



# Canada's Federal Election and the Catholic Church:

## *Educate, Reflect, Act*

### **POVERTY INCOME INSECURITY, FOOD INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS**

Canada's poverty level has been declining in recent years but remains high in many communities across the country. In 2017, 3.4 million Canadians (9.5%) lived below the poverty line (down from 10.6% in 2016). That includes 622,000 children (9%) under the age of 18. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that the poverty rate for the working-age population in Canada is well above the average for the world's wealthiest industrialized countries.

The human cost of poverty is staggering: broken families, children underachieving or failing in school, chronic homelessness, health problems and more.

*MORE ABOUT POVERTY ON REVERSE*

### **FACTS**

The 2016 Canadian Census counted 22,190 people living in 995 shelters across the country. Of those people:

- Almost 25% resided in shelters for abused women and children
- 41% had some employment income
- 13.7% were children aged 0 to 14



### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION BEFORE YOU VOTE ON OCTOBER 21, 2019:**

- What can the Canadian government do to end child poverty?
- How can the government help those who struggle to earn enough to live on?
- How can Canada create enough affordable housing so everyone has a home?

# INCOME INSECURITY, FOOD INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS

Poverty is also linked to other social ills:

- **Homelessness.** Housing costs have increased dramatically in recent years, leaving many people struggling to find a place to live. Yet having a place to call home is the key to ending poverty. A home provides the stability families and individuals need to build meaningful lives. For children, it means a place to call their own.

Homelessness is often hidden. People who live on the street do not represent the majority of those who are homeless: others can be found in shelters, constantly moving from one family member or friend's home to another, or living in their car. This problem affects those in large cities and those in rural areas.

- **Precarious employment.** Workers may find one or more part-time jobs, but are paid only minimum wage. Many of these workers receive few employee benefits and are discouraged from forming a union or advocating for better conditions.
- **Food insecurity.** Millions of Canadians, including children, still struggle to eat enough food every day. Studies have shown that 1 in 8 households in Canada are food insecure, meaning they do not have enough money to buy the food they need.

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## OUR SOCIAL TEACHING TELLS US...

“It is necessary to reaffirm that employment is necessary for society, for families and for individuals. Its primary value is the good of the human person ... And if there is no work, this dignity is wounded! Indeed, the unemployed and underemployed risk being relegated to the margins of society, becoming victims of social exclusion.”

—*Pope Francis, to Employees and Managers of Italian Steelworks, 2014*

“Governments must protect those who are marginalized in society ... must provide economic security and an acceptable quality of life for those who are unemployed, displaced, impoverished or afflicted by a mental or physical disability ... Voluntary efforts, though still needed, cannot begin to cope with the problems of the marginalized. Only government can do this adequately. The gospel clearly indicates that our final option must always be for the poor.”

—*Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, “On Choosing a Government,” 1998*

“We can find no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing. The Son of God came into this world as a homeless person. The Son of God knew what it was to start life without a roof over his head.”

—*Pope Francis, 2015 papal visit to North America*

Want to attend a debate with 1,000 Catholics or learn more about other issues leading up to the October 21, 2019 election?

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