

The cost of poverty ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available in print for order (see SOURCE) and online.

- Full report ^[3]

- Press release ^[4]

National Council of Welfare shows how expensive poverty really is and how all Canadians pay the price. The report draws on studies in the areas of health, justice, human rights and human development, work and productive capacity and child development. It illustrates how quality of life can be improved in economic and human terms by investing differently.

Excerpts from press release:

The National Council of Welfare released a report today showing that poverty is more expensive than Canadians might believe, and that everyone pays the price. The report draws on studies in the areas of health, justice, human rights and human development, work and productive capacity and child development. The studies show that reducing inequality between rich and poor, and especially bringing those people at the very bottom of the scale up, has positive effects. It can help a society better manage health care costs, reduce crime, develop a productive labour force, advance human well-being and foster social cohesion and public confidence in governments and in the economy. Further, many of the programs designed to achieve these goals would actually pay for themselves and generate substantial returns on investment.

The National Council of Welfare suggests a four-part strategy. First, government leadership and political will are necessary, especially at the federal level, because it is the role of responsible governments, not the market, to support the public good.

Second, comprehensive and holistic planning is needed to ensure that overall government policy direction from taxation to education helps reduce the gap between rich and poor, not just anti-poverty programs. We are faced with a difficult history of federal-provincial/territorial relations and growing disparity across the country. But this situation does not reflect what Canadians hold in common and the Council feels it is high time for a change.

The third element is building on success. There are examples in Canada and other countries of what works and universality and national standards have tended to work best. Canada's public pension system, public education and health care are prime examples, not perfect but they have made a real difference.

Fourth, starting with families with young children is critical because we risk losing so much if we do not act immediately. We need to provide more universal support for children from birth to age six, the way we provide education for all children, once they reach school age. We provide maternity and parental benefits to support newborns and parents who have relatively good incomes and labour force attachment and it makes sense to similarly support newborns and parents in less advantaged circumstances. And there is simply no escaping the need for a national program for affordable, accessible, quality child care and development.

The Council stresses that even when talking about the economy, we can't measure everything just in money. Human well-being depends on access to education and services, social inclusion, health, safety from violence, time for family and sleep as well as jobs, and autonomy to make decisions, develop individual abilities and best meet specific needs. Without these, a person's ability to contribute to the economy, through paid work and the unpaid work of raising families and building communities, is limited. Poverty in several of these areas can quickly turn into hopelessness and despair. This is why a holistic, enabling approach is so important.

Tags: poverty ^[5]

health ^[6]

family resource programs ^[7]

mother's labour force participation ^[8]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/02/02/cost-poverty>

Links

^[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/02/02/cost-poverty> ^[2] <http://www.ncwcnbes.net/> ^[3]

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