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# FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES – MANITOBA

**December 5, 2017**

## The View From Here Hasn't Changed

Last week the Manitoba government held a community consultation to help with the development of its poverty reduction plan. *The Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* requires the government to implement a long-term strategy to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion across Manitoba, and update the strategy at least once every five years. That deadline passed in May of this year. The Act also requires that the government:

- (a) establish or adopt poverty and social inclusion indicators to be used in measuring the progress of the strategy; and
- (b) provide annual reports to the public on the progress of the strategy in accordance with subsection 5(4)

The government consultation was an invitation only event. CCPA Manitoba was not invited.

That's odd, since it was CCPA Manitoba, in collaboration with Make Poverty History Manitoba and more than seventy community organizations, that in 2009 first put together a comprehensive community-based poverty reduction plan called *The View from Here: Manitoban's call for a poverty reduction plan*. We called upon the Manitoba government to implement a comprehensive poverty reduction plan and legislation including timelines and targets, indicators to measure progress, and a mechanism to ensure accountability.

The provincial government responded by releasing its All Aboard Strategy a week before the community's call to action was released. In 2011 the legislature passed

the aforementioned *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*, requiring the government to also consider poverty reduction in its budget process.

*The Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the death of Phoenix Sinclair* commenced proceedings in 2011. The Commission recognized CCPA Manitoba's expertise in the effects of poverty on families and in poverty reduction and it was called to testify before Commissioner Ted Hughes. The inquiry's final report made 63 recommendations to improve the welfare of children in Manitoba. Recommendation 50 calls upon the government to "closely examine the 2009 report, the *View from Here: Manitobans Call for a Poverty Reduction Plan*" with a view to implementing the outstanding recommendations, paying particular attention to the area of adult education."

Significant to the final report of the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry is the Commissioner's recognition that "the social and economic conditions that render children vulnerable to abuse and neglect are well beyond the scope of the child welfare system" (Hon. Ted Hughes, Commissioner, *The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair: Achieving the Best for All Our Children*).

The Hughes report notes that:

"The root causes of neglect—including poverty, poor housing, food insecurity, and substance abuse—lie beyond the scope of the child welfare system to resolve. But a collaborative approach

there is an alternative.

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that works with parents and harnesses the collective resources of child welfare and other provincial government departments, other levels of government, and the province's many community-based organizations, can make a difference for vulnerable families.”

Recommendations related to these root causes are included in the *2009 View from Here*, and in its updated version, which was co-published by the CCPA and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network in 2015 and endorsed by more than 100 organizations.

The 2015 report recognized areas where the provincial government had made progress, identified areas where it had fallen behind, and outlined 50 recommendations that, if implemented, would have a significant impact on the lives of people living in poverty.

Had CCPA been invited to participate in the consultations, we would have reminded the province of the recommendations put forward by the Hughes Commission related to the social and economic conditions that lead to child welfare involvement. We would have said that poverty reduction is glaringly missing from the 2017 Throne Speech and notably so when describing the government's plan to “reform” the child welfare system.

We would have reminded the province of the 50 comprehensive recommendations put forward in the 2015 *View From Here* that outline a plan of action across government departments that address income security, housing, education, funding for community based organizations, food security, transportation, disability supports, health, and child welfare.

We would also remind the government that targets and timelines are an integral part of a poverty reduction plan, and we recommend the following as outlined in the *View From Here 2015*:

- Using Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut Off-After Tax (LICO-AT) as the measure of poverty, reduce Manitoba's poverty rate by 25 percent in five years, and by 50 percent in ten years.

- Ensure the poverty rate (using the LICO-AT) for children, female lone-parent households, single women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, and recent immigrants declines by 25 percent in five years, and by 50 percent in ten years, in recognition that these populations are particularly vulnerable to poverty.

- Within two years, ensure there are no Manitobans living 50 percent or more below the LICO-AT.

- Reduce the share of Manitobans facing “core housing need” by half by 2020.

- Eliminate severe food insecurity within five years and reduce the prevalence of household food insecurity in Manitoba by half within ten years.

- Reduce the need for food bank use by half within ten years and set a date for the elimination of the need for food banks in Manitoba.

- Demonstrate annual progress in reducing the share of low-wage workers (earning less than two thirds of the median income in Manitoba).

The omission of CCPA Manitoba from the Provincial consultations on poverty reduction is a missed opportunity to hear from an organization with years of research and public policy development in this area. Many of the organizations invited to the consultation have endorsed *The View from Here*. Hopefully this will remind the government of the comprehensive set of targets, timelines, and initiatives that Manitobans have prioritized to reduce poverty across the province.

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