

**CASW Submission to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills  
and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities’  
Study on Poverty Reduction**

**From Aspiration to Implementation:  
End Poverty by Putting People First**

---

**September 2016**



---

Founded in 1926 the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is the national association voice for the social work profession.

CASW has adopted a pro-active approach to issues pertinent to social policy/social work. It produces and distributes timely information for its members, and special projects are initiated and sponsored. With its concern for social justice and its continued role in social advocacy, CASW is recognized and called upon both nationally and internationally for its social policy expertise.

The mission of CASW is to promote the profession of social work in Canada and advance social justice. CASW is active in the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

---



## Introduction

CASW is tremendously pleased that your government's first year of leadership has brought about many long-sought changes and commitments: from the introduction of the new Child Benefit to the early stages of a national affordable child-care strategy, and many encouraging promises in terms of restoring equity to the Canadian justice system, this government is taking concrete steps toward a better Canada.

As a social justice organization that has long advocated for a national poverty reduction strategy, and as proud members of the Dignity for All Campaign, CASW is equally pleased that this committee has chosen to focus on poverty reduction. We are encouraged by the emphasis on the role of affordable housing, housing strategies, addressing homelessness, and Housing First initiatives, and other new and/or innovative approaches in the elimination of poverty in Canada. A holistic understanding of the social determinants of health is key to the success of any poverty reduction strategy.

Despite this renewed federal leadership, there remains no pan-Canadian vision for social policy, and no common standard of outcomes or performance indicators for the delivery of social services across Canada.

With this government's many large initiatives still in the early stages of development, the time is now to ensure that all decisions made put people and end poverty first by addressing the social determinants of health, ensuring equity across Canada, and making children a priority.

## Executive Summary

CASW looks forward to working with this government to reduce poverty in Canada.

The following recommendations would greatly assist in reducing poverty in Canada while also proving cost effective for the federal government:

- 1) Adopt a *Social Care Act for Canada* to support equity across Canada, renew federal leadership, and develop mechanisms for benchmarking of outcomes and for information sharing between provinces, thus enabling the future creation of *innovative approaches to end poverty*;
- 2) Prioritize children with a basic income and a plan for child-care
- 3) Put humanity first by continuing the restoration of federal leadership in health and social investments

## CASW'S Recommendations:

### 1) Adopt a *Social Care Act for Canada* to guide social investments

CASW proposed the adoption of a *Social Care Act for Canada* with principles similar to those of the *Canada Health Act* to help guide the Canada Social Transfer (CST) and other social investments, making possible a national strategy with shared performance indicators.

#### *Ten Principles of a proposed Social Care Act for Canada*

1. Public administration
2. Comprehensiveness
3. Universality
4. Portability
5. Accessibility
6. Fairness
7. Effectiveness
8. Accountability and Transparency
9. Rights and Responsibility
10. Comparability

Such an *Act* would help guide the provinces and territories in developing policies that best fit their unique needs, while helping the federal government better understand where dollars are being spent – and, in turn, where more targeted investment might be needed. This would help not only to foster dialogue around shared issues, best practices, and evidence-based programs, but also aid in producing comparable outcomes across Canada. Without federal leadership guiding social transfers and investments, dialogue on progressive social policy stagnates.

In CASW's view, taking stock of the current provincial strategies, and their respective efficacy, is the first step toward the creation of a national strategy to end poverty.

The proposed *Social Care Act for Canada* can be read in full on CASW's website, [www.casw-acts.ca](http://www.casw-acts.ca).

### 2) Prioritize children with a basic income and a plan for child-care

In gearing the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to income, the Government of Canada took a bold step towards developing a comprehensive basic income for low income families with children. Budget 2016 enhanced the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) which, combined with Old Age Security (OAS), moves forward basic support for seniors. CASW welcomes the enhanced GIS and as with low income families receiving maximum CCB, we encourage the federal government to continue progressively moving forward with targeted affordable basic income for both these vulnerable populations.

Low income families and seniors should be ensured a basic income to allow them to live in dignity regardless of labour market status. With a basic income, society can stop much involvement in the child welfare system before it begins, and prevent many costly acute health care interventions for seniors. Additionally, we know that children and seniors living in poverty are exponentially more likely to develop chronic health conditions including concerns around mental health and addictions.

CASW recommends that the federal government initiate a process to review and renew the income security system in Canada with a view to the possibility of developing an affordable basic income. It should be targeted initially to provide income support families with children, and for all seniors who are economically insecure and vulnerable. As a measure that would significantly reduce poverty in Canada, a targeted basic income also reduce the long term social and financial costs of poverty in areas such as health care, education and criminal justice.

Parenthetically, CASW cautions that not all basic income or guaranteed annual income models are made equal: the implementation of a basic income should not be cause to eliminate all other social assistance programs and strategies.

In addition, and specific to children, CASW echoes the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada's recommendations that a new national framework for early learning and child care must include:

- A commitment to build universal, affordable, inclusive, high-quality child care systems across Canada.
- A commitment to provide long-term sustained federal funding to ensure affordable, high-quality services together with a planned expansion of child care programs so that, by 2020, child care can become accessible to every child whose family chooses it.
- A commitment to work together to strengthen family supports including better and more equitable family leave from work and study, as well as access to more flexible work arrangements.
- Commitment to use data and policy research to make evidence-based child care policy decisions<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada <https://ccaac.ca/2016/06/22/what-we-want-in-an-early-learning-and-child-care-framework-for-canada/>

### **3) Put humanity first by continuing the restoration of federal leadership in health and social investments**

Poverty is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted solution; a basic income as discussed above is only one piece of the solution.

#### **Social Finance:**

In terms of the development of a Social Finance and Innovation Strategy, CASW urges this government to carefully consider different social finance tools and their potential impacts. CASW is strongly in support of social enterprises and other initiatives and models that return benefits, and surpluses, to community. On the other hand, CASW is deeply concerned about Social Impact Bonds and other tools that would allow private interests to profit off of vulnerable populations, or compromise service delivery due to profit incentives.

To read CASW's recommendations on social finance in *The True Cost of Capital: A Social Work Perspective on the Potential of Social Investments*, please visit <http://www.casw-acts.ca/en/TheTrueCostofCapital> .

#### **Addressing Home Care:**

CASW supports the Canadian Home Care Association's Harmonized Principles for Home Care, which emphasize:

- Family- and Client-Centred Care
- Equitable and consistent access to appropriate care
- Accountable Care - A shared vision and clear strategy for managing, delivering and reporting on client, provider and system outcomes
- Evidence-Informed Care - Care is informed by clinical expertise, patient values and best available research evidence
- Integrated Care - Coordinated planning, delivery and alignment across multiple health and social care providers
- Sustainable Care - Provision of care that improves the client experience and achieves health and system outcomes in a cost effective manner.

Any future home care strategy in home care should adhere to these principles.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Affordable Housing:**

CASW supports the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) ask to continue and increase direct supportive housing investments, noting that the 2016 federal Budget introduced targeted funding programs to increase affordable housing for seniors and shelters for victims of violence. CASW recommends that the federal government continue these programs beyond their two year mandate, and extend the program to include other forms of supportive housing such as housing targeted at seniors, LGBTQ\*, veterans housing, and transitional housing for previously incarcerated individuals. Funding for these targeted supportive housing programs should be set at

---

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Home Care Association, <http://www.cdnhomecare.ca/content.php?doc=259>

a minimum funding level of \$150 million per year. Ideally, these funds would flow through a social policy framework established by the Social Care Act.

**Make Reconciliation a Priority:**

CASW appreciates the promises to enact Jordan's Principle and put an end to the unequal funding child welfare services on reserve. However, CASW shares the First Nations Family and Caring Society's concerns that, because over half of the dollars earmarked for children on reserve will not be spent until the final year of this government's mandate, many of those currently in need will be ignored. CASW urges this government to take immediate action to bring equity of services to all Canadians on and off reserve.

To learn more about CASW, visit [www.casw-acts.ca](http://www.casw-acts.ca) .