



Canadian Teachers' Federation
Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants

Speaking notes

CTF President Emily Noble

Focus of CTF Hill Day

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Good morning everyone.

My name is Emily Noble and I'm the President of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. I'm delighted to be here with my colleague Mary-Lou Donnelly, President designate who will be making her remarks in French.

Today, we want to talk with you about our advocacy efforts on Parliament Hill.

First, allow me to give you a quick overview of our organization, the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

CTF is the national bilingual umbrella organization for teachers in this country. CTF membership includes teacher organizations across Canada who in turn represent nearly 200,000 teachers. Since 1920, CTF has advanced the cause of children, defended the rights of teachers and promoted a strong public education system.

Today is our annual “Hill Day”, the time for our teacher leaders to meet with Members of Parliament and senior government officials to discuss issues of importance for teachers.

Our focus this year is child poverty.

You might ask yourselves what does child poverty have to do with education and learning?

We at the Canadian Teachers’ Federation believe there’s a strong correlation between socio-economic status and children’s academic performance.

Stats Canada concluded in 2006 that children from lower income families were less ready to learn than children from more affluent households.

The OECD also reports that poverty rates in Canada have increased for all age groups by around 2-3 per cent over the last 10 years -- for an overall rate of 12

per cent of the Canadian population. Poverty rates of older people is 6 per cent while 15 per cent of all Canadian children live in poverty.

Children living in low-income conditions experience:

- reduced motivation to learn,
- delayed cognitive development,
- lower achievement,
- less participation in extracurricular activities,
- lower career aspirations,
- lower university attendance,
- an increased risk of illiteracy, and
- higher drop-out rates.

As a result, thousands of young Canadians are less productive as adults than they could be. Indeed, some drop out of, rather than contribute to, the economy. This can be prevented.

For teachers, poverty also makes its mark in their classrooms:

- When students who move and change schools frequently during the school year because the family does not have enough money to pay the rent.
- When students who shrink from shame or lash out from anger because of the stigma of poverty
- when kids are ashamed when their moms and dads are laid off at the automobile manufacturing plant;
- when students can't afford to buy books at the book fair or go on school trips with the other kids.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation has long been an advocate for the reduction of child poverty in this country. We work closely with other national

organizations and coalitions with similar objectives

This year, we've prepared a report card on the Canadian government's performance with respect to progress made to reduce child poverty.

We've given the Canadian government a « D » for Family Studies because of its cancellation of its early learning and child care agreements with provincial and territorial governments. As you know, the lack of quality child care is a concern for 77 per cent of Canadians.

When it comes to World Economics, the Canadian government gets another « D » because it tied dead last in the 2008 UNICEF global report card for child care.

Because the number of children depending on foodbanks has more doubled since 1989, we have given the Canadian government an « E » for

Domestic Economics.

A copy of this report card is included in your media kits.

We at the Canadian Teachers' Federation call for a greater political will and commitment to a national poverty reduction strategy for Canada. Canada must try harder as it is losing the potential from many of its children.

In our brief -- also included in the media kits -- we also make the following recommendations to the federal government.

- raise the minimum wage,
- expand the eligibility for employment insurance especially in these times when unemployment is expected to soar because of layoffs and business closures;
- put in place a universal child care system with

dedicated funding for high quality care and early intervention and school-readiness initiatives for all children.

It is shameful for a country as wealthy as ours to have child poverty rates remain at 1989 levels.

Ironically, 1989 is the year that the House of Commons unanimously set the goal to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. Here we are, 20 years later, with no progress. In fact, we have lost ground and regressed.

As Canada heads into a period of economic uncertainty, the federal government has **a responsibility** to intervene and put in place a strategy to lower poverty rates in this country.

This is the message we will be sharing with elected and senior government officials today. Thank you. We will take your questions now.