

## **Nova Scotia fares poorly among Atlantic neighbours on measures of child poverty**

HALIFAX: A report released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives assesses progress on several measures of child poverty and finds that Nova Scotia performed fared most poorly among the four Atlantic Provinces.

Authors Pauline Raven and Lesley Frank used the most recent data available for comparisons and found a scattering of results across the four Atlantic Provinces. Overall, they found that New Brunswick placed squarely ahead of other Atlantic Provinces with Prince Edward Island placing next, followed by Newfoundland and then Nova Scotia.

The 2004 Nova Scotia Child Poverty Report Card draws on the most recent data available (2002) and shows that poverty continues to keep a grip on 36,000 children in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia rate of child poverty was 16.1% in the landmark year of 1989 when Canadian parliamentarians vowed to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The lowest rate recorded by Nova Scotia since the promise was 17% in 1999 but rates are on the increase again and by 2002 our rate stood at 18.1% - a substantial increase of 2 full percent points representing a 12.4% increase.

The report also charts the rate of child poverty for various groups of children and finds that children living in lone-parent, immigrant, visible minority and aboriginal households as well as disabled children experience much higher rates of child poverty than other Nova Scotia children.

Raven, one of the card's authors says: "We also wanted to lie to rest the question of whether our province is clawing back federal transfers or not." This year's report charts changes over a period of years in provincial and federal transfers for families with children in all four Atlantic Provinces. Raven says: "In Nova Scotia provincial transfers to families with children receiving social assistance were much greater in 1997 (the year before the federal government initiated enhanced tax benefits for low-income families) than in 2002." She concludes that: "Nova Scotia children have been deprived of the positive impact the increased federal payments should have had, starting in 1998."

Frank is focusing her key comments on housing. She says: "On this important measure of well-being, Nova Scotia families living in low-income circumstances are the most disadvantaged in Atlantic Canada. In Nova Scotia, 67.7% of families have unaffordable housing compared with 39.2% in New Brunswick, the province where affordable housing is most accessible." Frank, who was involved at the planning stages of the food costing project carried out by the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council in 2002, says: "I fear the health of many children living in poverty is being severely compromised. After paying the inordinately high cost of housing from their meager family budgets – for too many days in any given month – families find that nutritional food is simply beyond their means." The report found that on average income shortfalls in Nova Scotia were \$662 per month. These were lower in the other Atlantic Provinces – ranging from \$554 in New Brunswick, to \$561 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and \$572 in Prince Edward Island.

The report makes five key recommendations and calls for an overall plan of action that states how poverty will be addressed and when we can expect significant results on the goal of eliminating child poverty.

A copy of "The Nova Scotia Child Poverty Report Card 2004" is available at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)

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