

MEDIA RELEASE

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PROVINCIAL POVERTY STRATEGY: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NEEDED

REGINA, SK: Poverty Free Saskatchewan (PFS), a network of individuals and organizations working toward poverty elimination, is pleased to see that the provincial government is recognizing that poverty should be reduced.

The announcement in the recent Throne Speech is encouraging as the province for the first time has indicated that it will begin planning a poverty reduction strategy. Since 2009 PFS has been calling for a poverty elimination plan and has released 3 reports and conducted community consultations in rural and urban locations. The cost of poverty in 2010 has been estimated by the Poverty Costs campaign to be \$3.8 billion, about 5% of Saskatchewan's gross domestic product. It's time to take action.

PFS calls upon the government to develop a multi-year, comprehensive, integrated and innovative poverty elimination plan. PFS further encourages the government to include the following guiding principles in its strategy to ensure its anti-poverty planning is successful:

- A focus on vulnerable groups
- Adopting accountability mechanisms that are clearly set out in a Saskatchewan Anti-Poverty Act
- Community involvement carried out through a meaningful province-wide engagement process that hears from all vulnerable groups and includes them in the planning and implementation of the strategy
- Targets, performance indicators and timelines for the strategy

An evaluation of anti-poverty initiatives in other provinces shows that to be successful the initiatives must cut across key issue areas. PFS advocates that the plan include new and additional investments in:

1. Housing access and affordability
2. Income security for vulnerable groups
3. Innovation in education, training and early childhood learning programs
4. Enabling and rewarding work and participation in our communities including support for a living wage
5. Improving access to quality services for low income people
6. Promoting health and preventing illness among vulnerable groups

Summary statistics on poverty in Saskatchewan, based on the most recently available data, are included below.

For more information about poverty elimination strategies, see the PFS web site: <http://www.povertyfreesask.ca> and *Strategies to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatchewan* http://www.povertyfreesask.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Framework_PFS2.pdf .

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Poverty in Saskatchewan 2012

Over the last decade, poverty in Saskatchewan has declined as economic conditions have improved. But economic expansion has been insufficient to eliminate poverty and many persons and groups remain marginalized and vulnerable to the effects of low income. The following data on low income in Saskatchewan come from Statistics Canada. The measure of low income used is the Low Income Measure – After Tax (LIM-AT).

The poverty rate for the province is 12.7 per cent, with 128 thousand of the more than one million residents of the province having incomes below the LIM-AT (\$41,568 after-tax income in 2012 for a family of four). Among the groups that PFS has identified as being vulnerable to poverty are the following.

Children (ages 0-17). The poverty rate for the province's approximately 230,000 children is 16.6 per cent, meaning 38,000 children live in families with incomes below the LIM-AT. For female lone-parent families, the poverty rate is over 40 per cent.

Unattached individuals. Living alone increases vulnerability to low income. 18.2 per cent of adults of ages 18 to 64 who live alone have incomes below the LIM-AT.

Seniors. Poverty among Canadians aged 65 and over has fallen dramatically over the last thirty years. But many seniors, especially those living alone, have very low incomes. In the province, 14 per cent of seniors have incomes below the LIM-AT.

Aboriginal persons. From the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), 29 per cent of persons of Aboriginal identity in Saskatchewan had low incomes, as contrasted with a low-income rate of 12.2 per cent for those of non-Aboriginal identity.

Persons with disabilities. Across Canada in 2011, the rate of low income for persons with disabilities was 23.5 per cent – the rate in Saskatchewan was likely very similar.

Immigrants. Recent immigrants to the province, those who arrived since 2001, had a low-income rate of 24.3 per cent, as reported in the 2011 NHS.

Low income areas. The low-income rate for Prince Albert and for parts of Saskatchewan outside the nine largest cities is approximately 20 per cent, according to data obtained from income tax returns. Statistics Canada states that these rates are not comparable with the data presented in the following table. Much poverty in the province is concentrated in specific geographic areas – small towns, rural areas, inner city neighbourhoods, and the north.

Number and percentage of persons below the LIM-AT, Saskatchewan, 2012

Group	Saskatchewan persons in households with income below the LIM-AT	
	Number in thousands	Percentage
All Saskatchewan persons	128	12.7
Male	58	11.6
Female	70	13.7
Children – ages 0 to 17	38	16.6
In two-parent families	22	12.4
In female lone-parent families	13	41.4
Persons ages 18 to 64	70	11.0
In families	49	9.5
Males	21	8.3
Females	28	10.5
Unattached individuals	21	18.2
Males	12	16.9
Females	9	20.2
Seniors – ages 65 and over	20	14.0

Data sources:

Data in the above table come from Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey, 2014. CANSIM series 206-0001 to 206-0004.

Data concerning Aboriginal persons and immigrants was obtained from the National Household Survey, 2011. Information about low income areas comes from income tax returns in Statistics Canada, CANSIM series 111-0015. Data concerning people with disabilities come from *Financial Security – Low Income Incidence*, Employment and Social Development Canada.

LIM-AT. The Low Income Measure – After Tax is an income that is one-half of the median income, adjusted for household size. In 2012 the LIM-AT was \$21,734 for an unattached individual and \$41,568 for a family of four.

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