

A LIBERAL GOVERNMENT WILL RENEW THE FOCUS ON CHILD POVERTY

Earlier this week, Canadians celebrated National Child Day. Originally established in 1993 by the Liberal government, this day coincides with the 18th anniversary of the unanimous adoption of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Canada has a lot to be proud of. With the programs that were put in place over the past decade, we have actually seen the living standards for children increase. It was a Liberal government in 1998 that introduced the National Child Benefit, the single most important contributor to the decline in child poverty in recent years.

As a whole the percentage of Canadians living in poverty declined from 16 percent in 1996 to 11 percent in 2005. In real numbers, this meant that 1 million fewer Canadians were poor in 2005 than in 1996.

But this still leaves 3.4 million Canadians who are living beneath the poverty line. Indeed, on this National Child Day, the United Nations have slammed the Conservative's policies. They have had ample opportunity to correct their negligence towards the most vulnerable children, to create an accessible national childcare plan and to meet the needs of aboriginal children and have sadly chosen to do nothing.

Up until now, there has been no leadership from this Conservative Government and no action for the children of Canada. However, I am encouraged by the announcement by Liberal leader Stéphane Dion for his proposal for the **30-50 Poverty Reduction Plan**.

Over 5 years, a new Liberal government will:

1. reduce the number of Canadians living beneath the poverty line by at least **30 percent**; and
2. reduce the number of children living in poverty by at least **50 percent**.

While the plan will include measures that would expand and improve the Child Tax Benefit, address homelessness and a national childcare plan, the main tool will be through Income Support. Many children and families in poverty are the working poor. Creating a refundable tax credit for our lowest income earners will benefit those who face the "welfare wall", the disincentive to seek employment because of the benefits they lose and the taxes they pay.

Over the next 20 years we face a labour shortage. Getting more Canadians off of welfare and into the work force will help address this.

Conservative Party ideology leaves no room for the vulnerable. We need a fairer Canada. This means that we must rise to the challenge of helping those less fortunate fully share in our prosperity.



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