

dignité pour touTEs  
la campagne pour un  
canada sans pauvreté



dignity for all  
the campaign for a  
poverty-free canada

[www.dignityforall.ca](http://www.dignityforall.ca) / [www.dignityforall.ca/fr](http://www.dignityforall.ca/fr)

c/o 251 Bank St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ottawa, ON K2P 1X3

July 17, 2012

Honourable Darrell Dexter  
Premier of Nova Scotia  
Chair - Council of the Federation  
PO Box 726  
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Re: Council of the Federation Meeting, July 25-27 2012

Dear Premier Dexter,

On behalf of *Dignity for All: the campaign for a poverty-free Canada* (a coalition of over 575 provincial and national organizations, 9000 individuals, and 154 Members of Parliament and Senators from all parties dedicated to realizing a poverty-free Canada) , we respectfully request that at the upcoming meeting of the Council of the Federation, you place on your agenda as a matter of urgent priority, the need for a national, multilateral poverty strategy to ensure the economic and social well-being of Canadians.

As the federal government's proposed reforms to Employment Insurance (EI) regulations demonstrate, unilateral changes to important national programs leave provincial interests and the well-being of individual Canadians at risk. As you know, the EI changes will disproportionately affect the millions of Canadians employed in seasonal work and indeed, all those in jobs that are not full-year and full-time. These changes will force Canadians on EI to accept jobs with lower wages that are below their skill level, and will lead to people working farther away from home. They will have a negative impact on individuals, seasonal industries and local economies.

These reforms will have a profound impact on the Atlantic region, including Nova Scotia, which has recently had an increase in unemployment and where fewer people have been able to access EI. We encourage you to discuss these changes with your fellow premiers, and ask the question that our campaign partners highlighted in a recent letter to the provincial and territorial Ministers of Finance: can the provinces afford the increased financial burden if people who previously relied on EI for assistance during seasonal work shortages are forced to turn to provincial social assistance programs? Furthermore, how will these reforms affect regional economies and what will the resulting socio-economic impact be on residents of your respective provinces?

We know that government action *can* make a positive difference in the lives of Canadians. As several of the provinces and territories have begun to demonstrate, comprehensive, coordinated poverty reduction strategies can improve people's economic and social well-being. Yet without a national plan, there is no way of ensuring that federal legislative and policy reforms will be examined in a way that considers the impact on the quality of life for Canadians and regional interests.

We are encouraged that today nearly all of our provinces and territories, including your own province, have implemented or are developing a poverty reduction strategy. In the absence of a pan-Canadian poverty strategy, however, all the best of provincial intentions could be swept aside if the federal government is not working towards similar goals.

We're sure you and your colleagues who will gather in Halifax later this month would agree that governments must do all they can to improve people's livelihoods and keep them from living in poverty. It carries too much of a social and economic cost to maintain the status quo or implement regressive policy, such as the changes made to EI. We firmly believe that the provinces and territories can work together with the federal government to build a strong, viable economy while promoting the dignity and potential of all Canadians. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is in provincial interests and keeps with the Council of the Federation's stated goal of "[playing] a leadership role in revitalizing the Canadian federation and building a more constructive and cooperative federal system".

On behalf of our organizational members and individual supporters we urge you to raise these concerns and express the need for a national, cooperative strategy to keep people out of poverty and, following next week's meeting, to communicate this to the public and the federal government.

Thank-you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director  
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Executive Director  
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CC: Provincial and Territorial Premiers  
Right Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister  
Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Hon. Bob Rae, Interim Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada  
Hon. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skill Development  
*Dignity for All* campaign partners