

NAPO NEWS!

Speaking from experience

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Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world yet over 1.2 million youth live in poverty.



Erin Stevens, Misty Parent and Tonika Morgan

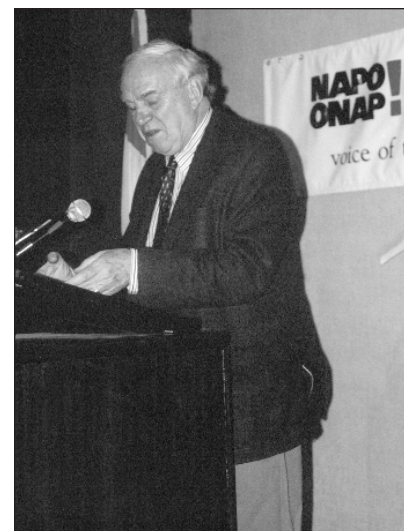
October 28 was an important day for NAPO as we launched the **Our Future Now!** national youth poverty initiative. The launch, which took place in Ottawa at the National Press Club, was very well attended by youth, representatives from national and local organizations, politicians, government officials and concerned individuals. In total, 40 people came to hear youth talk about their experiences of homelessness, poverty, and advocacy around the many issues related to living in low-income. There was strong enthusiasm for follow up events and activities, which we will capitalize on in the upcoming months. We want to thank the three young people

NAPO welcomes new and returning board members

The NAPO Board met June 17 to 19, 2005 in Ottawa. New board members elected at the Annual General Meeting and those elected to another term include: Linda Hilton from the Yukon, Lynda Laughlin from Alberta, Debbie Frost from Saskatchewan, Anne Marie Leschinski from Northern Ontario, Deana Shorten from New Brunswick and Paulette Halupa

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who spoke at the launch, Tonika Morgan, Misty Parent and Erin Stevens as well as the Canadian Federation of Students for the use of the National Student Loan debt clock.* All of the speakers were eloquent, informative and courageous. And we thank Ed Broadbent for his participation as MC. There will be follow up events on youth poverty in the next few months so be sure to visit the website for details.



Ed Broadbent, MP Ottawa Centre

The major goals of the **Our Future Now!** initiative are to raise public awareness of the issue and achieve concrete changes in policies that most affect youth in low income. For more information visit the website at www.napo-onap.ca/youth.

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Must Chronic Illness Mean Poverty and Isolation

by Michel Martin

Twelve years ago, two months after turning 40, I contracted a rare illness called Goodpasture's Syndrome, which attacks four or five Canadians each year. Until about 15 years ago, this illness was fatal but it can now be successfully treated using anti-rejection drugs similar to those used for transplants. I escaped the illness, lungs damaged but intact, however, since my kidneys no longer work, I don't urinate. To survive, I've been on dialysis, except for a two-year period when I received a kidney from a brother only to lose it to the same illness. I haven't worked for twelve years owing to persistent fatigue, continual episodes of illness and secondary complications of the illness and treatments.

I survive with a disability pension from the Quebec Pension Plan of not quite \$900 per month. Most of the \$2,000 per month of medications that I require is paid by Quebec's drug plan. As little as my pension is it's still more than I would receive were I to rely on social assistance for income. Also, I live in social housing, which is both good quality and affordable, but unavailable to most chronically ill people due to a shortage of social housing.

I live frugally and budget assiduously so that even the acquisition of a \$10 pair of slippers sometimes requires a month or so of juggling of priorities. Most social sorties are to the grocery store, drugstore, and similar places. The little social life that I do have depends upon active support by friends and family – not a given for many of the poor, ill, and elderly. Usually, I remain in my apartment since going anywhere costs money I don't have.

If I could double my current monthly income of just under \$900, I would be able to live with dignity. I would be able to get common necessities when they are needed, say a new pair of slippers. I would still have to budget carefully, of course, and could not travel or consume luxuries. Nevertheless, I would have a decent life without being socially isolated.

Given that my situation of living without adequate income support is common for many chronically ill and disabled Canadians what is stopping governments from providing this badly needed support to people forced to live in poverty?

Increasing income support through social assistance programs for people living in low income would generate increased local economic activity important to small business. The poor would not save their additional revenue or store it in offshore tax havens. They would consume and spend more. Governments would recover the additional money they had distributed to the poor via increased GST and sales tax revenue, and in some instances income tax. Furthermore, giving the poor more money might produce savings in social expenditure for health care and social services provided to the ill, elderly, and patients living in low income.

One argument against increasing income for the poor is that it creates a disincentive-to-work. I guess the whole country would book off work to live on poverty wages of less than \$10 an hour. Of course, the work disincentive argument barely disguises the absurdly low minimum wages forced on poor workers, particularly women.

The real reason welfare rates are so low is so that employers can keep wages as low as possible. This, combined with policy and propaganda about lazy workers and welfare cheats, make wonderful mechanisms for disguising low wages, setting workers against each other, and keeping the poor working in low-paid jobs.

Despite short-sighted arguments to the contrary, we are going to have to arrange things so that the chronically ill, disabled and poor receive more income support so they can live real lives rather than survive in social isolation. Many of us will be chronically ill and old at some point so this is an issue of preparing for our own future as much as it is about providing adequate resources to those already in these circumstances. I hope that by the time you experience old age or ill health the country's social policy makers will have progressed to where your chronic illness will not mean isolation, exclusion and poverty.

Michel Martin, a former freelance journalist, lives in Hull, Quebec, and writes so that he doesn't go nuts from ill health, poverty, and social isolation.

Did you know...

- One person living alone in a major urban centre needs to earn at least \$10 an hour at full time, full year work to avoid being poor. Forty percent of youth aged 25 or under working full time made less than \$10 an hour. 60% of those working part time made less than \$10/hr.
- In Ontario, following a tuition rate increase of 60%, four-year university graduates now acquire an average debt of \$25,000 compared to an average debt load of \$8700 in 1991. The increase was caused by government elimination of grant programs combined with soaring tuition fees.

Energy rebate leaves some low-income groups out in the cold

NAPO and other groups pushed for a comprehensive rebate plan from the federal Liberals to help low-income families and individuals cope with soaring energy costs. Partly in response to this pressure, Paul Martin's government announced an energy rebate for some modest and low-income Canadians this October in an attempt to address the rising price of heating fuel and gas. The Liberal one-year plan provides senior individuals and couples who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement \$125 and \$250 respectively. It also provides families receiving the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) with an additional \$250. Those who get the rebate will see it in January 2006.

While this is a step in the right direction, the scheme neglects individuals and couples without children who are living in poverty. NAPO sees this as a serious gap in the proposal and we are pressuring the Government to rectify it. We are also pushing for increased heating supplements in social assistance packages so they cover the full cost of energy prices as well as special payments to be issued at the beginning of the winter so people can get deliveries of fuel before the coldest weather hits.

NAPO's annual report 2004-2005 is now available. To order your copy please contact us at:

Phone: 1-800-810-1076

E-mail: napo@napo-onap.ca

Snail mail: NAPO

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Ottawa, ON K1B 5N1

NAPO welcomes new and returning board members continued from page 1

from PEI. Paulette Halupa was re-elected President, Debbie Frost was elected First Vice-President, Lynda Laughlin, Second Vice-President, Deana Shorten, Secretary Treasurer, Aimée Clark, International Secretary, and Robert Arnold continues to serve on the Executive as Past President.

Among other things, the board discussed how to expand NAPO membership and involve members in key campaigns such as the Youth Poverty Initiative, Make the Minimum Wage a Living Wage campaign, the Human Rights and Poverty project and the Make Poverty History campaign. Board members participated in workshops developed for the living wage and human rights campaigns, and several board members have since facilitated these workshops in their communities.

Private welfare-to-work program stumbles in BC

The BC Liberals have repeatedly claimed that their privately run welfare-to-work program saves the province money by moving people off social assistance and into jobs. So far, in approximately 34 months, the program has run a deficit of \$13 million. More disturbingly, up to 34% of the participants stated the job leads they received through the program did not help them get a job, and less than half said they felt more employable or that they had gained job search skills. Here's the kicker: the program may never break even let alone save the province the money the Liberals projected. Privatized programs like those in place BC and those proposed for Ontario have consistently had cost overruns, and spotty records on skill development and job placement for participants.

From "Evaluation of the Job Placement Program and the Training for Jobs Program," by Peter Adams and Cynthia Tait, Sept. 9, 2004. To see the full report go to the BC government web site at http://www.eia.gov.bc.ca/research/reports/eval/Evaluation_JPP_T4J_Pilot.pdf

Canada is one of the wealthiest countries continued from page 1

Now available online:

- e-action card calling for a national youth agenda and an end to youth poverty.
- campaign buttons (can be ordered in batches of 10 or more at \$1/button via email at napo@napo-onap.ca or phone 613 789-0096)
- lobby kit
- fact sheets on youth poverty

* The clock keeps a running total of all Canada Student Loan debt currently carried by post-secondary students (graduate and undergraduate). The present amount is over \$11.5 billion and does not include private or provincial/territorial debt.



Anti-poverty activists and supporters come together to mark October 17th

They were colourful, noisy and they wouldn't go away, at least for one morning. A dedicated group of anti-poverty activists and supporters marked the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in Ottawa on October 17 with political theatre, drumming, speeches and leafleting, all demanding that more be done to end the high rates of poverty in Canada and abroad. Dennis Howlett of NAPO, Gerry Barr and Laurel Rothman of Make Poverty History and Campaign 2000 also addressed the crowd.

The early morning event was organized by NAPO, Campaign 2000, Make Poverty History, the Ottawa Child Poverty Action Group, youth and the Canadian Council on Social Development and was followed by a conference organized by Campaign 2000. The activities of the day helped bring together the efforts of many groups and individuals to end domestic and international poverty. There is much momentum around the Make Poverty History Campaign and the NAPO youth poverty initiative, which we will continue to capitalize on it throughout the upcoming winter in order to get the changes Canada needs to end poverty. (Other anti-poverty events were held across the country on Oct. 17. We will have more information on those in our next newsletter.)

How you can support NAPO

We try to make supporting NAPO programs as easy as possible by providing many different giving options:

- You can write a cheque or money order and mail it to NAPO at:
NAPO
2212 Gladwin Cres, Unit C7, Ottawa ON K1B 5N1
- You can join NAPO's Partner Program and make monthly donations by authorizing automatic monthly debits in the amount you choose. This choice saves mailing costs and helps NAPO plan for the year because we're better able to budget. That means more of our dollars go directly to work!
- You can make a gift using your credit card (MasterCard or Visa), by mail or YOU CAN CALL TOLL FREE: 1-800-810-1076.
- You can make a gift on line using the Internet – Visit our website at: www.napo-onap.ca (just look for the donate now button!)
- You can remember NAPO in your will or make NAPO a beneficiary of a your life insurance policy.

Remember all your gifts to NAPO are tax-creditable. NAPO is a registered charitable organization (130916638RR0001). Your generous gifts are very much needed and appreciated. You can make a gift up to Dec. 31, 2005 to receive a tax-deductible receipt for 2005.

Stay Informed

Cathy Crowe's monthly newsletter –

This newsletter is an important and thoughtful resource for anyone who cares about homelessness, and related health and social issues. You may recall that Cathy, who is a street nurse in Toronto, received the Atkinson Economic Justice Award in the spring of 2004. In her newsletter Cathy reports on her activities as nurse and advocate for the homeless. Visit www.tdrc.net/cathycrowe.htm <<http://www.tdrc.net/cathycrowe.htm>> to view the newsletter and subscribe.

Paid to be Poor : Report of the 2005 Manitoba Low Wage Community Inquiry

A broadly-based panel of independent "listeners" heard the first-person stories of Manitobans affected by low wages – low-income individuals (single mothers, and couples, students and workers, Aboriginal people, immigrants, those with disabilities) and spokespersons for community organizations. See the recommendations for strategies and principles to move forward to a « living wage ». For the report : www.just-income.ca <<http://www.just-income.ca>>.

Women and Poverty Fact Sheet

(2005 edition) from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) – a very complete document of 12 pages filled with important facts. Download in English or French from www.criaw-icref.ca <<http://www.criaw-icref.ca>>.

Another way to stay informed!

We are launching the NAPO E-news, which will update subscribers on NAPO campaigns. We will also post our news releases and press announcements on various issues. Go to <http://napo.ca/en/subscribe.html> and subscribe.