

## International Women's Day 2011

Women Together Ending Poverty salutes all of the women around the world, who, over the past 100 years had the courage to resist oppression and exploitation. Today we celebrate the gains and achievements they fought for.

We are also here to celebrate the women who currently play an active part in struggles around the world whether these be for the defense of their homelands, the environment, human rights, workers rights, reproductive rights, or political freedoms- and the list goes on. Whether we are visible or not we are present in these struggles, all of which are for the defense of life and humanity-in fact our very survival.

In Calgary since 2008, Women Together Ending Poverty has been working to educate and empower women to take action on root causes of poverty, and to provide mutual support. We believe that charity is not a solution to poverty, and that access to supports and benefits that provide wellness and dignity is a human right.

Therefore we are launching two petitions today. The one to the federal government calls for

- the introduction of a Guaranteed Annual Income;
- a stronger Canada Pension Plan; and
- increased federal transfer payments to the provinces for social programs

The one to the provincial government calls for

- raising the minimum wage to a living wage; and
- increasing Alberta Works benefits and AISH to a living wage.

We are calling for these minimal changes because current government policies don't provide for the wellness and dignity of those of us living and working in poverty. Instead, over the years we have seen social assistance rates decline, both in absolute terms and in relation to the cost of living. At the same time we have seen our access to health and education eroded.

People will say that neither level of government nor business can afford these policy changes. Yet, we live in one of the wealthiest provinces, in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The money is there. The problem is government policy that allows corporations and the wealthy to avoid paying their fair share of taxes and fair wages.

Therefore, launching these petitions is just the beginning. The hard work lies ahead - reaching out to others not only to sign our petition but to work with us to bring about changes that will improve the lives of all.

Thank you! Long Live International Women's Day!