LESSONS FROM COALITION-BUILDING AROUND CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY
AGENDA

• Creating Basic Income Principles in Coalition
• Reality Check: A Parent’s Perspective
• Reflections on Coalition Building
• Critical Role of Non-profits in Advocacy
Our Start

• In 1989, the House of Commons committed to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000

• In 1991, **CAMPAIGN 2000** was launched to hold government accountable for its commitment
CAMPAIGN 2000

- Non-partisan coalition of 120+ national, provincial and community partners
- Focus on public education & social policy change
- Annual national report card on child and family poverty
- 8 Provincial report cards & extensive media work
National Context

• One of few national anti-poverty groups remaining

• Regarded as authority on child poverty in Canada

• Introduce new policy ideas with traction

Raising the National Child Benefit to $5,400 Will Reduce Child Poverty

In 2012 Campaign 2000 commissioned a simulation to model the impact of a maximum child benefit of $5,400 paid to low and modest-income families with children across Canada currently receiving the NCB.  

The simulation estimated the following impacts:

- An enhanced child benefit of a maximum $5,400 would bring the child poverty rate down by 15% and lift 174,000 children out of poverty.
- The decline in family poverty is greatest in families with incomes between $20,000 and $35,000.
- The data suggest the importance of building solid family incomes through access to full-time work throughout the year at decent wages.
What we do

• Research - report cards & policy proposals

• Public education - presentations, media work, etc.

• Non-partisan advocacy for social policy change

• Advise government on policy change - submissions, presentations, meetings
Our Structure

• Three paid staff, many volunteers, students, parents

• Guided by a national steering committee

• Members represent regional agencies, coalitions

• Convened by teleconference and Skype
What about Basic Income
Full Spectrum on Basic Income

- Campaign 2000 invited to contribute to CCPA Ontario compendium
- Found the full spectrum of opinions of basic income on the steering committee
Finding a Way Forward

• Formed a Basic Income sub-committee
• Difficult to reach consensus position
• Decided to develop principles for evaluating basic income from an anti-poverty perspective - an area of full agreement
• Landed on six principles
In principle: Basic income…

1. Must be designed to eradicate poverty and contribute to reducing income inequality;

2. Must fill the adequacy gap of current income security programs; bring individuals and families at least 10% above the poverty line;

3. Should not replace existing programs that meet extraordinary needs or programs required to strengthen our social safety net;
4. Should not lead to the marketization of public services or an expectation of individuals to purchase social services;

5. Not a panacea for structural and systemic inequality;

6. A basic income should not act as a subsidy for employers who pay low wages, nor should it be an excuse for reducing employment.
Lessons Learned

• Emerged united because coalition’s core goal of eradicating poverty meaningful to all members

• Members circulated the principles across the country: a measure of success
Reality Check: A Parent’s Perspective
Parent Advocacy

• Inspired to Act
• On Basic Income
• Important coalition experiences
Inspired to Act

Hands off!
Stop Taking Our Child Benefit!
On Basic Income

• Essential that rates reflect actual costs of living and are indexed to inflation
• Must reflect greater costs associated with living with disability
• Must not replace medical and disability device supports (canes, wheelchairs, scooters), and other supports such as physiotherapy, dental and pharma care
• Must not stop the creation of good paying jobs
Important Coalition Experiences
Words of Wisdom

IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO ALONE.

IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER

African Proverb
Coalition Experiences

Put Food in the Budget
Promote health and fight poverty

Why are these Torontonians trying to survive on PEANUT BUTTER and TUNA?

Dr. David McKeown
Naomi Klein
Damian Abraham

stitching our safety net
Bringing in Women’s Voices
Province urged to allow women on welfare to keep child support

By LAURIE MONSEBRAATEN Social Justice Reporter
Wed., April 16, 2014

When she couldn't find work after completing a social work diploma last spring, Jennifer Gray and her 7-year-old daughter reluctantly moved into a homeless shelter.

But the 39-year-old Toronto single mom refuses to go on welfare because she doesn't want to lose the $300 child support payment she receives from her daughter's father every month.

Ontario to end clawback of child support for parents on welfare

By LAURIE MONSEBRAATEN Social Justice reporter
Thu., Feb. 25, 2016

About 16,600 single parents in Ontario who rely on both social assistance and child support payments will see their incomes rise under rule changes to be introduced early next year, according to Thursday's provincial budget.

Currently, every penny of the average $870 monthly child support payment to families on social assistance is clawed back by the government, meaning children are "no better off" and the parent responsible for paying may feel little incentive to do so, the budget notes.
Province urged to allow women on welfare to keep child support

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Currently, every penny of the average $780 monthly child support payment to families on social assistance is clawed back by the government, meaning children are "no better off" and the parent responsible for paying may feel little incentive to do so, the budget notes.
Building a Strong National Coalition
Leading the Way for Change

- Built national consciousness of child & family poverty as a problem within Canada
- Negotiating the particularities of federalism

Examples of Policy Influence:
- Canada Child Benefit (CCB)
- National Early Learning and Child Care framework
- National Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)
Political & Cultural Context

Our narrative of government responsibility for child poverty part of media and political culture
Building & Sustaining the Coalition

1991 - 1996 Getting the issue on the public radar screen and the political agenda

1997 - 2003 Monitoring policy development and implementation: NCBS; provincial clawbacks

2004 - 2006 Proposing enhanced child benefit, affordable housing, high quality child care. Prepared discussion papers to highlight the ideas and support advocacy
2006-2014 Closer work with Opposition parties; private members bill to create PRS, national child care. Opposed bad policy (UCCB) and proposed re-allocation and re-design

2015 New government elected; policy shift to Canada Child Benefit
Highlights of Policy Influence:

• National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS)

• Provincial/Territorial anti-poverty strategies - everywhere except B.C.

• Over 40 municipal PRS, including Toronto
Lessons Learned

• Successful coalitions survive as a result of effective relationships that wrestle with and develop policy and advocacy strategies

• Stick to your raison d’être and don’t stray too far or you’ll lose partners/members

• Be nimble and prepared to respond to new developments while not losing sight of your basic principles
The Critical Role of Non-Profits in Advocacy
• FST became C2000’s home in 1991

• Within the Social Action and Community Building Unit (SACB)

• SACB includes GUHD, TNR and Lawrence Heights work
Sectoral Context

• Build and bolster sectoral capacity to respond to timely issues and opportunities

• Child Poverty Action Group

• 25in5 Network for Poverty Reduction

• June Callwood - Keep the Promise
FST’s Theory of Change
What is a Theory of Change?

• Starts with impact desired.
• Identifies the strategic path to get there.
• Questioning assumptions, learning, seeing complexity.
• Clarity and surprising new understanding.
Family Service Toronto

**Ultimate Impact Statement**

*(ambitious, lofty, immeasurable)*

A city in which individuals, families and communities are resilient and thriving.

**Intended Impact**

By 2020, as the result of FST’s work, individuals and families in Toronto, destabilized by precarious mental health and/or socioeconomic circumstances, will have achieved greater stability and resilience in more just and supportive communities.
Measuring Our Impact
Measuring Advocacy?

• Difficult to track impact

• Efforts influenced by factors beyond our control, ex: government in power, economic downturns, etc.

• Last independent evaluation of Campaign 2000 was in 2007
FST Indicators

- Number of Unregistered Participants
- Service Hours
- Number of FTEs
- Volunteer Hours
Campaign 2000 Indicators

- Website traffic
- Media stories
- Social Media
- Report Card Distribution
## Web Traffic

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<tr>
<td>Campaign 2000 and</td>
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## Social Media

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<td></td>
<td>Ontario Reach: 2200</td>
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Report Card Distribution

- Nine report cards released annually: national along with 8 provincial reports
- Online, with limited print run for the public and decision makers
- National report card mailed to each MP and Senator with a meeting invitation
- Findings also disseminated in summary infographics, fact sheets, etc.
Other Possible Indicators

- References by influential politicians
- Invitations to advise government or community processes
- Recognition as key stakeholders
- Periodic partner surveys
Non-Profits Can Lead the Way for Change

- Engaging in advocacy is essential for non-profits to achieve our mandates

- Agencies can and must do this work to effect positive social change
THANK YOU!

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