

Confronting poverty in Canada

NDP **BACKGROUNDER**

After decades of economic growth, Canada is one of the wealthiest countries on earth. But as the fruits of prosperity flow increasingly to a privileged few, the gap between the rich and everyone else has never been wider.

Today, with costs for family essentials soaring and average wages remaining stagnant, 3.4 million Canadians have fallen in poverty—including 800,000 children and legions of full-time workers trying to make ends meet on minimum wages. In fact, half of all working families now feel they are one or two missed paycheques away from falling into poverty themselves.

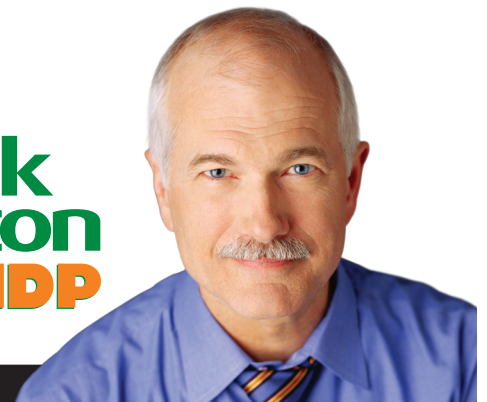
Successive Prime Ministers have committed to confront the poverty that drowns so many people's hope and potential. But time after time, they've spent billions on corporate tax cuts instead of targeting the growing gap between the rich and everyone else.

It's time for a Prime Minister who will put you and your family first. A Prime Minister who recognizes the worth and potential in every citizen—who's ready to move Canada forward without leaving the most vulnerable behind.

Jack Layton will be that Prime Minister.

Don't let them tell you it can't be done.

**Jack
Layton**
NDP



Stephen Harper can't be trusted.

- Instead of investing to make everyday life more secure and affordable, he squandered \$50-billion on tax giveaways for Canada's most profitable corporations.
- Most of the tax credits that he promotes as "poverty-easing measures" do nothing at all for the poorest third of Canadian families—and his very first budget actually increased taxes for the bottom income bracket.
- Even as two million Canadians struggled without acceptable shelter, he invested nothing to build new affordable housing—and even cancelled a home-retrofit program designed to help low-income families reduce their energy bills.
- Given the chance, he has shown no leadership on creating affordable child care spaces, lowering training costs, reforming Employment Insurance, or other initiatives that could make a difference for low-income Canadians.

Stephane Dion is not the change we need.

- By instructing his Liberal MPs to skip key confidence votes, Dion rubber-stamped Harper's agenda—including irreversibly damaging \$50-billion corporate tax giveaways.
- With Dion at the cabinet table, Liberals ended the federal role in welfare, cancelled the national housing program, and axed the federal minimum wage—then squandered surpluses on corporate tax cuts instead of reinvesting. That's not the change we need.

Jack Layton's New Democrats: Putting you and your family first.

This election, Jack Layton and his team of New Democrats have a plan to tackle the growing gap between the rich and everyone else. Already, Layton's team has led the way in Parliament:

- Tabled legislation to reinstate the **federal minimum wage** at \$10/hour to ensure a basic living standard.
- Forced a groundbreaking series of **parliamentary hearings** to lay groundwork for a comprehensive national anti-poverty strategy.
- Tabled bills to fix the **Employment Insurance** system so more unemployed Canadians can qualify for the benefits they need and deserve.
- Exposed **price gouging** that hurts low-income families—unfair ATM fees and credit card rates; gas pump gouging; abusive cell phone charges; and soaring prescription prices.
- Came within one vote of passing the NDP's *Early Learning & Child Care Act* to create a permanent program of **affordable child care** for today's families, regardless of income level.
- Tabled the *Post-Secondary Education Act* as the heart of a plan to **reduce crippling student debt and lower tuition fees** for education and training across Canada.
- Successfully pressured Harper to abandon cuts to **homelessness and housing** initiatives. Earlier, when Layton wrote the 2005 Liberal budget, he redirected \$1.6-billion out of corporate tax cuts to build affordable housing instead.