal child care system should be a priority for the federal government. By guaranteeing access to quality child care, the federal government can choose to help all children get a fair start by providing the foundations of life long learning, while also supporting parents in their efforts to seek and maintain employment.

The Conservative government introduced the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) in 2006. The UCCB provides all families with \$100 per month per child under the age of 6 years (before taxes). This federal benefit is provided to all families regardless of their income. While this benefit does assist in partially covering the cost of child care, it does nothing to address the shortage of child care spaces, especially quality child care.

In 2007, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit reported only 398,197 regulated child care spaces existed for children from 0 to 5 years in Canada. The report also showed that 2006 to 2007 had the smallest increase in the number of licensed child care spaces in many years. As the number of families with both parents working increases, it is likely more families will be seeking child care arrangements outside of the home. In 2005, 73% of mothers with children ages 3 to 5 years participated in the workforce, up from 68% in 1995.

Sources

Childcare Resource and Research Unit. 2007. *Child care space statistics 2007*. <http://childcarecanada.org/pubs/other/spaces/index.html> (1 Sept. 2008).

While having more money in an individual family's pocket is nice, choosing to pool our resources in order to create a universal child care system allows access to quality child care for all families. The federal government can choose to listen to the voices that are calling for a publicly funded national child care system, developed in partnership with the provincial governments, and with input from Canadian families. We can choose to elect a federal government that recognizes this need, and recognizes national child care as an opportunity to benefit the country.

For More Information:

Childcare Resource and Research Unit
www.childcarecanada.org

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
<http://ccaac.ca>

Code Blue for Child Care
www.buildchildcare.ca

Child Care: Key Points & Questions

Canadian families are struggling to find affordable, quality child care.

Even with decreasing numbers of children across the country, the number of full and part-time centre-based child care spaces only provides coverage for 19.3% of Canada's children under the age of six years.



How do you think the federal government can best improve access to quality child care for families with children?

Do you support a national publicly funded universal child care system?

Crime & Public Safety

Canadians express concern about public safety. They demand that crime in their communities be prevented or at least reduced. They want vigorous enforcement, meaningful sentences, and criminals off their streets. But all the time and extra resources spent on policing, courts, and correctional officers have not significantly decreased crime rates or fear of crime. In 2004, there were almost 500,000 sexual assaults. In 2006, youth crime rose 3%, with more violent crimes being committed. Canada is falling behind other western nations in ensuring safe communities. The federal government can choose to invest more in solving social problems that often become the root causes of crime. A four-pronged approach using prevention, policing, courts, and corrections would be an effective way to tackle crime.

The root causes of crime and victimization are not hard to identify; they include poverty, lack of affordable housing, unfinished education, low literacy, unemployment, family violence, and substance abuse. Everyone benefits when governments invest in improving community well-being. Police alone cannot prevent crime and victimization: law enforcement has to be balanced with strong social programs. The most effective crime prevention strategies to meet a community's needs are those developed by the community members themselves. Community cohesion and collaboration is key. In 2004, Regina Police reported a 28% drop in car theft in two years by bringing together all stakeholders to develop a community strategy.

Sources

Correctional Service of Canada. 2005 April. *The safe return of offenders to the community statistical overview April 2005*. http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rsrch/safe_return2005/sr2005-eng.shtml (1 Sept. 2008).

Canadian Council on Social Development. (2008). Preventing crime through social development website. <http://www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd/index.htm> (1 Sept. 2008).

Academic research and the experience of Canadian communities prove that it is more efficient and cost effective to prevent crime than respond to it. How to prevent crime is well known. Solving social problems makes communities safer places to live, work, and raise families. Providing social infrastructure, such as education, parent support services, and youth centres, in addition to eradicating poverty and housing insecurity is important. Correctional Services Canada reported, in 2003, that inmates who completed Grade 10 had a 21% decrease in re-admission to prison.

What is needed is the four-pronged approach of prevention, then policing, courts and corrections. Governments should not only pass legislation to tackle crime, but also show leadership in attacking the multiple causes of crime. We can choose a government that will lead a balanced approach to crime reduction and use resources wisely to alleviate the systemic social problems that impact the health and safety of Canadians.

For More Information:

Canadian Council on Social Development
www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd

Institute for the Prevention of Crime
www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng

Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police
www.cacp.ca

Crime & Public Safety: Key Points & Questions

Canada is falling behind other western nations in ensuring safe communities.

Law enforcement needs to be balanced with strong social programs
in order to effectively reduce crime.

The multiple causes of crime need to be tackled with prevention strategies that
meet a community's needs.



**What kind of change would you bring to the
federal law enforcement departments?**

**How would you support the creation of
community-based partnerships to combat
crime and victimization?**

**What would you do to prevent kids from
getting involved in crime?**

Community & Social Infrastructure

Urban populations are growing rapidly both in size and diversity. Poverty is concentrating in particular communities. Poverty intensifies social exclusion, while growth in density and diversity change the framework for social interaction. The social infrastructure of a community is vital in ensuring social cohesion by addressing human needs, such as health care, recreation, housing, cultural experience, learning, and spaces for gathering and friendship building. Inadequate or inappropriate social infrastructure can be detrimental to communities, perhaps even deadly. However, providing sustainable social infrastructure requires investment from municipal, provincial, and federal levels. The federal government can choose to revitalize public investment in social infrastructure by creating a new, national, collaborative plan that involves all three levels of government.

Attention to our outdated social infrastructure must be as important to the next government as our national highways, bridges, and buildings—what is traditionally referred to as infrastructure. The new reality of urban poverty has refocused our attention on the importance of place. We need to understand neighbourhoods better and the impact they have on the life chances of the children and families who live there. Most importantly, we need relevant, reliable, and timely data on social conditions and social change.

Affordable social data need to be made available to social and community planners through Statistics Canada and other federal departments. More and better social data are needed to meet local planning needs and priorities. A comprehensive plan for change among all three levels of

government is important. Local governments provide over 60% of public services, but they receive only 8 cents on every tax dollar. This amount is not sufficient to properly create infrastructure that can deal with increasingly complex social problems. Transportation systems, for example, that make our communities livable can't just be funded locally. The federal government can choose to change the current level and structure of community investment. We can choose a national leader who believes in grassroots community development, and who envisions how all levels of government could co-operate to equip neighbourhoods with the social infrastructure they need to build happy and healthy communities.

For More Information:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
www.fcm.ca/english/view.asp?x=477

Canadian Council on Social Development
Urban Poverty Project 2007
www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/upp/

Infrastructure Canada, Government of Canada
www.infrastructure.gc.ca

Sources

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. 2007. *Quality of life reporting system reports*. <http://www.fcm.ca/english/View.asp?mp=477&x=767>. (1 Sept. 2008).

Infrastructure Canada. 2006 June. *From restless communities to resilient places: building a stronger future for all Canadians*. www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eaccc-ccevc/alt_formats/pdf/eaccc_rep_ccevc_rap_e.pdf http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/eaccc-ccevc/rep-rap/index_f.shtml

Community & Social Infrastructure: Key Points & Questions

Canada is urbanizing rapidly, with growing ethno-cultural diversity and widening income gaps between rich and poor.

The growth in density and diversity requires investment in new and expanded social infrastructure.

Municipalities need access to a wide variety of data to understand the changes they are experiencing and to put in place the policies and services needed to keep communities healthy and just.



Will your party advocate for a national strategy on social and community infrastructure to address the new social realities of the 21st Century?

What is your party doing to ensure Statistics Canada has the appropriate resources and guidance to provide cities and communities with the data they need?

Youth in Canada

Canada's youth are growing up in a complex environment. There are many opportunities for employment as the baby boomer generation begins to retire; yet we face an unstable economy, coupled with rising student debt, and rising living costs. The youth of today are also susceptible to many health problems, such as the obesity epidemic. To ensure that the youth of today have a bright future, the government needs to invest in policies and programs that decrease the burden of student debt, increase access to post-secondary education, improve social inclusion among youth, and engage youth politically and socially.

Post-secondary education is a requirement for almost any job these days. However, long waiting lists and expensive tuition fees are preventing many youth from going on to more training after high school. While participation is on the rise, close to one in seven students drop out, which leaves them with fewer options, lower incomes, and decreased job satisfaction. The cost of post-secondary studies is rising and the prevalence and depth of student debt continues to be a problem. While youth employment growth is healthy, young people are faced with low-wage, low-skill jobs that provide limited (if any) benefits and offer part-time, temporary, or contract work with unstable and unpredictable schedules and little opportunity for advancement.

Sources

Human Resources and Social Development Canada/Statistics Canada. 2007. *Canadian Longitudinal Youth in Transition Survey*. <http://www.pisa.gc.ca/yits.shtml> (1 Sept. 2008).

Canadian Council on Social Development. (2006). *The Progress of Canada's Children and Youth 2006*. <http://www.ccsd.ca/pccy/2006> (1 Sept. 2008).

There are also some troubling trends in the rates of physical activity, obesity, asthma, and sexually transmitted infections among youth. The number of young people who are overweight/obese has jumped from 15% to 26% in the past 25 years. Young people are also more likely than adults to feel their health care needs are going unmet.

Evidence shows political and societal disengagement among Canada's youth as younger generations are less engaged in a number of ways—than older Canadians were at their age particularly in political membership, knowledge, and voting.

The government can choose to decrease the burden of student debt and reform the financial aid system so that all qualified individuals can access post-secondary education. They need to ensure youth can access stable jobs that pay a living wage and that youth are given useful leadership roles. We can choose a government that views youth engagement as a priority for the present and the future.

For More Information:

National Youth in Care Network
www.youthincare.ca

Canadian Federation of Students
www.cfs-fcee.ca

Inclusive Cities Canada
www.inclusivecities.ca

The Progress of Canada's Children & Youth
www.ccsd.ca/pccy/2006

Youth in Canada: Key Points & Questions

Major issues affecting young Canadians today include student debt, lack of job security, and health concerns.

Political engagement and knowledge of the political system is low among youth.



How will you make post-secondary education more accessible and address student debt?

What would you do to help curb the trend of low-wage and unstable jobs for youth?

What steps will you take to include youth in federal decisions and policies that affect their lives?

Income Security for Seniors

As a growing proportion of the population ages, income security for seniors is quickly becoming a major issue. Over the last few decades, the overall poverty rate of seniors has declined, but the federal government could choose to make several policy changes in order to improve the financial security of seniors.

Seniors who retire without an employer pension often find themselves in precarious financial circumstances. Old Age Security (OAS) pays about \$6,000 per year; Canada Pension Plan (CPP) retirement benefits are a maximum of \$10,000 and an average of \$5,700; and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) pays a maximum of \$7,600 for a single person. A typical income for a senior who is completely dependent on public pensions hovers around \$15,000. Eighty percent have an income below \$20,000.

About half of Canadian seniors rely on public pensions because they have no employer pension. Unfortunately, the GIS is reduced when seniors receive their CPP or RRSP funds, so they get little benefit from even modest savings. This problem will get worse because pension coverage is declining in the private sector.

Over the last 24 years, OAS has not been increased (except for cost of living). GIS was increased about \$36 per month (\$432 per year) starting in 2005. Recent changes in the tax system, such as increases to the age credit and pension-income splitting are of no value to the poorest of seniors.

Sources

Service Canada. (2008 Dec.). *Income security programs information card October - December 2008*. <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/isp/statistics/rates/octdec08.shtml> (1 Sept. 2008).

Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions. (2007). *Occupational Pension Plan Coverage in Ontario*. <http://www.pensionreview.on.ca/english/summaries/1ShillingtonCoverage.html> (1 Sept. 2008).

The federal government can choose to assist the poorest of seniors through some straightforward solutions, such as allowing seniors to spend some of their RRSPs without reducing their GIS, increasing GIS benefits, retroactively paying full benefits for CPP when seniors apply late, and ensuring that each senior is receiving all the benefits they are entitled to; OAS, GIS and CPP.

We can choose to elect a candidate that has a plan to address issues affecting seniors. Reduced restrictions on RRSP spending and increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement will give seniors more income security so they are better able to adequately support themselves as they age.

For More Information:

National Seniors Council
www.seniorscouncil.gc.ca

Canadian Social Research Links
www.canadiansocialresearch.net/seniors.htm

Advocacy Centre for the Elderly
www.advocacycentreelderly.org

Income Security for Seniors: Key Points & Questions

Many seniors live in poverty due to inadequate resources to cover their living costs.

Despite some increased out-reach by government, tens of thousands of poor seniors, overwhelmingly women, are not receiving their entitled benefits.



What will your party do to ensure that seniors dependent on the public system are financially secure?

How does your party plan to engage seniors on issues that matter to them?

How will your party make sure that the public pension plan is sustainable for the future?

Women's Economic Security

Women in Canada continue to struggle for economic security. Equity in the labour market and decreased social spending are two issues that are challenging the quality of life of women in Canada. The federal government can choose to pay attention to, and adjust, pay equity laws and social spending in order to ensure equality and economic security for women in Canada.

Of women under 65 living on their own, 35% live in poverty. Cuts to social spending, changes to the Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, and ineffective pay equity laws have all had serious impacts on the economic status of women, especially on single parents. Many women with children are living in poverty because women are earning less than men and child care costs are very high. In 2004, 38% of women tax filers earned too little to pay income tax. The \$100 per month taxable childcare benefit introduced in 2006 does not do much to improve the situation of those who do not make enough to qualify.

Working women are missing out on EI benefits; only one third are eligible for benefits in the event of unemployment. Thirty-three percent of unemployed women received regular benefits in 2001 compared with 44% of unemployed men. This difference is mostly due to restrictions that prevent part-time, seasonal and low-income workers from collecting EI. Women who work part-time because they have children at home are put in a very precarious position.

Sources

Statistics Canada. 2005. *Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report*, Fifth Edition.

Government of Canada Pay Equity Task Force website. <http://www.justice.gc.ca/payequal.html>

Jackson, A. 2003. *Is Work Working for Women? Canadian Labour Congress: Research Paper 22*.

A Commitment to Training and Employment for Women. 2007 Dec. *Women in the Canadian Labour Market*. http://www.actew.org/projects/pwpsite/snapshots/canadian_women.html

Women in Canada are still not being treated equally in the labour market. Women working full-time in Canada earned \$71 for every \$100 earned by men working full-time in 2003. Yet the federal government chose not to introduce legislation to strengthen pay equity laws, despite the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force.

The federal government can choose to make changes to pay equity laws to ensure that women get equal pay for equal work. They can also choose to keep, and increase social supports that will help to keep women employed, and, in the event of unemployment, keep them from falling below the poverty line. We can choose to elect a government that is committed to equality, equity, and economic security for women.

For more information:

Government of Canada's Pay Equity Task Force
www.justice.gc.ca/payequal.html

Canadian Labour Congress
canadianlabour.ca/index.php/pay_equity

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund
www.leaf.ca

Women's Economic Security: Key Points & Questions

Cuts to social spending have had a negative impact on women, especially single parent households.

Thirty-five percent of women under 65 living on their own live in poverty.

Tax breaks are not benefiting those most in need, and are leaving too little for future public investment.



Would your party introduce new pay equity legislation to ensure that women are paid the same as men for work of equal value?

What would your party do to ensure that women who pay into the EI system are eligible for benefits if they lose their jobs?

What would your party do to ensure that women who need access to skills training can get it regardless of whether or not they're eligible for EI?

Poverty Reduction

The Government of Canada made a commitment in 2000 to reduce poverty in Canada as part of the UN Millennium Development Goals. But in 2008, almost five million Canadians are living in poverty. After 10 years of economic boom, contract jobs are more readily found than permanent employment, and wages are stubbornly stagnant for many workers. Every month, 770,000 people visit food banks. We can choose to elect a government that has a clear plan for poverty reduction in Canada. A plan that is comprehensive and balanced, recognizing that poverty is a complex problem needing a multi-pronged approach.

Although unemployment is at a 33 year low, poverty rates are historically high. More people are struggling to meet basic needs – paying for shelter, food and transit, while putting aside a little for their own or their children’s education, or preparing for retirement. Suddenly, having a job is not a guarantee to security because the cost of living is rapidly rising, and the social safety net is disappearing. Visible minorities, newcomers, aboriginals, the disabled, and single mothers continue to have the highest rates of poverty.

Those who are working still lack job security, as 4 in 10 jobs are impermanent and part-time forms of work. People lack housing security, as affordable housing is increasingly hard to find in big and small cities alike. Canada needs a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that not only works to lift up those who currently live in poverty, but that also prevents people from getting there in the first place. Four provinces (Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador,

Nova Scotia and Ontario) have committed to a poverty reduction strategy. Two federal parties (the Liberals and the NDP) have developed platforms on poverty reduction, and the Conservatives introduced a small working income tax benefit in the last federal budget. Canada needs a federal government that will take leadership on addressing the root causes of poverty, such as raising minimum wages, reducing the reliance on temporary workers, introducing adequate income supports (like unemployment insurance when people can’t work) investing in policies or projects that provide more affordable housing options, creating better child care options, and allocating funding for cheaper post-secondary education. We can choose to elect a government that understands the need for a poverty reduction plan. Ask you local candidate what their plans are to help reduce poverty in Canada.

For More Information:

Make Poverty History
www.makepovertyhistory.org

The Growing Gap
www.growinggap.ca

Poverty Watch Ontario
www.povertywatchontario.ca

Sources

Make Poverty History. 2008. *We can make child poverty history in Canada*. <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/the-issues/ending-child-poverty> (1 Sept. 2008).

Poverty Reduction: Key Points & Questions

Poverty rates are at a historic high, despite the fact that unemployment is relatively low.

Poverty rates are still highest for visible minorities, newcomers, Aboriginals, people with disabilities, and single mothers.

Poverty reduction needs a comprehensive, national approach.



What would you focus on accomplishing in the next year to reduce the impact of poverty in our community?

What is your target for poverty reduction in the next five years at the national level and community level?

Supporting the Non-profit & Voluntary Sector

In Canada, 161,000 non-profit and voluntary organizations provide important services in areas as diverse as sports and recreation, the arts, health, social services, and community development. These services are central to how we engage with one another as Canadians, and how we contribute to and build our communities. However, sustainability is now a major challenge for the non-profit and voluntary sector in the face of unstable funding. The federal government can choose to set funding practices that ensure continued, stable funding, and can engage with the sector to create reasonable reporting and measurement structures.

The non-profit and voluntary sector employs over 2 million Canadians and adds nearly \$30 billion to the Canadian economy (about the same as the accommodation and food services industry and nearly triple the motor vehicle manufacturing sector). Canadians contribute the time equivalent of half a million full-time jobs to the programs, services, and products of non-profit and voluntary organizations.

But studies show that non-profit and voluntary organizations face inadequate and unstable funding, as funders (including governments) have moved away from supporting the core operational costs of organizations, such as rent and salaries, in favour of short-term projects. Organizations are pulled

Sources

Statistics Canada. 2005. *Cornerstones of community: highlights of the national survey of nonprofit and voluntary organizations*. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/61-533-XIE/61-533-XIE2004001.pdf> (1 Sept. 2008).

Statistics Canada. 2007. *Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions and Volunteering*. <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=13-015-XIE> (1 Sept. 2008).

Scott, K. 2003. *Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/index.htm> (1 Sept. 2008)

away from fulfilling their mission by the constant search for money to stay afloat. Sustainability is now a major challenge for the sector.

The demands and requirements of funders contribute to this destabilization. Non-profit and voluntary organizations support being accountable for how funds are used; however, funders frequently have disproportionate and often unrealistic requirements for measurement and evaluation, as well as overly complicated application procedures that are onerous for all organizations. These requirements place smaller organizations at a disadvantage in competing for funding.

Governments can acknowledge the importance of the sector by setting an example in their funding practices, providing adequate long-term and core operational funding, as well as ensuring that resources aren't wasted in unnecessary paperwork. Voters can send an important message to governments that the sector is important to their lives by asking their candidates to commit to this kind of support.

For More Information:

Imagine Canada
www.imaginecanada.ca

HR Council for the Voluntary &
Non-profit sector
www.hrcouncil.ca

Supporting the Non-profit & Voluntary Sector: Key Points & Questions

Sustainability of non-profit organizations are challenged as funders favour short-term projects rather than funding core operational costs.

Complicated application procedures and unrealistic requirements for measurement and reporting are diverting human capacity from fulfilling the organizational mission.



How will your government guarantee the vitality and sustainability of non-profit and voluntary organizations of all sizes?

What will you do to recognize the importance of non-profit and voluntary organizations in Canada?

How will your government improve federal support for this sector?

Immigrant Population: Inclusion & Employment

New Canadians have helped build vibrant communities and a strong workforce in Canada. Currently, many immigrants find it difficult to integrate into the labour market, find meaningful work, and become socially included. The recent shift to short-term, economic driven immigration policy will likely result in more social challenges for immigrants in the long run. Our next federal government can choose to prioritize Canada's long-term needs with more focus on permanent economic and family class immigrant entries. Coordinated settlement support across federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions can ensure immigrants successfully integrate into the labour market and feel included in their communities.

New immigrants and temporary foreign workers in Canada often experience social and labour related challenges: unemployment, underemployment, lack of support services, and discrimination. The low-income rate among recent immigrants is 3.5 times higher than those who are Canadian born. Highly skilled immigrants often end up underemployed because they lack Canadian work experience, their credentials go unrecognized, or they face discriminatory hiring practices. Systemic barriers still prevent ethnic minority populations from participating in all aspects of community.

To ensure that recent immigrants and temporary workers are not exploited, underemployed, or socially excluded, changes to the immigrant settlement and multiculturalism policies are needed. Currently, these policy portfolios are separate and fall under provincial and federal jurisdictions, respectively. A structure that efficiently coordinates all settlement policies and services across jurisdictions would better reduce the barriers new immigrants face when they come to Canada. There is also growing demand for cities and regions to provide the full range of settlement and integration support.

Tightly coordinated settlement and integration funding, with resources allocated at the local level (comparable to the levels that Ontario and Quebec received in 2007-2008), is needed for all provinces. Federal multicultural policies and resources aimed at community capacity building are needed to address discrimination issues and promote cross-cultural interactions. Addressing qualification barriers by funding employer-led training and work experience programs would create more opportunities for employment and help reduce the underemployment of highly skilled immigrants.

Canada as a whole can benefit from the immigrant population's skills and expertise, and by including them into the social fabric of our country. By asking questions, you can find out which candidate has a comprehensive plan to address the many barriers immigrants face when they try to access employment in Canada.

For More Information:

Settlement.org
www.settlement.org

AMSSA
www.amssa.org

Welcome BC
www.welcomebc.ca

Sources

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2001. *Recent Immigrants in Metropolitan Areas: Canada—A Comparative Profile Based on the 2001 Census*. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/research/menu-recent.asp> (1 Sept. 2008).

Statistic Canada. 2007 January. *Chronic Low Income and Low-income Dynamics Among Recent Immigrants*. <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=11F0019M2007294> (1 Sept. 2008).

Immigrant Population: Inclusion & Employment

Key Points & Questions

Only 66% of the recent immigrant labour force are participating in the labour market, compared to 78% participation by the Canadian born labour force.

Challenges facing immigrants trying to enter the work force include lack of Canadian work experience, unrecognized foreign credentials, and discrimination.

Short-term economic driven policy results in significant increases in temporary workers and exposes immigrants to exploitation in the job market.



What will your party do to address the systemic barriers and challenges to integrating immigrants into the labour market?

How will you and your party ensure adequate support for the settlement and social inclusion needs of the immigrant population?

Accessibility & Inclusion in Employment

The skills and abilities of people with disabilities are under-utilized in today's labour market. Both the labour market participation rate and unemployment rate indicate that people with disabilities have more barriers to securing employment than people without disabilities. With labour shortages across the country, and the looming mass exodus of baby boomers from the labour market, there is no reason why the federal government should not aggressively lead policies that can help bring more people with disabilities into meaningful employment. The federal government can choose to fund programs that work on educating employers and increase incentives to further encourage employers to modify their workplaces to include people with disabilities. Equally important is committed funding to improve the infrastructure that helps people with disabilities access workplaces, such as accessible transit for all communities.

People with disabilities saw the unemployment gap narrow between 2001 and 2006, when it was at 13.2% for people with disabilities as opposed to 7.4% for the non-disabled population. This increase in employment may be partly due to the current efforts of the federal government which support the hiring of people with disabilities. Some programs include Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities, which helps people prepare for and obtain employment and self employment; Social Development Partnerships Program that works with organizations and research, educational institutions to address disability issues; and Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities that assists in preparing for, sustaining, and maintaining employment.

These programs continue to have a positive impact on the employment rate for participation of people with disabilities, but further action would enhance program effectiveness. The federal government could choose to create an accessibility training fund to increase disability awareness among employers; develop a employer mentorship program that would allow companies to share ideas and learn from one another's experience in hiring people with disabilities; and introduce flexible employment supports that suit individual needs.

The federal government can make policy choices that make it easier for people with disabilities to enter the labour market, and we can choose to elect a government that recognizes the need to further develop programs and build a more inclusive society.

For More Information:

Canadian Council on Social Development
www.ccsd.ca/drip

Canadian Association for Community Living
www.cacl.ca

End Exclusion
www.endexclusion.ca

Sources

Statistics Canada. 2006. *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey of 2006: Labor Force Experience of People with Disabilities* <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-628-XIE/89-628-XIE2008007.htm#a1>.

Accessibility & Inclusion in Employment

Key Points & Questions

In 2006, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 10.4%, compared to 6.8% of the non-disabled population.

Canadian employers, people with disabilities, and the economy could benefit from more federal programs aimed at increasing participation of persons with disabilities within the Canadian labour market.



What kind of changes will you enact to make it easier for people with disabilities to enter the labour market?

What actions would you take to encourage the business sector to hire people with disabilities?

How will you work toward changing workplaces and communities to better accommodate persons with disabilities?

Health Care

Canada's Public Health Care System, established in 1966, is meant to provide universal access to medical care for all Canadians. In 1999, the federal and provincial governments reaffirmed in the Social Union Framework Agreement that they are committed to health care that has "comprehensiveness, universality, portability, public administration and accessibility." Over the years, changes and neglect have forced our health care system into a state of distress. The federal government can choose to reinvest and reinvigorate our failing health care system with a human resource strategy to address the shortage of health care professionals, instead of turning to privatization.

The federal government funds health care in each province, provided that the provinces adhere to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which are to operate under a public non-profit administration and to provide equal and accessible health care to all Canadians, everywhere in Canada. However, in direct contrast to the Canada Health Act, we are starting to see more private clinics and user-paid health care. User-paid health care is not accessible to all, and it changes the administration rules. Health facilities then begin to compete on an unlevelled playing field. Introducing more privatization into a public system could jeopardize an already critical situation where health facilities have a difficult time finding and keeping health care professionals. Complete privatization of the public system would divide our society into those who can afford to pay for health care, and those who can't – essentially turning health care into a privilege instead of a right.

Some people are calling for health care privatization because they are fed up with long waiting lists, due in part to the shortage of doctors. In 2007, four million Canadians did not have a family doctor. The shortage of health care

professionals is particularly worrisome with our growing aging population. However, the problems we face in the current public system can be resolved without turning to privatization.

The federal government can choose to create a long-term strategy that includes increasing available training spaces for doctors and nurses, and a system for recognizing credentials for foreign trained health professionals. We can choose a government that will fight to protect, and improve our universal public health system that respects the rights of all Canadians to access the care they need.

Sources

Government of Canada, Social Union, News Release. 1999 Feb. 4. *A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians: An Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Governments of the Provinces and Territories.* http://www.socialunion.gc.ca/news/020499_e.html (8 Sept. 2008).

Statistics Canada. 2007. *Canadian Community Health Survey 2007.* <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/080618/d080618a.htm> (11 Sept. 2008).

For More Information:

Canadian Health Coalition
www.healthcoalition.ca/

Canadian Institute for Health Information
[www.cihi.ca/cihiweb/
disppage.jsp?cw_page=AR_43_E](http://www.cihi.ca/cihiweb/disppage.jsp?cw_page=AR_43_E)

Health Care: Key Points & Questions

Privatization of the health care system is increasing in some provinces.

Canada has a significant shortage of health care professionals like doctors and nurses.



What will your party do to protect
our public health care system?

Where does your party stand
on private health care?



Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development. Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.

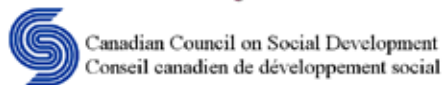
Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.

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SPARC BC
Social Planning & Research Council of BC
4445 Norfolk Street
Burnaby BC, V5G 0A7
Canada

tel: 604-718-7733
www.sparc.bc.ca
info@sparc.bc.ca



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