

failure to care for its most vulnerable citizens.

The safety net fails in several ways. Two-thirds of single parent households are not in subsidized housing, although half of these are on waiting lists. Many have been waiting for more than two years. Social assistance payments—either general welfare or Family Benefits—fail to provide for basic needs.

What do these women really want? Popular wisdom has it they want to stay home, have babies, and be supported. But 73 per cent of women surveyed said the thing that would make the greatest difference in their lives was a job. Seventy-five per cent wanted cheaper housing. Sixty-three per cent wanted more education or job training. This is a picture of people struggling to survive in a society where they are given less opportunities.

Let us hope that when this recession ends we will never again stand for the erosion of programmes designed to maintain people in health and dignity through rough periods in their lives. In the meantime, during this recession, we need a great public outcry against governments that put deficit reduction before hungry people, and blame those very people for their hunger while balancing budgets on their backs.

*Susan Cox is Assistant Executive Director of the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto.*

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For information contact:  
The Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre  
306 - 620 View Street Victoria BC V8W 1J6  
Tel: (604)383-5370 Fax: (604)383-6112

## HEATHER PYRCZ

### Talking

I am learning  
to listen  
to myself  
and watch while I  
say poverty for property  
not missing a beat

I expose myself  
like an Ihalmuit shaman  
to howling winds and unfathomable  
hunger  
to gainsay

*Heather Pyrcz is a writer who lives in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Her work has been published in Fiddlehead, West Coast Line, and Pottersfield Portfolio.*

## MAURA STOREY

### Chasm

They get in through the walls  
the cracks in the foundation  
and floor the chasm under  
the livingroom windows where  
Summers a sow-thistle grows  
blooms if tended toward  
Fall inside my house mice  
don't need much space even less  
for going out again mornings I  
find them cringing near my pillow  
or in fractions  
in miscellaneous, amputated bits  
half-eaten twice now they've left  
their precisely abandoned faces on  
my carpet: whiskers taut, tiny  
clenched teeth, eyes bulging alert  
watching waiting for my house  
to crumble.

*Maura Storey lives on a farm north of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and works on contract as an educational consultant.*