

# 15 YEARS & COUNTING...



MANITOBA  
CHILD POVERTY  
REPORT CARD 2004



# MANITOBA CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD 2004

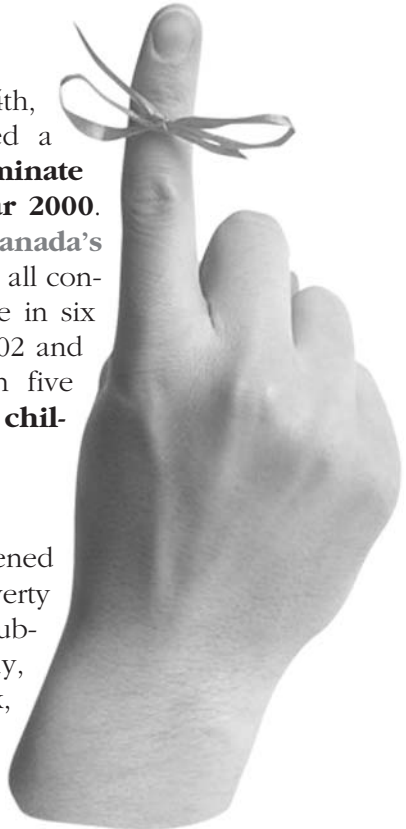
## WE REMEMBER

We remember that on November 24th, 1989, the House of Commons passed a unanimous all-party resolution to **eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000**. **Fifteen years later that promise to Canada's children has been unfulfilled** and we all continue to bear the costs. In Canada, one in six children (15.6%) lived in poverty in 2002 and in Manitoba this increased to one in five (20.8%). **Overall, 53,000 Manitoban children lived in poverty in 2002.**

Thankfully, the situation has not worsened considerably since 1989, but child poverty remains a major problem with little substantial improvement. Unquestionably, eliminating child poverty is no easy task, but some goals are worth striving for. Therefore, it is time for a renewed commitment by all of us to eliminate child poverty in Canada.

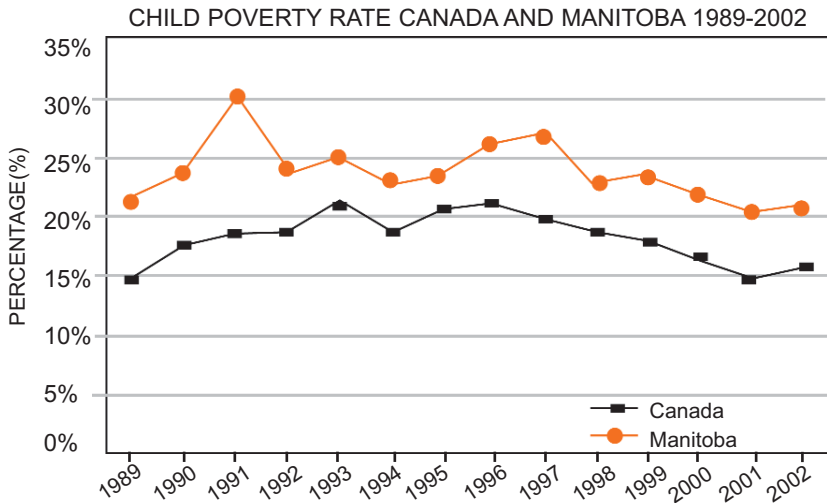
**“This House...seeks to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.”**

**- Unanimous all party resolution, November 24th, 1989**



## NO IMPROVEMENT SINCE 1989

In 1989, Manitoba experienced a child poverty rate of 21.8%. In 2002 the figure remains fairly consistent at 20.8%. As expected, there have been ups and downs over the past fifteen years but overall, between 1989 and 2002 the child poverty rate in Manitoba averaged 25%, consistently above the national rate. There are year to year variations, but overall, the rate of child poverty had a flat trend from 1980 to 2002<sup>1</sup> indicating no overall change. Sadly, we are not much further ahead than 1989.



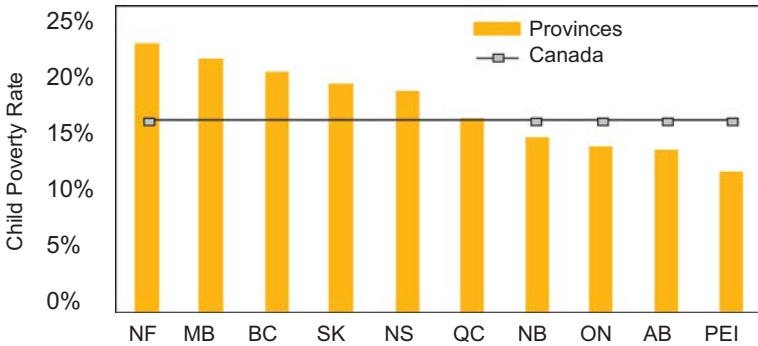
Source: Statistics Canada's *Income Trends in Canada*, 2002, 13F0022XCB

There is, however, a positive note. The poverty rate for female lone parent led families has improved significantly since 1989. In 1989, 68.9% of these families lived below the poverty line. In 2002, 50.9% of female headed lone parent led families were living in poverty – nearly a 20% improvement. However, we should certainly not be satisfied with more than half of children in these families remaining poor. On the other hand, poverty rates for two parent families have increased since 1989 from 14.6% to 15.8%. **Manitoba has the second highest child poverty rate for children in two parent families among Canadian provinces.**

## MANITOBA RATES AMONG HIGHEST IN CANADA

In 1989, Manitoba had the highest rate of child poverty in Canada and in 2002 it remains among the highest of all provinces, second only to Newfoundland.

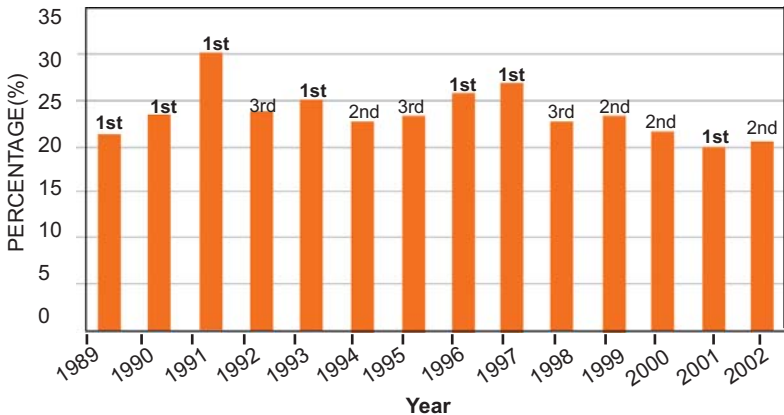
CHILD POVERTY RATE, CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE  
CANADA AND PROVINCES



Source: Statistics Canada's Income Trends in Canada, 2002, 13F0022XCB

Since 1989 Manitoba has been among the top three provinces in terms of children living in poverty in every single year. Our slight improvement in the provincial rankings from 2001 to 2002 does not reflect a decrease in our child poverty rate, but rather an increase in Newfoundland's.

MANITOBA'S NATIONAL RANK 1989-2002



Source: Statistics Canada's Income Trends in Canada, 2002, 13F0022XCB

MANITOBA HAS THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN POOR SINCE 1996 (8.9% VS. 5% FOR CANADA)

65.8% OF MANITOBA CHILDREN IN FAMILIES WITH LOW INCOME WERE IN FAMILIES THAT WORKED!



## POVERTY REMAINS DEEP FOR MANITOBA CHILDREN & FAMILIES

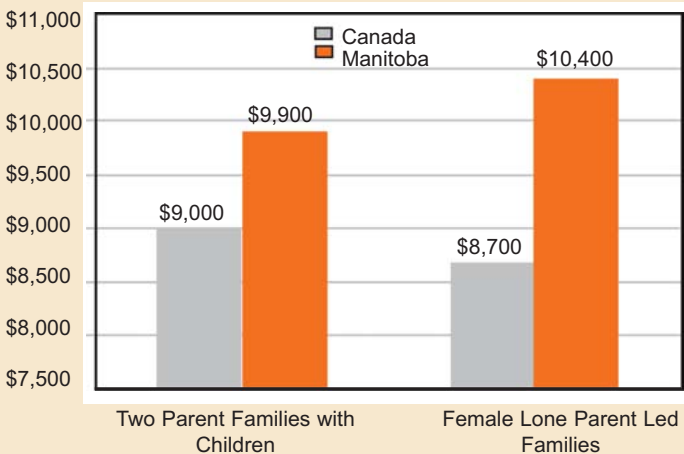
The depth of poverty for families in Manitoba remains a serious concern. In 2002 low income couples with children required an average of \$9,900 to reach the Low Income Cut-Off, an increase from \$9500 in 1989.

While the depth of poverty for female lone parent led families has improved by \$1,200 since 1989, in 2002 they still required an average of \$10,400 to move out of poverty. Manitoba's low income gap for female led lone parent families is the highest in Canada (tied with British Columbia) and well over the Canadian average of \$8700.



**Female lone parent led families in Manitoba remain among the poorest of all families in Canada.**

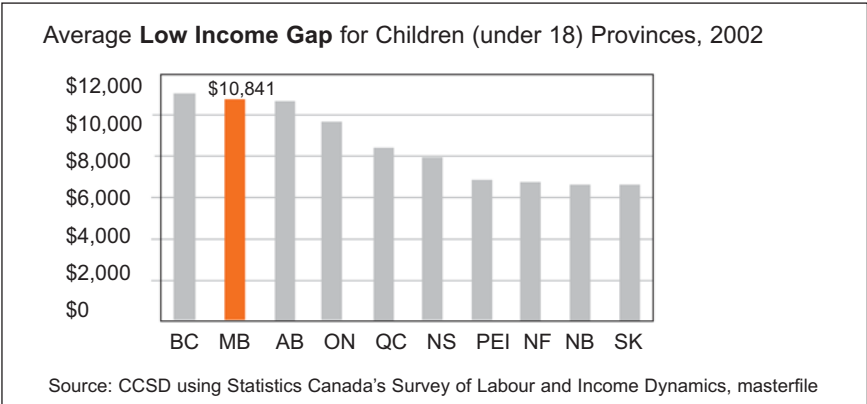
Average **Low Income Gap** by Family Type, Manitoba and Canada, 2002 (2002 Constant dollars)



Source: Statistics Canada's [Income Trends in Canada, 2002](#), 13F0022XCB

**Manitoba children are among the poorest of all provinces, requiring on average \$10,841 just to reach the poverty line.**

The inadequacy of income assistance benefits is a significant contributor to the depth of poverty in Manitoba. In 2002, a lone parent with one child in Manitoba received approximately \$9636 in welfare benefits and a two parent family with two children received approximately \$12,849.<sup>2</sup> Welfare incomes for these two family types were 40% and 35% of the poverty line, respectively.

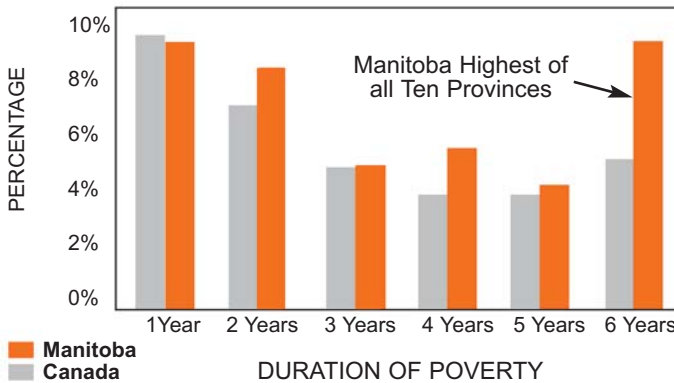


<sup>2</sup> National Council of Welfare. Welfare Incomes 2002

## MANITOBA CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY FOR LONG SPELLS

Poverty tends, for the most part, to be cyclical so that families with children may move in and out of poverty many times over the course of their lives. Among the provinces, however, Manitoba has the highest percentage of households with children who are chronically poor, or who have been consistently poor for six years (8.9% vs. 5.0% average for Canada). While those living in poverty for less than a year represent approximately 60% of Manitoba children living in poverty, the other 40% lived in poverty between one to six years.

Duration of Poverty 1996-2001, Canada and Manitoba, Percentage of persons in low income under 18 years of age

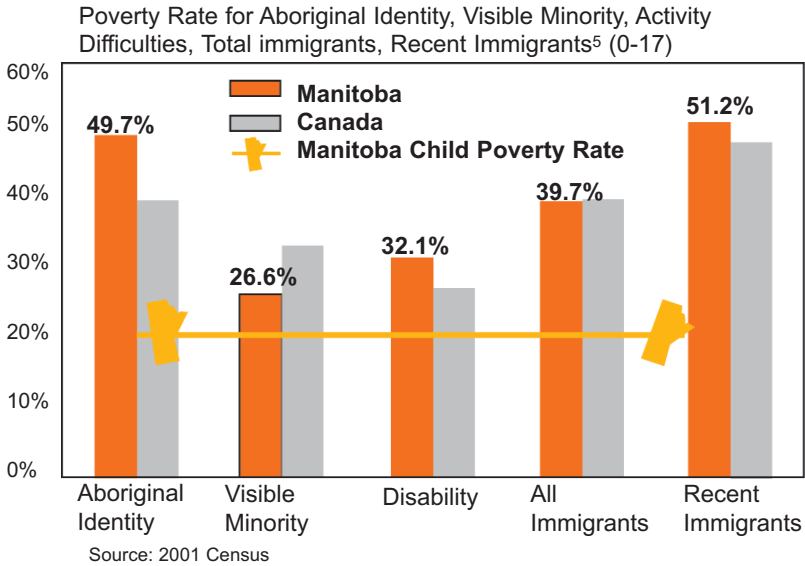


22,000 children in Manitoba have been poor for six years. Six years represents a significant amount of one's childhood and youth, providing serious cause for alarm in Manitoba. The longer children are exposed to poverty, the harder it becomes to mitigate against its effects and to promote their inclusion in society. Living in poverty has serious consequences for children – impacting their ability to learn, to be healthy, and to find jobs when they are older.



## SOCIAL INCLUSION – SOME GROUPS FARE FAR WORSE THAN OTHERS

Some populations are more at risk than others for living in poverty due to social inequities based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and identity. Aboriginal children, immigrants, newcomers, children with disabilities, and visible minority children are all disproportionately impacted by poverty in Manitoba. Nearly half of off-reserve Aboriginal children in Manitoba, 49.7%, are living in poverty and over half (51.2%) of children who immigrated to Manitoba between 1996 and 2001 live in poverty.



Aboriginal children continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty in communities across Manitoba, with a poverty rate that is two times greater than the overall child poverty rate. The poverty rate among recent immigrants has important implications for Manitoba’s immigration policy. The provincial government has set a target for an annual inflow of 10,000 immigrants to Manitoba. Given the commitment to attracting and retaining new immigrants, there is a great need for policies and social investments to promote equity and improve conditions for newcomers in Manitoba.

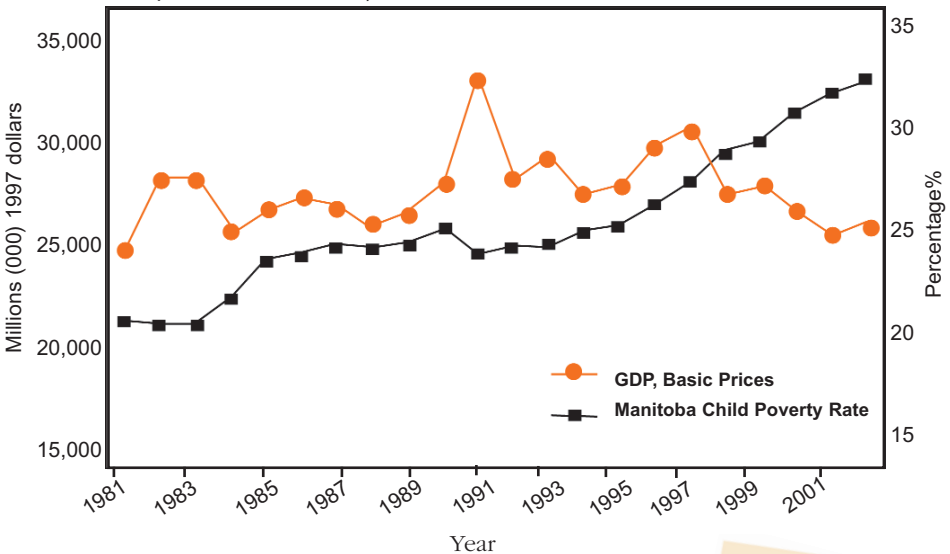


<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal identity is defined as the respondent identifying with at least one Aboriginal group. This does not include children in First Nations communities. Disability is defined in relation to level of difficulties in activities of daily living.

## POVERTY PERSISTS – DESPITE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic growth alone does not eliminate child poverty. In 2002, Manitoba’s GDP was nearly \$10,000,000 greater in constant dollars than in 1981. The child poverty rate, on the other hand, in 2002 was virtually the same as in 1981. The chart shows that GDP has been climbing steadily since the early 1990’s, but child poverty has not been showing a similar decline.

Incidence of Child Poverty and Gross Domestic Product (basic prices, 1997 dollars) for Manitoba, 1981-2002<sup>4</sup>



Manitoba’s child poverty rate has actually increased during times of strong economic growth, which suggests that reliance on the economy to eliminate child and family poverty without policy intervention is a losing battle.

Although there is an apparent connection since 1989, economic growth seems to have had an inconsistent relationship with the rate of child poverty between 1981 and 2002. There is certainly no long term trend of a decreasing child poverty rate as the economic value of production increases.<sup>5</sup>

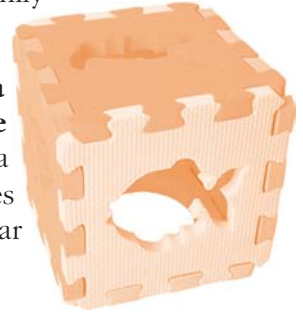
<sup>4</sup> Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at basic prices equals GDP at market prices less the net of indirect taxes on products and services minus subsidies.

# A JOB IS NOT A GUARANTEED ROUTE OUT OF POVERTY!

## Low Wage Jobs Trap Too Many Families in Poverty

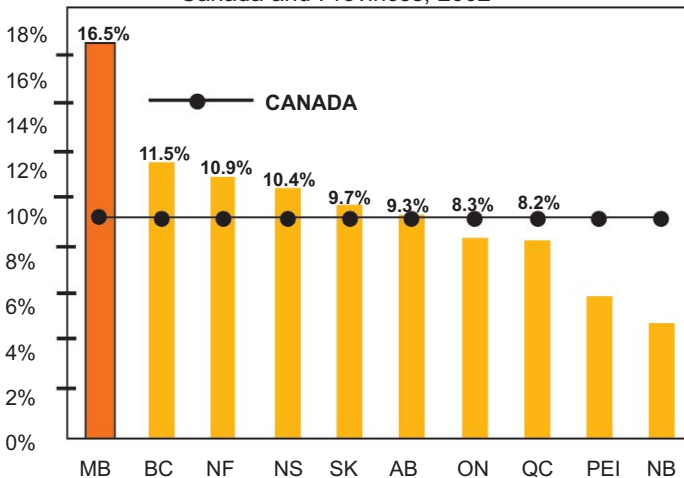
A common misconception we hold is that children are poor because their parents do not work, but depend on income assistance for their primary income. The reality, however, is quite the opposite: the overwhelming majority of Manitoba children in families living in poverty have at least one family member who is involved in the labour force!

In 2002, a staggering **65.8% of Manitoba children in families with low income were in families that worked** the equivalent of a full year.<sup>7</sup> This is the highest of all provinces (Alberta is a distant second at 57.9%) and far greater than the national average of 44.7%.



Of all Manitoba families with children where the members work the equivalent of a full time full year job, 16.5% of the children were living in poverty in 2002. Since at least 1996, of all the provinces, Manitoba has consistently had the greatest proportion of children in full year work equivalent families living in poverty.

Proportion of Children in Full Year Equivalent Families Below LICOS, Canada and Provinces, 2002



Source: CCSD using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, masterfile.

<sup>7</sup> A family is defined as working if the combined total weeks worked by all adults is 49 weeks or more.

## Why Are so Many Families with Children Labour Market Poor?

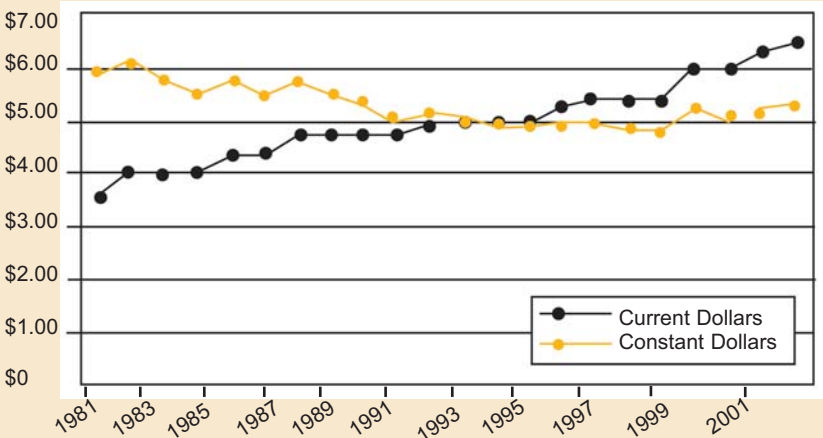
Of all the provinces, Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate for children in families where at least one member worked full time for a whole year. The high proportion of low wage jobs has increased labour market vulnerability for many families making it clear that there are simply not enough good jobs with good wages in Manitoba. In 2002, 31.1% of workers in Manitoba were low wage workers, compared to the Canadian average of 25.3%<sup>8</sup>.

**In 2002, a parent with two children working at the minimum wage would have to work 88.6 hours per week just to meet the poverty line.**

Since 1989 the value of the minimum wage has eroded considerably in Manitoba. As the chart below shows, when we look at the minimum wage in current dollars, it appears that it has been increasing quite steadily since 1981. In reality however, when we control for inflation we can see that the minimum wage has not kept up and in fact has lost considerable purchasing power over time. In 1981 the minimum wage was actually worth more than it was in 2002 even though it actually increased by \$3.00 during that time frame.

In order to ensure that vulnerable workers and their families are able to meet their needs, the minimum wage must be increased to an acceptable level and indexed to some measure to ensure its value is maintained over time.

Manitoba Minimum Wage, Current and Constant Dollars (1992 base)



<sup>8</sup> Black, Errol and Scarth, Todd (2003). Rising Job Tide not Lifting Low-Wage Boats. Review of Economic and Social Trends in Manitoba. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba. Low wages are defined as less than two-thirds of the national median wage

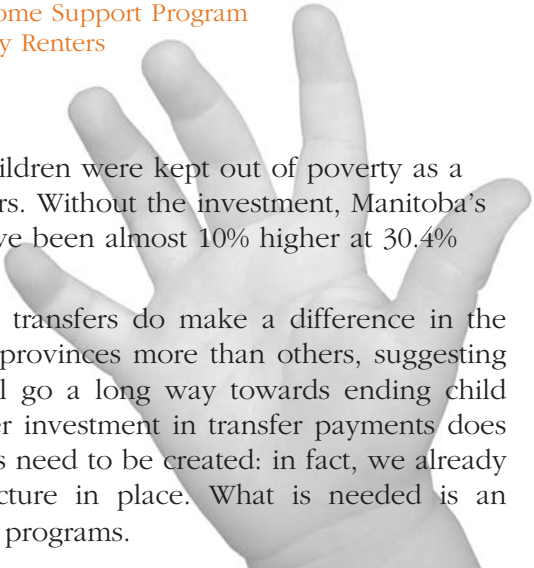
# GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS WORK BUT COULD WORK BETTER

As so many children living in poverty are in families that work throughout the year, government transfer payments, combined with a reasonable minimum wage, are key to keeping children out of poverty. Government transfers include all direct payments from federal, provincial and municipal governments to individuals or families include such payments as:

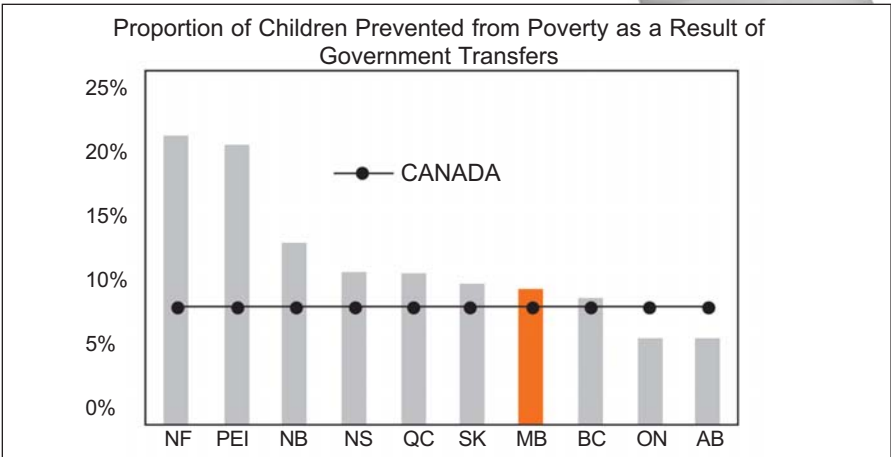


- Employment and Income Assistance
- Manitoba Child Related Income Support Program
- Shelter Allowance for Family Renters
- Employment Insurance
- Workers Compensation

In 2002, 25,000 Manitoba children were kept out of poverty as a result of government transfers. Without the investment, Manitoba's child poverty rate would have been almost 10% higher at 30.4% instead of 20.8%.



Across Canada, government transfers do make a difference in the child poverty rate, in some provinces more than others, suggesting that greater investments will go a long way towards ending child poverty in Canada. A greater investment in transfer payments does not mean that new programs need to be created: in fact, we already have most of the infrastructure in place. What is needed is an enhancement to our current programs.



Source: CCSD using Statistics Canada's Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, masterfile.

## **The Canada Child Tax Benefit**

Since 1998, the Canada Child Tax Benefit has been the main program to decrease the depth of child poverty in Canada, but the benefit is too low to do so in a substantial way. The Canada Child Tax Benefit is made up of two components – the base benefit and an additional supplement to those with particularly low incomes. Some provinces have maintained the practice of clawing back the supplement to families on income assistance – depriving families who need it most of extra income. In 2004, Manitoba finally ended the clawback after it began phasing it out in 1999.

In order to be truly effective, the Canada Child Tax Benefit must be consolidated into a single program that provides a maximum benefit of up to \$4,900 (in 2005 dollars) per child to families dependent on their level of income, but independent of its source.

## **Child Related Income Support Program (CRISP)**

The Child Related Income Support Program is a Manitoba income supplement program that provides a maximum monthly benefit of \$30/month/child to low income working families. The benefit is not available to families who receive income assistance.

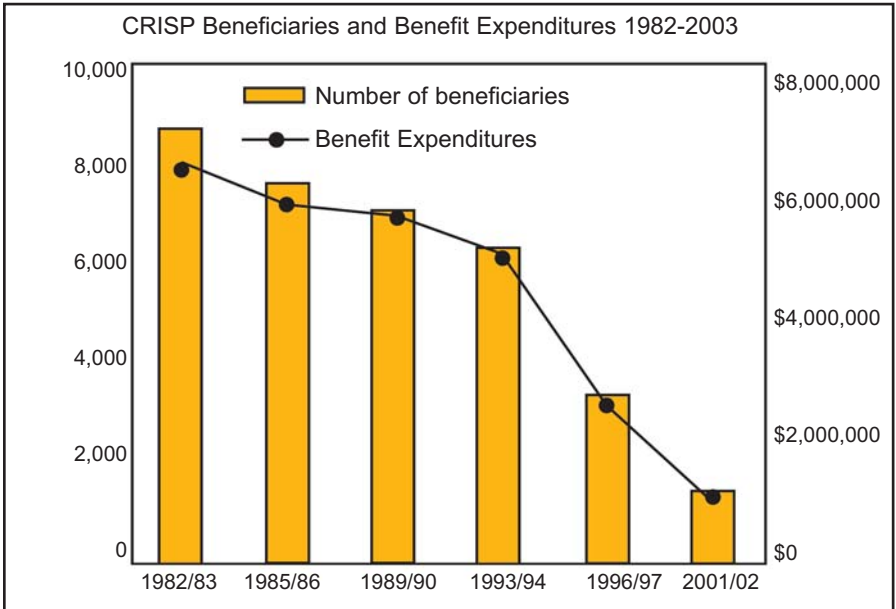
Eligibility levels for CRISP are so low that many families who would benefit from the support simply do not qualify. For example, a family of four (two adults, two children) no longer qualifies for CRISP benefits when their gross annual income reaches \$18,264, only 49% of the poverty line. The maximum benefit level for CRISP has never actually been increased since the program started in 1981.

As a result of low benefit and eligibility levels, the potential of CRISP to provide support for low income families has never actually been realized and the program has become quite ineffective. In 1989/90, the average number of cases per month for CRISP was 7,133, representing 16,187 children. In 2002/03, the average number of cases had decreased to 1,231, representing only 2,690 children – a fraction of the actual need.

### Shelter Allowance for Family Renters (SAFFR)

SAFFR is a monthly supplement to assist working families with low incomes to pay rent in non-subsidized housing. The program is targeted to those who pay more than 25% of their income on rent and provides a maximum benefit of \$180/month. Like CRISP, the SAFFR program is not available to those on income assistance, meaning that the poorest of families in Manitoba are excluded from receiving the support offered by the program.

If we can reduce child poverty in this province by nearly 10% with our current investments, imagine how low the rate could be if we were willing to invest more in the programs we already have. A review of current programs is needed to determine how they could be more effective in providing adequate support to families.



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Families need housing that is safe, stable and affordable for their well being. Housing is essential for providing children with a stable environment and a basis for their healthy development. As housing is often one of the greatest expenses for families, the availability of affordable quality housing is critical for children and families to move out of poverty.



- In Manitoba, 14.2% of families with children live in unaffordable housing where they pay 30% or more of their income on shelter.
- Among low income families with children, nearly half (48.3%) are in unaffordable housing.
- In Manitoba, 10.6% of all households pay more than 30% of their gross income for 'poor housing' (housing in need of major repairs). Of those households, 25.4% of them contain families with children.

Up to 2500 affordable housing units are to be built in Manitoba by 2007, yet this meets only a fraction of the need - 11,100 children in families with low income are living in unaffordable housing. The province of Manitoba must increase its commitment to build more affordable housing units over the next five years.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE – IT DOES A PUBLIC GOOD

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is an important component of an anti-poverty strategy. It enables parents to work or go to school to improve their potential to earn an income. It also provides children with a range of benefits that will enhance their school readiness and success in later life by

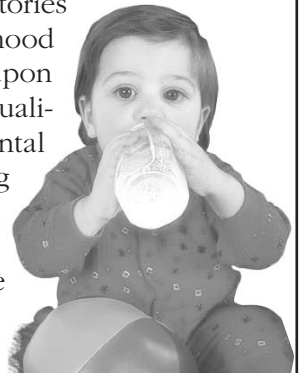


providing them with an early education. Child care is an important for families regardless of the employment status of parents.

Unfortunately child care is not a universal publicly funded program in Manitoba and poses many barriers for children in families with low income.

- The Child Care Subsidy eligibility levels determine were set in 1991 and have not increased since that time meaning many parents who would benefit are not eligible.
- All child care facilities are permitted to charge an additional fee to parents of \$2.40/day/child so even those with the maximum subsidy and limited incomes may still have to pay.
- In 2001 there were only 23,022 licensed child care spaces, enough for only one out of every eight children.

The Government of Manitoba's Five Year Plan and the Federal Government's commitment to create a national not for profit child care program with the provinces and territories are positive developments for early childhood education and care. Success will depend upon legislative action to enshrine principles of quality, universality, accessibility, developmental focus, and inclusiveness of all children. Long term goals are needed within the above legislative and policy framework, with clear objectives, targets and timetables to guide implementation.

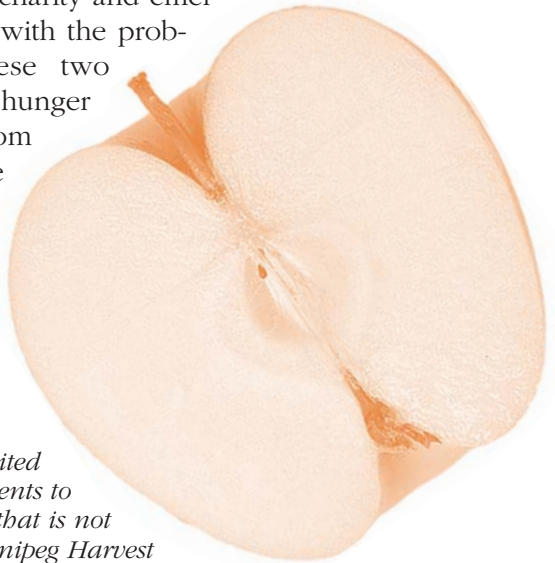


## FOOD SECURITY

*Food Security* exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. - *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.*

In 2002, nearly half, 46.2%, of those receiving food from Winnipeg Harvest were children. Food bank use has increased dramatically in Manitoba since 1989. In March of 1989, 4000 households were served by Winnipeg Harvest on a monthly basis and in 2002, this figure increased by 74% to 15,300<sup>9</sup>.

Food banks and school meal programs have been the primary response to food insecurity in Manitoba, leaving the important issue of access to food to charity and emergency measures that deal with the problem after the fact. These two avenues cannot prevent hunger or food insecurity from occurring and the Provincial Government must take steps to ensure that families have access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food at all times.

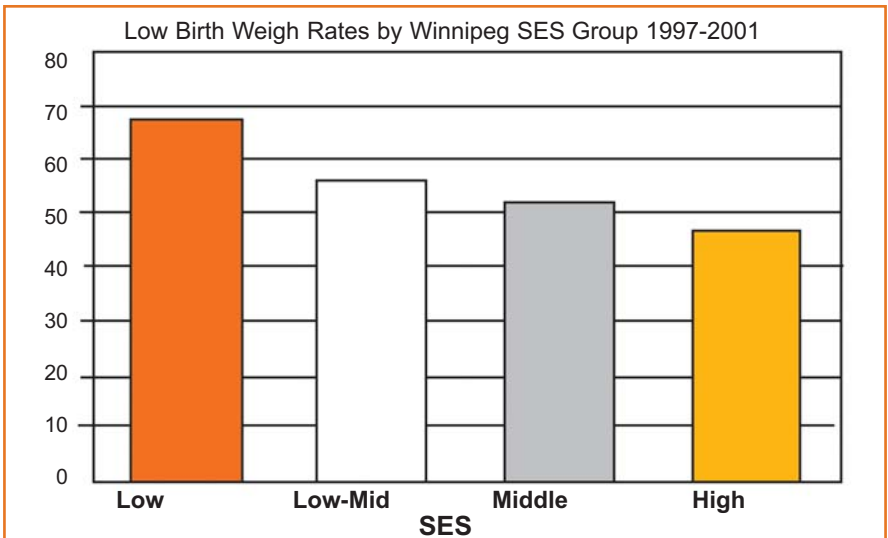


*“Our government and the United Nations have made commitments to end child poverty but clearly that is not happening. Every month Winnipeg Harvest is providing emergency food to 17,256 children in our community, children who would otherwise go to bed hungry. Words are not enough. Renewed commitment with a specific action plan is needed.*  
- Carol Ellerbeck, Executive Coordinator  
Winnipeg Harvest

Source: Winnipeg Harvest

## POVERTY AND HEALTH

The connection between income and health has been well documented. Children who live in poverty have poorer health outcomes on a range of indicators. New data from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy in their Child Health Atlas shows that the low weight birth rate for newborns in Winnipeg is greater in areas of the city with low socio-economic status.



Source: Manitoba Centre for Health Policy Child Health Atlas

Low birth weigh live births places these children at increased risk for many future health problems. Impatient injury and hospitalization rates were also higher for Manitoba children living in lower sector socio-economic status areas.

## FIFTEEN YEARS AND COUNTING...

While we remember the commitment made in 1989 to eliminate child poverty, we haven't honoured it. It is past time for a child poverty strategy to be developed and advanced in Manitoba. Far too many children have lived in poverty for far too long. A comprehensive and coordinated effort is needed to remedy the systemic causes of poverty. Economic growth alone will not suffice to eliminate child poverty and while government transfers make a difference, they are underutilized and do not go far enough.

**Without a strategy, we will continue to have a system of disjointed responses** to a problem that is firmly entrenched in our community and economy. Unless we are willing to accept a child

poverty rate of over 20%, we must be committed to a comprehensive program that will address the range of factors and circumstances that keep people in persistent and severe poverty. **The time has come to reinvest in children in this country and province. We cannot wait another fifteen years.**



## A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

Campaign 2000 has called upon the Government of Canada to create and commit to a Social Investment Plan for children and families to guide comprehensive action on child poverty over the next five years. This includes: more good jobs at living wages; an effective child benefit system; universally accessible system of quality early childhood education and care; significant expansion of affordable housing; and a renewed national social safety net.

**The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg calls upon the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba Government to work together to adopt a comprehensive child poverty strategy that would include the following components:**

**Labour Market Security**

- Raise the minimum wage to \$10.00/hr by 2007 and then adjust it annually to ensure it stays in line with increases in the cost of living.
- Support the creation of good jobs with good wages by:
  - Exploring the possibility of living wage ordinances to create good jobs through contracting with employers.
  - Working with the voluntary sector to support the social economy and the expansion of local community economic development opportunities.

**Strengthened Social Safety Net**

- Undertake a comprehensive review of income security and supplement programs to determine appropriate benefit and eligibility levels.
- Reform CRISP by increasing benefit levels and expanding eligibility to welfare recipients and moderate low income earners and implement a comprehensive income-tested subsidy modeled after Saskatchewan.
- Consolidate the Canada Child Tax Benefit into a single program that provides a maximum benefit of up to \$4,900 (in 2005 dollars) per child to families dependent on their level of income, but independent of its source.
- Provide financial support for community based off reserve Aboriginal services, developed and implemented by Aboriginal agencies.

**Affordable Housing**

- Campaign 2000 has called for a federal housing strategy that will commit the Government of Canada to aid in the development of 25,000 affordable housing units annually.
- Develop 1000 affordable and low income housing units in Manitoba annually.
- Expand geographic target communities in Neighbourhoods Alive!
- Increase shelter allowance component of Employment and Income Assistance to reflect actual rental costs in Manitoba.

**Early Childhood Education and Care**

- Work with the federal government in the creation of a universal publicly funded not for profit child care system with long term goals, legislative and policy framework, clear objectives and targets and timetables to guide implementation.
- Immediately eliminate the \$2.40 child care surcharge.
- Open ECDC to children in poor families whether or not they work to limit developmental effects of poverty on young children.

## POVERTY BAROMETERS

The Poverty Barometer is a quarterly publication of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and the Campaign 2000 Continues Steering Committee. Over the past year, the Poverty Barometer has addressed the following topics relating to child and family poverty in Manitoba:



### **May 2004 *Child Care: It Does A Public Good!***

Child care is an important component in the fight against child poverty and it contributes to the development and lifelong good health of children. It supports families by enabling parents to work or study and participate in their communities. Child care also contributes to the public good by fostering safe and healthy communities, helping to reduce poverty, enabling women,s equality, and creating jobs in the child care field.



### **September 2004 *Summer Learning Loss: Some Kids Miss Out on Much More Than Summer Camp***

Children living in poverty not only start school behind their peers; they begin each and every school year further behind as a result of summer learning loss.



### **October 2004 *Food Security: Children's Rights Denied***

The fundamental right to education and health for children living in poverty is compromised by low income and food insecurity. Children need an adequate diet in order to learn, develop, and be healthy throughout their lives.

For more information on child and family poverty and what you can do to help, visit [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca). Also view the report, Pathways to Progress: Structured Solutions to Address Child Poverty.

### **Aboriginal Identity**

Refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian, and/or who were members of an Indian Band or First Nation. Prior to 1996, Aboriginal persons were determined using the ethnic origin (ancestry) question. The 1996 and 2001 censuses included a question on the individual's own perception of his/her Aboriginal identity.

### **Affordable housing**

Housing that is less than 30% of total income. Anyone paying more than 30% of their income on rent is considered to be in unaffordable housing.

### **Canada Child Tax Benefit**

The CCTB is composed of two parts: a base benefit received by about 80% of Canadian families and a supplement, called the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) that is targeted to low income families.

### **Economic family**

Refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption.

### **Visible minority**

Refers to the visible minority group to which the respondent belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".

### TECHNICAL NOTES

While Canada has no official measure of poverty, the pre-tax Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off (LICO) is the measure most commonly used by those reporting on poverty in Canada. Statistics Canada has noted that the LICO is a consistent way of identifying those who are "substantially worse off than average". A family at or below the LICO is one that spends more than 55% of its pre-tax income on food, clothing, and shelter. The LICO varies by family size and community size.

All First Nations households on reserves are excluded from the calculation of the LICO.

## **Campaign 2000**

Campaign 2000 is a national group comprised of over 100 national, provincial, and local community partners. Campaign 2000 formed in 1991 in response to the 1989 all party resolution in the House of Commons to end child poverty by the year 2000. Campaign 2000 and its partner organizations maintain their commitment to promote and ensure the full implementation of the Federal government's promise.

## **Social Planning Council of Winnipeg**

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is a membership based organization in the voluntary sector committed to providing leadership in social planning and effecting social policy changes. SPC is dedicated to supporting Campaign 2000 initiatives within Manitoba and is the sponsor organization for the Campaign 2000 Continues Steering Committee and Manitoba Campaign 2000 Network.

***“School boards have known for a long time that students living in poverty succeed less well in school. Recent findings from Manitoba Centre for Health Policy demonstrates just how critical and urgent a problem this is for Manitoba children and youth. Policy makers and governments must at now to dramatically reduce child and family poverty in this province. Our children cannot wait!”***

– Carolyn Duhamel, Executive Director  
Manitoba Association of School Trustees



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*On November 24th, 1989, the House of Commons passed a unanimous all-party resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. **Fifteen years later** this promise to Canada's children and the commitment to ensure an equal start for all children has been unfulfilled. Child poverty rates in Canada and Manitoba remain far too high, leaving **too many children in poverty for too long.***



## **Social Planning Council of Winnipeg**

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