Ending Child Poverty in Alberta

Deborah Stewart, NASA Communications Officer

Earlier this month, the Edmonton Social Planning Council, the Alberta College of Social Workers and Public Interest Alberta released a new report on the child poverty realities in Alberta.

The report, “The Path Forward: Opportunities to End Child Poverty in Alberta” contains some very hard-hitting facts on poverty in both Canada and Alberta. In 1989, the House of Commons approved a resolution to end child poverty by 2000. That of course, did not happen. In fact, child poverty continued to worsen throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. In 2013, 144,850 children in Alberta, lived in poverty. In other words, almost one in six children in Alberta lived in poverty.

The report also shows that Alberta’s income inequality has increased faster than the national average. The top 1% of earners have seen real income gains of 72% since 1982 while the bottom half of income earners saw only a small gain of 10.4%

There has been much discussion in the media about the proposed $15 per hour minimal wage that was a campaign promise of the provincial NDP government. More than 362,000 Albertans work for wages less than $15 per hour. Of that number, 59.9% are 25 years and older. The report also states

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that 64.5% of those making less than $15 per hour are women, and women still only make approximately 60% of what a man earns.

A living wage is a calculation of the level of income needed for a family of four in which both spouses are working full-time for the year. A living wage provides a basic or modest standard of living. In Edmonton, the living wage is $17.36 per hour. Raising Alberta’s minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2018 would ensure that the minimum wage is closer to the living wage.

Some full-time workers here at the University of Alberta fall below the calculated living wage. Anyone working in a Grade 1, Step 1 to Step 5.5 position or a Grade 2, Step 1 to Step 3.5 falls below the calculated living wage.

This past year, we have seen changes in government at both the federal and provincial levels. In Alberta, we have witnessed the negative impact of the collapse of energy prices on the economy. This will impact the rate at which child poverty, and poverty in general, will be reduced. The new Alberta government has made significant investments in an effort to reduce poverty. These include the $15 per hour minimum wage by 2018, a 24% increase in preventative social services delivered through the Family and Community and Support Services Program, a two-year post-secondary tuition freeze and the introduction of the new Alberta Child Benefit.

As the report states, it will take more than money to end child poverty in Alberta but without additional investment in key solutions, the goal of ending child poverty will not be realized.

For more information or to read the entire report, see http://pialberta.org/sites/default/files/AlbertaPovertyReport2016_FINAL.pdf

Worksite Meetings with NASA President Elizabeth Johannson

One of President Elizabeth Johannson’s goals is to connect with NASA members in their various worksites to discuss their priorities and concerns. To date, Elizabeth has attended eleven worksite meetings in nine worksites.

If you would like to have Elizabeth meet with you and your colleagues over a lunch hour, please contact the NASA office at nasa@ualberta.ca. We will help set up a meeting in your area.
Want to get involved? Join a NASA Committee

Do you regularly attend NASA general meetings and read the newsletters? Do you want to have greater union participation but don’t want to serve on the Executive Board? Then you should consider applying to serve on one of NASA’s Standing Committees.

There are seven Standing Committees. They are—Bylaws and Policy Committee, Finance Committee, Grievance Committee, Membership Services Committee, Award Committee, Human Resources Committee and Political Action and Member Education Committee.

The NASA membership elects members to all Standing Committees in accordance with NASA’s electronic voting policy. The term of office for each Standing Committee is two years and will coincide with the term of office of its Chair. That means, this year NASA will be looking for members for the Finance Committee, the Grievance Committee and the Political Action and Member Education Committee.

Watch NASA Buzz and the website for further information about applying to serve on one of the Standing Committees.

Important Labour Events—April and May

April 28 marks Canada’s National Day of Mourning, when workers, families, employers and others come together to remember those who were injured, disabled, or have lost their lives to work-related incidents or occupational diseases.

While it is a time to commemorate those workers whose lives have been lost or whose lives have been changed by workplace injuries and illnesses, it is also a reminder that we must continue our struggle for safe and healthy workplaces for everyone. An injury to one is an injury to all.

The Edmonton and District Labour Council is holding a Day of Mourning Ceremony on Thursday April 28, 2016. This ceremony is to recognize those workers killed and injured at work and to re-commit to working toward ending workplace deaths and injuries.

The ceremony will be held at the location of our Broken Families Obelisk from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Grant Notley Park 11603-100th Avenue, with a reception to follow at the park.

Born out of the struggle for the 8-hour day more than 100 years ago, May Day is celebrated by working people the world over as an occasion to defend the rights of workers and defend the rights of all. On May 1, Edmontonians will join the millions around the world who take to the streets on this important day.

Bring your flags, banners and placards to let everyone know what the most pressing concerns are in your unions, organizations and communities.

- Gather at the front steps of the Legislature at 1 pm. Speakers from labour and community organizations will address the rally
- March to Winston Churchill Square is at 2 pm
- Plaque dedication ceremony commemorating the founding in 1911 of United Garment Workers of America Local 120. The GWG workers were the first in their industry to win the 8 hour day.
- Light refreshments, lower level Stanley Milner Library at 3:30 pm

For more information, see maydayedmonton.ca
NASA Budget Information Meeting

Date: Wednesday, May 11, 2016
Location: ED 129
Time: Noon - 1:00 pm

NASA Annual General Meeting

Date: Wednesday, June 8, 2016
Location: ED N2 115
Time: Noon - 1:00 pm