



For Immediate Release

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Social Workers Urge Progress in the Fight Against Poverty

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW US), on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, together honour those trapped in poverty and challenge governments worldwide to begin implementing effective solutions.

Internationally, some progress is being made towards eradicating extreme poverty, according to the 2007 Millennium Development Goals Report. Yet continued effort is required to ensure that poverty is eradicated and that the benefits of economic growth are shared both within and among countries.

“When many people think about poverty, they think about the extreme poverty witnessed in developing countries. Today, we also want people to think about the poverty experienced in our own backyards,” states CASW President Veronica Marsman. Of particular concern for social workers in North America is that so many people in both Canada and the United States continue to live in poverty despite the economic growth and security of the countries. In the United States in 2006, 36.5 million people were living in poverty, while in Canada, despite the federal surplus and record-setting employment rates, 3.4 million people live in poverty. In both countries, the income gap between rich and poor continues to grow.

Social work has a long history of addressing poverty at the individual, community, national, and international levels. The President of NASW, Elvira Craig de Silva, affirms, “We support economic policy that invests in human capital, and recognize that a nation’s well-being derives not only from an economic balance sheet but also from the well-being of its members. Society must accept responsibility for the protection and care of its most vulnerable and those without resources.”

Many solutions are available. Affordable child care, housing options, and an increased minimum wage are just some of the possible measures towards eliminating poverty in the two richest countries in North America. More and better aid, clean water and sanitation,

food, disease treatment and prevention, trade justice, and debt cancellation are only a few of the international solutions.

Political will, public interest, and social responsibility are required for the implementation of these solutions. Today, social workers across North America join efforts with those living in poverty to demand change.

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