



PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

Basic Income

Canada needs a federal government that is committed to sustained investment in public health across the country. The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century calls on the next federal government to invest in strategies and programs that support strong healthy people in Canada regardless of their economic and social status.

A higher standard for Canadian families

The World Health Organization has declared that [poverty is the single largest determinant of health](#), and yet [9.5% of Canadians live in poverty](#) as measured by the [Market Basket Measure](#). In 2017, 622,000 children under 18 years of age, or 9.0%, lived below the poverty line – levels that are unacceptable in light of our country’s wealth. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 10.1 is “to reduce inequality and progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average.”

According to Statistics Canada, 3.4 million Canadians lived below the poverty line in 2017. [Canada ranks 13th](#) among 16 peer countries. [One quarter of Indigenous Peoples and 40% of Canada’s Indigenous children](#) live in poverty. The reduction in seniors’ poverty since the 1970s through programs such as the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement is a success story of social policy in Canada.

The [evidence](#) strongly suggests that a basic income could provide a new approach to reducing poverty in a sustainable manner.

It’s time for Canada to do better.

Call to action

The Coalition is calling on the next federal government to lead development of a national strategy to provide a basic income for those Canadians who need it most. Every Canadian should be able to meet their fundamental needs for adequate housing and nutritious food, two key factors that affect the health of Canadians.

A Higher Standard for All Canadians

Why it matters

Household income underpins the fundamental social determinants of health that include access to adequate housing, nutritious food, education and proper early childhood development. People with limited access to income are often more socially isolated, experience more stress, have poorer mental and physical health and fewer opportunities for early childhood development and post-secondary education. It also limits access to prescription medication and community care.

Data from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) show that 20% of the over \$200 billion spent on health care annually can be attributed to socio-economic disparities in Canada. The [poorest fifth of Canada's population](#) faces a staggering 358% higher rate of disability compared to the richest fifth. The poor experience other major health inequities, including: 128% more mental and behavioural disorders; 95% more ulcers; 63% more chronic conditions; and 33% more circulatory conditions.

[Childhood poverty](#) can be a greater predictor of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adults than later life circumstances and behaviour.

According to the [Wellesley Institute](#), an increase of \$1,000 annually to the income of the poorest 20% of Canadians would lead to 10,000 fewer chronic conditions and 6,600 fewer disability days every two weeks. Canada could [save \\$7.6 billion per year on health expenditures](#) by moving people from the lowest income bracket to the second-lowest income bracket.

Questions for the candidates

1. Do you support a basic income for Canadians?
2. What will your party do to improve income supports for Canadians?
3. What specific steps will your party take to implement a basic income program?

Resources

- [CCPH21 Position Statement: Basic Income](#)
- [CASW Position Statement: Universal Basic Income](#)

About the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century

The Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21) is a national network of 21 non-profit organizations, professional associations, health charities and research organizations that share the common goal to improve and sustain the health of Canadians. CCPH21 advocates for public policy to ensure that adequate public health functions are in place and information is made available to protect and promote health, and prevent disease and injury. CCPH21 aims to help all stakeholders work together for the future of public health by generating ideas and potential policy directions for discussion among both the public and decision-makers.