



WHO Report indicates Poor People Likely to Have Poor Health

Winnipeg – The local arm of Campaign 2000, the national campaign to end child and family poverty in Canada, and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPC) welcome the findings of the World Health Organization on the Social Determinants of Health, the most comprehensive examination ever done on how every aspect of social life determines who will be sick and who will be well.

The World Health Organization report released today finds that “social injustice is a matter of life and death” and that the unequal distribution of power, money and resources is both the prime reason for health inequities and the biggest factor limiting the health of the entire population.

“In the 2007 election, the NDP campaign platform was led by the health care priority, and addressing poverty did not even appear in their list of priorities” says Dr. Sid Frankel Vice-president of the SPC and member of Campaign 2000 steering committee. “With this report from the WHO the link between poverty and health couldn’t be clearer. Poor people have poor health. Mr. Doer, it’s time for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan in Manitoba, the health of almost a hundred thousand Manitobans depends on it.”

Campaign 2000 and the SPC support the World Health Organization’s call for concerted action to reduce poverty and inequality. Investing in children; providing good public services at the community level, including maintaining a universal health care system accessible to all; insuring that the labour market produces good jobs at living wages; and providing a strong social safety net to guarantee there is sufficient income to meet basic needs will promote social justice and population health at the same time.

The Commission that penned the report argues that, adequate public expenditures to fund action across the determinants of health is necessary for both a healthy population and a healthy economy.

At 12.4 per cent, Manitoba’s child poverty rate was the 3rd highest in Canada in 2006, which translates into approximately 31,000 children. This number does not include those living in First Nations communities, if it did the number of children living in poverty would be significantly higher. What the WHO report makes clear is that Provincial and Federal poverty reduction plans are required to maintain a healthy population.

“Health is about a lot more than waiting lists, technology and hospital beds. This commission reaffirms that we must focus on good jobs with living wages, high quality public services and a strong social safety net if we want healthy Canadians and sustainable health care spending” says Wayne Helgason, Executive Director of the SPC.

"Canada likes to brag that for seven years in a row the United Nations voted us ‘the best country in the world in which to live’. Do all Canadians share equally in that great quality of life?" asks Monique Begin, former federal minister of Health and Welfare and Canada’s appointed Commissioner. “No

they don't. The truth is that our country is so wealthy that it manages to mask the reality of food banks in our cities, of unacceptable housing, of young Inuit adults' very high suicide rates. This report is a wake up call for action towards truly living up to our reputation."

Frankel notes that as we face a potential federal election Canadians from all provinces should understand that tax cuts are *literally* killing us

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