

POVERTY

makes me sick

“The role of hospitals is changing. Staff and Trustees have a responsibility to look beyond our walls to the communities we serve and see how we can contribute to their well-being. We must recognize that poverty damages the health of our young people, and we must take action.”

Charlotte Gray
Board Trustee and Chair of Advocacy Committee, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario
Director of the Board, Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres

“Watching the video reminds us why poor children in our affluent society are more at risk for health problems than other children. Let’s promote public policies to give families the support so many of us take for granted and enable them to lift themselves and their children out of poverty.”

Senator Landon Pearson
Advisor on Children’s Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

“This video tells it like it is. No matter how hard poor families try, they cannot overcome all the threats to their children’s health. Researchers know this. Every Canadian needs to know it. You can make a difference.”

Judith Maxwell
President, Canadian Policy Research Networks

“When we realize the powerful negative effect poverty has on children’s health and well-being, we have to ask ourselves as Canadians why we would choose to spend more money on repairing the life-long damage caused by child poverty than on eliminating the poverty in the first place.”

John Godfrey, Member of Parliament
Co-chair, National Children’s Agenda Caucus

“All the evidence shows that poverty is a major contributor to ill-health. Band-aids are not the answer. As individuals and institutions we must look at the big picture. Use this video and the information provided and make alleviating poverty both a local and a national goal.”

Carolyn Kennelly,
member, Canadian Association of Paediatric Nurses

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“Child poverty is more than a lack of money; it is a loss of culture, education, recreation, preventive health, a safe environment, nourishing food and a stable family life. Canadians must be consciously aware of this problem and be active participants in all aspects of its solution. Just spending money won’t make poverty go away. We must educate ourselves and become active participants in enriching the lives of disadvantaged children in Canada.”

Dr. Rick Cooper,
President, Canadian Assembly of Paediatric Chairs
Chair, Department of Paediatrics, Memorial University, Newfoundland

“Canada’s U.N. report card on child poverty is an embarrassment especially in view of the immutable evidence that poor socio-economic circumstances have lasting effects on children’s development and health.” (United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report 1999)

Dr. Claude Roy, Department of Paediatrics,
Université de Montréal, l’hôpital Ste Justine

“The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has identified both children and the health status of vulnerable populations as priority research areas. Our success as a country is directly tied to the health of our children, regardless of where they live or their socio-economic status. CIHR applauds CAPHC for spear heading this national poverty initiative.”

Dr. Alan Bernstein
President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research

“Hits hard and realistically. Shows the differences between those that have and those that have not. Depicts difficult decisions that all parents have to make accurately. Describes the situations as they really are.”

Dawn Walker
Executive Director, Canadian Institute of Child Health

“Poverty identifies children with inferior life quality and reduced life chances. We need to learn more about why poverty is such a strong marker for deleterious outcomes in children, and what the most effective and efficient initiatives are to enable poor children to have the same life quality and life chances as their middle-class peers.”

Dr. Dan Offord
Director, Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk

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This package contains many tools you can use to raise awareness in your community and organization about how poverty affects health. Take some of these ideas, and add your own as you consider your role in alleviating child poverty.

Show the Video (more than once!):

To your board, and get their endorsement to write letters:

- a. for publication in city or community newspapers, reminding people of the effects of poverty on the health of children and youth
- b. requesting policy changes at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels that reflect the priority of eliminating child poverty

To promote your hospital or agency and its contribution to the health of your community (for promotional or fundraising potential)

- a. integrate into a telethon
- b. integrate into a health fair
- c. special events with media
- d. conferences or workshops
- e. press release in response to a news issue (i.e. budget, study release)

To energize staff and board members, and to promote discussion and new thinking

- a. at a staff or board retreat
- b. as part of the introduction to a visioning seminar or strategic planning meeting
- c. as part of the orientation for new staff

To assist you in building partnerships or bringing new groups together

- a. bring together existing and potential partners around the issue for a “lunch and learn”, or “getting to know each other” type of meeting or joint action



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At a community event to raise awareness and stimulate discussion and action

The video can be your organization's contribution to existing events

- a. show the video at conferences, workshops, etc.

Get your clientele involved

- a. run the video on closed circuit television
- b. leave petitions for clients to sign, endorsing the link between poverty and health status
- c. challenge myths about choices and what it means to live in poverty
- d. hand out names and addresses of politicians to whom concerned people should write
- e. develop a campaign

Join others involved in a range of poverty issues and consider your role in:

- a. food banks
- b. breakfast programs
- c. changing budget priorities
- d. support for social housing
- e. national childcare programs
- f. snowsuit/clothing programs
- g. guaranteed national income
- h. work programs

Public Service Announcements

- I. Call your local station to remind them to play the "Poverty Makes Me Sick" PSAs included in the video



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Too many children in Canada are poor.

- In 1989, the House of Commons passed an all-party resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000. A decade later, the number of poor children has increased by 43%.¹
- The number of children living in poverty grew by over 700,000 between 1981 and 1996.²
- Canada is ranked 11th out of 18 industrialized countries in the United Nations Human Poverty Index – 2, which measures poverty by looking at: a long and healthy life, knowledge, economic provisioning, and social inclusion.³

Poor children face multiple risks.

- **Hunger:** In 2001, children accounted for 41% of those assisted by food banks.⁴
- A study published by the Canadian Paediatric Society indicates that children who go hungry on a regular basis are at greater risk for long-term health problems.⁵
- **Inadequate housing:** Nearly 35% of children in low income families live in substandard housing.⁶
- Crowded housing is known to contribute to the spread of viral and bacterial infections; asthmatic children living in problem housing are more likely to have asthma attacks than other children.⁷
- **Unsafe neighbourhoods:** Poor children are more likely to live in unsafe neighbourhoods or problem neighbourhoods (e.g. drug use and drug dealing, excessive public drinking, and the threat of violence).²

Who lives in poverty in Canada?

Nearly 1 in 5 children under eighteen years of age⁹

1 in 4 children under seven²

1 in 3 children under fifteen with a disability²

1 in 2 Aboriginal children²

1 in 2 children in families new to Canada²

More than 1 in 2 children living with a lone-mother (more than 8 out of 10 children living with a lone mother who is under twenty-five years of age)⁹

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- **Fewer opportunities for sports and recreation:** Less than half of low-income families with children spend money on user fees for recreational activities, compared to 71% of high-income families.⁸
- Participation in organized recreation and sports contributes to healthy development of children, protecting, to some extent, against emotional and behavioural problems.²
- **Environmental contaminants:** Poor children are at disproportionate risk of exposure to environmental contaminants.¹
- Exposure at critical periods of development can result in irreversible physical and behavioural damage.²

Poverty is a major cause of poor health in children.

- From health and academic achievement to behaviour and types of friends, children from families with incomes of \$30,000 or less display consistently poorer outcomes in every facet of their development.⁶
- Children in low-income families are over two and a half times more likely than children in high-income families to have lower functioning vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity, cognition, emotion, and pain/discomfort.⁶

References

- 1 Campaign 2000. (2001). Child poverty in Canada: Report card 2000 [brochure]. Toronto, ON: Author.
- 2 Canadian Institute of Child Health. (2000). A CIH profile: The health of Canada's children (3rd edition). Ottawa, ON: Author.
- 3 United Nations Development Programme. (2001). Human development report 2001: Making new technologies work for human development. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 4 Canadian Association of Food Banks. (2001). HungerCount 2001: Foodbank lines in insecure times. Toronto, ON: Author.
- 5 Canadian Paediatric Society. (October 2000).
- 6 Canadian Council on Social Development. (1999). Income and child wellbeing: A new perspective on the poverty debate. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- 7 Canadian Council on Social Development. (2001). The progress of Canada's children: Background paper on housing. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- 8 Canadian Council on Social Development. (1998). The progress of Canada's children: Highlights. Ottawa, ON: Author.
- 9 National Council of Welfare. (2001). Child poverty profile 1998. (Publication No. H68-2/1998E). Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

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Use the following information to contact your government representatives to express your concerns or to find out what they are doing about child poverty.

- Contact your Federal Member of Parliament by entering in your postal code at canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html
- Members of Legislative Assemblies across Canada can be reached at the following addresses and websites:

Province	Address	Website
British Columbia	Parliament Buildings Victoria, BC V8V 1X4	www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/index.htm
Alberta	Legislature Building 10800 - 97 Ave. Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6	www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/mla/index.asp
Saskatchewan	123 Legislative Building 2405 Legislative Drive Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3	www.legassembly.sk.ca/members/members.htm
Manitoba	450 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8	www.gov.mb.ca/leg-asmb/dir/mla.html
Ontario	No common address	www.ontla.on.ca/Members/alphabetical_constituency/index.htm
Québec	Hôtel du Parlement Québec (Québec) G1A 1A4	www.assnat.qc.ca/eng/membres/circ_1st.html
New Brunswick	Members of the Legislative Assembly Province of New Brunswick P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5H1	www.gnb.ca/legis/MLA/MLA99.htm
Nova Scotia	Government Caucus Office Centennial Bldg., Suite 805 1645 Granville Street Halifax, NS B3J 1X3	www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/MEMBERS/directory/alpha.html
Prince Edward Island	Province House Richmond Street P.O. Box 2000 Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8	www.gov.pe.ca/leg/members.php3
Newfoundland & Labrador	House of Assembly Office Confederation Building P.O. Box 8700 St. John's, NF A1B 4J6	www.gov.nf.ca/hoa/members/
Nunavut	Legislative Assembly of Nunavut Box 1200 Iqaluit, NU X0A 0H0	www.assembly.nu.ca/english/members/MLAs.html
Northwest Territories	Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories Public Affairs Office P.O. Box 1320 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9	www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/Members/index.html
Yukon Territory	Yukon Legislative Assembly Box 2703 Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6	www.gov.yk.ca/leg-assembly/mlas/

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National organizations concerned about child poverty:

- Campaign 2000 (www.campaign2000.ca): a national non-partisan group made up of over 85 national, community and provincial partners actively working to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.
- National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) (www.napo-onap.ca/): a non-governmental, non-partisan advocacy organization of low income Canadians and others concerned about issues affecting poor people.
- Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH): offers publications and resources for parents and health professionals, and engages in policy and advocacy work.

Websites with Facts and Statistics:

NAPO:

www.napo-onap.ca/

Campaign 2000 Annual Report Cards:

www.campaign2000.ca/rc/

Canadian Council on Social Development:

www.ccsd.ca/facts.html

Canadian Institute of Child Health:

www.cich.ca/facts.htm

Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (for access to this information kit):

www.cheo.on.ca

Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres (for access to this information kit):

www.caphc.org



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