

**Submission of the  
National Anti-Poverty Organization  
To the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
On the Occasion of the Consideration of Canada's Fourth and Fifth  
Periodic Report on the Implementation of the International  
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The National Anti-Poverty Organization**

1.1.1 The National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) is a non-profit organization representing 4.9 million Canadians currently living in poverty. Our mandate is to eradicate poverty in Canada. We are known as the “voice of the poor” because our 20-member board is made up of people who live or have lived in poverty at some time in their lives. Our membership is made up of low-income individuals, organizations that provide direct and indirect services to the poor and other concerned Canadians.

1.1.2 NAPO has worked on human rights and poverty issues for many years - sponsoring public education workshops on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, providing information to the media and through its web site on poverty and human rights issues, advocating for recognition of economic and social rights in government policies and Canadian law and intervening in court cases where rights enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are at stake.

### **1.2 Purpose of this Submission**

1.2.1 The purpose of NAPO’s submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is to provide an alternative perspective and information on Canada’s progress in implementing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. NAPO’s perspective is that of people living in poverty.

1.2.2 NAPO also presented reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the occasion of Canada’s periodic reviews in 1993 and 1998. Then, as now, NAPO believes the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports submitted by the Federal provincial and territorial governments of Canada, do not fully or correctly report on Canada’s progress in implementing the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

### **1.3 Issues Addressed in this Submission**

NAPO has coordinated its efforts with a number of Canadian non-governmental organizations in making submissions to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Some Canadian NGOs, including Campaign 2000 and KAIROS, have contributed to this NAPO report. Others have produced separate reports on specific issues where they have a particular expertise. This

report will focus primarily on the rights articulated in Articles 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11. This report does not intend to provide a comprehensive critique of all aspects of Canada's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> periodic reports or comment on all of the ICESCR Articles. Other reports from Canadian NGOs will cover important topics such as the right to housing or the rights of Canada's aboriginal peoples that are not addressed in this report. We have chosen to focus our efforts on the Articles which we have the most expertise.

## **2. Review Process**

### **2.1 Lack of Government Consultation with Non-Governmental Organizations**

While review processes for other international human rights instruments have had more adequate NGO consultation, there continues to be problems from our point of view in the lack of adequate Canadian government consultation with Canadian non-governmental organizations in the ICESCR review process. Despite efforts by non-governmental organizations to engage in discussions with the Canadian government and offers of input on Canada's ICESCR reporting process, there has been no meaningful consultation or cooperation with NGOs in the reporting process.

### **2.2 Lack of Follow-up on Concluding Observations**

2.2.1 NAPO is also very disappointed that Canada's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports do not specifically address what has been done about the recommendations from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its Concluding Observations issued following Canada's 3<sup>rd</sup> review from 1998.

2.2.2 NAPO notes that the Concluding Observations in 1998 requested that the State Party "ensure the wide dissemination in Canada of its present concluding observations and to inform the Committee of steps taken to implement those recommendations in its next periodic report."

2.2.3 As far as NAPO is aware, there is nothing to indicate that the Concluding Observations from 1998 were brought to the attention of senior government and elected officials in the federal, provincial and territorial governments. There has also been a lack of any legislative or parliamentary follow-up on the Concluding Observations from Canada's 3<sup>rd</sup> Periodic Review in 1998.

2.2.4 The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights issued a Report in December of 2001 called **Promises to Keep: Implementing Canada's Human Rights Obligations** which observed that the political effect of the views and decisions of treaty-monitoring bodies is diminished by the fact that “there is no formal or public process in Canada that is dedicated to following up on the observations, findings, and recommendations of these bodies with respect to Canada's human rights performance.”<sup>1</sup>

*2.2.4 NAPO urges the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to ask the Canadian government about what was done to address the Concluding Observations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Review and recommend that more effective follow-up mechanisms be implemented this time.*

### **2.3 Need for Parliamentary Review**

2.3.1 There is a need for parliamentary review of Canada's human rights reporting. Among other important recommendations, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights recommended in its **Promises to Keep** report that a parliamentary Human Rights Committee be created and that it have as part of its responsibilities “reviewing and scrutinizing Canada's reports to treaty bodies, as well as those bodies' observations and decisions on complaints concerning Canada.”<sup>2</sup>

2.3.2 In support of this objective and in the absence of a Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, NAPO will be asking the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Social Development to hold public hearings following the release of the Concluding Observations to hear from the Canadian government on how it plans to respond to the recommendations and also hear from the public on what they feel needs to be done.

*2.3.3 NAPO urges the CESCR to endorse this call for parliamentary review of the human rights reporting process.*

### **3. Article 6 – Right to Work - Freely Chosen**

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<sup>1</sup> Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, **Promises to Keep: Implementing Canada's Human Rights Obligations** <http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/huma-e/06cv-e.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, **Promises to Keep: Implementing Canada's Human Rights Obligations**, *Ibid.*

### **3.1 Youth Unemployment**

While the unemployment rate in Canada, at 6.6% in January 2006, is low in historical terms, there continue to be sectors of the population and specific regions where unemployment is very high. In particular the unemployment rate for youth, at 12.4% in January 2006, is almost double the national unemployment rate. Youth poverty is growing as a result of the growth of precarious employment, restricted access to Employment Insurance, low minimum wages, decreased access to post-secondary education for low income students because of rising tuition fees and high student debt.

### **3.2 Workfare**

3.2.1 In Canada's 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> reports, all levels of government refer to Article 6 of the Covenant as a 'right to work', addressing their governments' level of compliance in a variety of ways. Without exception however, government reports ignore the terminology used in Article 6 that asserts a 'right to work *freely chosen or accepted.*'

3.2.2 Up until 1995 the Canada Assistance Program (CAP) which governed federal cost shared social programs prohibited the provinces from forcing people in financial need to work, or perform other activities in order to receive welfare. Eligibility could only be based on the needs test and there could be no mandatory undertaking required for an individual to work for basic benefits.

3.2.3 A number of provinces including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have implemented work for welfare programs. If people refuse to participate in the workfare program of their province, their payments may be reduced, or denied entirely. We believe these policies are a violation of Article 6. NAPO's position is that workfare programs violate the political and economic freedoms of the individual.

3.2.4 In most provinces workfare recipients are not protected under employment standards legislation; do not have the right to join or organize trade union; and do not receive the same benefits or wages as their non-workfare colleagues. NAPO is concerned that without even basic employment protections, recipients are vulnerable to exploitative or coercive employment practices which may leave them without basic financial supports or recourse to appeal.

3.2.5 In some provinces workfare does not provide participants with financial compensation for transportation or child care. Although supporters of workfare state that participants may receive training and opportunities for future employment often these ‘jobs’ are low skilled, low waged, with little or no future employment opportunities.

*3.2.6 NAPO urges CESCRC to recommend that all training and other work requirements be optional and not mandatory for the receipt of welfare.*

### **3.3 Employment Insurance**

Changes to the Employment Insurance program introduced in 1997 stripped many Canadians of their eligibility for EI. The percentage of the unemployed who are in receipt of UI has dropped from 87 per cent in 1990, to 48 per cent today.<sup>3</sup> Yet the EI Account (funds collected from employer and employee payroll tax for EI) had an accumulated surplus of \$46 billion in 2004. The lack of access to EI for many people who become unemployed means that instead of having a helping hand through to finding another job they are forced to go on welfare at much lower and completely inadequate rates of assistance thereby falling into deep poverty from which it is much more difficult to escape.

## **4. Article 7 – Just and Favourable Conditions of Work... including Fair Wages**

### **4.1 Federal Minimum Wage**

The federal government had a federal minimum wage that applied to all workers in federally regulated sectors (about 10% of the work force) but since 1996 the minimum wage rate applicable in regard to workers under federal jurisdiction is the general adult minimum rate of the province or territory where the work is performed. Provincial minimum wage rates are all below the poverty line and vary considerably. Workers in federally regulated industries such as inter-provincial transportation doing the same job end up getting paid at different rates depending on where they are based. The federal government needs to reinstate a federal minimum wage set at \$10 an hour and indexed annually according to changes in the cost of living index.

### **4.2 Provincial and Territorial Minimum Wages**

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<sup>3</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, A Good Program in Bad Times: The Dismantling of Unemployment Insurance, August 2005. [http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Unemployment\\_Insuran/557](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/Unemployment_Insuran/557)

4.2.1 The minimum wage in every province and territory is \$5000 to \$9000 below the Low Income Cut Off poverty line for an individual working full time. Rates are even more inadequate if a minimum wage worker has to support a family. Minimum wage rates range from a low of \$6.50 an hour in New Brunswick and Newfoundland to a high of \$8.50 an hour in Nunavut.

In 2003, 57% of youth earned less than \$10 an hour. 16.2% of women aged 25 to 54 and 11.2% of men aged 25 to 54 earned less than \$10 an hour.<sup>4</sup>

4.2.2 In 2001, British Columbia established a “training wage” at \$6.00 an hour (or \$2.00 below the \$8.00 an hour provincial minimum wage) for workers starting a job until they have completed 500 "training" hours. The fact is in most low-wage jobs there is never more than a few hours of actual training provided. There is also growing evidence that this policy is being abused with many workers forced to work at this lower rate even though they have previous job experience. Because it applies to people entering the work force for the first time, this policy has a disproportionate impact on youth, and other specific vulnerable groups (e.g. mothers who have been working to raise children).

4.2.3 For provinces with large cities the minimum wage needs to be at least \$10 an hour for an individual working full time to escape poverty. Provinces with smaller cities, where the cost of housing is generally lower, and therefore with a lower LICO poverty line, need to raise minimum wages to at least \$9.40 or \$9.45 an hour. Adjustments need to be made annually based on the cost of living index. They should be automatic and not subject to political interference.

*4.2.4 NAPO urges the CESCR to recommend that minimum wages be raised to a level where an individual working full time can escape poverty.*

## **5. Article 9 – The Right to Social Security**

5.1 Eligibility requirements for welfare have been tightened up to the point that in many cases people who desperately need help can't get it.

5.2 In Saskatchewan, for example, the government created a separate welfare program, at a lower level of support, for those deemed to be employable called the Transitional Employment Allowance. As one Saskatchewan social assistance recipient explained:

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<sup>4</sup> Ron Saunders, *Does a Rising Tide Lift All Boats?* Canadian Policy Research Networks, May 2005.

Access to Social services has now been made almost impossible for those without phones or transportation. This was done with the creation of a “Call Centre” Anyone in the province needing to apply has to call a toll free number, with wait times as long as four hours before you can even get through to a person. The Call Centre determines your eligibility over the phone, it has led to many people being refused benefits, especially those with disabilities, should someone with a speech problem call in, its automatically assumed that you are a drunk and you are refused benefits.<sup>5</sup>

Applicants for social assistance are also required attend an orientation session, and then participate in pre-employment programs. Clients can be cut off if they fail to attend the pre-employment programs, fail to be available for work or refuse to accept any employment offered.<sup>6</sup>

5.3 Ontario also introduced many new punitive restrictions on eligibility for welfare. A 2004 report to the Ontario Minister of Community and Social Services said some 800 rules and regulations had to be applied to determine if someone is eligible for welfare and how much they can get each month. It said in part:

“Many of those rules are punitive and designed not to support people, but rather to keep them out of the system. Because there are so many rules, they are expensive to administer and often applied inconsistently from one caseworker to another, even within the same office. Further the rules are so complicated that they are virtually impossible to communicate to clients, and it takes years to train a caseworker.”<sup>7</sup>

5.4 In August, 2001, Kimberley Rogers, a 40 year old, pregnant woman was found dead in her over-heated apartment in Sudbury, Ontario. She had been sentenced to house arrest and her welfare payments suspended, following a conviction of welfare fraud for collecting \$13,500 in social assistance benefits while attending school on a student loan under the get tough on “welfare cheats” policy of the Harris Conservative provincial government. A judicial inquiry into the case in 2002 made 14 recommendations including an end to bans on social assistance following any conviction related to welfare fraud. The Ontario government has yet to act on many of these recommendations.<sup>8</sup>

5.5 A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives called **Denied Assistance: Closing the Front Door on Welfare in BC** found that the acceptance rate for those who apply

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<sup>5</sup> From letter to NAPO from Debbie Frost, March 28, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Garson Hunter and Kathleen Donovan, **Transitional Employment Allowance, Flat Rate Utilities, Rental Housing Supplements and Poverty in Saskatchewan**, Social Policy Research Unit of Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina, October 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Deb Matthews, M.P.P, **Review of Employment Assistance Programs in Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program**, December 2004, page 25.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.elizabethfry.ca/rogers/1.htm>

for welfare has dropped dramatically from 90% in June 2001 to 51% in September 2004 in the wake of changes to eligibility rules and the application system.<sup>9</sup>

5.6 British Columbia has also violated the right to assistance on the basis of need, by introducing a two-year limit for collecting welfare out of every five years. Bowing to public pressure, the BC government introduced a number of exemptions that limited the number of people affected **yet**, the legislation still stands and hundreds of people who are in need, are denied support as a result.<sup>10</sup>

*5.7 NAPO urges CESCR to recommend that changes be made to eligibility requirements for welfare to ensure that all those who require social assistance are able to get the help they need.*

## **6. Article 10 – Protection and Assistance for the Family and Dependent Children**

6.1 In 1989, Canada's Parliament vowed to end child poverty in the country. Sixteen years later, 1.2 million children still live in poverty. For nearly 30 years, one of the richest nations in the world has maintained an average child poverty rate of one in six. Today, this remains the case: 17.6% of Canadian children live in poverty despite continued economic growth, rising employment and strong job creation.<sup>11</sup>

6.2 Canada's record on child poverty is worse now than it was then:

- The number of children living in poverty has risen by 20% since 1989.
- More than half of all female lone-parent families – 52.5% – are in poverty. These families would need \$9,600 (on average) to reach the poverty line.<sup>12</sup>
- Families living in poverty face a real challenge balancing the expenses of rent, food, child care and medical expenses. As a result, many have no choice but to rely on food banks and hope for

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce Wallace, Seth Klein, and Marge Reitsma, **Denied Assistance: Closing the Front Door on Welfare in BC**, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, March 2007.

[http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/bc\\_2006/denied\\_assistance.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/documents/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/denied_assistance.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> National Council of Welfare, **Welfare Incomes 2004**, August 2005, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Latest available child poverty data is for year 2003. Child poverty data prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) using Statistics Canada's *Income Trends in Canada*, 2003, 13F0022XIE and *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics* (SLID) masterfile data (1993 to 2003), via remote access. Poor children are those living in families whose total income before taxes falls below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) as defined by Statistics Canada. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 living with parent(s) or guardian(s), excluding those who are unattached individuals, those that are the major income earner or those who are the spouse or common law partner of the major income earner. Statistics Canada data excludes those on First Nations reserves; those in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut; and children living in institutions.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

secure, affordable housing in order to make ends meet. In 2004, 41% of food bank users were children – approximately 325,390 children.<sup>13</sup>

6.3 Many of Canada's working families live in poverty. Nearly half (576,000 or 48%) of all low-income children live with parents who participated in the labour market for the full year. In 2003, 373,200 children, nearly one-third of all low-income children living in families with at least one parent working full time year-round were living in poverty.<sup>14</sup>

6.4 Children with disabilities face barriers to full inclusion and their families encounter immense financial, social and emotional stresses. In 2001, the child poverty rate of children with disabilities was 27.7%.<sup>15</sup>

6.5 Among racialized groups, barriers to employment are compounded by discrimination.<sup>16</sup> Workers belonging to a visible minority group earned on average \$4,600 lower than earnings for all other workers.<sup>17</sup> The poverty rate for children in racialized families stood at 33.6% in 2001. The racialization of poverty is becoming a harsh reality in Canada's largest cities, as the vast majority of recent immigrants (of whom almost three-quarters were members of visible minority groups) have settled in urban centres.

6.6 Aboriginal youth are increasingly living in urban environments, and 46% of Aboriginal children under 15 live in lone parent families.<sup>18</sup> Canada must address the extremes of poverty that are their daily reality: 40% of off-reserve Aboriginal children live in poverty, and one in four live in poor housing conditions, compared to 13% of all children in Canada.<sup>19</sup>

6.7 Throughout the 1990s, federal and provincial governments cut funding for programs dedicated to urban Aboriginal children aged 6–12, funding for Friendship Centres, and funding

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Association of Food Banks (2005). *Hunger Count 2005*. Toronto: Canadian Association of Food Banks.

<sup>14</sup> Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) using Statistics Canada's *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, masterfile (1993-2003).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Canadian Coalition for Family Supportive Policy. (2004). *Declaration: A Public Policy Agenda to Support Families who have a Member with a Disability*. Ottawa: CCFSP.

<sup>16</sup> Racialization refers to the process of attributing social meaning to differences such as skin colour. This process leads to ideologies, policies, and practices of exclusion and inclusion that structure social inequalities. For a full discussion on this subject, see Slaoojee, A. (2003). *Social Inclusion, Anti-Racism, and Democratic Citizenship*. Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation. For an analysis of racialization and poverty in Canada, see, for example, Galabuzi, Grace-Edward (2001). *Canada's Creeping Economic Apartheid: The Economic Segregation and Social Marginalisation of Racialized Groups*. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Social Justice Foundation for Research and Education., and, Agos, C. (2001). *Systemic Racism in Employment in Canada: Diagnosing Systemic Racism in Organizational Culture*. Toronto: Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

<sup>17</sup> Prepared by Campaign 2000 from Statistics Canada, *2001 Census*, 97F0019XCB01057.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, J. (June, 2003). *Aboriginal Children in Poverty in Urban Communities: Social Exclusion and the Growing Racialization of Poverty in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

for Aboriginal language programs.<sup>20</sup> Without investment and partnership between all levels of government and Aboriginal organizations, we risk seeing the growth of high poverty urban Aboriginal neighbourhoods in Canada's major cities. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy must be redesigned to ensure that urban Aboriginal peoples across Canada have access to programs and services addressing education, employment, housing and health needs. Similarly, the Aboriginal Human Resources Strategy should be redesigned with Aboriginal communities to ensure that urban Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to this labour market program. Renewed investment to enhance and expand the Aboriginal Friendship Centre Program is needed so that urban Aboriginal peoples across Canada have access to a well resourced and stable safety net.

6.8 In all provinces except Quebec, there is inadequate access to quality, affordable child care. This creates a major barrier to employment, particularly for low-income families on social assistance. Canada currently spends only about 0.2 % of GDP on educating its youngest children; about half the average spent by other industrialized countries in the OECD.<sup>21</sup> While the federal government negotiated agreements with provinces to fund a program of early learning and child care, this promising new initiative is in danger of being cancelled, even before it gets off the ground. Access to quality, affordable childcare is critical to improving the lives of children, particularly those with sole support mothers.

*6.9 NAPO urges CESCRC to recommend Canada develop a poverty reduction strategy to reduce child and family poverty with a range of policies, targets and timelines and measures to evaluate progress.*

*6.10 NAPO urges CESCRC to recommend that Canada ensure quality, affordable childcare is available for Canadian families that need it.*

## **7. Article 11 – The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living**

7.1 Article 11 sets out the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. While there has been strong economic growth for over ten years and nine

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<sup>20</sup> National Association of Friendship Centres (October, 2005). *The Impact of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program on Increasing Canada's Productivity, Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance.*

<sup>21</sup> *Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada 2005/06 Pre-Budget Consultation / Consultation prébudgétaire 2005-2006*

consecutive years with federal budget surpluses, over 4.9 million Canadians or 15.9% still live in poverty.<sup>22</sup> While the rate of poverty has increased only slightly from 2001, the depth of poverty (or how far below the poverty line those who are poor fall below the poverty line) has grown significantly as welfare rates and minimum wage rates have fallen in real terms.

7.2 Marginalized groups such as Aboriginals, immigrants, racialized people, disabled people, youth and seniors all suffer higher rates of poverty, particularly women in these groups.

There has been a significant increase in the poverty rate of immigrant families, even though their educational levels have been rising. From 1980 to 2000 the rate of poverty for this group rose by 8.3%.

7.3 Work is no longer a guarantee against poverty. Even households with two low-income wage workers cannot earn sufficient income to escape poverty. There has been an increase in precarious, part time and temporary low-wage jobs in Canada. 25.3% of Canadian workers are in low-wage jobs. In 2001, over 41% of poor families had at least one family member who worked at least 910 hours in the year.<sup>23</sup>

7.4 Welfare rates in every province and territory for every household type is grossly inadequate. The National Council of Welfare, **Welfare Incomes 2004** report, issued in August 2005, shows that a single “employable” person on social assistance is expected to live on just \$3168 a year. Even with the addition of the Goods and Services Tax Credit of \$220, this puts a social assistance recipient \$14,127 below the LICO poverty line of \$17,515 or just 19% of the poverty line. In British Columbia a couple with two children on social assistance receives only \$18,258, \$19,533 below the poverty line of \$37,791 or 48% of the poverty line. The best rate is for a single parent with one child in Newfoundland who receives \$15,228 or \$6,576 less than the poverty line of \$21,804 or 70%.<sup>24</sup> (For a summary of provincial welfare rates in relation to the

<p>“I receive a little over \$8000 per year to live on and I’m one of the lucky ones because I have a slight disability. Once rent is subtracted, I have a little over \$200 left per month for food.” Comment from a human rights workshop participant in Prince Edward Island</p>
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<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada, CANSIM table (for fee) [202-0802](#) and Catalogue no. [75-202-X](#). Last modified: 2005-08-12.

<sup>23</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, *The Economy*

<sup>24</sup> National Council of Welfare, *Welfare Incomes 2004*.

<http://www.newcnbes.net/htmldocument/reportWelfareIncomes2004/WI2004EngREVISED.pdf>

poverty line see Adequacy of 2004 Benefits, Table 2.1 from National Council of Welfare, Welfare Incomes 2004 appended to this report.)

7.5 Welfare rates have generally been falling in real dollar terms. The National Council of Welfare reports that “many welfare incomes were significantly lower then they were ten or fifteen years ago.”<sup>25</sup>

“ I am on social services and I'm raising a daughter on an income of \$684 a month. The system is designed to set me back. I would love to get my education upgraded but to do so I lose the funding I have, and the system is not designed to help me become independent again.” A human rights workshop participant in Lethbridge, Alberta

7.6 The National Child Benefit Supplement continues to be “clawed back” from social assistance recipients, despite the recommendation in the Concluding Observations from the 1998 review that this practice be stopped. Only three provinces, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Quebec, do not reduce social assistance cheques by the amount of the NCBS. All other provinces and territories clawback the monies either fully or in part. This situation has not changed since Canada’s last review. NAPO and many other groups have been calling for the ending of this unfair practice, which discriminates against those receiving social assistance who are among the poorest families in Canada.

7.8 NAPO and other groups such as Campaign 2000 and the Make Poverty History campaign have been calling for the development and implementation of a poverty reduction strategy for Canada involving groups where poverty is predominant, such as Aboriginal People, women, minorities and youth. The governments of Quebec and Newfoundland have initiated processes for developing a poverty reduction strategy which, while still incomplete, offer some hope. But other governments have yet to make poverty reduction a priority for action.

*7.9 NAPO urges CESCRC to recommend increases in welfare rates to ensure an adequate standard of living for all Canadians.*

*7.10 NAPO urges CESCRC to recommend ending the claw-back of the National Child Benefit Supplement, which discriminates against those receiving social assistance who are among the poorest families in Canada.*

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<sup>25</sup> National Council of Welfare, “Fix Welfare Financing and End the Clawback of Child Benefits”, News Release, June 7, 2005.

*7.11 NAPO urges CESCR to recommend that the federal, provincial and territorial governments develop poverty reduction strategies with targets, time-lines and a comprehensive set of policies to achieve poverty reduction targets as a way to recognize the progressive implementation principle of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*