













## Comparison of Federal Parties Platforms on Poverty Issues


**April 18, 2011** - The following comparison examines the positions of four federal parties as outlined in their party platforms on poverty issues identified in *Poverty in Guelph & Wellington: A Voter's Guide*. The information was compiled by Jane Robson and Maria L. Cabel Garces, student interns with The Research Shop, at the request of the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.





				
				
<b>National Poverty Reduction Strategy</b>		<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners at all levels to develop a Poverty Reduction Plan for Canada. It will set goals, identify practical measures for achieving them and set out who can do what among all the partners. The outlook will be long-term.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table legislation that will set goals and targets for poverty reduction in consultation with the provincial, territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments and with non-governmental organizations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make poverty history [and] meet Canada's commitments and push other nations to meet theirs in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.</li> </ul>

				
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Income Security &amp; Seniors</b></p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue helping workers in transition, by extending the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers</li> <li>• Prohibit federally-regulated employers from setting a mandatory retirement age.</li> <li>• Top up the benefit to the Guaranteed Income Supplement providing up to \$600 extra per year for single seniors, and up to \$840 per year for senior couples.</li> <li>• Implement the Pooled Retirement Pension Plan as soon as possible in our next term of office.</li> <li>• Recognize and support Canadians caring for infirm loved ones at home, we will establish a Family Caregiver Tax Credit – a tax credit, the amount of \$2,000.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure Retirement Option, a voluntary, low cost option within the CPP that small businesses can choose for affordable pensions.</li> <li>• Boost the GIS benefit for low-income seniors by \$700 million per year, strengthening an important tool in the effort to eliminate poverty among seniors, especially older women and seniors with disabilities.</li> <li>• Work with the provinces and territories to enhance the Canada Pension Plan in two complementary ways. We will support a gradual increase of the defined benefits under the core CPP to enhance the retirement security of all Canadians. In addition, a Liberal government will propose a new, voluntary supplement to the CPP called the Secure Retirement Option (SRO). The SRO would be available to any Canadian worker who wants it, with maximum flexibility built in.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the provinces to bring about increases to your Canada/Quebec Pension Plan benefit, with the eventual goal to double the benefits [seniors] receive;</li> <li>• Work with the provinces to build-in the flexibility for you and your employer to make voluntary contributions to your individual public pension account;</li> <li>• Amend federal bankruptcy legislation to move pensioners and long-term disability recipients to the front of the line of creditors when their employers enter court protection or declare bankruptcy;</li> <li>• Increase the annual Guaranteed Income Supplement to a sufficient level in the first budget to lift every senior in Canada out of poverty immediately;</li> <li>• Introduce a new Caregiver Benefit, modelled after the Child Tax Benefit, to assist low and middle-income families in tackling the costs of everyday needs while caring for elderly or dependant family members. Eligible family members will include children, spouses, parents and other family.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure secure pensions and provide programmes that address health – both physical and mental – and ensure dignity by stopping elder abuse and respecting living wills.</li> </ul>

				
<b>Employment Insurance Program</b>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the Wage Earner Protection Program – we will extend protection to workers whose employers’ restructuring attempts take longer than six months and are subsequently unsuccessful.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace the six-week compassionate care provision with a new six-month Family Care Employment Insurance Benefit.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a more flexible and generous Employment Insurance benefit to permit family members to take leave from work to tend to relatives at home at the end of life;</li> <li>Ensure that new parents who have taken maternity and parental leave are not penalized on Employment Insurance benefits once they return to work;</li> <li>Extend Employment Insurance stimulus measures until unemployment falls to pre-recession levels;</li> <li>Restore the integrity of the Employment Insurance program by amending the Employment Insurance Act to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminate the two-week waiting period;</li> <li>Return the qualifying period to a minimum of 360 hours of work, regardless of the regional rate of unemployment;</li> <li>Raise the rate of benefits to 60 per cent and basing benefits on the best 12 weeks in the qualifying period;</li> <li>Improve the quality and monitoring of training and re-training.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand access to employment insurance for those who paid into it, while protecting the pensions of retired Canadians.</li> </ul>

				
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Housing &amp; Homelessness</b></p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend by one year the ecoENERGY Retrofit-Homes program. This new investment will help families lower their energy bills, and support jobs in home renovation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with provincial, territorial and municipal partners to put in place a renewed Affordable Housing Framework (AHF). The main objectives of the new Framework will be to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce homelessness;</li> <li>• Maintain and renew existing affordable housing stock; and</li> <li>• Stimulate new construction of affordable housing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase federal investment in affordable housing by \$550 million</li> <li>• Implement a new \$400 million Green Renovation Tax Credit targeting home renovations that save families money and bring environmental benefits.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore funding for the homeowners Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), and the Affordable Housing Initiative to increase the supply of affordable housing, in partnership with the provinces and territories;</li> <li>• Provide significant new funding for affordable and social housing;</li> <li>• Introduce a home heating federal sales tax rebate to give your household budget a break;</li> <li>• Introduce a permanent <i>Eco-energy</i> retrofit program to cut your home heating bills, reduce greenhouse gases and create jobs;</li> <li>• Provide an inter-generational <i>Home Retrofit Program</i> to help families retrofit their homes to accommodate senior family members;</li> <li>• Work with provinces and territories to expand access to shelter and transition houses to support women fleeing violence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramp up to building 20,000 new affordable housing units per year; and renew 8,000 units per year to ensure the existing stock. Provide rent supplements or shelter assistance for an additional 40,000 low-income households per year, for ten years.</li> <li>• Establish a nation-wide program to retrofit all low-income rental housing by 2025, as Germany has done.</li> <li>• Revive the EcoEnergy program supporting retrofits for houses and buildings in 2011-12 and then expand it by 50% in 2012-13.</li> <li>• Support a national housing program to build energy efficient co-ops and affordable housing units where there is a shortage of such housing options.</li> </ul>

				
<p><b>Child Poverty</b></p>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the Family Tax Cut &amp; sharing for couples with dependent children under 18 years of age. important new measure will be implemented when the federal budget is balanced within our next full term of office. The result will be significant tax relief for approximately 1.8 million Canadian families – each of them saving, on average, \$1,300 per year.</li> <li>• Double the value of the Children’s Fitness Tax Credit, and make it refundable – up to \$1,000 to help cover the costs of registration fees for children’s physical activities. This measure will be implemented when the federal budget is balanced within our next full term of office.</li> <li>• Establish a Children’s Arts Tax Credit, to cover up to \$500 per child in qualifying expenses for eligible arts or cultural activities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a new Early Childhood Learning and Care Fund. Administered as a new social infrastructure fund, provinces and territories will be able to apply to the Fund for cost-sharing of early childhood learning and care plans that create and operate new, affordable, high quality early childhood learning and care spaces across Canada, with well-trained professional staff. The long-term goal is a high-quality, affordable early childhood learning and care space for every Canadian family that wants one.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the provinces and territories to establish and fund a Canada-wide child care and early learning program, enshrined in law, with the following goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of 25,000 new child care spaces per year for the next four years;</li> <li>• Improvements to community infrastructure to support the growth of child care spaces;</li> <li>• The creation of integrated, community-based, child-centred early learning and education centres that provide parents with a “one-stop shop” for family services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Combine existing supports like the <i>Child Tax Benefit</i> to create a non-taxable <i>Child Benefit</i> and increase the support steadily by up to \$700 per child over the next four years. This will be in addition to the current <i>Universal Child Care Benefit</i>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several provinces have gone it alone in designing innovative programs that work for their populations. Quebec has \$7-a-day daycare. Ontario is moving towards full day kindergarten for 4 and 5 year olds. The GPC would ramp up to \$1 billion a year to support existing and new programs that would be cost shared with the provinces.</li> </ul>

				
<b>Food Security</b>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a National Farm and Food Strategy to guide federal policy through the coming years. The Strategy will build on our efforts to sustain the Canadian family farm, to strengthen food safety, and to open new markets for the world-class products of Canadian farmers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a National Food Policy that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Invest] \$40 million over four years to implement a new Healthy Start program to help 250,000 children from low-income families access healthy, home-grown foods, in partnership with the provinces, territories and non-governmental organizations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commit to ongoing support for the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and Aboriginal Head Start Program (AHSP).</li> </ul>	<p><b>We will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a <i>Children's Nutrition Initiative</i> to support and expand provincial and local programs that provide healthy meals to school-children; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduce a Canadian Food Strategy that will combine health goals, environmental goals, food quality objectives, local and organic choices for consumers across the country;</li> </ul>	