

### **For the Love of God... Therefore Be Generous and Open-Handed**

Any one of us might be struggling to make ends meet: overdue on rent payments with eviction notices arriving, overdue bills and credit card payments piling up, struggling to find employment and earned income, held back by health difficulties, not having access to good food choices and having to skip meals. They can all so easily feed a downward spiral and weigh heavy on your spirit. Recent immigrants, lone parent families, aboriginal peoples in Canada, youth and seniors are the ones most likely to bear the burden (see *The Burden of Poverty: A snapshot of poverty across Canada* by Citizens for Public Justice).

In families and communities where these are the facts of life, children bear the greatest burden. Campaign 2000's *2014 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada* points to persistent high levels of child poverty in Canada, nearly 2 in 10. Four in 10 indigenous children in Canada live in poverty. For status First Nations children living on reserve, that ratio rises to 50%—fully half of children who live on reserves where the federal government has the major role in funding income support and community services.

Despite the 1989 House of Commons unanimous resolution “to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000” and the 2009 House of Commons vote to “develop an immediate plan to end poverty for all in Canada” the rate of poverty in Canada remains high. Despite action in many provinces and territories, there is still no federal plan to end poverty in Canada.

In 2007 church leaders wrote to Prime Minister Harper to call on the federal government to “take immediate steps to develop and implement a national poverty reduction strategy.” In 2009 The Canadian Council of Churches submitted a brief on *The Federal Contribution to Reducing Poverty in Canada* to The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons Disabilities calling for a high level task force to develop a national poverty reduction strategy within the next budget year, incorporating these features:

- measurable goals and timelines
- indicators that are publicly comprehensible to measure poverty in Canada
- a means to monitor and evaluate progress
- budget commitments that focus on the needs of vulnerable people

Many Canadians do their part: volunteering their services, working for justice for all, and giving to charitable organizations whose goals are to prevent, alleviate, and work to eliminate poverty. But it is not enough—poverty continues to be a continual reality in a land of plenty. More must be done. It is time for federal leadership.

On this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unanimous resolution in the House of Commons to end child poverty in Canada and because today there are still so many living in poverty in Canada, **for the love of God** may we refocus our efforts, and may our representatives in government act on the ancient call to **therefore be generous and open-handed** (Deuteronomy 15:11) in working to end poverty for all.

*Peter Noteboom, Deputy General Secretary*