



# Media Release

Canadian Council on Social Development

For immediate release  
September 17, 2008

## New report says NAFTA ignores economic well-being of our kids

**Ottawa** – A new report finds tremendous disparities in the economic well-being of children across North America.

The “Security and Prosperity Partnership” (SPP) created in 2005 was supposed to build on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It was supposed to provide a “means for dialogue, priority setting, collaboration and action on issues affecting the security, prosperity and quality of life of Canadians, Americans and Mexicans.”

But more than three years later, there is no indication that the *economic* security of North American families and the quality of life and future prosperity of their children will be on the SPP agenda anytime soon – despite the importance of this issue for our economic and social prosperity.

There is little evidence that our political leaders are minding the kids.

The latest report in the **Growing Up in North America** series – *The Economic Well-being of Children in Canada, the United States and Mexico* – examined a range of different measures to determine the economic security of children living in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is the Canadian partner in this tri-national project. Katherine Scott, Vice president of research at the CCSD and lead author of the report says, “we found tremendous economic disparities – both *between* and *within* the three countries – that will have an impact on young people in North America.”

Among the main findings in this report:

- Rates of child poverty in North America are high compared to other developed countries.
- Issues of gender, region, disability, ethno-racial identity and indigenous status have an impact on the risk of poverty.
- Housing affordability is a significant contributor to high rates of poverty in Canada and the United States; in Mexico, the concern is around basic housing conditions, although families with children saw a marked improvement since the late 1990s.
- There is evidence of growing income inequality among families with children, despite rising national incomes.
- Stronger public income support systems for families in Canada and the U.S. help mitigate the negative impact of market conditions and protect children from poverty.

“We know that a family’s economic circumstances affect the well-being of their children – positively or negatively – both now and into the future,” says Scott. “Similarly, the opportunities we create for our youth, and their access to basic goods like adequate housing, health care, and nutritious food will determine the health, well-being and future prosperity of the continent. And since young people under 18 make up more than one-quarter of the population in North America today, they are a vitally important demographic.”

As people across North America head to the polls over the next year, they should be asking *all* political parties how they intend to improve the lives of our youngest citizens.

If the economic security and well-being of families and children are not at the top of those political agendas, as responsible adults we should be asking, Why not?

– 30 –

For more information about this report, *The Economic Well-being of Children in Canada, the United States and Mexico*, contact Katherine Scott, VP of Research at the CCSD, at (613) 236-5868, ext. 245, or by email at [scott@ccsd.ca](mailto:scott@ccsd.ca).

All reports in the Growing Up in North America series are available free of charge on the CCSD's website at [www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2006/cina/index.htm](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2006/cina/index.htm).

\* \* \*

Organizational partners in the Children in North America project include the following:

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation**, a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. For more information, visit [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).



**The Canadian Council on Social Development** is Canada's oldest non-profit research group. The Council works with partners and our membership base across the country to measure, monitor and report on issues of social and economic security and well-being. An independent, national, membership-based organization, the CCSD facilitates forums that encourage innovative and pro-active sharing, discussion and debate. For more information, visit [www.ccsd.ca](http://www.ccsd.ca).

**Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México** (The Children's Rights Network in Mexico) is the union of 58 Mexican civil organizations and networks which develop programs to offer support to Mexican children in vulnerable situations. The mission of the Network is that children know, enjoy and exercise their rights; to accomplish this, it promotes a social and cultural movement in favour of the children's rights, advocates for equitable legal frameworks and public policies, strengthens the capacity of Mexican civil organizations dedicated to children. For more information, visit [www.derechosinfancia.org.mx](http://www.derechosinfancia.org.mx).