



February 1, 2016

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
and Member of Parliament
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0J9

END CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

Dear Minister Duclos,

On the eve of the February 4-5th Federal-Provincial-Territorial social service ministers meeting, I am writing to you as the National Coordinator of the Campaign 2000 network, a cross-Canada movement to end child and family poverty in Canada. We recognize this meeting as an important step in advancing much-needed and long-awaited progress on vital social programs for Canadians living in poverty.

As you and your colleagues share information, establish priorities and determine a plan to move forward on common goals, we urge you to ensure the goal of reducing and preventing poverty informs all policy decisions. With over 1.33 million Canadian children and families living in poverty today, and the Federal Government committed to collaboratively developing a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy, ending poverty must be a central focus of your discussions.

We understand that key issues discussed at the meeting will include child care and early learning, Indigenous children in care, poverty reduction and social infrastructure. As you may know, Campaign 2000 tracks progress, or lack thereof, against child and family poverty in Canada through our annual Report Card on Child and Family Poverty and a number of our partners also release annual provincial report cards on child poverty. For too many people, sustaining employment, with decent wages, benefits and security, is difficult to find and maintain. Families are faced with a lack of adequate income support, accessible and affordable childcare and affordable housing and have no choice but to rely on food banks or charity while adult and children health and mental health suffer.

Joint Federal-provincial-territorial leadership and effective social policy backed by investment can turn the tide for millions of Canadians living in poverty. As you prepare for the February 4-5th meeting, we recommend that the federal government, in collaboration with all your provincial/territorial counterparts:

- Adopt a poverty reduction lens on all social policy decisions and discussions to ensure that people in poverty benefit from programs meant to alleviate poverty and provide dignity to individuals and families. The federal government's commitment to poverty reduction behooves you to adopt a poverty reduction lens as you collaborate with your counterparts from across Canada.
- Apply a poverty reduction and human rights lens to the roll out of the new, bolstered and income tested Canada Child Benefit (CCB). We recommend that all provinces and territories enter into agreements with the federal government to ensure that incomes for all families improve as a result of the CCB. Such agreements must ensure that no clawbacks or deductions are permitted on any portion of the CCB from social assistance/income support benefits. Your provincial/territorial counterparts should also refrain from taxing back or deducting any increases from benefits and from delaying or cancelling any benefit increases in the name of poverty eradication. The CCB is projected to lift 315,000 children out of poverty. In order to achieve this goal, children cannot be punished for their family's source of income and families must see a direct benefit in their incomes as federal child benefits increase.
- Ensure the planned Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy contains targets and timelines to guide key investments and hold government accountable for progress. All provinces and territories except for British Columbia have a poverty reduction strategy in place or under development. The

- new federal strategy is a commitment that is long overdue for millions of people living in poverty. It has great potential to close the income and opportunity gap plaguing children and families and must be realized through collaboration and targeted investments. In order to address the urgent needs of children in poverty, Campaign 2000 recommends the target of reducing Canada's child poverty rate by 50% in five years through a well-designed and equitably delivered CCB.
- Proactively participate in the development of the long awaited National Early Learning and Child Care Framework. High quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is an integral part of a holistic approach to social policy, cutting across multiple domains, including labour, social development, health, family and social infrastructure. ECEC plays a crucial role in supporting children, families and communities, promoting social inclusion, combating child and family poverty, stimulating the economy and promoting women's equality. Thus, the Canadian status quo of high parent fees and limited access to quality child care impedes a number of important social and economic agendas. We urge you to read and adopt the new [Shared Framework for Building an Early Childhood Education and Care System for All](#) developed by Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, Canadian Child Care Federation, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, and Campaign 2000.
- Work collaboratively with all levels of government, including First Nations, and Indigenous organizations and people, to enable the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The commission's first five recommendations pertain to Child Welfare and outline significant roles and responsibilities for the provinces and territories. These include reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care, annually publishing data on Aboriginal children in care, establishing national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases, implementing Jordan's Principle and developing culturally appropriate parenting programs.
- Develop a comprehensive national housing strategy reflecting the needs of local communities and First Nations in partnership with provinces, territories, municipalities, First Nations, the non-profit sector and the private sector. The strategy requires affordable housing targets for specific populations including low income families and others with high levels of core housing need. It should be paired with a long-term funding commitment to create and retain existing affordable housing and to support capital repairs.

Campaign 2000 believes that a fair and just Canada must enable every child to escape poverty. This week's meeting of social services ministers, and your future collaborations, present the perfect opportunity to re-establish Canada as a world leader in progressive social policy that enables opportunity and advancement for all.

I would be happy to meet with you and your staff to discuss Campaign 2000's recommendations and child and family poverty further at your earliest convenience. Best wishes to you and your colleagues for a successful meeting in Edmonton.

Sincerely,



Anita Khanna
National Coordinator of Campaign 2000 &
Director of Social Action and Community Building, Family Service Toronto