

Excerpts from Greetings Received for 2010 National Social Work Month

International Federation of Social Workers **David N Jones, President**

I am very pleased to send greetings to social workers in Canada as you celebrate Canadian Social Work Month 2010.

I know from inspecting and evaluating services for children and families that poverty has a huge impact on the lives of many in our communities. I have just returned from an IFSW visit to East Africa, where I visited families living on less than \$1 a day, which reminded me starkly of the differential impact of poverty around the world. I will never forget visiting a mother with Aids living in a tin shack with no sanitation and little hope. Her husband was dying of Aids in hospital. She was caring for her 4 children. Like mothers everywhere, her first concern was for her eldest daughter – who would pay her school fees? – and her HIV positive son aged 8 who was there beside her. She was supported by a community group, but they also lived in poverty. Yet against all adversity, the group provided care and concern. In the most difficult situations, people find humanity.

Social workers can really make a difference, helping people to discover their strengths and to be creative in the most difficult situations. We know that making a difference very often means helping others to make the 'right' decisions and underplaying our own role in the process. We also know that poverty is an abuse of human rights and something which every decent society should struggle to eradicate.

At this time of philosophical and political challenge to social programmes, we need to speak with confidence about the work we do and the needs of those we support. We have to find ways to tell social work stories in ways which the public and politicians can understand. This is not a betrayal of the values of social work but an essential element of advocacy and the foundation for building services.

I hope that in social work month, every social worker will tell somebody outside of the social work profession of at least one story about the impact of poverty – but also stories about effective social work practice. Our stories are powerful, emotive and persuasive. What will your story be?

For Canadian Social Work Month 2010, I send very best wishes to CASW and to all Canadian social workers.

National Association of Social Workers (US)

James J. Kelly (PhD, ACSW), President

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) joins with the Canadian Association of Social workers (CASW) in the celebration of March as National Social Work Month.

Your theme, "Social Workers Speaking up: Poverty costs," supports your ongoing efforts to bring attention to and to combat poverty particularly in the areas of employment and job training, income support and affordable housing. In this period of economic downturn, social workers in both of our countries are dealing with the growing needs of communities and families, particularly women and children who are disproportionately affected. We applaud the great work that the CASW is doing to remediate the negative effects of poverty within the Canadian borders and wish you continued success in this endeavor.

We value the collaborative efforts of the CASW and the NASW and look forward to our continued relationship.

Canadian Association of Social Work Education

Benoît van Caloen (PhD, RSW), President

It is with great pleasure and on behalf of all the constituencies of the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, that I would like to extend our warm greetings and congratulations to the Canadian Association of Social Workers and all its members on the occasion of National Social Work Month.

We particularly wish to recognize the theme of this year's celebration, namely "*Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Cost*". As CASW clearly recognizes, social work is a human rights profession which seeks the empowerment, participation and inclusion of all in society and especially the most vulnerable. CASW is to be congratulated for its strong national leadership in advancing the cause of social justice and its respect for a common humanity in a diverse society such as Canada.

Campaign 2000

Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator

Campaign 2000 is pleased to send its greetings to the Canadian Association of Social Workers in celebration of a profession that speaks up about the alarming personal, familial, communal, and societal costs of poverty.

The passage of the 1989 House of Commons Resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000 was a rallying point for social workers. Exactly 20 years later, the passage of the November 24, 2009 House of Commons Resolution must increase our vigour:

That, with November 24th, 2009 marking the 20th anniversary of the 1989 unanimous resolution of this House to eliminate poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000, and not having achieved that goal, be it resolved that the Government of Canada, taking into consideration the Committee's work in this regard, and respecting provincial and territorial jurisdiction, develop an immediate plan to eliminate poverty in Canada for all.

As a group that sees the toll that poverty takes on families every day, the social work sector has a critical role to play in ensuring that initiatives put forward to address poverty are both beneficial and achievable. Every social worker and every social work association must ask what they can do to contribute. We must be assertive, intelligent, and even give up some of our cautious politeness. We must demonstrate absolute intolerance of that injustice called poverty. We must "call a spade a spade" when we oppose those who care more about tax cuts than children and families. And we must be united in our resolve to eradicate poverty.

Anything less would be a betrayal of our heritage.

Canada Without Poverty
Rob Rainer, Executive Director

Canada Without Poverty is pleased to recognize and support National Social Work Month for 2010. We are particularly pleased to do so given this year's theme – "Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs."

Indeed, as social workers in Canada know all too well, poverty costs deeply. It can cost the individuals who experience it physical, emotional and psychological suffering and damage, including from the exclusion of so much in terms of opportunities enjoyed by those who are not poor, or of simply a sense of being a valued part of the larger community. It also costs society as a whole in terms of poverty's impact on health care and criminal justice systems, as well as economic productivity and prosperity. Indeed, extrapolating from cost of poverty studies in Ontario and the United States, this Canada-society cost, in raw dollar terms, may exceed \$100 billion per year.

We are very appreciative of the day to day work that social workers in Canada do, at street and decision-making levels. And, we are also very appreciative of the extent to which professional social work associations are speaking and acting, on behalf of their memberships, to help address the injustice of poverty in Canada. For example, the Canadian Association of Social Workers has been an invaluable partner in the coalition emerging behind *Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-free Canada*.

We wish the social work community success in its efforts to improve the lives of Canadians facing social and economic challenges. Keep up the great and essential work that you do!

Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
Linda Walsh (MHSc, S-LP(C)), President

On behalf of the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), it gives me great pleasure to extend greetings to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) on the occasion of your National Social Work Month in March.

Your theme for this year, *Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs*, is an important message to advance. Many speech-language pathologists and audiologists see first-hand the added disadvantage that poverty places on people with communication problems. We whole-heartedly applaud your efforts to increase awareness of the long-term costs of poverty.

Best wishes to CASW as you celebrate National Social Work Month.

The Canadian Home Care Association
Nadine Henningsen, Executive Director

The Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) congratulates social workers across Canada as they celebrate National Social Work Month.

As the voice of home care in Canada, the CHCA is pleased to pay tribute to the contributions of social workers whose expertise and skills are applied within the home care sector every day. The involvement of social workers in home care ranges from basic needs that include locating financial resources, housing and sustenance to the provision of therapeutic counselling and psychotherapy in order to help clients and family caregivers at risk for, or suffering with needs such as depression, addiction, marital difficulties, and client/family adaptation. Social workers are important members of the home care team contributing to optimized and coordinated care.

We hope that the celebrations of National Social Work month allow social workers time for reflection and renewal of their professional pride. On behalf of the members of the CHCA, we thank all social workers for their contributions to the health care team and extend our best wishes.

Canadian Medical Association

Anne Doig (MD, CCFP, FCFP), President

On behalf of Canada's Physicians, I am pleased to bring you greetings as we collectively celebrate National Social Work Week. The Canadian Medical Association commends the CASW and its members for your invaluable contribution to the well-being of so many of our fellow citizens.

Your theme this year, "Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs", is an important one; the doctors of Canada are aware of the important role that social workers play in our communities.

Please accept our best wishes for a successful National Social Work Month. We look forward to continuing to work with you to help improve the health and well-being of Canadians.

Canadian Physiotherapy Association

Alice Aiken (PT, PhD), President

On behalf of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association, our members strongly support 2010 National Social Work Month. Our professions share a commitment to inter-professional collaboration and believe it is an essential pre-requisite for effective and efficient client care across the broad spectrum of the health care system, and is critical to the future of health care for Canadians.

We celebrate the Canadian Association of Social Workers' ongoing accomplishments and wish you well as you showcase them during 2010 National Social Work Month: "Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs."

Child Welfare League of Canada

Tony Diniz, President

Peter M. Dudding, Executive Director

CWLC (Child Welfare League of Canada) is pleased to join the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and its 17,000 members in celebrating National Social Work Month. CWLC is aware of the numerous successes and valuable contributions made by social workers in all

provinces and territories, in communities and on reserves across the country. CWLC members are themselves a broad representation of child and family organizations staffed with dedicated social workers. Our members are proud to be part of a profession that is committed to working with children, youth and families of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

The recent report published by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness*, highlights the precarious situation encountered by a growing number of Canadians: poverty. Social workers have long been aware of the causes and challenges of this issue and we join CASW in speaking up for the vulnerable and marginalized families living in poverty. The theme for the 2010 National Social Work Month, *Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs*, is important. In 2009, Canada did not meet its target of eradicating child poverty, a goal set in 1989 by the federal government. We applaud CASW for highlighting society's failure on this issue and the need to take action on behalf of millions of Canadian families.

CWLC works to address this pressing social issue in order to improve the lives of vulnerable children, youth and families. On behalf of CWLC, we extend our congratulations to the 17,000 social workers in Canada. We are proud of the accomplishments of social work.

Citizens for Public Justice
Joe Gunn, Executive Director

It is with great pleasure that the Board, staff and members of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) send greetings to Canada's social workers and CASW, their national organization, on the occasion of National Social Work Month.

There is no doubt in our minds about the prominent and socially useful role that social workers play throughout Canadian society. We realize that social workers are engaged in a multitude of jobs, but to our minds the most important of these relate to the provision of services to the most disadvantaged in society. These most laudable roles deserve greater societal recognition and gratitude. However, we are also aware that structural inequalities in society result in differential access to and distribution of, power (economic, political, social and cultural) for groups of people. CPJ also recognizes that the amelioration of structural inequalities is at the heart of the best social work practice.

Congratulations and best wishes for a very successful National Social Work Month!

The College of Family Physicians of Canada

Cathy MacLean (MD, CCFP, FCFP), President

Calvin Gutkin, (MD, CCFP (EM), FCFP), Executive Director and CEO

On Behalf of the 23,000 members of the college of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), we want to extend our congratulations and best wishes to our friends and colleagues at the Canadian Associations of Social Workers and all the social workers across Canada during 2010's National Social Work Month.

Your important role as part of the health care team providing a broad range of services to a vast population is highly valued by Canada's family physicians.

In these challenging times, we look forward to working together with you in the best interests of our patients.

National Council of Welfare

John Rook, Chairperson

On behalf of the National Council of Welfare, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone observing this year's National Social Work Week – *Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs*. The National Council of Welfare is also looking into the costs of poverty, the value of wise investments, and the federal role in solving poverty. We are encouraged to see that others, such as yourselves, are contributing to this important work.

Social workers not only bring a commitment to improve the well-being of Canadians, but also see first-hand the consequences of poverty. The CASW plays a critical role in promoting anti-poverty strategies and your support to end poverty in Canada is deeply valued by the Council. We look forward to continued collaboration in the future.

PREVNet

Wendy Craig (PhD) and Debra Pepler (PhD) Scientific Co-Directors

We are pleased to write in support of National Social Work Month and your important theme: "Social Workers Speaking up: Poverty Costs". When families live in poverty, parents' resources are strained and they struggle to survive and support their children.

PREVNet, the Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network, greatly appreciates the involvement of the Canadian Association of Social Workers as a partner. PREVNet's work is based on the understanding that *healthy development depends on healthy relationships*. CASW's focus on the costs of poverty is essential to mobilize supports for disadvantaged families to enable parents to provide healthy family relationships for their children and promote healthy development.

By working with partners such as the CASW, PREVNet is enhancing research capacity, knowledge mobilization, and the practice of those who work with children and youth. We are delighted to be joining the CASW in promoting the well-being of all Canadian children and youth.

PREVNet extends best wishes for your continuing work and National Social Work Month to highlight that "Poverty Costs".

Carleton University, School of Social Work

Hugh Shewell (BA, MSW, PhD), Director

On behalf of the faculty, staff and students of the School of Social Work at Carleton University I extend our greetings and best wishes to the ACTS-CASW during National Social Work Month, March 2010. The Carleton School of Social Work strives to graduate social workers who are committed to principles of social justice and who are prepared to work with people and communities to address the systemic, structural issues that underlie their poverty and marginalization. We join with ACTS-CASW in deploring the continued existence of poverty in Canada and throughout the world. We call on all social workers in Canada to honour their origins as champions of the disadvantaged, to speak up against poverty and to work actively towards its elimination.

Dalhousie University, School of Social Work

Wanda Thomas Bernard (C.M.), Director

The Dalhousie School of Social Work is pleased to join with social workers across the country, and indeed around the world, as we celebrate Social Work Month in 2010. This is a good opportunity for us to recognize the many contributions that social workers make to our society in their everyday practice and volunteer work.

The theme for 2010: Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs is timely. Whilst many individuals and organizations continue to deal with the world wide recession, social workers are acutely aware of the fact that the most vulnerable are those living in poverty every day. Social Workers must continue to speak up and speak out about the human and material costs of poverty.

We join with you today in celebration of social workers for their work in dealing with those costs, and addressing the root causes of poverty.

McGill University School of Social Work
Dr. Wendy Thomson (CBE), Professor and Director

On behalf of all faculty, staff and students at McGill University's School of Social Work I would like to extend our warmest wishes to all social workers across Canada in celebration of National Social Work Month 2010.

We look forward to hosting you in Montreal this spring. This year's theme, Families and Communities: Intersections and Connections will bring to our attention important developments pertinent to clinical and community practice with families.

Congratulations to the Canadian Association for Social Workers and all its members across the country who work towards the common goal of advancing the profession both nationally and internationally.

Once again, congratulations on acknowledging such an important issue and best wishes for National Social Work Month 2010 and beyond.

McMaster University School of Social Work
Gary Dumbrill, Acting Director

Please accept warm National Social Work Month greetings from the McMaster School of Social Work. We believe the work of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) is not only crucial for the profession, but more importantly crucial for the public who the profession serves. For this reason we appreciate your proclamation of National Social Work Month each year to mark the contribution social workers make to our society. This year's theme, "Social Workers speaking Up: Poverty Costs", is timely because it is one of the most pressing issues we face today. Thank you for playing such a key role in enabling social work to focus on issues that matter.

Memorial University School of Social Work
Ellen Oliver (MSW, RSW), Acting Director

The School of Social Work at Memorial University is pleased to join with colleagues across the country to celebrate social work month.

This year's theme on speaking up about poverty is particularly relevant to our profession. Our history of work to address poverty continues to be relevant in current practice contents. This difficult work demands the collaboration and solidarity that exists within our profession in Canada.

Our school is committed to promoting social justice and we rely on our provincial and national associations to support us in this work. The theme and activities of social work month are a visible reminder of the connections within our profession that strengthen our collective social justice agenda. We are pleased to join with our colleagues to celebrate this strength.

Ryerson University School of Social Work
Judith Sandys (PhD), Interim Director

Greetings to ACTS-CASW, social workers and social work students across Canada and around the globe during National Social Work Month, from the students, staff and faculty of the School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

This year's theme - Social Workers Speaking Up: Poverty Costs - reflects the daily challenges experienced in a capitalist world predicated upon competition and individualism. In social work, we are called to challenge inequities and work towards transformative changes that promote social justice. In our work with communities we resist policies and practices that divide people and create poverty. We particularly challenge the continued colonizing of Aboriginal Peoples that reproduces poverty and other systemic and personal oppression.

We celebrate the work of social workers in addressing the challenges of and working towards the elimination of poverty and marginalization in Canada and the world.

University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work
Gayla Rogers (PhD, RSW), Dean and Professor

We live in a world that has a staggeringly inequitable distribution of power, money and resources. As a known social determinant of health, poverty challenges many of our most vulnerable citizens in their struggle to survive.

Because we social workers are mandated to be agents of change, many of us work diligently and creatively to combat the dynamic between poverty and social justice. That is why the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary puts so much emphasis on research and policy development in this area, and trains students and practitioners in best practices.

Our Faculty is a leader in social work research and practice related to poverty, particularly as it intersects with family violence and abuse, mental illness, addictions, immigrants and refugees, Aboriginal communities, the sex trade, homelessness and other societal concerns. Many of our faculty members are experts on these topics, and have contributed to practice enhancement and social policy development in these areas at the local, provincial and national levels.

As you may know, the financial impact of poverty in Canada is immense. Billions of dollars are spent annually by the criminal justice, health and human service sectors, as well as in emergency shelter costs. We congratulate CASW for focussing attention on this pervasive societal concern by making *"Speaking Up: Poverty Costs"* the theme of 2010's National Social Work Month.

In the long run, implementing solutions to poverty is much more effective than adding more social programs. If we can target high-risk groups and provide support for early intervention and prevention, we can significantly reduce entry into the expensive healthcare, criminal justice and child welfare systems.

There are huge benefits to helping people reach their full potential; and as social work researchers, academics and educators at the University of Calgary, we take seriously our obligation to serve our vulnerable populations.

University of Northern British Columbia School of Social Work
Dawn Hemingway, Associate Professor and Chair

Unfortunately, the theme of National Social Work Month this year is exceedingly relevant to citizens in northern British Columbia. We wish it was not the case. Hundreds upon hundreds of forestry and other workers have lost their livelihoods over the past couple of years as plants shutdown one after the other.

Most recently, 500 Eurocan pulp and paper workers in Kitimat have seen their jobs eliminated in one fell swoop – and hundreds more are feeling the impact as the ripple effect into other sectors takes hold. Entire families, once expecting a secure life, are now facing impoverishment and a loss of locally accessible services. Public schools are closing with students facing bus trips of up to 4 hours a day. And other social and health infrastructure has been cut or is at risk.

Although social workers are innovative and strive to access maximum support for those we serve, this will not be enough. Even advocacy work and organizing efforts to bring about needed policy and programmatic change will not suffice.

A more fundamental shift is an urgent necessity - creating a society that, as a first priority, meets the basic needs of the majority rather than the excesses of a minority. In Social Work Month 2010, we join with our colleagues and citizens across Canada in seeking to create the conditions that will make such change a reality. There really is little choice.