

Community Dispatch

An InfoFax of Community Development Halton

September 2008

Vol. 13, No. 10

Canada Votes! – Poverty Reduction

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VOTES!

“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**.

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 postsecondary education. We can choose to elect a government that understands the need for a poverty reduction plan. Ask your 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?

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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