



MEDIA RELEASE

Poverty Organizations Recognize International Eradication of Poverty Day

FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 16, 2016

Regina, Saskatchewan – To honour the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on October 17, Poverty Free Saskatchewan (PFS), the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry (RAPM) and the Regina Food Bank are drawing attention to the ongoing need for improvements in addressing poverty in our province. As a signatory to the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada and Saskatchewan are obligated to uphold its recommendations.

“Over the past two years the government of Saskatchewan has initiated the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy. After lengthy public consultations it released a long list of recommendations, unfortunately an actual plan to implement specific recommendations has yet to see the light of day. Instead of an expansion of social and economic benefits and protections we are seeing announcements of funding cuts to social, health and education programs that support our most vulnerable citizens,” said Joanne Havelock, Poverty Free Saskatchewan.

Benefits distributed via the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability, the Seniors Income Plan, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement have been slashed. As well, school boards are now expected to pay for one half of teachers’ negotiated salary increases. Teachers have been laid off as a result. IN health care most recently mental health workers employed by Regina Health Care Authority have lost their jobs. The Saskatoon Lighthouse Stabilization Unit has had its funding cut and detoxification facilities, hospital emergencies and police cells are now expected to provide emergency services for Lighthouse clients.

Poverty Free Saskatchewan’s publication ***Budget 2016: Transformation or Austerity?*** documents the negative effects of the government’s diminishing social expenditures, which inevitably create increased social exclusion and inequality resulting in higher longer term costs to government. As well, the government has terminated the coordinators of the province’s Regional Intersectoral Committees, the local bodies which coordinate and implement initiatives on poverty and other important education and health issues. These coordinators were key personnel involved in facilitating the work of the regional committees.

“Since 2014 Poverty Free Saskatchewan has advocated for a Saskatchewan Anti-Poverty Act which entrenches the human rights the province is committed to in the United Nations’ International Covenant. Such legislation is the essential ingredient of an effective anti-poverty plan and would allow us to once again play a leadership role in pioneering progressive social legislation. Most importantly it would provide needed protections for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens,” stated Peter Gilmer of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry.

“During times of economic duress austerity policies are counterproductive – rather it is more appropriate for government, business, community-based organizations and communities to double their efforts to ensure quality of life is protected for all Saskatchewan residents,” concluded Gilmer.

Media Conference

Date: Monday, October 17 at 10 a.m.

Place REACH 1308 Winnipeg Street

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United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights **Concluding Observations on Canada (March 23,2016)**

The following recommendations are from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ observations on the sixth periodic report on Canada's implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

“The Committee recommends the following actions to reduce poverty:

37. Considering the advanced level of development of the State Party (Government of Canada), the Committee is concerned about the significant number of people living in poverty. It is further concerned that indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, single mothers, as well as minority groups continue to experience higher rates of poverty and at the limited effectiveness of measures taken to address this (article 11)

38. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to combat poverty more effectively while paying particular attention to groups and individuals that are more vulnerable to poverty. The Committee recommends that the State party in collaboration with provinces, territories, and indigenous peoples and in consultation with civil society organizations, implement a human rights-based national anti-poverty strategy, which includes measureable goals and timelines as well as independent monitoring mechanisms. The Committee further recommends that the State party ensure that provinces and territories’ anti-poverty policies are human rights-based and aligned with the national strategy.”