



Rural Poverty in Canada

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Presentation Overview

- **Poverty as a Human Rights Issue**
- **Poverty in Canada**
- **Poverty in Rural Canada**
- **Policy Considerations and Recommendations**
- **Who is Responsible?**



Poverty as a Human Rights Issue

- A recent U.N. independent expert report defined poverty as having three often intersecting dimensions:
 - Income Poverty
 - Human Development Poverty
 - Social Exclusion
- “Extreme poverty was an extreme deprivation...especially when all these elements of deprivation coexist.” (p. 6)
(Sengupa 2008)



Poverty in Canada

- **Between 1976 and 2004, income inequality in Canada increased**
- **People living in poverty in Canada are commonly:**
 - **In a sole earner family**
 - **Women**
 - **People in rural or remote areas**
 - **People with Disabilities**
 - **Aboriginal People**
 - **Immigrants**



Poverty in Rural Canada

- **“Being poor in rural Canada means more than just not having enough. It also means having to travel long distances to get enough.”**

**(Standing Senate Committee on
Agriculture and Forestry 2006, p. 52)**



Poverty in Rural Canada

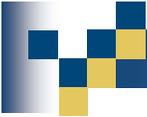
- “Equity and justice underpin discussions about poverty” (p. 1)
- “The health and vitality of rural and northern communities hinges on federal and provincial policy agendas that seek to alleviate inequity stemming from geography, demographic, social and economic differences, while encouraging sustainable development.” (p. 1)

(Annis et al. 2007)



Poverty in Rural Canada

- Diversity of landscape and demographics
- Understanding regional variability through measurement, economic indicators and social context
- Barriers to entering the work force
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Building community and regional capacity through collaboration
- Increasing awareness, understanding and solutions is needed across communities, jurisdictions, service providers, governments and NGOs
- Gender is an important factor that needs to be considered



Challenges Facing the Rural

Poor

(Senate Committee on Ag. and Forestry)

- **Rural Transportation and Rural Roads**
 - Transportation often necessary for basic needs and its absence can exacerbate impacts of poverty
- **Rural Health and Access to Health Care**
 - Shorter life expectancies and poorer health
- **Rural Education and Literacy**
 - In 2001, 23% of people aged 20 to 34 in rural areas had less than a high school education versus 14% in urban areas.
- **Government and Private-sector Services**
 - Greatly impacted by declining rural population
- **Employment Issues**
 - In 2001, unemployment rate in rural Canada was 7.2% compared to 5.4% in urban Canada



Challenges Facing the Rural Poor

(Senate Committee on Ag. and Forestry)

■ Immigration

- New Canadians are often attracted to urban areas and face language barriers in rural areas

■ Gender Issues in Rural Canada

- Women often have difficulty finding child care or well paying employment
- Increase in male suicide rates due to decline in male-dominated primary sector jobs

■ The Informal Economy

- Negatively impacted by population decline

■ Low Farm Incomes and its Consequences

- Farmers are increasingly seeking off-farm work

■ Hardship in the Forestry Sector

- A single mill closure can have a devastating impact on single-industry communities



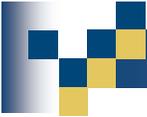
Characteristics of Rural Working Poor

- **Rural working poor are more likely to:**
 - **Be older**
 - **Be part of a two-earner couple with children**
 - **Work more hours**
 - **On average, the equivalent to an additional eight full-time weeks per year**
 - **Have more work experience**
 - **Be self-employed and for longer periods of time**
 - **In 2003, over half of rural working poor were self-employed**
 - **40% were self-employed from 2000 thru to 2004 and 60% were self-employed at least once**
 - **If salaried, receive Employment Insurance benefits**



Characteristics of Rural Working Poor

- **Rural working poor are less likely to:**
 - **Be unattached**
 - **Hold a university degree**
 - **Work in the sales and services industry**
 - **Work for a medium size business**
 - **Be salaried and low-paid**
 - **Receive Social Assistance benefits**



Gender Differences of Rural Working Poor

■ Women

- “Have similar work hours and wages, whether they live in rural areas or in urban centres.” (p. 5)

■ Men

- Work more hours in rural areas
 - 2000 hours vs. 1700 hours
- If salaried, earn higher wages
 - \$15 per hour vs. \$13 per hour



First Nation Geographical Differences

■ Above Average

- 154 First Nations communities; about 23% of Registered Indian population in the study
- Lower levels of crowding and incidences of below grade 9 education
- Northern Quebec, mid- & southern-Ontario and lower mainland, southern regions and costal areas of British Columbia
- One or more in every province

(Armstrong 1999, p. 3)



First Nation Geographical Differences

■ Typical Disparity

- 213 First Nations communities; about 47% of the Registered Indian population in the study
- Incidence of low education and crowding were marginally higher than the overall average
- Employment and income were marginally lower than average
- Prevalent in Maritimes, southern Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan

(Armstrong 1999, p. 4)



First Nation Geographical Differences

■ High Disparity

- 124 First Nations communities; about 32% of the Registered Indian population in the study
- Low education
- Crowding levels above average
- Employment and income well below average
- mid-Quebec, northwestern Ontario, northern Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan, thru Alberta

(Armstrong 1999, p. 4)



Provincial Differences

■ Quebec

- Decreased risk of living on a low-income for rural and urban

■ Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba

- Increased risk of living on a low-income for rural but not urban

■ British Columbia

- Increased risk of living on a low-income for urban (Fortin 2008)



Senate Studies on Canada's Poor

- **1968 – Special Senate Committee on Poverty (Croll Commission) was created to investigate and make recommendations on improving the lives of the nation's poor.**
- **2006 – Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry began to examine and report on rural poverty in Canada.**



Poverty in Canada - Then & Now

- Using the Low-Income Cut-Off as a measure, the number of households in poverty increased by 1.3 million between 1973 and 1997.

(Canadian Council on Social Development)

- Gap between rich and poor increased between 1976 and 2004.
 - Income inequality was from late-1970s to 1980s but rose during 1990s

(Heisz 2007)

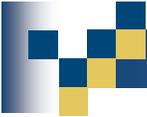
- Hourly wages rose between 1972 and late-1970s but have been stagnant for the 30 years since.

(Russell and Dufour 2007)



Policy Considerations

- **“Programmes designed to be implemented within an urban setting do not always translate into appropriate rural and northern policy goals” (Annis et al. 2007, p. 1)**
- **“Universal policies to combat low incomes may have different impacts on rural and urban populations” (Fortin 2008, p. 10)**



Policies to Consider

(Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry)

■ Rural Economic Development

- Ease Transition out of Rural Canada
- Build Rural Alliances
 - Leverage Urban Growth
 - Connecting Rural and Urban Interests
 - Rural to Rural Linkages
- Farming and Multifunctionality

■ Income Policies

■ Education

■ Other

- Transportation
- Tourism
- Immigration
- Regionalizing Government Offices
- More Rural Research



Recommendations for Action

(Rural Development Institute)

Employment and training

- Recognize and remove barriers
- Employ a community economic development approach
- Collaboration between and within governments (federal, provincial, first nation and municipal)

(Annis et al 2007, p. 2)



Recommendations for Action

(Fortin 2008)

- **Targeting education based on demographics (older working poor population in rural)**
- **Assistance with cost of raising children (more poor two-earner families with children in rural)**
- **Minimum wage policies not applicable and Employment Insurance benefits not accessible (more self-employed working poor in rural)**
- **Foster growth in sectors other than primary industry (e.g cultural sector, see Singh 2006 (RSTBStats Can))**

(Fortin 2008 p. 10)



Who is Responsible?

Relevant Jurisdictional Responsibilities under Canadian Constitution

Federal:

- Employment Insurance
- Census
- Trade Regulation
- Money and banking
- Transportation
- Citizenship
- Indian affairs

Provincial & Territorial:

- Property and civil rights
- Administration of Justice
- Natural resources and the environment
- Health
- Welfare

Municipal:

- Public Transit
- Land use planning
- Libraries
- Emergency services
- Economic development



Is there an International Role?

- United Nations
- OECD



For Additional Information:

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