

The Roles of Canada's Federal Government in Reducing Poverty

Prepared by the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network is working to raise awareness of the many roles of the federal government in poverty reduction in the lead up to the 2015 federal election. Through the creation of a summary report, *The Roles of Canada's Federal Government in Reducing Poverty*, we have researched and based our work on public policy recommendations from all-party government reports prepared in the House of Commons and the Senate, as well as Motion-534 on child poverty reduction in Canada that recently received near unanimous support from all Members of Parliament.

Poverty impacts between 10-14% of Canadians, depending on which measurement tool is used, and disproportionately includes Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, female-led single parent households, and newcomers to Canada. The picture in Niagara is no different. Countries such as Denmark have a poverty rate below 6%, so it is possible to significantly lower poverty. The path to reducing, and ultimately eradicating, poverty in Canada is complex. There is not one single public policy that can address it all, nor can one level of government do it alone. What is clear is that strong, collaborative leadership from all levels of government is required. Canada is not simply the sum of its part, it is a nation and solving poverty is a national issue. While the federal government cannot tackle poverty on its own, it does have an integral role to play and strong national leadership is needed to bring together lower-tier levels of government, as well as the private and not-for-profit sectors **to create a national plan of action.**

There are four key areas where the federal government can make an important contribution in reducing, and ultimately, eradicating poverty in Canada:

- 1) Leadership to create a comprehensive national plan for poverty eradication that works in partnership with other levels of government and sectors, uses a human rights lens, and is enshrined in legislation
- 2) Enhanced federal income security programs, including Employment Insurance, Old Age Security, Canada Pension Plan, National Child Tax Benefit, Working Income Tax Benefit, and income supports for persons with disabilities
- 3) Improved support of Canada's social architecture programs and services that are provided and delivered by the provinces, territories and municipalities, such as employment training, health care, early learning/child care, housing, and transportation
- 4) Aboriginal programs and supports

In our full summary report, we have outlined further context of the federal roles in poverty reduction, as well as key federal public policy recommendations and useful resources in each of the four key areas listed above. To access the full report, please visit www.wipeoutpoverty.ca.

In the lead up to the federal election, we encourage you to gain a better understanding of the many integral roles and policy options of the federal government to reduce poverty. We also encourage you to ask your federal candidates where they stand on these public policy recommendations.

Politicians tell us that the issue of poverty is rarely raised with them; let's change that.

