

QUESTIONNAIRE
for the four federal leaders of parties

Poverty is rampant in Canada. Six out of Canada's ten provinces have adopted poverty reduction plans and are looking up to the federal government to come on board. Provinces cannot fight poverty alone.

In particular, there was an all-party resolution passed unanimously by the Canadian parliament in 1989 calling for an end to child poverty by the year 2000, but no plan was adopted to achieve this goal and after 15 years, child poverty rates remain at high levels today.

Further, over the last three decades the gap between the rich and the poor has grown sharply in Canada. The top 10 per cent of Canadians earned 10 times as much as the bottom 10 per cent in 2008, the OECD said. That's up from a ratio of 8 to 1 in the early 1990s. In 2008 the highest group of Canadians made on average \$103,500 that year, while the lowest group made \$10,260, according to the report 'Divided We Stand: Why the Inequality keeps Rising'. The gap has further widened further now and the story is much worse when we compare the after tax income. In 2013 the top 10 per cent of Canadian earners saw their after-tax income rise on average by \$100, to an average of \$183,600 and by contrast, the bottom 10 per cent saw their average income shrink by the same amount, to \$9,200 per year from \$9,300 a year earlier. This makes the difference a whopping 20 times gap. The middle class have not seen much benefit either. Middle-income families are suffering from the fact that the cost of living has been increasing much faster than the marginal raise in their income.

Based on the above preamble, we have few questions for you and your party. Please address them as to how you and your party will tackle them if voted to power.

1. A National Poverty Reduction Strategy had been endorsed by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights in its April 2007 report. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance recommended in its 2007 pre-budget report that the Federal government develop a poverty reduction strategy with targets and timelines to reduce child poverty in Canada. Till today there is no movement on this issue. How and by when would you go about setting up a National Poverty Reduction Plan at the Federal Government level?

2. How will you act to ensure the 1989 All Party resolution will be realized, even if over 15 years later?
3. At a broader level, how would you work to close the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada
4. Would you create a Fairness Test of Fairness Impact Study (akin to Environmental and Gender Impact Studies) as one method to close the gap between rich and poor in Canada? Would you include an independent Federal Fairness Commissioner to report annually on progress in closing the gap between rich and poor?
5. Will your party work towards implementing a progressive tax policy to close the gap between the wealthiest and the rest of the rest of the Canadians?
6. Following the foot prints of municipalities and businesses in few provinces of our Country, would you pass a Living Wage Law in place of Minimum wage?
7. Will your party work toward creating a universal Early Education/Child Care program like the province of Quebec?
8. Will your party work to create Universal Pharmacare as a good way to strengthen health care, reduce health care costs and fight poverty?
9. What will your party do to make housing more affordable for Canadians?
10. How will you work towards implementing the Kelowna Accord in letter and spirit - a promise made to leaders of five national aboriginal organizations in Canada?