

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS¹

In from the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing, and Homelessness

December 2009 Report issued by:
The Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,
Science and Technology

THE WELFARE WALL

Recommendation 1

p. 31

The Committee recommends that the federal government adopt as a core social policy poverty eradication goal that all programmes dealing with poverty and homelessness are to lift Canadians out of poverty rather than make living within poverty more manageable and that the federal government work with the provinces and territories to adopt a similar goal.

Recommendation 2

p. 33

The Committee recommends that provincial governments increase current limits on assets for qualifying applicants for the first six to 12 months, to allow those relying on social assistance for short periods of time to retain the assets they need to re-engage in the labour force and regain their economic footing.

Recommendation 3

p. 34

The Committee recommends that federal government modify all federal income security programs, e.g., Employment Insurance, to better protect Canadians in low-income households who experience short-term gaps in income.

¹ Taken from Appendix 6 of the full report, and put into broad categories. Page references refer to the [full report](#).

CHILD POVERTY

Recommendation 4

p.35

The Committee recommends that the federal government establish with the provinces a goal that individuals and families, regardless of the reasons for their need, receive incomes totaling at least after-tax LICOs.

WORKING POVERTY

Recommendation 5

p. 41

The Committee recommends that the federal government publish a Green Paper by 31 December 2010, to include the costs and benefits of current practices with respect to income supports and of options to reduce and eliminate poverty, including a basic annual income based on a negative income tax, and to include a detailed assessment of completed pilot projects on a basic income in New Brunswick and Manitoba.

Recommendation 6

p. 44

To demonstrate a federal commitment to adequate minimum wages, the Committee recommends that the federal government reinstate a federal minimum wage at \$10/hour, indexed to the Consumer Price Index, and that suppliers of goods and services to the federal government be required to pay its employees at least that amount.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Recommendation 7

p. 48

The Committee recommends that the federal government develop a new program to insure against income losses due to long-term employment interruption that covers those who are not included under the Employment Insurance Act.

Recommendation 8

p. 48

The Committee recommends that the federal government amend the *Employment Insurance Act* to provide benefits for a longer period to workers who become unemployed after a long attachment to the workforce, and that the longer benefit period not be based solely on regional unemployment rates.

Recommendation 9

p. 50

The Committee recommends that the two-week waiting period for Employment Insurance benefits be removed for people who are taking compassionate or parental leave funded through the EI program.

Recommendation 10

p. 50

The Committee recommends that the federal government re-engineer the Employment Insurance program to allow adjustments to anticipated economic downturns, rather than be based solely on recent but past experience.

Recommendation 11

p. 51

The Committee recommends that the federal government amend the EI program to extend its parental insurance benefits to self-employed individuals, with premiums assessed similar to those being paid by employees who access this benefit.

Recommendation 12

p. 51

The Committee recommends that the federal government expand EI sickness benefits over time to 50 weeks, to provide appropriate support for eligible beneficiaries experiencing medium-term illnesses or disabilities.

Recommendation 13

p. 53

The Committee recommends that the federal government include reinstatement of experience rating for consideration in any redesign or substantial modification to the EI program.

Recommendation 14

p. 53

The Committee recommends that the federal government make EI-funded training available to those who have contributed to the EI fund over time, but are not eligible for benefits.

Recommendation 15

p. 53

The Committee recommends that the federal government permit the inclusion of advanced language training and training that could equip those with credentials from other countries to qualify for Canadian recognition be permitted within training funded through the EI program.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Recommendation 16

p. 56

The Committee recommends that the federal government coordinate a nationwide federal/provincial initiative on early childhood learning.

Recommendation 17

p. 56

The Committee recommends that federal funding programs and allocations emphasize and support initiatives that keep disadvantaged youth enrolled and engaged in schools, including effective counselling, after-school programs, homework clubs, and youth centres.

Recommendation 18

p. 59

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in conjunction with the Council of Ministers of Education, encourage and support actions to reduce the drop-out rate, including the establishment of targets and time-lines, with regular reporting on progress.

Recommendation 19

p. 59

The Committee recommends that federal government, in conjunction with the Council of Ministers of Education, encourage and support actions to reduce the drop-out rates among Aboriginal students, on-reserve or off-reserve, including the establishment of targets and time-lines, with regular reporting on progress.

Recommendation 20

p. 60

The Committee recommends that the federal government monitor and report on new post-secondary student aid programs, including comparisons with affordability and debt load results of the programs that have been replaced.

Recommendation 21

p. 61

To redress the under-representation of low-income people from some groups, e.g., Aboriginal people and people with disabilities, among students in post-secondary education, the Committee recommends that the federal government offer additional tax support for post-secondary education targeted to these students and their families.

Recommendation 22

p. 62

The Committee recommends that the federal government sustain strong financial support for adult and family literacy programs, with a special priority given to groups over-represented among high-school non-completers.

Recommendation 23

p. 63

The Committee recommends that federal and provincial governments collectively amend existing income security programs to provide secure funding to training participants for long enough periods to ensure opportunities for secure employment at adequate incomes.

Recommendation 24

p. 63

The Committee recommends that the federal government set aside a fixed percentage of training positions (to match the percentage established for federal employment equity targets) for persons with disabilities in all renewing and new labour market agreements.

Recommendation 25

p. 63

The Committee recommends that the federal government explicitly identify immigrants as a population to be targeted in training programs, including training to reduce language and other barriers to the labour market in all renewing and new labour market agreements.

ACCESS TO HEALTH

Recommendation 26

p. 66

In recognition of poverty's effect on health, the Committee recommends that the federal government instruct its central agencies to allocate resources to prevent and address negative health outcomes associated with poverty and unemployment.

Recommendation 27

p. 67

The Committee recommends that the federal government work with provincial and territorial governments and appropriate other stakeholders to develop a national pharmacare program, building on progress underway in some provinces.

Recommendation 28

p. 69

Recognizing the importance of local contexts with respect to identifying and implementing programs to reduce poverty, the Committee recommends that federal policy initiatives seek and support local voluntary sector and municipal agencies as active partners in design and delivery of federal government initiatives at the community level.

Recommendation 29

p. 69

To facilitate support for local approaches and solutions to complex social and economic problems, the Committee recommends that the federal government explore and implement additional Urban Development Agreements among federal, provincial and municipal governments, in concert with community-identified leaders and priorities.

Recommendation 30

p. 70

The Committee recommends that the federal government establish a fund to allow groups over-represented among the persistently low-income to have legal representation in law reform cases with respect to their human rights.

INCOME TRANSFERS TO INDIVIDUALS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Recommendation 31

p. 72

In recognition of both Canadian obligations under international human rights law, and their importance in claiming access to appropriate programs and services, the Committee recommends that the federal government explicitly cite international obligations ratified by Canada in any new federal legislation or legislative amendments relevant to poverty, housing and homelessness.

Recommendation 32

p. 72

The Committee recommends that the federal government analyze gender-based differences in benefits to men and women when designing and implementing new tax measures.

Recommendation 33

p. 73

The Committee recommends that the federal government increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors to ensure that economic households are not below the poverty line as defined by the low income cut-off levels, and that intergovernmental collaboration ensure that such increases do not result in the loss of eligibility for provincial/territorial subsidies or services for seniors.

Recommendation 34

p. 74

Recognizing the important contribution the National Child Benefit (NCB) can make to reducing child poverty, the Committee recommends that the NCB be raised, incrementally and predictably, to reach \$5,000 (in 2009 dollars) by 2012.

Recommendation 35

p. 75

The Committee recommends that the federal government commit to a schedule of longer term planned increases to the Working Income Tax Benefit to bring recipients at least to the LICO line.

Recommendation 36

p. 77

The Committee recommends that just as the federal government invests in "shovel-ready" physical infrastructure to combat recession with their provincial counterparts, so too should "shovel-ready" social infrastructure be targeted for investment, specifically housing, income security, and social agencies, whose ability to serve can be quickly enhanced through increased and accelerated investment in the Canada Social Transfer.

HOUSING

Recommendation 37

p. 87

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide sustained and adequate funding through the Affordable Housing Initiative to increase the supply of affordable housing.

Recommendation 38

p. 89

The Committee recommends that the federal government issue a White Paper on tax measures to support construction of rental housing in general and affordable rental housing in particular, including the donation of funds, lands or buildings for low-income housing provision.

Recommendation 39

p. 89

The Committee recommends that the federal government clarify the mandate of Canada Lands Corporation to favour use of surplus federal lands for development of affordable housing and to expedite planning processes to facilitate this use.

Recommendation 40

p. 91

The Committee recommends that the federal government support the work of local and provincial non-profit housing developers by making housing programs longer term to accommodate five-year development cycles and ten-year planning cycles, and to permit more effective planning at the local and provincial levels.

Recommendation 41

p. 92

To assist tenants facing discrimination in housing, the Committee recommends the explicit identification of civil legal aid as an element to be supported by the Canada Social Transfer.

Recommendation 42

p. 96

The Committee recommends that the federal government extend the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program as a permanent program, increase the budget allocations for this program, and amend eligibility requirements to take into account differential costs for repairs in different communities across Canada, and projects converting housing units for affordable rental accommodation.

Recommendation 43

p. 103

The Committee supports the use of rent supplements to provide faster access to affordable housing and recommends that the federal government, with provincial housing authorities, private landlords' associations and non-profit housing providers, assess the impact of portable housing allowances on rents.

Recommendation 44

p. 104

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial governments, representatives of municipal governments, First Nation organizations, and other housing providers, develop a national housing and homelessness strategy to include:

- priorities established by and for each provincial and territory with respect to meeting existing needs for affordable and secure housing;
- a 10-year commitment of funds from the federal government, to include similar commitments from provincial and territorial governments that will receive these funds;
- annual reporting on how the money is being spent, with particular attention to the number of people housed who could not afford to secure housing in the private market;
- a specific focus, with targets and funding commitments, with respect to meeting the needs for affordable housing for urban Aboriginal peoples;
- a simpler, more integrated application process for funds, cutting across programs related to housing funded at the federal level;
- the integration of the Homelessness Partnering Initiative, with an expanded mandate and budget to support combined local housing and homelessness plans and the initiatives identified in them; and
- a thorough evaluation at the end of the 10-year period to assess achievements and continuing gaps.

HOMELESSNESS

Recommendation 45

p. 112

The Committee recommends that federal funding focussed on homelessness be sustained until a combined strategy on housing and homelessness is developed to guide federal investment.

Recommendation 46

p. 114

The Committee recommends that the federal government, with provincial and territorial governments and health researchers across Canada, provide funding for physical health services for people who are homeless.

Recommendation 47

p. 115

The Committee recommends that the Homelessness Partnering Strategy be expanded to play a greater coordinating role within the federal government, engaging all departments and agencies with a mandate that includes housing and homelessness, especially for those groups over-represented among those in need.

Recommendation 48

p. 115

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide financial incentives to encourage communities already supported through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy to use a 10-year time horizon in adjusting and renewing their community plans.

Recommendation 49

p. 117

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to provide direct funding for and continued support of related research and knowledge dissemination about a —housing first approach to eliminating homelessness.

OVER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Recommendation 50

p. 132

The Committee recommends that the federal government, at the next meeting of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers of Labour, take a leadership role in encouraging a harmonization of provincial and territorial workers' compensation programs.

Recommendation 51

p. 132

The Committee recognizes the importance of support services for persons with disabilities entering jobs, and that these supports are often lost when employment earnings begin. Therefore, the Committee recommends that provincial and territorial governments extend these supports for up to 12 months following employment to persons with disabilities leaving social assistance, and that these governments negotiate with employers to provide these supports indefinitely for those earning low incomes.

Recommendation 52

p. 133

The Committee recommends that the Government make the Disability Tax Credit refundable.

Recommendation 53

p. 134

The Committee recommends that the federal government develop and implement a basic income guarantee at or above LICO for people with severe disabilities.

Recommendation 54

p. 134

The Committee recommends that provincial and territorial governments use the savings realized in social assistance spending with the introduction of the basic income guarantee for people with severe disabilities to redesign and enhance delivery of disability supports to all persons with disabilities, regardless of the source of their incomes.

Recommendation 55

p. 135

The Committee recommends that the federal government sustain and increase the funding for the Opportunities Fund for persons with disabilities, with a clear mission to address barriers to the labour force.

Recommendation 56

p. 136

The Committee recommends that all provincial and territorial governments amend their social assistance legislation to exempt savings under the Disability Savings Plan from any asset depletion requirements with respect to qualifications for or benefits from social assistance and social services programs.

Recommendation 57

p. 136

Until mainstream training programs provide training opportunities for persons with disabilities proportionate to their representation in the population, the Committee recommends that the federal government extend and expand funding for such training through the Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities.

NEWCOMERS IN CANADA

Recommendation 58

p. 141

The Committee recommends that federal government work with provincial governments and social housing providers to take the necessary steps to provide larger housing units to larger families.

Recommendation 59

p. 145

The Committee recommends that the federal government develop a tax credit for employers who hire newcomers for their first job in their field or area of expertise.

Recommendation 60

p. 146

The Committee recommends that the federal government reduce the immigration sponsorship period from 10 years to three years similar to the regulations pertaining to conjugal sponsorship, and make a commensurate reduction in the residency requirement for entitlement to a monthly pension under the *Old Age Security Act*.

Recommendation 61

p. 147

The Committee recommends that the federal government extend eligibility for the resettlement assistance program for refugees to two years for regular cases and to four years for joint assistance sponsorships.

Recommendation 62

p. 148

The Committee recommends that the federal government establish a repayment schedule and loan forgiveness program for travel loan repayment by government-sponsored refugees, that takes into account the time needed to integrate and the household income upon employment.

Recommendation 63

p. 149

The Committee recommends that the federal government accelerate its work with provincial governments and other relevant agencies to complete and implement a framework leading to the recognition of qualifications from other countries, and report annually to Parliament on its progress.

Recommendation 64

p. 149

The Committee recommends that the federal government support bridging programs, especially for immigrants with professional qualifications from their countries of origin, through immigrant settlement funds and agreements.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Recommendation 65

p. 159

The Committee recommends that the federal government provide on-going subsidies to off-reserve, non-profit Aboriginal housing providers for new and existing units to ensure increased supply of affordable housing.

Recommendation 66

p. 161

The Committee recommends that the Urban Aboriginal Strategy be used as a platform for greater investment and collaboration in addressing the poverty and housing problems facing urban Aboriginal peoples.

Recommendation 67

p. 163

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue and expand targeted funding and programming for training and employment supports for urban Aboriginal peoples, and their organizations, where appropriate.

Recommendation 68

p. 163

The Committee recommends that the federal government require an Aboriginal working group to identify priorities for urban Aboriginal people and designate funding for this purpose within all federal funding to communities to address housing and homelessness.

COMMON CAUSE

Recommendation 69

p. 167

The Committee recommends that the federal government review and revise grants and contributions reporting requirements among federal departments and agencies to enhance horizontal and vertical coordination of reporting and encourage multi-year funding among federal granting agencies, where problems that programs are addressing are persistent and longer term.

Recommendation 70

p. 167

The Committee recommends that the federal government recognize and stabilize the contribution of voluntary sector organizations with respect to poverty, housing and homelessness, by budgeting adequate support for these organizations to accomplish not only the delivery of government-funded services, but also the community-building activities that only this sector can provide.

Recommendation 71

p. 168

The Committee recommends that federal government use grants and contributions to fund community-based organizations to provide innovative solutions, to share innovation, and where appropriate to replicate successful community-based initiatives involved in poverty reduction, housing affordability, and supporting homeless people.

Recommendation 72

p. 169

The Committee recommends that federal and provincial governments, acting internally, bilaterally and/or multilaterally, review current policies and programs and new initiatives in the context of eliminating and avoiding both gaps and duplication, through a whole-of-government approach to poverty, housing and homelessness issues.

Recommendation 73

p. 171

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue and expand support to Statistics Canada for the collection, analysis and more affordable dissemination of data important to the evaluation and improvement of social programs with respect to poverty, housing and homelessness.

Recommendation 74

p. 172

The Committee recommends that the federal government continue to support knowledge exchange with respect to poverty, housing and homelessness.