

NOVA SCOTIA CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD 2001 A National Disgrace



**Many things we need can wait. The child cannot.
Politicians promise, "Tomorrow." But— the child's name is "Today."**

Adapted from "The Child's Name is Today"
Gabriela Mistral, Nobel Prize winning poet

More than a decade ago, Canadian Parliamentarians determined that child poverty should be ended by the year 2000. Actual statistics for the year 2000 become available in 2002.

The most recent data (based on 1999 statistics) indicate that a greater number and higher percentage of children are poorer than in 1989. Our First Ministers continue to fail children miserably. A decade has passed—and more children now live in poverty. As new items mount on national and provincial agendas—it's up to us to see Canada's crucial promise to children is kept and not forgotten.

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

Resolution of the Canadian House of Commons, November 24, 1989.

A Decade Lost... 1989-1999

A closer look at what happened between 1989 and 1999 reveals not only a lack of progress—but a worsening situation for more children. Since the promise to end poverty, seven provinces have seen increases to child poverty rates ranging from just under 1% to over 43%. Only two provinces have seen rate decreases (Alberta 14%; Saskatchewan 18%).

Nova Scotia is among the seven provinces experiencing increases and part of a picture resulting in a national child poverty average that has increased significantly.

Poor Children in Nova Scotia...	Rate increased by 12.4%
Poor Children in Canada...	Rate increased by 21.7%

The total number of children living in poverty increased:

Nova Scotia...	36,000—38,000
Canada...	1.016 million—1.298 million

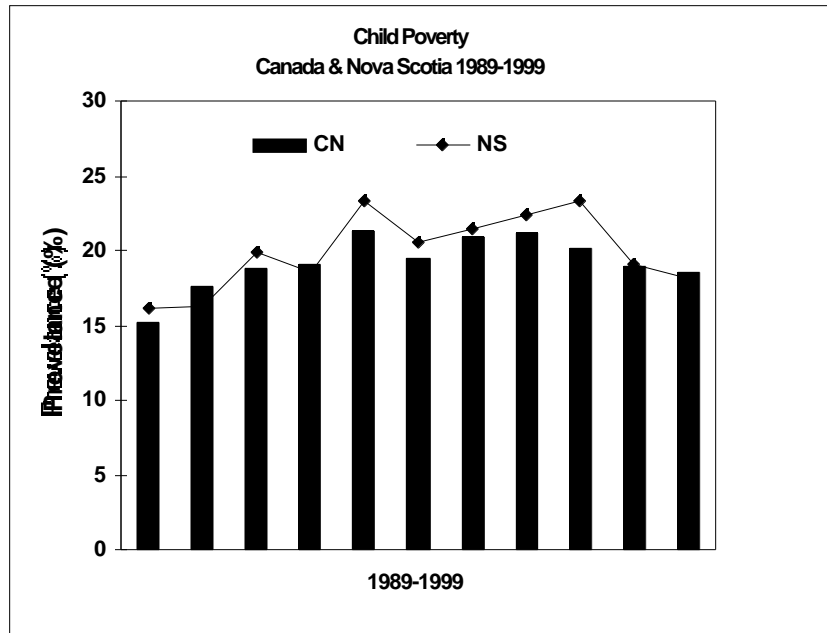
For Nova Scotia—latest statistics show:

- Close to 1 in 5 children (18.1%) are experiencing poverty compared with 1 in 6 (16.1%) in 1989.
- Child poverty rates are higher among First Nations (42%) and Visible Minority (49.2%) children, as well as children with disabilities/disorders/health impairments (39.5%).
- Children in female lone-parent families continue to experience very high rates of child poverty. With an increase from 62.6% (1989) to 66% (1999), children living with a single mother continue to be those most exposed to the risks of family poverty. In NS, 18,100 or 48% of all poor children live with a single mother.
- Nova Scotia's 1989 rate of 16.1% placed us among the 5 Canadian provinces with lower rates of child poverty. In comparison, our 1999 rate of 18.1% places us among the 5 provinces with higher rates.



More Nova Scotian Children Live in Poverty

The graph below shows the prevalence of child poverty in Nova Scotia and Canada over the last decade. It demonstrates a strong tendency for Nova Scotia's provincial rate to hover just above the national average.



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Income in Canada Catalogue No. 75-202. Nov., 2001

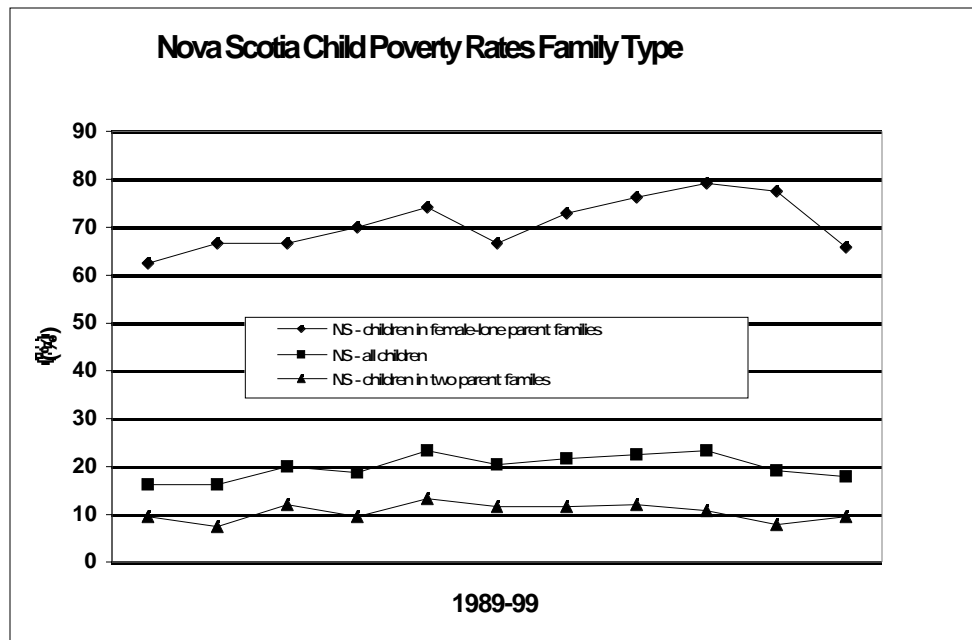
The Canada Way?

... A Society committed to ensuring that no Canadian is left behind as we move ahead. These [are] the values we have embraced; a unique blend known around the world as the "Canada Way." Summer Speech 2001, Canada's Prime Minister

In Contrast, Broken Promises and Increased Child Poverty Rates are Becoming a Dark Stain on Canada's International Standing.

Female-Lone Parent Families Have Highest Child Poverty Rates

In 1989, female lone-parent families in Nova Scotia experienced a 62.6% rate of child poverty, while two-parent families experienced a 9.4% rate. Over the decade examined this group's rate of child poverty remained above the 1989 level—arriving at 66% in 1999. Poverty among Nova Scotia's female-lone parent families is 7 times greater than the rate for two-parent families.

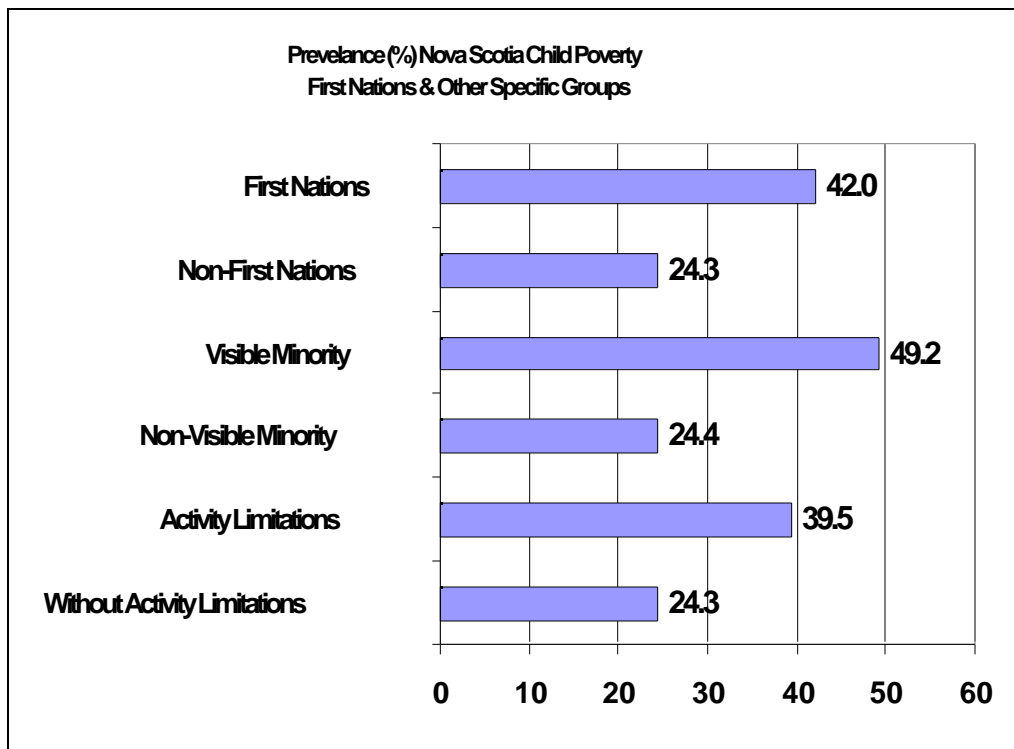


Data Source: Statistics Canada. Income in Canada Catalogue No. 75-202. Nov., 2001.

- A single urban Nova Scotia mother, with 1 child, working 37.5 hours at the \$5.80 minimum wage rate (\$11,310 per annum) would live \$7,734 (59%) below the LICO (\$19,044-\$11,310).
- To reach the LICO a single urban mother would need to work 63-hours per week at Nova Scotia's minimum wage rate (1.7 full-time jobs) - or find employment at \$9.77 per hour.
- A single urban Nova Scotia mother, with 1 child under age 7, dependent on provincial income assistance and Provincial/Federal Child Tax Benefits would receive income totaling \$983 per month (\$550 shelter; \$180 personal allowance; \$253 child tax benefits).
- Current levels of federal/provincial support leave her family \$7,248 (62%) below the Low Income Cut-off (\$19,044 - \$11,796).

Poverty Rates Higher for First Nations & Other Children

Based on the 1996 Census, in Nova Scotia poverty rates among 0–14 year-olds are significantly higher for First Nations and visible minority children, as well as for those children with disabilities, disorders and/or health impairments.



Data Source: Canadian Council on Social Development (Custom tabulations using Statistics Canada 1996 Census).

The higher prevalence of child poverty among First Nations, visible minority, and disabled children, along with those in lone-parent families, underscores the need for immediate and specific actions to counter the impact of racial and social discrimination.

The increased rate of child poverty in Nova Scotia since 1989 angers concerned observers. While taking inadequate action, politicians continue to describe real commitment to children...

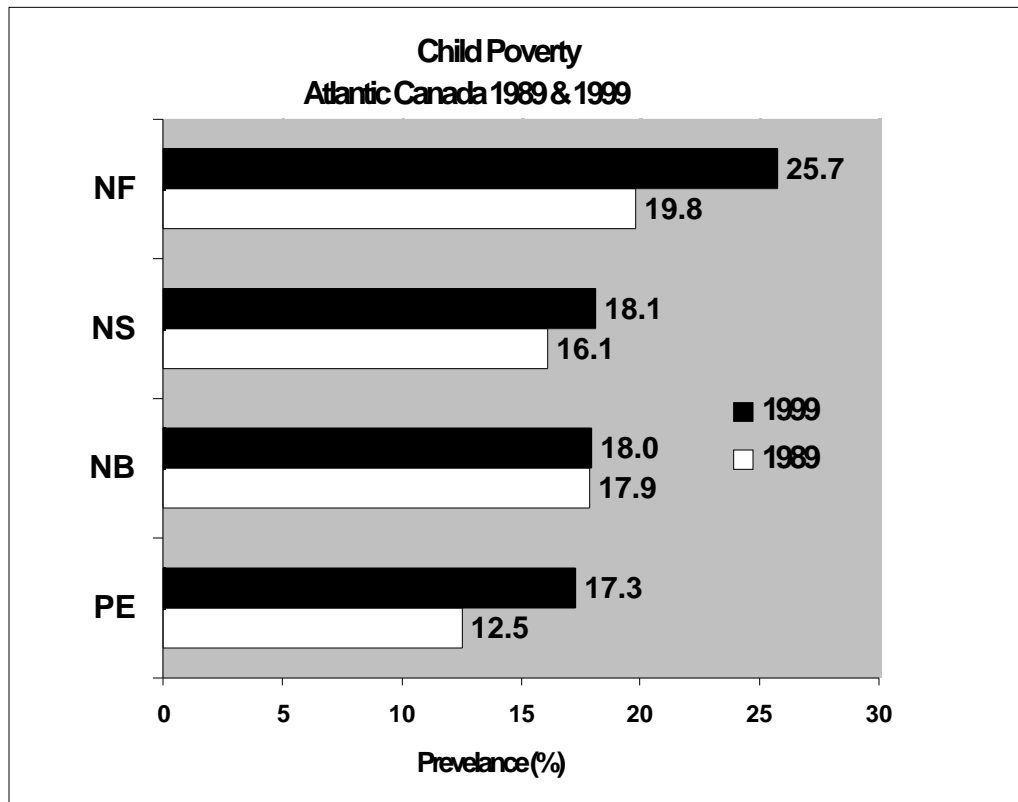
“A generation ago, Canadians set a national goal to eliminate poverty among seniors, and we have made significant progress... Now Canadians must undertake another national project—to ensure that no Canadian child suffers the debilitating effects of poverty.” Federal Speech from the Throne, January 30, 2001

Canada took on “the project” of eliminating child poverty in 1989. Today, even higher rates of child poverty place our most valuable resource in jeopardy. This raises serious questions regarding the integrity of family support policies and agreements between federal and provincial governments.

Nova Scotia Third Highest Atlantic Canada

All four Atlantic Canadian provinces experienced an overall increase in child poverty between 1989 and 1999. Prince Edward Island saw the most significant rate increase (38.4%), followed by Newfoundland (29.8%), and then Nova Scotia (12.4%). New Brunswick's rate of child poverty increased marginally.

Over the 1989-99 decade, Nova Scotia has almost consistently held the third highest ranking for child poverty rates in Atlantic Canada. The promise to eliminate child poverty has not yielded positive results for families in Atlantic Canada. It is particularly disturbing to see significant rate increases in 3 of 4 provinces.



Data Source: Statistics Canada. Income in Canada Catalogue No. 75-202. Nov., 2001.

Nova Scotia Loses Ground 1989—1999

In 1989, Nova Scotia's child poverty rate of 16.1% was the 4th lowest among Canadian provinces – 1999's rate of 18.1% placed Nova Scotia 5th highest. In 1999, for the first time since 1992, Nova Scotia's rate was slightly lower than the national average. Ontario experienced the greatest rate increase (43.5%) in child poverty. The best rate improvement was experienced in Saskatchewan (an 18.3% decrease).

Ranking of Canada and Provinces Prevalence (%) of Child Poverty & Performance (% Decrease or Increase)								
1989			1999			1989 – 1999 Change (%)		
ON	11.5	Lowest	AB	16.3	Lowest	SK	18.3	Greatest Decrease
PE	12.5		ON	16.5		AB	14.7	Decrease
BC	14.6		PE	17.3		NB	0.6	Increase
CN	15.2		SK	17.9		MB	4.9	Increase
NS	16.1	4 th Lowest	NB	18.0		NS	12.4	Increase
QB	16.3		NS	18.1	5 th Highest	CN	21.7	Increase
NB	17.9		CN	18.5		NF	29.8	Increase
AB	19.1		BC	19.0		BC	30.1	Increase
NF	19.8		QB	21.6		QB	32.5	Increase
SK	21.9		MB	23.7		PE	38.4	Increase
MB	22.6	Highest	NF	25.7	Highest	ON	43.5	Greatest Increase

Data Source: Statistics Canada. Income in Canada Catalogue No. 75-202. Nov., 2001.

*For National Statistics & Links to other Provincial
Cards Visit*

www.campaign2000.ca

Causes of High Child Poverty Rates

- Lack of Adequate Employment
- Weak Employment Insurance
- Low Wages for Women
- Low Income Assistance Levels
- Inadequate provincial and federal child tax benefits for low-income families.

Impacts of Child Poverty

Poor children are:

- Less likely to have nutritious food
- Less likely to have annual visits to the dentist
- Less likely to participate in extra-curricular activities
- More Likely to have health threatening low birth weights
- More likely to visit the hospital emergency room
- More likely to have delayed vocabulary scores, low math scores, and to fail elementary and grade school
- More likely to face poorer employment prospects

Source: Canadian Council on Social Development. Income and Child Well-being: A New Perspective on the Poverty Debate. David Ross & Paul Roberts. May, 1999.

What will end child poverty?

Without government actions aimed at fundamental adjustments to national and provincial economic policy—no substantial change to child poverty rates can occur. Voice your concerns without delay by contacting your government representatives.

Doing more to address the extent and depth of poverty... a goal for governments and all Canadians.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

How to Contact Federal Politicians

Mail may be sent, postage free, to any Member of Parliament. Write your member at:

House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Detailed contact information can be found for each Member of Parliament at:
www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/house/PostalCode.asp?Source=SM

How to Contact Nova Scotia Politicians

Mail may be sent to any member of Nova Scotia's Legislative Assembly. Write your member at:

Province House
1726 Hollis Street
Halifax, NS B3J 3J9

Toll-free numbers in Nova Scotia

The Premier's Office...	1-800-595-8679
The Liberal Caucus...	1-877-778-1917
The New Democrats...	1-888-247-0448

Detailed contact information can be found for each Member of Nova Scotia's Legislative Assembly at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/legislature/MEMBERS/index.html>

Challenging the Lack of Political Will to Help Vulnerable Families!

An ongoing lawn sign and button campaign began November 24, 2001. Launched by a Berwick -based ecumenical group —the "Million Broken Promises" message provides concerned citizens with a way to demonstrate their dissatisfaction regarding the lack of adequate political action over the last decade.

To join this campaign call: Greg Hubbert, 902 -538-9181 (evenings); or Steve Burke, 902-538-3959; Members, Feed My Lambs, Child Advocacy Group.

Getting Information About the NS Report Card 2001

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LICO... Measuring Poverty with a reliable and relative method

Unlike the United States and some other countries, Canada has no official, government-mandated poverty line. The Canadian Council on Social Development, the National Council of Welfare, most anti-poverty groups and many government and university-based researchers use “Low Income Cut Offs” as poverty lines. Reliable estimates of low income rates based on the LICO lines are released annually by Statistics Canada, along with the release of general income statistics. LICOs are familiar, widely used and provide a consistent series of estimates over time.

The Nova Scotia Child Poverty Report Card uses pre-tax LICOs as measures of poverty to consistently track progress on the promise to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The pre-tax LICO is widely accepted as a fair and relative measure that identifies those substantially worse off than average and more likely to encounter greater difficulty in achieving healthy outcomes.

Sincere thanks to Debbie Reimer and Alasdair Sinclair

—who reviewed this bulletin at a moment’s notice.

Please Note... Access to 1999 statistics is later this year than expected. A more detailed paper will be published in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in January, 2002.