

Consider this story.

A homeless man sits on the street day after day. He's been out of work and alone since he lost his family four years ago. Sometimes he sleeps in a shelter, but since he got beaten up, he doesn't want to go back. His mental health is poor; he is anxious and afraid. People don't like him much. Sometimes he turns to alcohol to dull the pain.

Today he feels a different kind of pain, one he doesn't recognize. The pressure in his heart builds. As he collapses, someone calls 911. The ambulance arrives and takes him away.



At the hospital, life-saving steps are taken. Extraordinary measures are implemented. The damage to his heart is stopped. In two days, the government has just spent \$25,000 saving this man's life.

Why does preventing death take priority over building life? This same money could have been invested in his recovery from homelessness, even providing him with housing for a few years.

We must treat the cause and not just the symptoms. It's time to focus on the causes of ill health, like job loss, hunger, stress, worry and poverty.

Canadians have a great history of dealing with social problems. We created a universal system of medical care. Ended crowded housing. Provided safe drinking water and better sanitation. Ended child labour and shortened the workday. We protected workplaces and found ways to deal with bad bosses. We created a minimum wage and set up nurseries for children of working mothers.

But conditions are slipping and it is time for us to act.

In December 2002, more than 400 health experts and community partners signed the Toronto Charter for a Healthy Canada. The Charter addresses the "social determinants of health" including early life, education, employment and working conditions, food security, health services, housing, income and income distribution, social exclusion, the social safety net, and unemployment and job insecurity. The signatories called for governments, health providers, and the media to make these issues a priority. They called for immediate spending on safe, affordable housing and a universal system of high quality childcare.

Join our call for a healthy Canada. Find out more by visiting the website of the Centre for Social Justice, www.socialjustice.org. There you will find material on the determinants of health and the links between health and social justice. You will also find links to action groups working to build a healthy Canada. Get involved and let your voice be heard.

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Social Determinants of Health
Across the Life-Span



Social Determinants of Health
Across the Life-Span

**Your health
depends more on a
decent income
and safe housing
than on MRI machines.**



Imagine...

Low Income Living

- Worrying about paying the rent
- No money for fresh fruits or vegetables
- Living in damp, bug-infested places
- Being unable to hire someone to watch your kids
- Lousy jobs that leave you depressed and anxious
- Being unemployed, upset and in poor health
- Having to beg for handouts
- Bad teeth because you can't afford a dentist
- Anxiety and fear of not making ends meet
- Thinking about suicide as a way out

Imagine...

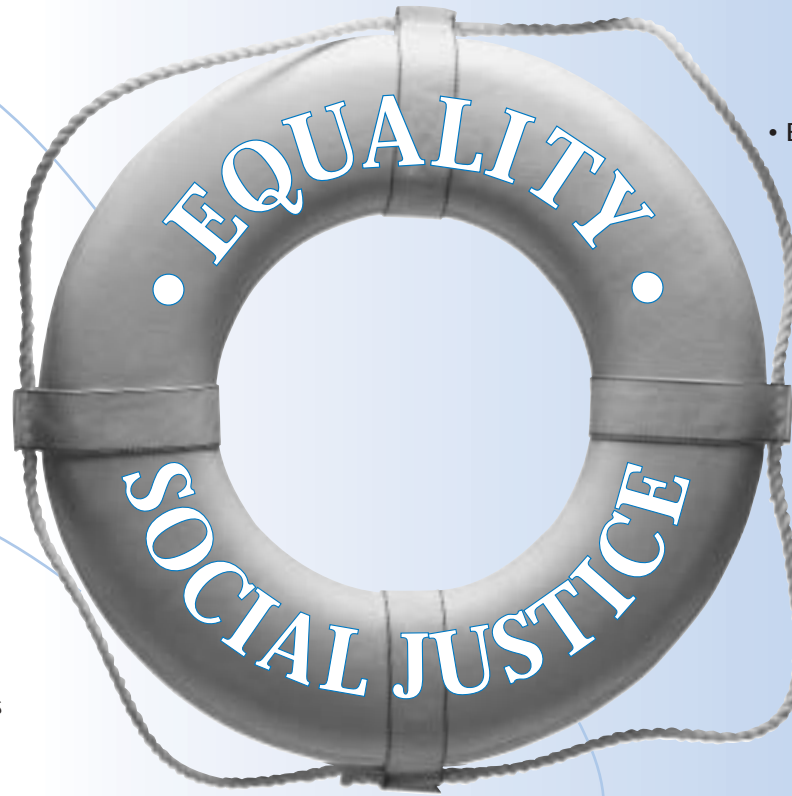
Racism

- Kids not wanting to sit with your child
- Having to explain why white people ignore your child
- Always wondering if racism is the cause of your child's problems
- Being told vacant apartments just got rented
- Having your heritage ignored in school books and history text
- Being stopped by the police or immigration officers much more often than others
- Blaming yourself for the bad treatment you get
- Getting angry for how you are treated
- Being paid less than you deserve

Imagine...

Child Poverty

- Making excuses for not bringing lunch to school
- Getting "sick" before field trips because your parent has no money
- More visits to the hospital
- No decent toys to play with
- No medicine when you are sick
- Stressed out and overworked parents
- Not replacing things when they break, get lost or worn out
- Always wearing someone else's clothes
- Not going to birthday parties because you can't afford a present
- Clothing that smells because it is washed without soap
- No safe, supervised places to play
- No "safety proofing" at home



The World We Want

- Enough nutrition for healthy growth and development
- Quality licensed childcare for anyone who needs it
- Strong unions to protect working conditions
- An economy where everyone thrives and has enough money to buy what they need
- Enough energy at the end of the day for self-care, exercise and decent parenting
- Decent jobs at decent pay for everyone
 - No one going to bed hungry at night
 - Enough money for our schools
 - Dignity for aboriginal peoples
 - An end to racism
 - A home

Health promotion
through equality
and social justice
...the time has come.

