

# Re-inventing A Political Focus

**By Monica Guetre**

No matter how hard you squeeze, getting water form a stone is next to impossible depending on the type of stone you're squeezing.

However, this is what it feels like both the provincial and federal governments are doing to 98% of Canadians.

In my opinion hardest hit are our young adults who are trying to pay rent, buy groceries, and paying to further their education (let alone saving money to buy a house, plan a family or put aside a retirement fund). Additionally, our seniors are struggling to live off old age pensions and the middle income households are taxed heavily to prop up government budgets. So just about everybody is feeling more than a pinch.

Living pay cheque to pay cheque is akin to running on a hamster wheel that many of us can't get off for a very long time without serious targeted action. And depending on where you live, such as living in the north and rural Canada, you're getting hit much harder.

Yup we are all tired of political inaction and lack of foresight.

Food Banks Canada reports that 45.4% of food bank users in Canada are single adult households, while only representing 29.3% of the population and seniors who represent 8.9% of Canadian food bank users, have a rate of increase far outpacing other age groups.

Statistics Canada in its November 2022 price index reported that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 6.8% year over year in November, following a 6.9% increase in October. Prices for food rose 11.4% year over year in November, following an 11.0% gain in October. The cost of groceries rose at a faster rate than the all-items CPI every month since December 2021. The cost of a roof over our heads rose 7.2% at a faster pace year over year.

Minimum wage in Manitoba is currently at \$13.50. It's set to rise on April 1 to \$14.15/hour. The next planned provincial increase is not until October but even that is not set in stone since the rise in minimum wage depends on increases in the consumer price index (cost of living). Right now, the best estimate is that on October 1 minimum wage will increase to \$15.

That means this October a minimum wage earner's take home gross pay will be \$31,200 assuming a 40 hour work week. Now deduct approximately 15% for provincial and federal taxes. A minimum wage earner in Manitoba has about \$26,520 left to pay for a roof over their head, buy food, and put gas in their car. Living anywhere in rural Manitoba means that the basics just to survive like the cost housing or food is more expensive.

Here's a solution that both levels of government can tackle. First target one thing from everyone's household or business budget to reduce or eliminate.

How about the cost of heating a home or business? Decide that you will make a monumental effort over the next 10 years, to incentivize building an energy infrastructure that is capable of heating our homes and business then feeds excess back into our electrical grid. Get aggressive when creating this program and making it affordable to everyone, not solely dependant on their income levels. The key goal is to lower everyone's monthly energy costs.

This program would target one of many identifiable costs the in the mainstream household or business budget.

As a government, it can easily identify the balance of the “mainstream” expenses the majority of people face every month. Their focus could be on reducing the cost of living targeting these mainstream costs. And fine-tune these programs to be as inclusive as possible not restricted by age or income.