

# Election 2008: Vote to Make Poverty History

The election is upon us and there is no better time to get our politicians to listen than now.

The election is a great opportunity for you to speak to candidates and political leaders to let them know that in this election their constituents care about making poverty

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Available for download online at

<http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/resources>

- Online checklist
- "Vote For Me" poster/pamphlet
- "I'm Voting to Make Poverty History" lawn sign
- Ordering Your Election Action Kit

# Eight Ways to Make Poverty an Election Issue

“Tell your local media you care about poverty and urge reporters to ask candidates what they’ll do to help end poverty.”

## 1 Ask.

Ask candidates to support the Make Poverty History goals. All candidates will be sent a request to publicly support the Make Poverty History goals. Follow up with the candidates in your riding to ensure that they support the Make Poverty History Campaign and will work towards its goals if elected.

- When candidates or their canvassers knock on your door, ask them if they support Make Poverty History and pose some of the ‘questions to ask candidates’ on page 5 of this guide. Keep the questions taped by the door so anyone in your house who answers the door can ask the Make Poverty History questions.
- Stop by campaign offices, speak to candidates at community events, at the mall and on the street. Ask them if they support Make Poverty History and if they’ll work towards our goals if elected.
- Go to <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/action> to send an email to your candidates - to be online when we have all the candidate contact information, a few weeks into the campaign.
- Check the Make Poverty History website at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/candidates> to see which candidates in your riding have indicated their support for the Make Poverty History goals - online once the candidates have a chance to respond to our questions.

## 2 Organize.

Work with other Make Poverty History supporters in your area to make poverty an election issue. Organize an all candidates meeting, ask questions at other all candidates meetings or videotape interviews with local candidates.

Organize an “All Candidates’ Meeting: Job Interview for MP to Make Poverty History” or ask questions at other all candidates meetings. Get together with some friends or groups concerned about poverty issues, book a room, invite the candidates, invite the public. See page 6 of this guide for organizing tips.

Ask questions on global and domestic poverty issues at candidate meetings organized by other groups. See sample questions on page 5 of this guide.

Make Poverty History has email addresses of hundreds or even thousands of supporters in your area. If you want to send an email to these supporters to help organize in your area, send an email to [web@makepovertyhistory.ca](mailto:web@makepovertyhistory.ca)

Record video interviews with local candidates to get them “on the record.” See page 14 of this guide for more information.

→ RECAP:

- Ask candidates for their support
- Organize a meeting
- Be visible
- Publicize views
- Watch & send the campaign ad
- Distribute posters
- Put up a banner
- Follow up

### 3 Be visible.

Get visible with party leaders. If party leaders come to your community, show up at their events, wear a Make Poverty History t-shirt, wave white banners and barrier tape, ask them if their party supports Make Poverty History goals and what they would do to make poverty history globally and here in Canada. Be polite and have fun.

### 4 Be vocal.

Publicize your views. Tell your local media you care about poverty and urge reporters to ask candidates what they'll do to help end poverty. Write letters to the editor, send in opinion articles and call in to radio shows. See a sample letter on page 15, and a sample opinion article on page 16 of this guide. Don't forget to invite your local media to your All Candidates' Meeting.

### 5 Go online.

You can post your events, post web updates of your activities and upload your event photos to [www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/kit/web](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/kit/web)

Join other Make Poverty History volunteers to discuss your activities and get inspired by joining the online discussions at <http://discuss.makepovertyhistory.ca>

Make Poverty History has email addresses of hundreds or even thousands of supporters in your area. If you want to send an email to these supporters to help organize in your area, send an email to [web@makepovertyhistory.ca](mailto:web@makepovertyhistory.ca)

### 6 Distribute posters and lawn signs.

Download the "Vote for Me" poster/brochure: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/poster> and print it out. The poster is available in two sizes: 11 by 17 inches (poster only) and 8.5 by 11 (with brochure on opposite side). Distribute copies to family and friends and ask them to help you post them in public places around your community. Hang one in your window or make it into a lawn sign so that candidates and their canvassers know that you support Make Poverty History.

### 7 Put up a banner.

Get your school, church, union or community agency to put up a large "Vote to Make Poverty History" banner in a prominent place on their building. You can download materials for making your banner from <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/resources>

If you have a website or a blog, download a "Vote to Make Poverty History" banner here: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/resources>

### 8 Follow up.

Make sure you report your results back to the web: post photos, event updates or comments at [www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/kit/web](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/kit/web)

**Poverty Watch:** Watch the election results, note which candidates win and which support Make Poverty History. Get ready to follow up and make sure they do!

# Four Facts You Should Know About Federal Candidates

## → IDEAS:

- Organize a candidates' meeting
- Visit your local candidate's office
- Prepare for your candidate's visit
- Send a Candidate's Response Form to Ottawa

**1** Your candidates are now in their local riding offices looking for as many opportunities as possible to meet people in their communities.

### WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU:

There is no better time to organize an "All-Candidates' Meeting: Job Interview". It will give candidates an opportunity to meet their constituents and hear first-hand that poverty is an important election issue.

**2** Your MP will be working six days a week and they may be in their offices between 10:00am and 3:00 pm Monday through Friday.

### WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU:

Between 10:00am and 3:00pm is a great time for you to request a meeting to talk about the Make Poverty History campaign or to call their office with an invitation to participate in an all-candidates' debate. Refer to the MP Advocacy Kit on how to discuss Make Poverty History platform issues with candidates in your riding.

**3** Candidates or their representatives will be going door-to-door.

### WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU:

You can go door-to-door first. In this kit there is a "VOTE FOR ME" poster/brochure for you to print and deliver in your area so your neighbours can also ask the candidates questions about their stance on poverty. You can also prepare yourself for their visit. Generate your own poverty-related questions or familiarise yourself with the sample questions available in this kit. That way, when they knock, you'll be ready to ask questions about poverty.

**4** Candidates have received emails and a request for support asking them to endorse the Make Poverty History campaign goals.

### WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU:

Candidates know about the campaign, so ask if they support the Make Poverty History goals. A list of all supporting candidates will be available online at [www.makepovertyhistory.ca](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca). If a candidate in your riding is not a supporter, ask them to sign on. Print the Candidate Response Form in Section 1 of this kit, ask him or her to fill it out and then forward the completed form to the Make Poverty History national office in Ottawa.

# Questions for Candidates

Keep these questions taped by the door to ask candidates who come to ask for your vote.

We need to let candidates and parties know that poverty is an important issue.

Whether it's at the door, at all-candidates' meetings, in campaign offices, or in your community, the election is a great opportunity to make poverty an issue.

## 1 Candidates' Support for Make Poverty History

**Background:** The Make Poverty History campaign is calling for more and better aid, trade justice, 100% debt cancellation for the poorest countries and an end to child poverty in Canada. Over a quarter million individual Canadians and over 1000 organizations have endorsed the campaign.

**QUESTION:** Do you support the Make Poverty History campaign and, if elected, will you work towards achieving its goals?

## 2 More Aid

**Background:** In 1969, former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson recommended to the United Nations that rich countries adopt a foreign aid target of 0.7% of Gross National Income.

Canada ranks 16th out of 22 donor countries, coming in at only 0.28% of Gross National Income. That's not even half way to the 0.7% United Nations target.

Eleven donor countries, including Sweden, Norway, France and Great Britain, have reached their 0.7% commitment or have timelines to do so. Canada, despite its robust economy, is not among them. The small country of the

Netherlands gives more aid than Canada.

**QUESTION:** Do you support increasing our foreign aid to reach the United Nations target of 0.7% of Gross National Income within 10 years?

## 3 End Child & Family Poverty in Canada

**Background:** In 1989, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. Yet the child poverty rate today at 11.7% is the same as in 1989. 788,000 Canadian children, or nearly one in eight, are poor. Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected; in First Nations communities one in four children lives in poverty.

**QUESTION:** How do you propose ending child poverty in Canada? Specifically, will you work towards boosting the Child Tax Benefit to \$5,100 per child and ensuring that all low-income children receive full benefit of this program?

**Continued on next page**

“788,000 Canadian children, or nearly one in eight, are poor. Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected; in First Nations communities one in four children lives in poverty.”

## 4 National Poverty Reduction Strategy

**Background:** The governments of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and recently Ontario have taken the lead in developing comprehensive poverty reduction strategies. But we need leadership from the Federal Government to engage all levels of government in the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Canada.

A National poverty reduction strategy needs to include among other things a national housing strategy; a national child care program; reinstatement of a federal minimum wage; improvements to the Employment Insurance program; a national pharmacare program and an aboriginal poverty reduction plan. Such measures will help us realize our goal of making poverty history in Canada.

**QUESTION:** Do you support adopting a national plan for ending poverty in Canada that commits the government to specific targets and timetables over the next five years, and includes investments in an improved Child Tax Benefit, affordable housing, early learning and child care and good jobs at living wages?

## 5 Aboriginal Poverty

**Background:** In November of 2005 a comprehensive agreement was reached on a plan to close the living standards gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada at an historic First Ministers Meeting with First Nations leaders in Kelowna. \$5.1 billion was committed over 10 years in new spending for aboriginal housing, education, health services, clean drinking water, and economic development. But the Conservative government has so far refused to honor this agreement.

**QUESTION:** Do you support implementation of the Kelowna Accord or a comparable plan to close the living standards gap between Aboriginal people and the rest of Canada?

# Tips for Organizing an All-Candidates' Meeting: A Job Interview for “MP to Make Poverty History”

“All candidates in the riding are invited to a public meeting where a panel of three or four will interview candidates and also offer a chance for questions from the audience.”

One of the best ways to make poverty an issue during the election is to hold an all-candidates' meeting. An all candidates meeting can be organized in a traditional way with short speeches from each candidate followed by questions from the audience. Or you could try putting a new spin on this format by inviting candidates to come for a job interview for the job of Member of Parliament to Make Poverty History.

This guide has been prepared for the purpose of providing Make Poverty History local groups with valuable tips for organizing a “Job Interview for MP to Make Poverty History” All-Candidates' Meeting' with local candidates.

## Goals:

1. Make poverty an election issue
2. Increase public awareness of domestic and international poverty issues
3. Engage the public and candidates in each riding in constructive dialogue regarding poverty issues, and more specifically Make Poverty History goals
4. Get as many candidates as possible to endorse Make Poverty History goals
5. Motivate voters to vote to Make Poverty History

Our success in achieving these goals will help to ensure we elect a government and parliament that will implement the policies required to Make Poverty History.

## Overview:

All candidates in the riding are invited to a public meeting where a panel of three or four will interview candidates and also offer a chance for questions from the audience. After the interview there will be a chance for audience members to discuss in small groups who they would recommend be hired for the job. Recommendations and reasons are reported back to the large group.

### 1 Find partners

Ask groups concerned about global and domestic poverty issues in your community to co-sponsor the event. The more groups involved, the more volunteers you'll have to get the word out, and the more people you can get to attend the meeting. It will also be harder for the candidates to say no to your invitation.

### 2 Hold an organizational meeting

Review contents of the Make Poverty History election campaign kit and tips for organizing an All Candidates' Meeting as a group. Discuss options for time and location, delegate tasks and assign time for completion. Set regular meeting times to review accomplishments and set the agenda for the following week. Exchange contact information.

It may be helpful for participants to assume specific roles in the event planning process.

→ **SAMPLE ROLES:**

- Local Group Coordinator
- Media Relations Coordinator
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Publicity Coordinator
- Candidate Recruitment Coordinator(s)
- Logistics Coordinator

This ensures continuity, maximizes efficiency and reduces role confusion. Below is a sample breakdown of roles and corresponding responsibilities.

### Local Group Coordinator

- a) Organize meetings, propose agendas and chair meetings
- b) Act as liaison with the MPH National Office in Ottawa
- c) Be the official spokes person for MPH at the electoral district level

### Media Relations Coordinator

- a) Find out media contacts in your community and invite them to the event
- b) Write and issue press releases advertising the event. See a sample on page 14 of this guide.
- c) Make media calls two days before the event and try to get commitments that someone will cover the event.

### Secretary/Treasurer

- a) Produce minutes and circulate to all group members
- b) Record all-candidates' meeting proceedings with particular emphasis on any verbal commitments made
- c) Send sign-on sheets, candidate pledges and report back form to the MPH National Office
- d) Obtain approval from national office for any election related expenditures, and submit all receipts as well as keep records of any donations.

### Publicity Coordinator

- a) Design a flyer for advertising the all-candidates meeting
- b) Reproduce promotional materials including MPH event flyers and 'Vote for Me' posters. Available online at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/poster>.
- c) Distribute promotional materials to group members for posting

### Candidate Recruitment Coordinator(s)

- a) Contact all candidates in your electoral district. Extend an invitation to participate in the all candidates meeting. Inform them about the format and issues to be discussed. Follow up as required.
- b) Responsible for candidate follow-up

### Logistics Coordinator

- a) Locate and book a suitable venue.
- b) Organize all materials and equipment required for the event e.g. microphones, name cards, tables and chairs
- c) Coordinate the set-up of an information kiosk at the event.
- d) Develop and distribute a detailed itinerary for the event.

## 3 Pick a date, time and place

- a) If you can, pick two possible dates to give the candidates a choice and make it harder to turn you down. Go with the date that works the best.

“If a candidate will not return your calls or refuses to take part in the all candidates meeting, consider having an empty chair or name card on display, and ask the moderator to note the absence of a candidate.”

- b) When selecting a location, remember to choose one that’s accessible by car or public transit, and by people with disabilities. Some examples: local library, City Hall, a public school or university or college campus, a community centre, seniors’ centre, church or a union hall.
- c) You can usually find something for \$100 or less, or even for free. Remember you can pass the hat at the meeting to get donations to cover the costs of the venue.

#### 4 Contact candidates

- a) Find out who the candidates are in your riding and their contact info by visiting the Elections Canada website at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca) or by checking the party websites for the candidates’ office or local riding association.
- b) Call the candidates’ offices and ask to speak to the campaign manager. Invite the candidate to participate in the all candidates meeting on the date you have chosen. If they are not available, ask about the second date you set. Be persistent but polite – make it hard for them to say no!
- c) Fax, email or deliver the invitation as soon as you hang up. Invite the candidates to apply for the job of MP to Make Poverty History by submitting their resume for the job and attend a job interview at the All Candidates’ Meeting. Enclose a job description. You can share the list of questions with them ahead of time. Give them 2 days to respond and call to follow-up.

#### 5 What if a candidate says no?

- a) If a candidate will not return your calls or refuses to take part in the all candidates meeting, consider having an empty chair or name card on display, and ask the moderator to note the absence of a candidate.
- b) Do not proceed if you get a positive response from only one candidate but go ahead if only one candidate is not able to attend.

#### 6 Select a moderator, interview panel and timekeeper

- a) The moderator introduces the event and candidates, reviews the agenda and guidelines before at the start of the meeting, and then moderates audience questions. Ideally, moderators should be experienced and non-partisan, with an ability to stay neutral, calm and firm. A good sense of humour is also a plus! You might want to invite a person well-known and respected person in the community – perhaps a religious, education or community leader, or a media personality.
- b) The interview panel should include at least one person who is living or has lived in poverty, one person who has some understanding of policy issues related to poverty and one person who has some Third World experience. Try to balance age and gender. An interview panel of three or four is ideal.
- c) Identify a timekeeper to monitor time limits, and notify the candidates and

→ **TIP:**

- Choose a venue that you are confident you can fill. The more packed the space is, the more impressive the turnout appears.

questioners. Timekeepers can use a stopwatch, gavel, flag or coloured piece of paper. The moderator can introduce them and the methods for keeping time (waving one colour for a warning and another for cut off.)

## 7 Plan logistics

Check out the event venue: How many people does it seat? Are there sufficient chairs and tables provided? How are the acoustics in the space? Will microphones be required? Is there sufficient parking nearby? Where will information tables be located?

## 8 Plan the format and timing of your event

Figure out how much time you will need for moderator’s welcome, each candidate’s answers to ‘interview questions’, questions from the audience, small group deliberation and report back. The number of questions and time allowed for each answer will depend on how many candidates you have participating. The entire event should not exceed 2 hours. The following is a suggested outline which you can adjust to your situation:

PARTS OF JOB INTERVIEW: ALL CANDIDATES MEETING	WHO	TIME
Welcome, introductions of candidates and panelists, agenda and guidelines	Moderator	10 minutes
<b>Question 1:</b> Opening statement – what experience and commitment makes you the best candidate for the job of MP to Make Poverty History?	Panelist 1	1 minute
<b>Answers to Q1:</b> Opening statement	Each candidate	Max. 3 min. each
<b>Question 2:</b> More and better aid	Panelist 2	1 minute
<b>Answers to Q2</b> on more and better aid	Each candidate	Max. 1 min. each
<b>Question 3:</b> Trade justice and debt cancellation (optional)	Panelist 3	1 minute
<b>Answers to Q3</b> on trade justice and/or debt cancellation	Each candidate	Max. 1 min. each
<b>Question 4:</b> Child tax benefit and child poverty	Panelist 4	1 minute
<b>Answers to Q4</b> on child tax benefit and child poverty	Each candidate	Max. 1 min. each
<b>Question 5:</b> Poverty reduction strategy for Canada	Panelist 5	1 minute
<b>Answers to Q5</b> on poverty reduction strategy for Canada	Each candidate	Max. 1 min. each
Questions from the floor	Audience members	Max. 1 min. for each question
Answers to questions from the floor	Each candidate	Max. 1 min. each
Instructions for small group discussion on who is the best candidate for the job	Moderator	1 minute
Small group discussion	Audience members	15 minutes
Report back from small groups	Reporter from each group	10 minutes
Closing thank yous, and where you can get more information about Make Poverty History, other announcements	Moderator	3 minutes
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>		<b>1.5 - 2 HRS.</b>

→ **TIP:**

- Prioritize publicity! Begin advertising as early as possible so that people are aware of the event prior to their schedules becoming overwhelmed with competing interests.

## 9 Prepare questions for candidates

- Sample questions for candidates (to be posed by interview panel and audience members) are located on page 5 of this guide. Although trade justice and debt cancellation are key goals for the Make Poverty History campaign, these issues are not as topical and could be skipped if there is not sufficient time or replaced with questions about more specific local poverty issues such as access to social housing or child care in your community.
- Draft your own questions about poverty.
  - Make sure that they are clear and concise.
  - Ensure that preambles and questions do not turn into speeches
  - Personalize your questions by making reference to poverty in your community, or personal experience. Well articulated personal anecdotes catch the attention of both politicians and media representatives.
- Encourage friends and colleagues at the meeting to ask questions!

## 10 Publicize your meeting – getting people to attend

- Once you've confirmed the details, contact your local media – your newspaper, radio, TV, community weeklies – and urge them to attend. See a sample media advisory on page 14 of this guide.

- Announce the debate in the “public service announcement” sections of your local media, and put up flyers in community centres, libraries, cafés and other public places. See a sample flyer here: <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote/flyer>.
- Ask your community centre to send it to all community agencies. Send it to local unions, faith communities, student organizations and other community groups.
- Call friends, family and colleagues.
- Start getting the word out as soon as possible, so to ensure a great turn out.
- Contact Make Poverty History to send an email to other Make Poverty History supporters in your riding. Write to [elections@makepovertyhistory.ca](mailto:elections@makepovertyhistory.ca). Post event details at: [www.makepovertyhistory.ca/e/take-action/events-form.php](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/e/take-action/events-form.php)

## 11 Promoting MPH at the event

- Set up an MPH information table or kiosk at your all candidates' meeting:
  - Sell white bands. Order by calling 1-877-BUY-FAIR or 613-241-7007 xt. 232
  - Provide media representatives, candidates and the public with additional information about MPH
  - Hand out “Vote for Me” posters/ brochures. Ask that they be reproduced and posted around the community.
  - Have supporter sign-on sheets available in order to provide an opportunity for interested individuals

to join the campaign

- To order MPH materials (stickers, posters and barrier tape) email [materials@makepovertyhistory.ca](mailto:materials@makepovertyhistory.ca)

- b) Announce other election campaign activities being hosted in your community

## 12 After the event

- a) **TEAM DEBRIEFING:** Review and assess the successes and challenges of organizing this event, and discuss how your efforts may be improved the next time. Discuss the commitments extracted from each candidate and develop a strategy for following up.

- b) **POST EVENT FOLLOW-UPS:**

- i. **Media:** Follow up with reporters that attend your event. Ensure that they are provided with additional information on MPH, that they know your name, contact information and that

you are available for comments.

- ii. **Candidates:** Send a short thank you note to participating candidates in which you reiterate any commitments they have made to supporting our goals.

- iii. **Make Poverty History National Office:** Forward completed candidate pledge forms, campaign sign on sheets, and report-back form to the office in Ottawa in a timely fashion. Our mailing address is:

**1 Nicholas St., Suite 300**

**Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7**

**fax: 613 241-5302**

**[elections@makepovertyhistory.ca](mailto:elections@makepovertyhistory.ca)**

Send us campaign stories and photos of your event for posting on our website:

[makepovertyhistory.ca/en/connect-and-share](http://makepovertyhistory.ca/en/connect-and-share)

Post a blog to the Make Poverty History web site.

- iv. **Newly elected MP:** Once the election is over send a letter of congratulations to your MP restating any commitments they made to the MPH federal ask. You may also request a meeting. See the MP Advocacy Kit available online at [www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/vote)

- c) **KEEP THE MOMENTUM ALIVE!** Refer to “Eight Ways to Make Poverty an Election Issue” on page two of this guide for additional action ideas.

# Job Description for “MP to Make Poverty History”

Citizens and voters of  
electoral district  
are seeking  
qualified applicants for the  
position of  
“Member of  
Parliament to  
Make Poverty  
History”.

## Responsibilities:

- Supporting the Make Poverty History goals of more and better aid, trade justice, debt cancellation and ending child poverty in Canada and doing all you can to help achieve them.
- Actively listening to constituents and giving voice to their poverty-related concerns in Parliament.
- Raising and speaking in support of the Make Poverty History goals in the House of Commons, in Committees and in party caucus.
- Voting in favour of legislation that will help to alleviate poverty domestically and globally.
- Promoting awareness of Make Poverty History issues in caucus and among fellow parliamentarians.

## Qualifications:

- An understanding of poverty-related issues globally and in Canada.
- A record of community engagement on poverty-related issues.
- A commitment to use their position as MP to promote policy changes that will help to make poverty history both globally and in Canada.

# Sample News Advisory for an All Candidates' meeting

**For immediate release:**

[release date should be 3 to 5 days in advance of All Candidates' Meeting, weekly newspapers will have to get it at least 10 days in advance]

## Ending Poverty is on the Federal Election Agenda As Local Candidates Get Set for Make Poverty History Job Interview

**WHAT:** All candidates' meeting on poverty issues

**WHO:** Jane Doe (Conservatives), John Smith (NDP), Jane Jones (Liberal), Bill Smith (Green)  
[list all participants and party affiliation]

**WHEN:** [list time and date]

**WHERE:** The Circle Square Community Centre, Main Hall, 73 Fox Drive  
[give exact address of your event]

Federal Election candidates from the riding of [indicate your riding] will be participating in a "Job Interview for MP to Make Poverty History All Candidates' Meeting" set for [time, date and location].

With one in eight Canadian children living in poverty and almost half the world's population living on less than \$2 a day, poverty is one of the most important issues facing the Canadian government. Federal candidates will have the opportunity to share what they would do, if elected, to make poverty history at home and abroad.

The all candidates' meeting is being organized by local Make Poverty History supporters [and list any co-sponsoring groups as well]. Make Poverty History Canada is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, the world's largest anti-poverty coalition made up of national campaigns in over 100 countries. In Canada, over a quarter of a million people have signed on to the campaign.

For more information, contact:

**[name and contact information]**

Make Poverty History

Phone: (416) 222-2222

Cell: (416) 333-3333

# Sample Letter to the Editor

## Ending Poverty is on the Federal Election Agenda

Around the world, 1 billion people live in abject poverty. Over 50,000 people die every day from poverty related causes, and every night 800 million people go to bed hungry. And poverty does not end at our borders. In Canada, 788,000 children are poor. Ending poverty, at home and abroad, should be at the forefront of this election campaign.

In December 2000, all United Nations members, including Canada, committed to reduce the number of people living in poverty by 2015. World leaders also committed to reaching the international target for aid spending of 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015. Canada, not even halfway to reaching the target, is failing the world's poor.

Here at home, the House of Commons unanimously resolved in 1989 to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Over eighteen years later and eight years past the deadline, 788,000 children, or nearly one in eight, are still poor.

Make Poverty History ([www.makepovertyhistory.ca](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca)) is calling for more and better aid, trade justice, 100% debt cancellation for the poorest countries and an end to child poverty in Canada. I call on all candidates to publicly support and work toward achieving Make Poverty History's goal of ending poverty at home and abroad.

# Sample Opinion Article: Vote to Make Poverty History

“...when we talk about 0.7%, we are really talking about reducing child mortality rates, creating decent jobs, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and allowing children to go to school.”

Around the world, 1 billion people live in abject poverty. Over 50,000 people die every day from poverty related causes. And every night 800 million people go to bed hungry. And poverty does not end at our borders. In Canada 788,000 children are poor. Ending poverty, at home and abroad, should be at the forefront of this election campaign.

All candidates and parties should say how they will make poverty history at home and abroad. And voters need to make a candidate or political party's position on poverty issues be a significant factor in choosing who they vote for in the next election.

Specifically we need to know where candidates and parties stand on these key issues: more and better aid, trade justice, debt cancellation, Aboriginal poverty and ending child poverty in Canada.

## More Aid

In December 2000, all United Nations members, including Canada, committed to reducing the number of people living in poverty by half by 2015. World leaders also committed to reaching the international target for aid spending of 0.7% by 2015. Canada, at less than half that level now, is failing the world's poor.

We need more and better aid to help end global poverty. Five countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Luxemburg, Norway and Netherlands have reached their 0.7%

commitment. Eleven countries, including United Kingdom, France and Germany have timelines for doing so. Canada, despite its relatively robust economy, is not among them. It must set a timetable to reach the 0.7 target within 10 years.

We should never forget that when we talk about 0.7% we are really talking about reducing child mortality rates, creating decent jobs, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and allowing children to go to school.

## Trade Justice

Trade justice is also needed to make poverty history. We need trade rules that allow poor countries to protect small farmers and staple crops. Governments in the South need to be able to access affordable medicine and maintain public services. Trade rules need to support, rather than undermine, human rights and environmental protection.

But global trade rules are not working for the poor. Trade rules currently force poor countries to open their markets, flooding them with cheap and subsidized goods from rich countries. Trade must contribute to creating decent work, promoting human rights and ending poverty worldwide.

The United Nations estimates that unfair trade rules deny poor countries \$700 billion every year. Canada must work towards international trade rules that enable developing

“The United Nations estimates that unfair trade rules deny poor countries \$700 billion every year.”

countries to support poor farmers and local industry to help end poverty.

## Cancelling the Debt

As a result of unprecedented public pressure, progress was made on debt cancellation at the 2005 G8 Summit. Those countries that have had their debts cancelled and don't need to repay crippling debts, are spending more on what really matters: food, clean water, housing, health care, jobs, education, and building their economies. In Tanzania for example, debt relief enabled the government to abolish primary school fees, leading to a 66% increase in attendance. But only about 30 of the 60 countries that need this break have benefited so far and more needs to be done.

Between 1970 and 2002, the poorest African countries received \$294 billion in loans, paid back \$298 billion in interest and principal, but still owe more than \$200 billion due to late penalties and accumulated interest. Poor countries have already paid their debt many times over.

In the past, Canada has been a leader in the fight for debt relief. It must become a leader again, demanding debt cancellation for all the poorest countries.

## Ending Child Poverty in Canada

Canada must also uphold its commitments to end child poverty at home. It is almost unimaginable that 788,000 Canadian children

may regularly pretend that they forgot to bring a lunch to school. That one in every eight children may be afraid to tell their parents that they need new gym shoes for school.

When we talk about child poverty what we are really saying is that poor children are at risk of living in sub-standard housing; having poor health and health care; not enough food and poor quality food; unsatisfactory grades in school; and inadequate access to friends and recreation – that means they don't have adequate access to fun.

Years ago, the government promised to act, promised to change this reality. In 1989 the House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. More than 15 years later and five years after the 2000 deadline, they have utterly failed to do so. The child poverty rate at 11.7% is exactly the same now as it was then.

We must end child poverty in Canada. We need more money for low-income families, affordable housing, decent jobs with a higher minimum wage, universal, affordable child care and the government must raise the annual Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5100. The government should also involve groups where poverty is predominant, such as Aboriginal People, women, minorities and youth in designing strategies to reduce poverty. If we don't hold the government accountable, we're failing our children.

Ending poverty must be a priority for the next government. The best way to make this happen is for voters to make it clear to candidates that they will be voting to make poverty history.

**BY LINE:**

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# Poverty Facts & Statistics

“Every 3 seconds a child dies from poverty-related causes.”

- Nearly half of the world’s population lives on less than US\$2 a day.
- 1 billion people live in abject poverty on less than US\$1 a day.
- 50,000 people die from poverty-related causes every day.
- Every three seconds a child dies from poverty-related causes.
- 800 million people go to bed hungry every night.
- 880 million people lack access to basic healthcare.
- More than 800,000 Canadian children are living in poverty.
- Five countries – including Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Denmark – have reached their 0.7% commitment. Another 11 countries, including UK, France and Germany have timelines for doing so before 2015. Canada is not among them.

## United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

All UN Member States pledged in 2000 to meet the MDGs by 2015. The goals aim to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Five years on, although progress is being made in some areas, prospects for meeting the MDGs by 2015 are not good. Greater efforts are needed by both developed and developing country governments.

## Canada’s Aid Performance at a Glance

### OECD Figures for 2007

- According to the Development Assistance Committee at the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), in 2006 Canada gave 0.28% of Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Still well below the internationally agreed-to figure of 0.7%.
- Canada was ranked 16th out of 22 donor countries.

“In Tanzania, debt relief enabled the government to abolish primary school fees, leading to a 66% increase in attendance.”

## Child Poverty in Canada

- In 2007, 788,000 Canadian children, or nearly one in eight, are poor. First Nations children are disproportionately affected, with one in four children living in First Nations communities living in poverty.
- Canada’s child poverty rate of 11.7% is two to three times as high as the rates of Sweden, Norway or Finland.
- Every month, 770,000 people in Canada rely on food banks – 40% of whom are children.

- Applying the United Nations Human Development Index would rank First Nations communities 68th among 174 nations. Canada has dropped from first to eighth due, in part, to the housing and health conditions in First Nations communities

From the Assembly of First Nations “Make Poverty History for First Nations” campaign. More at [www.afn.ca](http://www.afn.ca)

## Aboriginal Poverty in Canada

- 1 in 4 First Nations children live in poverty, compared to 1 in 6 Canadian children.
- High school completion among First Nations youth is half the Canadian rate. At the current rate, it will take 28 years for First Nations to catch-up to the non-Aboriginal population.
- Suicide accounts for 38% of all deaths for First Nations youth aged 10-19.
- Life expectancy for First Nations men is 7.4 years less, and 5.2 years less for First Nations women, than Canadian men and women respectively.
- Nearly one in 30 live in homes without hot running water (3.7%), cold running water (3.5%) or flushing toilets (3.5%). 5,486 of the 88,485 houses on-reserve (6%) are without sewage services

# Frequently Asked Questions

“For every dollar generated by Canada’s economy, only one-third of one cent goes to help poor countries.”

## **ISSUE:** MORE & BETTER AID

**Q:** Can we afford to give more money to foreign aid without hurting social programs here in Canada?

**A:** Reaching the 0.7% target can be done in a practical and affordable way. Aid spending needs to increase by 15% annually over 10 years. We can do this without creating new taxes or adding to the deficit.

**Q:** What is the 0.7% target and why is this number so important?

**A:** In 1969, former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson recommended to the United Nations that rich countries allocate 0.7% of their Gross National Income to support poor countries. The recommendation was adopted by the UN. But Canada has so far failed to live up to our foreign aid goals – Canada now contributes only 0.28% of GNI to foreign aid. For every dollar generated by Canada’s economy, only one-third of one cent goes to help poor countries.

**Q:** What does Canada currently spend on aid? Where do we rank?

**A:** In 2006, Canada was ranked 16th out of 22 donor countries, coming in at only 0.28% of Gross National Income – not even halfway to the 0.7% United Nations target.

Five countries – including Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Denmark – have reached their 0.7% commitment. Another 11 countries, including UK, France and Germany have timelines for doing so before 2015. Canada, despite its robust economy with ongoing federal surpluses, is not among them.

**Q:** Do Canadians support increasing aid to developing countries?

**A:** Over a quarter of a million Canadians have signed on to the Make Poverty History campaign. The Prime Minister and Finance Minister have both received thousands of e-mails calling on them to increase aid. And a recent EKOS poll found that a majority of Canadians surveyed agreed that, “Canada should increase its humanitarian aid to poor countries even if it means less spending in other important areas.”

“With child poverty at 11.7%, Canada has one of the worst records among wealthy countries.”

## **ISSUE:** END CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA

### **Q:** Is child poverty really a problem in Canada?

**A:** 788,000 Canadian children, or one in eight, are poor. With child poverty at 11.7%, Canada has one of the worst records among wealthy countries.

### **Q:** How can a country as rich as Canada have so many children growing up in poverty?

**A:** In 1989, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. More than 18 years later and eight years after the 2000 deadline, they have clearly failed to do so and the poverty rate today remains the same as it was then.

### **Q:** How does growing up poor affect a child?

**A:** Low-income children are more likely to live in sub-standard housing, suffer from poor health and health care, lack sufficient quantity and quality of food, obtain unsatisfactory grades in school, and lack adequate access to friends and recreation. This also means they have fewer opportunities for fun compared to other children.

### **Q:** How can we end child poverty in Canada?

**A:** We need more money for low-income families, affordable housing, decent jobs with a higher minimum wage and universal affordable childcare. The government must raise the annual Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5100. It should also involve groups where poverty is predominant, such as Aboriginal people, women, immigrants, minorities and youth in designing a strategy to reduce poverty.

### **Q:** Who is the face of poverty in Canada?

**A:** A child of an immigrant family who moved to Canada in the past five years has a 50% chance of being low income. Aboriginal people have one of the highest rates of poverty—40% of off-reserve Aboriginal children are growing up below the poverty line.

### **Q:** What’s the progress to date on addressing child poverty?

**A:** The percentage of children living in poverty is unchanged since 1989. Since federal government support for housing stopped in 1993, the availability of affordable housing has drastically decreased. Today, about 1.4 million people need housing. On a positive note, the February 2005 federal budget allocated \$1.6 billion to social housing over two years. However, this funding has not been renewed. In 1996, the federal minimum wage was abolished and replaced by provincial and territorial minimum wages. An income of \$10 per hour of full time work is needed for a single person to live above the poverty line. All the provincial/territorial minimum wage rates are below \$10 per hour.

# Briefing Note: More & Better Aid

“A quarter of a million Canadians and over 1000 organizations have endorsed the Make Poverty History campaign.”

## The Issue

Over a billion people live in abject poverty. Poverty kills more than 50,000 people every day – one third of all deaths. Every three seconds, a child dies as a result of extreme poverty.

Make Poverty History is calling for more and better aid, trade justice, 100% debt cancellation for all the poorest countries and an end to child poverty in Canada.

Canadians support an end to poverty. A quarter of a million Canadians and over 1000 organizations have endorsed the Make Poverty History campaign.

Parliamentarians are calling for action to end global poverty. On June 28, 2005, the House of Commons unanimously passed a groundbreaking resolution. It calls on the federal government to “set a plan to reach 0.7% by 2015; introduce legislation to ensure that aid is provided in a manner consistent with Canada’s human rights obligations and respectful of the perspectives of those living in poverty; and improve our aid effectiveness by strengthening the partnership with civil society, both in Canada and overseas.”

## More Aid: Increasing Our Resource Commitments

Canada has pledged to address global poverty, but is failing to implement its promises. Nearly eight years ago, all members of the United Nations committed

to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to meet minimum targets to reduce poverty, hunger, illiteracy, discrimination against women and environmental degradation by 2015. The MDGs reiterated a global pledge for wealthy countries to spend 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) on aid.

Currently, Canada devotes less than half of this amount. Five countries – including Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Denmark – have reached their 0.7% commitment. Another 11 countries, including UK, France and Germany have timelines for doing so before 2015. Canada, despite its relatively robust economy, is not among them.

We need a commitment to raise development assistance by 15% annually over 10 years to reach the 0.7% target. These increases are affordable.

## Better Aid: Ending Poverty the Exclusive Goal for Canadian Foreign Aid

We need both more and better aid. The new resources should be accompanied by the introduction of legislation setting poverty reduction as the exclusive purpose of Canadian aid. This legislation would assure parliamentarians and the public that increased aid resources are directed to the needs of people living in poverty.

Canada has improved the poverty focus of its

“An explicit and comprehensive strategy for contributing to poverty reduction should guide Canadian aid policy.”

aid program since 1999. Funding for basic education doubled between 1996 and 2002 and there has been a 40% increase in primary health spending.

An explicit and comprehensive strategy for contributing to poverty reduction should guide Canadian aid policy. Unfortunately, approaches to improve aid effectiveness are coming with high levels of donor-imposed conditions to liberalize trade or privatize the delivery of public services. At the same time, civil society is being ignored in the development process.

Between 2001 and 2003, almost 25% of Canadian aid increases were allocated to Afghanistan and Iraq, because of foreign policy pressures. Canada has also joined some donors in the OECD Development Assistance Committee who have called to expand the criteria for what can be counted as aid – particularly for military and security aspects of peace operations.

As the boundaries between legitimate concerns for global security and international cooperation in developing countries become increasingly unclear, Canadian aid should be focused on

ending poverty.

Progress is being made toward the realization of more effective aid spending. This spring a private member’s bill (Bill C-293), the Better Aid Bill, was passed into law. It makes poverty reduction the focus of Canada’s aid program and require much better accountability for how it is spent.

## Recommendations

The Canadian government should:

- Set a timetable for reaching the 0.7% of GNI target within 10 years.
- Implement Bill C-293 making ending poverty the exclusive goal of Canada’s foreign aid in a way consistent with our human rights obligations.

### MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

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Make Poverty History Canada is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, the world’s largest anti-poverty coalition made up of national campaigns in over 100 countries.

# Briefing Note:

## End Child & Family Poverty in Canada

“Poverty among Aboriginal groups remains appallingly high... if Canadian Aboriginal people were viewed as a distinct category, they would end up 78th on the UN Human Development Index – the ranking

### The Issue

On November 24, 1989, Canada’s House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution stating that: “This House seeks to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.”

More than 18 years later, and seven years after the deadline of 2000, what has happened?

- 1 in 8 children in Canada (788,000) lives in poverty.
- Canada’s child poverty rate of 11.7% is exactly the same as it was in 1989 when the all-party resolution was passed. This is more than twice as high as the rates of Sweden, Norway or Finland.
- Every month, 720,000 people in Canada rely on food banks—40% of whom are children.

Canada is a rich country, ranked fourth in the world on the 2007 UN Human Development Index. But in the midst of wealth, almost five million Canadians live in poverty. Poverty is increasing for youth, workers, young families and immigrant and visible minority groups.

Poverty among Aboriginal groups remains appallingly high, both on and off reserve. In fact, if Canadian Aboriginal people were viewed as a distinct category, they would end up 78th on the UN Human Development Index – the ranking currently held by Kazakhstan.

### More affordable housing & higher paying jobs

Since the federal government left the housing sector in 1993, the availability of affordable housing – particularly for people living in poverty – has decreased drastically across the country. Today, about 1.5 million people need housing.

At the same time, minimum wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. The federal government abolished the federal minimum wage in 1996, making wages in federally regulated sectors subject to provincial and territorial minimum wage rates. The minimum wage rates in every province and territory, however, are all below \$10.00 per hour—the basic rate required for a single person to live above the poverty line in an urban centre in Canada.

Canada must take action to create more affordable housing and re-instate a federal minimum wage.

### More money for low-income families

The National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) and the Canada Child Tax Benefit provide vital support for families. However, these funds are not enough to lift many low-income families out of poverty. What’s more, most provincial governments “claw back” the NCBS from families on social assistance.

The federal government needs to increase the Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5,200 per child and ensure the benefit is available to all low-income families.

## More action on childcare

Lack of affordable, quality childcare is a major barrier preventing low-income families from obtaining work. Lack of childcare also affects women disproportionately. In 2006 there were only enough regulated child care spaces for 17.2% of children aged 0-12 in Canada – about 1 in 6 children.

## Recommendations

The Canadian government should:

- Raise the annual Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5,200 per child and ensure all low-income children receive full benefit of this program.
- Involve groups where poverty is predominant, such as Aboriginal People, women, minorities and youth in the design and implementation of a domestic poverty reduction strategy.

### MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

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