

POVERTY

INNER CITY VOTES

2019 FEDERAL ELECTION



What's Happening

Canada now has a national plan to reduce poverty yet 3.4 million Canadians, 9.5% of the population, still live in poverty. The poverty levels vary depending on where you live and if you are part of a minority community. Winnipeg Harvest reports that 43% of the people who use their services are children.

Why is this happening?

Canada is the 15th richest country in the world, but 1 in 6 Canadians cannot pay for the basic necessities of life. People living in poverty cannot find a good place to live or good jobs. It means that people cannot fully join Canadian society. They go hungry and cannot afford healthy food, medication or schooling. They have more stress and feelings of depression and failure. On average, a person who experiences poverty dies 8 years sooner than those who do not.

This is a social justice issue as high poverty levels are seen among Indigenous Canadians, racialized Canadians, children and parents with disabilities, lone-parents and recent immigrants. For child poverty alone, over 1.4 million children live in poverty with their families (LIM-AT). The provincial minimum wages for workers has not kept up with inflation so a single parent working full-time still falls below the poverty line. At the same time, in Canada billionaire wealth grew by \$28 billion in 16/17, enough to pay for universal childcare and lift 4.9 million Canadians out of poverty.

Canada's official poverty measure (Market Basket Measure, MBM) seen as an absolute poverty measure does not account for social exclusion, exposure to stressful environments, discrimination, poor health and negative outcomes such as interrupted schooling and criminal justice involvement.

Poverty costs our government about \$24 billion a year. About \$7 billion a year is spent on homelessness, but it would only cost the government half of that to end homelessness in Canada. It has long been proven that for every \$1 spent on children under the age of 6, the government saves \$9 in future costs trying to address the harm done by poverty.

We need Canada's poverty plan to deal with the root causes of poverty by addressing systemic barriers. It must ensure that the basic needs of Canadians are met through a fair tax system that allows for economic growth and innovation but ensures that the gap between the wealthy and those struggling narrows rather than continuing to widen.

Questions to Ask

- What is your understanding of the link between poverty and negative social outcomes?
- What will your party do to address the gap between the wealthiest and poorest Canadians?
- What priority would your government give to eliminating child and family poverty especially for those in marginalized groups?
- How would you increase the adequacy of income support payments to move families with children out of poverty?
- How will you work with the provinces, territories and cities to reduce poverty in Canada?



Social Planning Council
of Winnipeg