

## **Break the vicious circle: Vote to free Canada from poverty**



This federal election, help us break the vicious circle of poor people not voting because they feel governments don't care about them and politicians ignoring the interests of poor people because they know there is a low turnout among poor people.

NAPO has prepared two tools to support the engagement of poor people in the federal election and to ensure poverty issues are addressed in the campaign.

### **Vote for a change Voter Education Campaign**

NAPO has participated in the development of the Vote for a Change voter education campaign coordinated by the Centre for Social Justice. Postcards, posters, stickers and buttons are available with a variety of catchy messages designed to promote public engagement in the election process. NAPO suggests local activists use these tools to encourage people to vote for candidates who are committed to taking action on poverty. For more information on issues and resources check out the web site at: [www.voteforachange.ca](http://www.voteforachange.ca).

### **Questions for Candidates on Poverty Issues**

NAPO has also prepared questions on key poverty issues that can be asked of candidates in the federal election. We encourage you to attend all-candidates meetings in your community and get your candidates to state where they and their parties stand on the need to eliminate poverty in Canada. Or even better invite candidates from all parties to an event you organize involving poor people and their allies to discuss what you want the federal government to do and what they would do about poverty.

#### **1) *Child poverty:***

Fifteen years ago an all-party resolution in the House of Commons promised to end child poverty by the year 2000. Since 1990 the rate of child poverty has hardly changed. Today, there are still over one million children living in poverty. In 2003, 3,000,000 children relied on food banks for their meals. What specific strategies does your party have to eliminate child and family poverty in Canada?

**2) *Federal spending:***

In 1997 and 2000, the Liberal Government promised a “50/50” split in the spending of the federal surplus where 50% would go to funding social programs and 50% would go to tax cuts and deficit reduction. To date, approximately 10% of extra monies have gone to genuine new program spending while 46% have gone to tax cuts and 44% to debt reduction. This has had a disastrous affect on our social safety net. How would your party use the surplus to rebuild the social safety net?

**3) *Minimum wages and living wages:***

Today, poverty rates among workers especially male youth; immigrant workers and female workers are rising as low minimum wages keep many Canadians below the poverty line. (You can use the following example that refers to Ontario or you can use an example from your province if you prefer.) In Ontario, a minimum wage job leaves a person working full time, year round with no dependents \$3,000 below the poverty line. In order to meet the poverty line, this worker earning minimum wage must make \$10 an hour. Will your party reinstitute a federal minimum wage at a level to raise workers above poverty and, if yes, when will it be put in place?

**4) *International obligations to address poverty:***

Canada is a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that states everyone has the right to an adequate income, shelter and food. At the last UN review of Canada’s performance under the Covenant held in 1998, Canada was severely criticized for consistently high levels of poverty and homelessness. How does your party intend to meet Canada’s International Covenant obligations to reduce poverty and homelessness?

**5) *Social Transfer:***

On April 1, 2004 the Canada Health and Social Transfer was spilt into the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer. The Social Transfer will provide federal money to provinces for post-secondary education and social program spending. How will your party ensure that the Social Transfer receives the amount of funding required to address the high levels of poverty in Canada?

Follow up question: What will your party do to ensure that the money given to provinces for social programs under the Canada Social Transfer will actually be spent on social programs?

**6) *Housing:***

Canada is the only industrialized country without a national housing program. Approximately 200,000 Canadians are homeless and 1.7 million are in core housing need. What strategies does your party have to eliminate the current national housing crisis?