

# Child poverty needs more action, less talk <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Yarema, Megan

**Source:** Huffington Post

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 27 Nov 2013

## EXCERPTS:

When promises made by politicians don't materialize it is clear that words on paper are nothing but good intentions or opportunistic moments.

In 1989 the federal government voted unanimously on a motion to end child poverty by the year 2000. Nothing happened. In 2009, at the 20-year anniversary of this promise, another motion was unanimously passed in the House of Commons that called for the development of a national poverty strategy. Again nothing happened. Actions speak louder than words, and in this case there is deafening silence.

Campaign 2000 marks the anniversary of the 1989 motion with the release of annual child poverty report cards each year around the same time in November. The report cards serve two purposes: first to expose the rate of poverty amongst children in Canada -- data that is not readily promoted or procured by the federal government; and second, to remind politicians and people in Canada that when promises remain unmet the victims are children and families, living in desperate situations.

The findings of the most recent report are stark: 1 in 7 children in Canada are living in poverty, and worse yet, if you are an Aboriginal child there is a 40 per cent chance that you live in poverty. This brings the total number of children living in poverty in 2011 (the most up-to-date data available by Statistics Canada) to 967,000. This number is actually slightly higher than the number of children living in poverty in 1989 when the promise to eradicate this dismal situation was first made. At that time, 912,000 children were facing poverty each day.

Both numbers were calculated using the Low Income Measure After-Tax (LIM-AT), which is a relative poverty measure that considers all individuals living 50 per cent below the median income as living in poverty. As Canada does not recognize an official poverty line, the LIM-AT is one of three pseudo measures used and is often utilized to draw international comparisons.

What does it mean to live below the LIM-AT? For lone-parents with one child the poverty line is drawn at \$28,185 annually, meanwhile the average income of low-income families has been stagnant at \$23,024. Many families with children who are living in poverty (approximately 1/3) actually have at least one-parent working full-time. Low wages and an increase in precarious work is part of the problem, so while the federal government may point to its "economic action plan" as some sort of solution to a troubled economy (this government doesn't talk about poverty publicly) the reality is that the majority of jobs that have been created since the recession are part-time, low-paying and without benefits. Campaign 2000 reports that 25 per cent of low-income workers with part-time jobs said they would prefer full-time employment but these jobs are not available. And, in fact, there really has been little "economic action" with there being only 1 job available for every 6 unemployed people.

Words alone may not work, but concrete action and financial commitment from government does. Campaign 2000 points out that government transfers reduced the child poverty rate from 25.6 per cent to 13.6 per cent in 2010. These transfers, such as the Canadian Child Tax Benefit and National Child Benefit Supplement could go even further if raised to \$5,400 annually (instead of \$3,654). The rate has been stuck since 2007 which, incidentally, is when the federal government ramped up the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), which costs \$2.5 billion annually. The UCCB is the creation of the current government providing all families with children under the age of 6 a \$100 monthly allowance ostensibly to offset child care costs and increase choices. The UCCB is, of course, a drop in the monthly child-care cost bucket in every province and territory. The supplement also does not support the creation of sorely needed child care spaces across the country.

If the federal government wants to focus on an economic action plan, then they should include a child care strategy as a key component (alongside fair wages, the creation of full-time employment options, and housing and food strategies that would save the government millions). Not only would this create jobs in the child development sector, but it boosts the economy. For every \$1 invested in childcare there is a \$2.30 economic benefit received. Campaign 2000's report card suggests that by cancelling the UCCB and redirecting that money into a national child care plan would create 700,000 new spaces each year. Now that is an economic action plan.

But regardless of the recommendation, we could actually solve child poverty if we turned words into legislated action. Ask yourself, mightn't we be in a different place if in 1989 or 2009 Parliamentarians had enacted a Poverty Elimination Strategy, with measurable goals and timelines and mechanisms to hold government accountable? It's not too late. Legislated action could mean change for thousands of children and millions of people living in poverty today. It could be a promise fulfilled.

-reprinted from the Huffington Post

**Related link:** [2013 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy <sup>[4]</sup>

poverty <sup>[5]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/child-poverty-needs-more-action-less-talk>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/child-poverty-needs-more-action-less-talk> [2]

<http://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/13/11/canadas-real-economic-action-plan-begins-poverty-eradicatio> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty>