

Bridging the Gap From Poverty To Independence:



What is the role of Canadian Food Banks?

By Candace Weimer



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**By Candace Weimer
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About the Author

Candace is a single mother of one 17 year old son. She has learned from first hand experience the challenges single mothers and fathers face as they try to make one moderate income feed and clothe families in times of both national recession and economic boom. She works as a Communications Coordinator at SaskEnergy in Regina, Saskatchewan. Candace holds three educational certificates in Administration, Public Relations and Adult Learning and continues her studies towards obtaining her Sociology degree from the University of Regina in an effort to become a leader in the non-profit world. She is closely involved with her community, focusing specifically on understanding the overall culture of the Regina and District Food Bank and what initiatives must be taken to effectively put it out of business. She is also committed to the Canadian Blood Services as a corporate public spokesperson. In her personal time, Candace enjoys reading, travelling, and mountain biking, hiking, working out and teaching fitness classes.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Understanding Food Banks	7
International Anti-Poverty.....	9
Canadian Anti-Poverty Programs.....	10
An Anti-poverty Agenda for Saskatchewan.....	13
Works Cited.....	15

Introduction

Although many Canadian citizens may never have to consider relying on the services of a food bank to provide their families with either nutritional sustenance or life skills learning, many do. Today an increased number of families depend on food banks. In fact, the number of agencies which have become food collection and distribution services is growing. Research indicates that food banks have become a vital part of communities nationwide because of flat lined personal and family income growth, inadequate minimum wage and social assistance rates, and the steadily rising cost of living, especially due to high accommodation rental rates. It may appear that the growth of food banks is the result of weak economic growth. Not so. An uneven distribution of income is the defining factor.

In the past 20 years, Canada's fiscal situation with respect to GDP growth, government deficits and debt has improved from one of the weakest to one of the strongest. (Even with the recent international credit crisis Canada's economy has held up quite well to the end of 2008 when compared to other country's economies.) Our gross national product has doubled since 1981 and has produced the lowest rate of unemployment in more than a generation. Despite these changes, "all of which were supposed to ensure greater prosperity for every Canadian – the reports continue to come in indicating the gap between the rich and the poor is greater than it was 20 years ago." (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. 2008) Families are experiencing economic insecurity as more Canadians work in temporary jobs, with a rise from "11 per cent in 1989 to 21 per cent in 2004". (Morissette, R.

Johnson, A. 2005) And even though our economic outputs have grown substantially, many Canadians' wages have stagnated or dropped. To further worsen the situation, more women must work (providing dual income needed to get by). Uncertain job security and government funding cut-backs for programs such as employment insurance for recipients have contributed to the growing fear of being a paycheque away from poverty. Canadian families who are raising children are working more (200 hours more per year as compared to a decade ago) but falling further behind in providing for their families with a growing number now depending on the services of food banks. (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - B, 2008).

An example of how good economic times do not reduce the poverty rate exists here in Saskatchewan, where the province's economy is 70 per cent larger than it was a generation ago, and has created over 70,000 new workforce jobs. (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – B, 2008) Statistics like this should suggest that the middle and lower class families are benefiting. Again not so. Even under these fortunate economic circumstances Saskatchewan's poorest families are earning less and spending power has declined.(Globe and Mail, May 2, 2009, p. A14). The University of Regina's Social Policy Research Unit using 2006 Statistics Canada data describes the incidence of poverty a follows:

- Saskatchewan's overall poverty rate is 15.3% (140,000 people).
- For Saskatchewan children under 18 years of age, the poverty rate stands at 19.9% (42,000 children), whereas the national

average is 15.8%. Saskatchewan is second only to British Columbia (21.9%) in having the highest child poverty rate in Canada.

- The poorest in Saskatchewan are children living in female lone-parent families, with a poverty rate of 47.5% (19,000). The national rate among this group is 42.6%.
- Unattached individuals under 65 years of age face a high poverty rate at 40.7% (38.4% for males and 43.9% for females).
- Saskatchewan's unattached elderly (over 65) also face a high poverty rate at 28% (13,000). (Stats Canada, Income Trends in Canada, 1976-2006)

According to Wayne Hellquist, CEO of the Regina and District Food Bank, food bank clients are becoming increasingly frustrated and disillusioned while losing hope for themselves and their children, especially when any increases in income supports are quickly eaten up by rising food, housing and utility costs.

In Canada, poverty, exclusion and isolation of significant groups of people have led to difficult living conditions for many. In addition to the working poor, who are physically able to hold jobs, the situation of the less-abled must also be considered, as they are more likely to be poor. According to the Council of Canadians with Disabilities;

- 14.3 per cent of Canadians have a disability
- 2 million Canadian adults with disabilities lack one or more of the educational, workplace aids, home modification or other supports needed to participate in their communities,
- Over 56 per cent of working age adults are unemployed or out of the workforce

and for women with disabilities, the rate is 60 per cent,

- More than 10,000 persons with intellectual disabilities remain warehoused in institutions, group homes and congregate care facilities,
- Rates of violence and abuse against people with disabilities are among the highest for any group in Canadian society.

To work toward the equality of *all* Canadians, including those with disabilities, our governments must seek to improve programs for disabled citizens including adequate and sustainable training, affordable housing, adapted social assistance safety nets, aid devices, medications and environmental accommodations.

The intention of this paper is to explore several questions related to income gaps and poverty, poverty reduction programs and the role of food banks. Can an integrated, collaborative and comprehensive antipoverty program be established as a preventative measure to reduce the numbers who now are depending on the food bank – especially children who comprise almost 50 per cent of food bank clients? Or does the solution to improved food security lie in food banks taking on a more socially activist, community-based “bottom up” approach? What is the optimal role food banks (who have their “finger on the pulse” of their clients’ needs) should play in sharing their experience and expertise with government to become partners in building bridges for those with low incomes? Should food banks expand their services beyond food distribution? And if they do so, will this have the effect of actually reducing the impacts of poverty?

Governments rely on food banks to feed poor families. Only Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador have poverty reduction plans in place, while Ontario is currently in the process of initiating a poverty reduction plan. The lack of attention to poverty issues in the past twenty years has failed to reduce the number of poor children, as promised by the Federal Parliament. Recent public opinion surveys by Ipsos Redi and Environics demonstrate that citizens in most provinces, feel that a comprehensive plan to reduce poverty should be a medium to high priority for the provincial government. (CCPA, Ready for Leadership, 2008.)

Not only are Canadian citizens wishing to change public policy with regards to the development of an anti-poverty law, people internationally are literally taking a stand against poverty. On October 17, 2007 the **International Day for Eradication of Poverty** saw over 43 million people stand up and be counted in the Stand Up Campaign – the world’s largest coordinated movement of people that “demand that world leaders keep their promises to end poverty and inequality.” (Stand Against Poverty. 2008). The Stand Up Campaign has had three consecutive years of international participation and has become an internationally known event as a result of minimal action taken to execute the Millennium Declaration. Leaders of 189 countries signed the Declaration in 2000, pledging themselves to the Millennium Development Goals, a plan to end extreme

poverty by 2015. However, to October 10, 2008 (eight years after the signing of the Declaration), “50,000 people die [each day] as a result of extreme poverty [while] the gap between rich and poor people is increasing. Nearly half the world’s population live in poverty, 70 per cent are women.” (Stand Against Poverty. 2008) In raising awareness through public demonstration aimed at policy makers about the root causes of poverty, this campaign hopes to push their governments for “better aid, debt cancellation, education for all boys and girls, healthcare, trade, justice, gender equality and public accountability.” (Stand Against Poverty. 2008)

In the meantime, while policy makers are pressed regarding the essential need for improving wealth distribution, the food banks within our country continue to provide the nourishment and learning opportunities for poor families. They are proving to be diligent in developing and administering short term solutions of feeding the poor, while simultaneously knocking on the policy makers and program funder’s doors requesting additional funding to keep their doors open. As two decades of food banking has concluded, food banks are now becoming the confirmation of the re-emergence of the “residual welfare state and sit at the interface between critical questions of public health, welfare reform and social policy.” (Riches, G. 2002) What then is the evolving role of food banks in alleviating poverty?

Understanding Food Banks

The first food bank in Canada officially opened in the city of Edmonton in 1981, with the materialization of the economic recession in the early 1980s. The impact of the recession saw social agencies quickly overwhelmed, leaving thousands of Canadians without sufficient food to feed their families. Edmonton's experience was soon replicated in Toronto. Due to its location in the media center of the province, the issue of food banks was quickly brought to the public consciousness in Ontario. In 1984, Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo and Ottawa opened doors to food banks and were soon followed in the next few years by more food banks in many other regional and urban centers throughout the country.

The Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) was founded in 1985 with its ultimate goal being the elimination of hunger in Canada. It represents a national network of regional and community food banks, including provincial associations and food distribution centres. Beginning in 1989, the CAFB has annually conducted a national survey called *Hunger Count* to collect and present accurate, timely information to donors and media, while representing member's key concerns at a variety of public forums. Food bank use has more than doubled since the CAFB first conducted the *Hunger Count* survey, increasing from "378,000 people in 1989 to 720,231 in 2007." (CAFB Annual Report. 2007).

Simultaneously, as the trend of hungry people rose during the reported eighteen years, so did Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with it reflecting the total value of all goods and services produced by a nation rising from "\$657 billion to \$1.45 trillion." (Statistics Canada. 2008). Our nation continues to become wealthier, but more Canadians access the services of the food bank.

The CAFB has also collected additional information specific to the rising trend of hunger in Canada. A report issued in February 2007, by the CAFB entitled *Hunger in Rural Canada* stated that in the month of March 2006, over "753,000 different people accessed food banks, 41 per cent of whom were children." (Seiden, C., Hellquist, W., Swinemar, B. 2007). Worse, in Canadian urban cities, close to 50 per cent of food bank clients are children. Closer to home, the Regina and District Food Bank (RDFB) reports **an average of**

8,000 clients are being served each month, a statistic that has grown since the agency's inception.

There is a defined need for the CAFB to act as an advocate for hungry Canadians as it recognizes and preserves the dignity

of food bank users. However, in an effort to preserve client's dignity, providing food is only the first step. While the CAFB's 2007 objectives are focused on client advocacy and adult education programming, it is the responsibility of local, individual food banks to customize their hamper, learning and job training

"Food bank use has more than doubled since the CAFB first conducted the Hunger Count survey, increasing from "378,000 people in 1989 to 720,231 in 2007."

programming and funding requirements to suit the demographics of their regions.

Along with the basic service of providing food hampers to families in need, food banks are also emerging as educational institutions that provide life skills learning to their adult clients to assist them in understanding the importance of training to obtain higher paying jobs. Learning programs such as adult high school classes, cooking classes, computer training, tutoring, support groups for single moms, community kitchens, career counselling, coaching and gardening are examples of programs that have emerged to support those who rely on social disability and welfare programs with new opportunities for education, training and personal development.

Further to providing food, training and development for their clients, food banks are now transitioning themselves to become labour force intermediaries in an effort to help to fill job vacancies created by chronic labour and skill shortages in Saskatchewan. Food banks are beginning to develop customized contracts with business and government partners to satisfy and meet their labour shortages with food bank clientele trained and readied by the adult learning programs provided by the food bank. The RDFB in partnership with Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) hired an external agency to conduct a research study assessing the opportunistic niche for food banks to assist and improve the labour market participation of food bank clients by becoming a labour force intermediary. It suggested that food banks "...as part of the social economy have well suited accessibility, trust levels, and support services to provide disadvantaged populations with services. The community-based approach is better suited for altering cyclical patterns around poverty and unemployment..." (Derek Murray Consulting and Associates. 2008.) The report concluded that there was an expanded role for food banks

to become a labour force intermediary with consideration given to partnering with currently operating Saskatchewan labour force intermediaries. In this case, the RDFB, due to decreased governmental funding, economic trending, and most importantly increased clientele needs is emerging as a natural one-stop-agency of the future to assist its clients with life's basic essentials by providing food, life skills and job training. Are food banks becoming permanent institutionalized catch-all agencies?

In 2008 the Ontario Association of Food Banks published a groundbreaking report, *The Cost of Poverty*, which documented poverty's extremely high price tag for households, governments and the economy.

- In real terms poverty costs every household in the province from \$2,299 to \$2,895 every year.
- The federal and Ontario governments are losing at least \$10.4 billion to \$13.1 billion a year due to poverty, a loss equal to between 10.8 to 16.6 per cent of the provincial budget.
- When both private and public (or social) costs are combined, the total cost of poverty in Ontario is equal to 5.5 to 6.6 per cent of Ontario's GDP. (OAFB, *The Cost of Poverty*, 2008 p. 4)

The OAFB identified three components of the social costs of poverty, remedial, intergenerational and opportunity costs. Remedial costs are defined as those incurred by the province in "treating its symptoms: the incremental costs to the health system that result from the lower health status of those who are poor; the cost of fighting crime committed by those who see themselves as excluded from the mainstream; and the cost of social assistance and related remedial programs." (OAFB, p.7) Intergenerational costs

are those payments resulting from society's inability to prevent the children of today's poor from escaping poverty. The report estimates that 20 to 25 per cent of poor children will not likely escape a life of poverty and will be poor for a lifetime, in dollar terms having an annual income of only \$16,000 a year. (p.15) Opportunity costs arise from our failure to address the root causes of poverty – the productivity and tax revenues we forego as a society by not capitalizing on the potential economic contributions the poor could make.

(p.7) The report estimates that there are 1,948,850 Canadian households in the lowest income quintile who are unable to contribute to governments' tax base. (p.16)

Saskatchewan's economy and taxpayers no doubt face similar levels of costs as Ontario.

International Anti-Poverty Programs

Several European governments already have implemented anti-poverty programs as a result of actions of the European Union. The European Council meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal in 2000 established a common goal that the European Union (EU) would become the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." (European Commission. 2000.) The Council then proceeded to implement a problem solving application called the "open method of co-ordination (OMC) to the fight against poverty and social exclusion." (Armstrong, K. 2003.) The OMC was considered a new mode of governing and could potentially reshape governance within the EU as it provided problem-solving potential through engaging "both levels [non and for profit voices] in a process of knowledge generation, policy innovation and mutual learning." (Armstrong, K. 2003.) It provided a template of the following six mutually understood governance methods:

1. Participation and power sharing: civil society and stakeholder involvement in governance processes.
2. Multi-level interaction: both vertical and horizontal engagement of actors.
3. Diversity and decentralisation: The support and coordination of Member States policies rather than an attempt to impose an 'EU' solution.
4. Deliberation: problem solving through debate and dialogue about problems and potential solutions.
5. Flexibility and revisability: preference for 'soft law' solutions that can be applied flexibly and revised in light of experience.
6. Experimentation and knowledge creation: the governance process as productive as knowledge and self-consciously experimental. (Armstrong, K. 2003.)

The OMC process has the ability to reshape the most important boundaries between the socially, politically and economic included and those excluded. It is a tool that is working towards the common goal of the European Council to both understand and potentially eradicate poverty in the European world.

Since the inception of OMC practices, European Union countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland have seen changes in their social safety nets for the citizens. Each country must cope with the widespread hardships resulting from globalization and the transformation of their economies, and all are developing different solutions to providing a safety net for struggling citizens. For example, the Czech Republic developed a system of income tested state

social subsidies to guarantee minimum living standards that has focused on families with children, while Nordic countries rely on general programmes. The Hungarians and Poles have integrated the strategy of relying on massive temporary emergency payments. In Sweden, women especially continue to face issues such as access to employment, housing and basic services. However, a significant change that has been seen is the shift from housing needs to housing rights as a direct result of governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGO) influence on policy. Each country must individualize their anti-poverty strategy to suit their needs as "recent reforms in many 28 countries have tailored programmes to specific categories of need." (Sainsbury, D. Morissens, A. 2002).

Canadian Anti-Poverty Programs

In an (almost) ideal world, one that has government, the private sector and communities working together to maintain and provide for a healthy society, food banks should have available one service – providing food hampers for those families who require short term nutritional help as a result of being trapped in poverty or falling on unforeseen hard luck. They should essentially be put out of business due to lack of clientele. Rather, they "permit governments and the public to believe that food poverty is being addressed." Instead governments should ensure "that the services they provide move beyond charitable relief to public education and advocacy regarding the real causes of hunger and the need for appropriate public policies." (Riches, G. 2000)

There is some evidence to show that poverty reduction programs are a possible solution to reducing the numbers of dependents on food bank. In Quebec, *Bill 112: An Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion* or Quebec's anti-poverty law is a first of its kind in Canada and is the outcome of a sequence of collaborative, grassroots efforts begun in the late 90s among social justice groups working to understand and address the issues of hunger and adult life skills learning. In 2002, Bill 112 allocated \$2.5 billion dollars over five years to increase the income of low-income individuals and families to boost investment in social housing and improve the employment assistance program. (Noel, Alain. 2002.) With an additional \$16 million dedicated to the anti-poverty law in 2004-2005

a more concentrated effort to promote local strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion in Quebec was undertaken:

- to establish an advisory committee on the prevention of poverty and social exclusion,
- to provide a research centre on poverty and social exclusion (an *observatoire*), and
- to set up a fund to support social initiatives (*Fonds québécois d'initiatives sociales*) dedicated to combating poverty and social exclusion.

As a result of the injection of funds specific to decreasing poverty within the province of Quebec, available data shows that the "proportion of people living on low incomes in the province has decreased steadily from 1997 to 2005. Based on the after-tax low income cut-offs (LICO), the overall proportion of people living on low incomes in Quebec went from 19 per cent in 1997 to 11.8 per cent in 2005, and the proportion of children living in low-income families decreased from 22.4 per cent in 1997 to 9.6 per cent in 2005." (Collin, C. 2007). In the same report, it was indicated that about 20,000 *fewer* children were living in families receiving last-resort financial assistance in 2007.

Quebec's achievements specific to decreasing its hungry are encouraging. Consequently and possibly working off Quebec's anti-poverty legislative template, in December 2006, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador's legislative assembly unanimously passed a new governmental Poverty Reduction Strategy in an effort to address and reduce the 9 per cent of its residents living on low incomes. Children in particular were suffering from the effects of

being part of a poor family. Alarming, close to 11 per cent of children were living in low-income families with an even higher percentage when, "The prevalence of low income children living in female lone-parent families was much higher at 30.5 per cent". (Statistics Canada. 1992.) In 2006, Statistics Canada reported that close to 20,000 families of female lone-parent families had a median after tax income of \$24,067 and 16.3 per cent of all families were living in poverty – an increase of over 5 per cent from 1992. (Statistics Canada. 2006).

As in Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador's newly designed legislation addressed the "connections between poverty and gender, education, housing, employment, health, social and financial supports, and tax measures, as well as the link between women's poverty and

"Both Quebec and Newfoundland have stepped ahead of the pack and have created two excellent examples of anti-poverty programs for other provinces to build on."

their increased vulnerability to violence." ([Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 2005](#). p. 25) The \$30.5 million dollar action plan set out to improve access and coordination of services for those living on low incomes, while establishing a strong social safety net, bettering earned incomes and placing high emphasis on early childhood development in order to achieve a better-educated population. The provincial government initiated the following strategies in order to strengthen their low income and working poor families:

- tax reductions for low-income families,
- measures to build the supply and demand for labour,
- increased social and financial support,
- increased access to affordable housing,

- improved access to health programming,
- enhanced justice system support,
- strengthening of early learning and child care programs,
- improved primary and secondary school systems, and
- provided greater access to post-secondary education, literacy and adult basic education.

Newfoundland and Labrador's action plan aims to reduce the numbers living in poverty and insists that government regularly engages in ongoing dialogue with community-based poverty reduction agencies and individuals living in poverty to ensure that the policies are succeeding. The program calls for collaboration with the federal government as a priority – especially when dealing with Aboriginal and

people with disabilities, children and youth and student loan and literacy programs. The province has mandated \$64 million per year following the initial \$30.5 million dollar investment as their contribution to bridging the gap from poverty to independence. (Collin, C. 2007.)

Newfoundland and Labrador's anti-poverty strategy was put into effect in 2007 and results of the action plan are not yet available. However progress on the implementation and success of the action plan will be monitored closely both nationally and internationally, as it will provide invaluable information required for other provinces' consideration. Both Quebec and Newfoundland have stepped ahead of the pack and have created two excellent examples for other provinces to build on. Recently the Ontario government established a Cabinet Committee on Poverty and it was scheduled to bring forth an antipoverty strategy in December 2008.

An Anti-poverty Agenda

This paper has explored a number of issues related to the incidence and costs of poverty and the development of anti-poverty programs and has raised questions about the role food banks can play in alleviating poverty. Clearly, the fundamental purpose of food banks is to provide food on an emergency basis. Their ability to alleviate intergenerational poverty and reduce the remedial impacts of poverty is very limited. It is governments' role to lead the response to these impacts.

Until governments fully regard and recognize the urgent need for multi-faceted poverty reduction programs supported by law, food

banks will be necessary in Canada. Non-governmental agencies along with private and public businesses are only gradually defining individual customized roles that they will play with food banks. At the very least the provision of continuous financial assistance from governments, citizens and the private sector for food bank programming is needed. When partnership agreements including funding, volunteerism, donations, and adjustments to public policy are established, food banks may generate new capacity to better reach their goals.

At present, our Canadian food banks and school-based food programs are providing the

only solution to keeping struggling families fed including those ordinary people who “lose their jobs, get sick or can’t work, earn ‘working poor’ wages or face unexpected and sometimes overwhelming challenges in their life.” (Regina and District Food Bank Annual Report. 2008)

The determinants of health of a population are improved when the gap between rich and poor is narrowed. Community food security is “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice.” (Fisher, A. 2003) In the past twenty years food banks have established themselves as one of the fastest-growing charitable industries in our societies. They have emerged as a key frontline *response* to the growing problem of food poverty and inequality. The rise of food banks specifically in Canada is concrete evidence of the “breakdown of the social safety net and the commodification of social assistance.” (Riches, G. 2002). *Food banks should not enable governments to look the other way and neglect the nutritional health, well-being and poverty of Canadian citizens.* Food banks are facing growing difficulties delivering their services even in good economic times. With the growing likelihood of an economic recession in 2009, sustaining their current programs may be insurmountable. It is time to take a good hard look at revisiting and reconstructing our governmental policies, our community practices and our personal mindsets with respect to the poor. With a fresh look at these policies, most Canadian food banks can again realize their paramount role of fighting hunger instead of taking on the additional roles of educating, training and bridging their clients back into the workforce.

Will our generation see a decline in the number of food banks? Quite possibly if all partners

(federal, provincial governments, private corporations and Canadian food banks) were to strongly commit to a strategy and then establish long-term, comprehensive anti-poverty programs, perhaps in less than five years, we could see a reduction of both food bank clients and Canadians relying heavily on the social system.

By working towards a change in policy, it is imperative that crucial steps be taken immediately to recognize, understand and address the issue of poverty. Both Canadian and European anti-poverty strategies can provide a good starting point. Essentially, by tying all stakeholder groups together including municipal, provincial, territorial and national governments, private corporations, NGOs, community agencies including Food Banks and disadvantaged citizens, a mutual understanding and trusting relationship can be established. While the hunger of our nation is being addressed, together these stakeholder groups can provide the building blocks of an anti-poverty program. By working together with a common goal in mind of eliminating both hunger and poverty, such a combined effort has the power over the long term to reduce taxes, increase social and financial support, increase access to affordable housing, improve access to health programming and legal support and strengthen child care and post-secondary training for adult learners. Anti-poverty programs must attack the intergenerational, remedial and opportunity costs resulting from poverty as recommended by the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Let’s commit to working together and *sharing the power*, learning from our mistakes and achievements while being flexible and adaptable.

It is time all citizens life chances be improved and they are able to experience enhanced nutritional, financial and emotional independence. It is time that we as a nation no

longer neglect the current issues of poverty. It is time for the Saskatchewan government to take the lead, create an integrated anti-poverty program and support a new "war on poverty" with the goal of eliminating poverty rather than reducing it.

"By working together with a common goal of eliminating both hunger and poverty, such a

combined effort has the power over the long term to reduce taxes, increase social and financial support, increase access to affordable housing, improve access to health programming and legal support and strengthen child care and post-secondary training for adult learners."

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