

## ISSUE

Canada continues to be the only G8 country without a national strategy to reduce poverty, in spite of the fact that 4.8 million Canadians are currently living in poverty.

## CONTEXT

Canada is the 15th wealthiest country in the world based on per capita GDP, yet 1 in 7 Canadians are unable to meet their basic needs for survival. Because of a lack of secure employment with sufficient income, 4.8 million Canadians cannot access adequate housing, healthcare, childcare and nutritious food.

Poverty is about more than a lack of adequate income; it's an entire experience that excludes individuals from participating fully in Canadian society. Individuals living in poverty experience substandard housing, hunger and inadequate nutrition, preventable illness and disease, precarious employment, increased stress and social isolation, feelings of inadequacy, diminished opportunities to develop and learn, discrimination, and stigmatization (Dignity For All: A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada).

Canada is becoming a less affordable place to live. The average minimum wage across Canada is only a penny more than the average minimum wage in 1975 when adjusted to inflation, despite the fact that housing, food, transportation, childcare and healthcare costs have swelled inexorably.

The cost of poverty far outweighs the cost of reducing it. According to a report by the National Council of Welfare, poverty costs taxpayers more than \$24 billion a year. And the total cost of homelessness has been estimated at \$7.05 billion per year. Yet it would take only half of that amount each year to eradicate homelessness

in Canada. Additionally, an investment of \$1 in children under age 6 saves \$9 of future spending.

All of Canada's provinces and territories, with the exception of British Columbia, have adopted or are currently developing a poverty reduction strategy. A key feature among these strategies is the need for a meaningful commitment at the federal level to reducing poverty. Much of the work that provinces and territories have committed to do to reduce poverty requires substantial collaborative federal support.

We need a national poverty reduction strategy that addresses the root causes of poverty in concrete, strategic and measurable ways. This strategy will have achievable targets that focus on the needs and participation of those affected by poverty. Transparency, accountability and clear indicators of progress will make a National Poverty Reduction Strategy effective.

## QUESTIONS

- What measures to reduce poverty in Canada will your party advocate for?
- Does your party support a new National Poverty Reduction Strategy that will work collaboratively with provinces, territories and municipalities to reduce poverty in Canada?

## RESOURCES

For more information and additional fact sheets in this series: <http://spno.ca/canada-votes-2015>