

Community Dispatch

An InfoFax of Community Development Halton

June, 2004

Vol. 8, No. 12

CANADA VOTES 2004 – INCOME SECURITY

Community Development Halton wishes to acknowledge the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia, SPARC BC, for the development of the materials in Canada Votes 2004. Community Development Halton has made changes to this material in order to reflect the Ontario reality.

ISSUE 6: INCOME SECURITY

How can our Society ensure income security for all its members? There are two main pillars for ensuring income security – the market and transfers from government. Market income included savings and investments, but is mostly concerned with income from employment insurance and self-employment. Transfers from government include employment insurance (E.I.) or income when someone is not able to obtain employment (CPP Disability and other programs). The amount of income received from the market and transfers determines if an individual has sufficient income to escape poverty.

Barriers to Employment: Some people may have barriers to employment. A shortage of affordable quality childcare prevents, blocks some parents from working. Recent increases in tuition fees have made it difficult for low-income students to access post-secondary education. Many workplaces cannot accommodate people with disabilities, which denies them employment opportunities.

Wages: Job quality and wage levels in the labour market can vary significantly as well. Minimum wages set the 'floor' (lowest possible wage), and one way that the federal government could provide leadership would be by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$10/hour.

Employment Insurance: Currently, there are no guarantees of employment for all that want work, and national unemployment levels continue to hover around 8%. However, changes in eligibility for Employment Insurance have reduced the number of successful claimants to about half what it was in the 1980s.

Income Transfers: Since 1970, Canada has made

great strides in reducing the level of poverty among seniors by introducing a range of income transfers. This has not been the case for families with children of persons with a disability. One way for the federal government to help could be to increase the Canada Child Tax Benefit. However, the federal government would need to get an agreement from the provinces to stop the practice of lowering rates of income assistance every time federal benefits are increased.

Issues:

- The federal government could increase the federal minimum wage to \$10/hour.
- Even with a minimum wage of \$10/hour, a single parent with one child would require \$4,900 from the Canada Child Tax Benefit to reach the poverty line.
- There are regulated child care spaces for only 12% of the women with young children who are working.

Questions for Candidates:

- What steps will you take to consolidate the Canada Child Tax Benefit and to increase the annual benefit to \$4,900 per child?
- What steps will you take to establish a universally accessible, inclusive child care system?
- What changes would you make to ensure that more employees are eligible for EI benefits?
- What are your specific plans to increase social housing?

To find out more:

- Campaign 2000: www.campaign2000.ca (for information on income security issues affecting children, youth and families)
- Statistics Canada: www.statcan.ca

- Canadian Council on Social Development:
www.ccsd.ca
- Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN):
www.cprn.org

- Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA):
www.policyalternatives.ca



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