

October 7, 2014  
7 Tishrei, 5775

Dear Rabbis and Community Professionals:

In 2001, 1 in 7 people in our community were living in poverty. This knowledge led to the formation of Yad b'Yad – the Coalition on Poverty in the Jewish community. The coalition was a joint venture of the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver and the Jewish Family Service Agency. During the five years that the coalition operated in the community, a number of important initiatives were implemented that still benefit community members today.

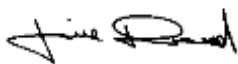
Despite this important work, many in our community remain poor. The 2011 National Household Survey reveals that the number of Jewish poor has grown - with 1 in 6 in our community struggling. Although many of these people work they do not earn enough to cover basic monthly expenses or to actively participate in Jewish communal life. Child poverty has grown with over 630 Jewish children now living in economically disadvantaged homes.

Our situation is not unique – Jewish communities across Canada are facing similar concerns. Last year, representatives from Jewish Federations and Jewish Family Services agencies across Canada met to discuss how best to tackle the issue. There is agreement that once again our communities must raise awareness and explore solutions. As a first step, this group has prepared a statement to be distributed widely that highlights the specific situation of poverty in the Jewish community and recognizes the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

As representatives of the two organizations that played a significant role in the establishment of the Coalition on Poverty, we ask that you disseminate the statement along with local highlights about Jewish poverty during the week of Sukkot. Over the next six months, our two organizations will be working with our community rabbis and community professionals and volunteers to develop an action plan.

Thank you for supporting the initiative. We welcome your ideas and feedback as we move forward with our poverty reduction strategy.

Sincerely,



Jill Diamond  
Chair, Jewish Federation Planning Council



David Kaplan  
Director, Jewish Family Service Agency Board



Diane Switzer  
Chair, Board of Jewish Federation



Joel Steinberg  
Chair, Jewish Family Service Agency