

Dear editor,

As a paediatrician, my job is to heal sick children. I love my work and what I am able to do for our young people. As a compassionate, as well as pragmatic Canadian, I wonder why our governments are doing so little to help.

The key reason behind most of the health issues I see is poverty. Canada is a wealthy country, consistently among the world's richest dozen or so countries. Why then, do one in ten children in Canada live in poverty? [[Refer to the report to make a comment here about the level of poverty in your province/territory](#)] Since an all-party resolution in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000, rates have dropped a mere 2.4%.

Along with the daily trials of growing up poor – hunger, substandard housing, high levels of stress – poor children are not as healthy as others. They are almost twice as likely as wealthy children to be born with low birth-weight, which is a marker for lifelong health problems. As they grow, poor kids tend to have worse physical and emotional health than others. They have more behavioural issues and do not go as far in school, increasing their chances of a life in poverty. They are more likely to die prematurely, due to disease, injury or homicide.

Being poor is really bad for your health.

So why do we allow our children to grow up in poverty? On top of the fact that it is just plain wrong, it makes economic sense to pull families out of poverty. The poorest quarter of residents uses twice the health care services as those in the wealthiest quarter.

Other nations show that it can be done. The rate of child poverty in all the Scandinavian countries is below 5%. In Brazil, rates of extreme poverty have been cut by almost 50% in just six years, and infant mortality rates have fallen by 73%.

The Canadian Paediatric Society, in its recent report *Are We Doing Enough?* points out that good health can only be achieved if poverty is addressed. It is calling for a national child poverty reduction strategy. Please join us in that call at www.cps.ca. Make the children of Canada healthier, and my job a little easier.

Sincerely,

(name)

(address)

371 words