



Alternatives North

Submission to Federal Poverty Reduction Consultation

May 2017

The following is a submission to the Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy from Alternatives North. Alternatives North is a social, environmental and economic justice coalition operating in the Northwest Territories. Within our coalition are members of the public, and representatives of faith groups, labour unions, environmental organizations, women and family advocates and anti-poverty groups. The submission follows the questions outlined for the consultation.

1. *How do you define poverty? How should it be measured? Are there data gaps that need to be addressed to help improve our understanding of poverty in Canada?*

Poverty is a multi-faceted and harmful social problem with both qualitative and quantitative aspects. It involves relative and objective deprivation, reduced life choices, as well as enforced isolation.

The low-income cut-off (LICO) has been the most commonly used poverty line for many years. However, it has not been re-based since 1992 and has become an increasingly unreliable and inaccurate metric as it has failed to keep up with the rising cost of living expenses such as housing as a share of household budgets. From now on, our tracking of poverty rates should rely on the more accurate low-income measure (LIM) and market basket measure (MBM).¹ However, the MBM is only calculated for Yellowknife, and not the other communities in the Northwest Territories and this will need to be addressed.

On the qualitative side, a definition of poverty should include aspects of agency and empowerment as increasing conditions in which people can make choices and have opportunities to better their lives in dignity is essential to poverty reduction.

2. *What will success look like in a Poverty Reduction Strategy? What target(s) should we pick to measure progress?*

¹ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives : 2017 Alternative Federal Budget – High Stakes, Clear Choices

Canada needs to develop a comprehensive, human rights-based national poverty reduction strategy with strong policies that address gaps in the following areas: income security, housing and homelessness, health and wellness, food security, employment, and early childhood education and care. The strategy must be legislated and adequately funded, and include clear targets and timelines to ensure enduring federal commitment and accountability. Targets should be measurable and achievable. For example: achieve an overall goal of universal child care by meeting a yearly increase in quality licensed child care spaces of 20%.

Success from a human rights basis will require commitments from general society as well as population level arrangements from governments to address the determinants of health. It will also need to be equity focused –those that need more should get more. There needs to be specific attention paid to the indigenous populations in Canada.

Why Human Rights Based?

An effective anti-poverty plan must be informed by Canada’s international human rights obligations. This includes the obligation to take reasonable steps to effectively address poverty, using the maximum of available resources. Human rights transform issues of homelessness, poverty and hunger from being solely about economic deprivation to being about equal citizenship and dignity. A human rights approach understands that socio-economic deprivation occurs in large part because of the de-valuing of the rights of the most vulnerable, leading to particular policy and program choices and decisions.²

NWT Context on Income Security and Employment³

In March 2017, Canada’s monthly employment rate dropped to 60.9%. Yukon (73.9%) had the highest employment rate followed by the Northwest Territories and Alberta, both at 66.0%. The NWT’s unemployment rate was seventh highest in the country at 7.0%. The number of NWT residents who were not in the labour force is 9,400. Alongside this relatively high level of employment in 2014, 7,040 persons or 16.9% reported incomes of less than \$15,000 and 14.9% of families had incomes of less than \$30,000. These numbers rise significantly for smaller, more isolated communities. For example, the frequency of families earning less than \$30,000 annual income is 37.5% in Paulatuk and 30.8% in Whati. In 2015/16, there were 3,301 cases (individuals or families) on Income Assistance at a program cost of \$20,087,837. In addition, in 2015-16,

- 1,083 seniors were supported with NWT Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit at a cost of \$2,254,712 and

² DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice.

³ www.statsnwt.ca/labour-income for all statistics in this section

- 1,502 (average number of families) were supported through the NWT Child Benefit at a cost of \$1,139,739.
- 845 (average number of families) were supported with the Territorial Workers Supplement at a cost of \$217,094

Recommendations on Income Support and Employment

As these statistics reflect a high level of need, Alternatives North supports the following recommendations promoted by several national organizations⁴:

- Reform income assistance programs to better reflect labour market realities and other gaps in the system including greater flexibility in the provision of benefits.
- Improve Employment Insurance with a lower entrance requirement of 360 hrs, extend the benefit period back to 50 weeks and more for older workers, and increase the rate of payment to 60% (instead of current 55%).
- Increase EI sickness benefits from 15 to 50 weeks and allow part-time work without loss of benefits.
- Increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to the amount required to lift all seniors out of poverty and develop a proactive registration of seniors for both GIS and Old Age Security.
- Double the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) income replacement rate from 25% to 50% of pensionable earnings over a period of several years by raising the employer and employee contribution rates to a modest 7.95% (15.9% combined) and reduce the impact of CPP contribution rate increases on low-income earners by raising the basic personal exemption (or other measures).
- Increase the National Child Benefit to \$5,600 annually for eligible families, index it to the cost of living and work with provinces and territories to prevent any claw back of this benefit.
- Increase the Working Income Tax Benefit so that it pays one half of the poverty gap between minimum wages and the after-tax Low-Income Measure with the remainder of income provided by employers.
- Provide employment incentives for hiring youth and other groups under-represented in the workforce.

NWT Context on Housing and Homelessness

⁵In 2014 in the NWT, there were 14,729 households. Of those 2,919 – nearly one-fifth - were in core need. Core need is defined as a problem with affordability, adequacy and/or suitability and a total household income below Core Need Income Threshold.

⁴ DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice.

⁵ <http://www.statsnwt.ca/Housing/housing-conditions/> for all statistics in paragraph

The actual number of homeless people is not known but research indicates that the rate of users of emergency shelters in Yellowknife is around 5%, much higher than the national average of around 1%.⁶ A 2007 study by the YWCA and Yellowknife Women's Centre estimated that the range of homeless women in Yellowknife was around 500 and the total in the NWT well over 1000.⁷ Homelessness expert, Nick Falvo, has observed that

"Homelessness in Yellowknife appears to be increasingly protracted, multigenerational and sharing more characteristics with 'southern' communities.... The increased presence of homeless cohorts of young adults (20 to 30 years old) and youth (<20 years) as part of the overall homeless population is increasingly evident – based on public visibility and shelters' administrative information."⁸

It must be emphasized that the cold climate of the NWT exacerbates the conditions that homeless people face. In the small and largely indigenous communities, the lack of housing is often lived as overcrowding instead. The cost of maintaining and building housing is prohibitive and requires the reinstatement of CMHC funding for the operation and maintenance of social housing. Declining CMHC funding has meant that the NWT Housing Corporation has not added any new units to its inventory of 2400 units due to the additional cost of O and M.

Recommendations on Housing and Homelessness

Priority investments for housing and homelessness are to:⁹

- Develop and implement a coordinated National Housing Strategy based on the right to adequate housing with measurable goals and timelines including specific measures for marginalized people as well as a public reporting and monitoring system. The strategy must also reinstate CMHC funding for operation and maintenance of social housing. In the NWT, more funding is required to support programs to help those at risk to transition to permanent housing.
- Renew yearly funding for the Homeless Partnering Strategy (\$113 million) as current investment in Affordable Housing program (\$254 million) provides only a quarter of what is required. Increase funding by no less than \$2 billion per year in new money

⁶ Falvo, Nick (2011) Homelessness in Yellowknife: An Emerging Social Challenge. (Toronto: The Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press).

⁷ <http://ywcacanada.ca/data/publications/00000011.pdf>

⁸ Appendix A: What is the Homelessness Problem (s) in Yellowknife, Homelessness in Yellowknife: Community Partnership Forum April 26-27, 2016. nwthc.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/2016_homelessness_in_yellowknife_-_community_partnership_forum_-_summary_0.pdf

⁹ DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice

to be matched by provinces and territories to implement housing strategies that meet the strategy targets.

- Collaborate with Inuit Land Claim Organizations, First Nations, and Métis governments to develop a comprehensive Aboriginal Housing Strategy that sets out measureable goals and timelines, as well as mechanisms to coordinate implementation and track and evaluate progress.

NWT Context on Health¹⁰

- Currently 51% of the NWT population (age 12 and over) rated their health as very good or excellent – significantly lower than the national rate of 61%. The NWT rating has been lower than the national rate in all survey years with the exception of 2005.
- Between 2001 and 2014, the prevalence of diabetes increased from 61.1 to 98.2 cases per 1,000 – an average annual increase of 4.0%. The prevalence of diabetes in the NWT is similar to the national average of 97.3 cases per 1,000 (2012/13).
- The incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections in the NWT is seven times higher than the rest of Canada's 3.4 cases per 1,000 (2012)... at an average of 24 cases per 1,000 between 2010 and 2015. In 2015/16, the rate increased by a troubling 16% from the year before to 28.3 cases per 1,000.
- The NWT's mental health hospitalization rate, between 2011 and 2016, is on average over twice the national average (2013/14). The NWT has higher rates of hospitalizations for each of four main categories relative to national rates, with especially higher rates of alcohol/drug hospitalizations (over six times) and anxiety disorder hospitalizations (four times).
- Currently 32.5% of the NWT population, age 12 and over, are considered to be heavy drinkers - well above the national rate of 19.2%. Between 2003 and 2012 there have not been any significant changes in the NWT rate, whereas the national rate increased marginally from 17.5% to 18.8% over the same time period.¹¹

Recommendations on Health

Poverty has been declared to be the single largest determinant of health by the World Health Organization. There is a strong correlation between socioeconomic inequality and poor health; as inequalities have widened in Canada, so have disparities in health. These disparities account for an estimated 20% of all health care spending. Similarly, the cost of hospitalization due to not taking prescribed but unaffordable medications has added \$7-9

¹⁰ www.hss.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/public-performance-measures-report-2016.pdf

¹¹ Statistics Canada, *Canadian Community Health Survey* (National File).

billion per year to healthcare spending.¹² The following recommendations are priority changes in the provision of health care.¹³

- Legislate an anti-poverty plan that recognises the social, political and historical determinants of health, including income, employment, food security, early childhood education and care, level of education and housing.
- Commit to a new ten-year Health Accord for the implementation of high-quality, universal, culturally-appropriate, publicly-funded and managed health promotion, prevention, and acute care services.
- Develop and implement a National Public Drug Plan to cover the costs of all prescribed medications.
- Develop, in collaboration with all levels of government, health organizations and providers, and the public, a new Continuing Care Program that provides a seamless continuum of safe, culturally-appropriate and high quality services, financed in part through a new, legislated, indeterminate fund, with a 6% annual escalator as set out in the 2004 Health Accord. This program needs to be fully integrated and operate across sectors to ensure all needs are meant.
- Implement the National Mental Health Strategy developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which includes a national campaign to combat stigma and discrimination, and policies and programs that create greater access to needed mental health and addictions supports for vulnerable individuals and families, and tools for monitoring and reporting on mental health and its determinants.

Northern Context on Food Security

“Food insecurity is a serious problem in northern and remote Aboriginal communities across Canada. Aboriginal households experience food insecurity at a rate about two times higher (27.1%) than non-Aboriginal households (11.5%). Households with children report even higher rates of food insecurity, and more women than men are affected.... In a First Nations Regional Health Survey from the Dene Nation in NWT, for example, 90% of the 824 respondents indicated that, in the preceding year, an adult in their household either had cut the size of their meals or skipped meals, were hungry but did not eat, or ate less than they felt they should due to a lack of money for food.... While food sharing networks remain a key part of many northern Aboriginal cultures and economies, a nutrition transition is underway due to social, economic, cultural, technological, political, and environmental changes. This transition... refers to the shift from nutrient-rich, locally sourced food (hunted or harvested) to store-bought food. While a single portion of local animal or fish food results in increased levels of energy, protein, and many essential vitamins and minerals, much of the food bought from stores

¹² DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice

¹³ Ibid

in the North tends to be highly processed and low in nutrients. As a result, the nutrition transition is associated with a decrease in dietary quality. Together, food insecurity and the nutrition transition represent a double burden.”¹⁴

Recommendations on Food Security

The overarching impact of food insecurity requires action in the following areas¹⁵:

Develop, in collaboration with all levels of government, food producers, community stakeholders, and food insecure people, “a National Food Policy that is committed to systems based policy making, democratizing governance, nation-to-nation relationships and adaptive policy management for social innovation”¹⁶. The policy should provide:

- recognition of the right to adequate food,
- measurable goals and timelines toward solving food insecurity,
- methods to identify threats to the availability of adequate food and water,
- place-based adaptations to diverse geographic and contexts,
- building on sound evidence, strong principles and practical knowledge emerging from community volunteers and organizations and
- measures to address the needs of children and marginalized groups.

Increase federal investment to address the very high levels of household food insecurity among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in a manner that respects cultural, community, and gender considerations as well as Aboriginal land sovereignty. Measures should include:

- programs to increase the affordability and availability of healthy food and health education (e.g., Nunavut Food Guide Recipe Program),
- measures to foster community wellness and intergenerational knowledge sharing,
- harvester support programs and sustainable wildlife management,
- poverty reduction and community economic development innovation in infrastructure and local food production (e.g., Northern Farm Training Institute, NT); and,
- youth engagement.

NWT Early Childhood Education and Child Care (ECEC) Context

¹⁴ Aboriginal Food Security in Northern Canada: An Assessment of the State of Knowledge; <http://www.ohpe.ca/node/15423>

¹⁵ DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice

¹⁶ Food Secure Canada, From Patchwork to Policy Coherence: Principles and Priorities of Canada’s National Food Policy, May 2017

- The proportion of kindergarten students who are vulnerable in one developmental area is approximately 43% higher in the NWT than the national average.¹⁷
- NWT children's scores varied across the five domains that make up the Early Development Instrument. In physical health and wellbeing 22% were found to be vulnerable, 19% were vulnerable in communication skills and general knowledge, 17% were vulnerable in language and cognitive development, 17% were vulnerable in emotional maturity and 14% in social competence.¹⁸
- Canada performs poorly on international assessments of access to ECEC and program quality. It is among the bottom spenders in ECEC, and our children are among the least likely to attend an ECEC program. Among Canadian jurisdictions, the NWT spends below the Canadian average as a portion of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and far below Québec and the Scandinavian countries. To meet Québec's level of spending, the NWT's child care budget would need to increase 175 percent. To spend at the same rate as Sweden, it would need to increase by 375 percent. To even meet the Canadian average—which is low by OECD standards would require a 50 percent bump in spending. The NWT also ranks below the Canadian average in terms of spending per child care space. There is almost a \$10,000 per space gap between what Québec allocates and what the NWT spends.¹⁹
- Child care is available for 39 percent of 0–4 year olds and 13 percent of 5-11 year olds in the NWT. Rates of licensed child care spaces range from 30 to 45% of need depending on the region. Eight communities with a total population of 162 0–4 year olds are without any licensed day care.²⁰
- The average monthly parent fee for full-time centre-based care is \$900 for an infant and \$600 for a preschooler. In regulated family day homes the average monthly parent fee is \$1000 for an infant and \$700 for a preschooler... The Child Care User Subsidy (CCUB), which is administered by the Northwest Territories Income

¹⁷ NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, *Early Development Instrument – Summary of NWT Baseline Results for the 2012, 2013 and 2014 School Years* (September 2014). Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University and Canadian Institute for Health Information (yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca).

¹⁸ NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, *Early Development Instrument – Summary of NWT Baseline Results for the 2012, 2013 and 2014 School Years* (September 2014). Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University and Canadian Institute for Health Information (yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca).

¹⁹ Feasibility study of universal, affordable daycare in the Northwest Territories. Tabled Document 276-15 (5), tabled on June 4, 2015

²⁰ Ibid

Security Division, may provide families with a partial subsidy based on a territory wide income test. Parents may be eligible to receive a set amount for full or part-time care of children under 12 years of age.²¹

- Women’s participation in the labour force is associated with reduced rates of family poverty. “An estimated 68 percent of mothers with children younger than 6 years of age are in the paid labour force in the NWT, which is 12–16 percentage points behind the participation rate of mothers in Québec”²².
- “The NWT is alone with Nunavut in having no legislated requirement for post-secondary ECE training for staff working in child care centres. Recent DECE policy calls for all family home day care operators and primary staff in centre to have a one-year certificate in early child development or equivalency. According to figures compiled from a recent survey by the DECE of child care operators and staff, only 51 percent of staff working in child care centres and only 31 percent of home child care providers have any post-secondary ECE training.”²³
- It is predicted that a lower intensity child care program at the enrolment levels seen in Québec** will cost approximately \$25.6 million dollars per year. A high intensity* program will increase that figure by approximately \$12 million dollars per year... Given the spending on ECEC of \$2,181,000 in 2013\14 and knowing that parents will continue to pay a portion of costs, a universal child care program for the NWT would cost between \$17,876,450 and \$20,236,150.²⁴

Recommendations for Early Childhood Education and Child Care

Quality ECEC programs have been found to benefit all children and help to mitigate the detrimental effects of adverse home and neighbourhood environments on school readiness. Children who benefit most from participation in quality ECEC programs, but who are the least likely to attend, are those living in families disadvantaged by poverty.²⁵

The following recommendations on ECEC must be integral to the national poverty reduction strategy:²⁶

²¹ <http://www.findingqualitychildcare.ca/index.php/northwest-territories>

²² Feasibility study of universal, affordable daycare in the Northwest Territories. Tabled Document 276-15 (5), tabled on June 4, 2015

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice

- Develop a high-quality, universal, publicly-funded and managed early childhood education and care program for children aged 0 to 5 years and for school-aged children up to age 12, to be phased in by 2020. Set targeted yearly rates of increase for such spaces.
- Dedicate federal transfers of \$1 billion, \$1.6 billion, and \$2.3 billion over each of the next three years with the ultimate goal of achieving the international benchmark of spending at least 1% of GDP on childhood education and care by 2020.
- Develop Canada wide goals and principles for ECEC including quality through staff training and appropriate compensation, universal access, affordability and inclusion and respect for cultural and linguistic relevance.
- Increase maternity/parental leave benefits to 80% of wages and create a more flexible program in terms of duration and financing options and a more inclusive program for groups who have difficulty accessing services.

3. *Which indicators should we use to track progress towards the target(s)?*

Track all indicators across different subgroups.

- Education: Number of children vulnerable in one developmental area; number of graduates from secondary, college and university programs; level of education of citizenry; drop-out rates.
- Rate and length of employment, income level, extent of income inequality, quality/meaningfulness of work, rate of access to, and success at, training and apprenticeship programs, youth employment levels, number of recipients of employment insurance, number of rejected applications for employment insurance, debt levels.
- Health: number of emergency room visits, level of co-morbidities, level of stress related to environmental concerns, rate of smoking, rate of addictions, rate of diabetes, rate of sexually transmitted diseases, rate of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, rate of mental health admissions, suicide rates, overall wellness and intrapersonal empowerment.
- Food security: Number of users of food banks and food provisions services, number of people using local sources of food production, number of people accessing local wildlife for food.

Targets should be measurable and set at a rate that holds each government accountable during its mandate.

Any data collected on First Nations, Inuit and Metis must be disaggregated and reported as separate components. Otherwise, it will result in false assumptions.

4. *On which groups should we focus our efforts? Which dimensions of poverty should be prioritized?*

An effective plan must address the unique and particular needs and circumstances of groups most vulnerable to poverty. In particular, it will be critical to meaningfully

engage First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as other groups at higher risk of poverty, including: recent immigrants, single mothers, single senior women, people with disabilities, and people with chronic illness and addictions. It is important to know of their particular experiences of poverty (such as homelessness or inadequate housing, low-wage precarious employment, and lack of affordable child care). However, no group is more important than any other and the needs of all groups affected by poverty must be met.

5. *Which Government of Canada programs and policies do you feel are effective at reducing poverty? Are there programs and policies that can be improved? What else could we do?*

Senior families, in particular, have made important gains in their after-tax incomes, even as the number of seniors has grown. The two main pillars to the federal government's retirement income programs – Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) are effective and potential models to expand assistance to other sectors and groups. The same can be said for the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB).

Tax policy is a key component of an effective anti-poverty plan as it is a vehicle through which government can generate sufficient revenues to support vibrant and effective public programs in ways that equitably distribute the costs. The tax-benefit system offsets less than 40% of market inequality, compared to more than 70% prior to the mid-1990s. Changes made by governments to income tax rates and the erosion of spending on social programs also played a role in increasing poverty in Canada. Total tax revenues have fallen from 36% to 31% of GDP since the mid-1990s, matched by an equivalent decline in spending on social programs. Tax cuts in Canada have been among the largest in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Canada's income security system is now one of the weakest among developed countries, ranking 25 out of 30 countries studied.²⁷

There are unnecessary barriers to people accessing some federal programs that while not eliminating poverty, can positively impact lower income families. For example, the Canada Learning Bond requires a Social Insurance Number for applicants. There is a cost for getting a birth certificate and new or replacement SIN numbers. It is cumbersome, if not impossible, to get to banks to set up the necessary Registered Education Savings Plan for people who live in remote communities without a bank.

Canada's involvement in creating social housing was more extensive in the past, in particular between 1974-1985. It allowed mixed income social housing, and specific measures for urban and remote areas. Canada has only modestly reinvested in social

²⁷ DIGNITY FOR ALL | A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice

housing since 2001 and lack of affordable housing plays a significant role in poverty.²⁸ Canada's plan to opt out of social housing is incompatible with a poverty reduction strategy.

6. *How can the Government of Canada align its Poverty Reduction Strategy so that it supports existing efforts by provinces, territories, municipalities and communities?*

- The federal government must link with poverty reduction efforts across all levels of government (while navigating provincial/territorial distinctions) and across the federal government itself, leveraging collective knowledge and action to maximum effect.
- The federal government can play a role in shifting public consciousness and discussion about what causes poverty by acknowledging structural failures of the system. This would shift the conversation from personal responsibility to societal accountability and is in keeping with a human rights based approach.
- There should be a comparative analysis of poverty reduction strategies that highlights components of different plans that are “leading the way” in various sectors.
- A new federal plan should link with existing efforts at the provincial/territorial and community levels, recognizing in particular the unique position of Québec and its approach to social policy within the Canadian context.
- Enhance the Canada Social Transfer with a boost of \$2 billion to the provinces and territories to support poverty reduction efforts, tying the investment to measureable goals and timelines and efforts to improve public accountability.
- Canada should reinstate minimum national standards for provincial and territorial income assistance and set conditions that require that social assistance be available to those who need it at rates that are set at adequate levels to meet the real costs of housing, food, and other basic necessities, with specific consideration for vulnerable populations.

7. *What are some initiatives/innovations in Canada or elsewhere that other governments, community organizations, academia, or businesses have introduced or proposed to effectively reduce poverty?*

²⁸Canadian Social Housing: Policy Evolution and Program Periods; Sutton, 2016

- Needs-based programs coupled with foundational supports are effective for poverty alleviation because factors linked to poverty impact individual outcomes in different ways.
- The introduction of a guaranteed basic income has regained significant interest. It is not a stand-alone solution to poverty reduction and can complement, but not replace a strong social infrastructure. It must not be designed as a subsidy for employers to pay low wages. “The most effective approach may be a basic income in the negative income tax model that reduces in value based on income and family size—in other words, a basic income that targets those who need it most.”²⁹ This would require assistance for some people to complete tax returns.
- Increasingly, programs and policies are used to address the individual factors that put families and individuals at risk for poverty. Countries and programs are increasingly providing customized support based on the spectrum of needs of individuals and families. Each support is available to anyone if needed and treatments or programs are individualized for each unique situation. Programs are delivered with enough flexibility to allow recipients to use these resources to meet their needs. However, the distinction between targeted and universally-available customized support begins to fade when supported with sound universal and community supports such as access to childcare, income security, transportation, housing and a progressive tax system to assist in funding programs.
- Promote programs so they are used by people they are meant to help. Provide incentives for business and other governments to promote these programs.
- Streamline access to poverty reduction programs to increase effectiveness and limit the administrative barriers to access.

8. *How can the Government encourage an ongoing dialogue with other levels of government, community organizations, academia and businesses on its poverty reduction efforts?*

Annual reporting back to the House of Commons on the poverty reduction plan and frequent review of established targets is essential.

Annual roundtables on poverty reduction with different levels of government including Inuit Land Claims organization, First Nations and Métis governments, non-governmental organizations working to reduce poverty and people with personal experience of living in poverty. Goal of roundtables would be to present updates and new research/programs that are show to be effective.

²⁹ www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/policymakers-guide-basic-income