



END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Budget 2014: Children in Poverty Wait while Surplus Accumulates**

TORONTO - The 2014 Federal Budget has no clear strategies to address Canada's 14.3% child poverty rate and is out of step with Canadian values of caring about our neighbours' children. "Canadians are deeply committed to their communities and neighbours and they understand that eradicating child poverty is a collective responsibility," said Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000. "In this federal budget, government fails to play a leadership role in implementing policies that can improve the lives of over 967,000 children living in poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000 urges the government to dedicate half of the \$6.5 billion projected surplus for 2015 to poverty reduction this year. Children and families in poverty should not be forced to wait for action that secures their basic dignity."

While the government states that the 2014 Federal Budget demonstrates it is fiscally responsible, Campaign 2000 notes that poverty costs Canada significantly. "Failing to address poverty adds up to a \$86.1 billion annual price tag that is paid by Canadians," said First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition's Adrienne Montani. "When government ignores poverty, there are significant lost opportunities for low income children whose education, health and employment prospects are jeopardized by poverty. Evidence also shows that Canada's dramatic underinvestment in early childhood education and care is squeezing young families and undermining our future prosperity."

Canada needs a dedicated federal action plan to eradicate poverty that is guided by targets and timelines and invests in the potential of low income children. "Such a plan should include enhancing child benefits for low income children up to \$5,400 per child, building a system of high quality early childhood education and childcare, investing in affordable housing and secure employment," noted Rothman. Budget proposals should be amended to address disparities created by income inequality in addition to geographical location. Rothman urges that "Enhanced access to high speed internet should be expanded from targeting rural areas to targeting all low income children who have less access to internet-based educational opportunities at home than their higher income classmates."

Campaign 2000 also notes that the budget does not outline specific employment programs that can assist low income families wanting to leave poverty behind. "One in three children living in poverty in Canada has a parent who works full time, full year," said Dr. Sid Frankel, University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work. "Rather than ensuring 'work' works for families, the government is eliminating funding for Labour Market Agreements, which support labour market entry for vulnerable populations without enough of a work history to be eligible for Employment Insurance. In addition, the Canada Jobs Grant exclusively serves the training needs of employers, and not the needs of low wage rate workers to improve their earning potential. The proposed youth employment measures will only impact a fraction of the young people seeking economic security."

Furthermore, low income Canadians are left out of the budget's measures to address affordability, such as the proposed price parity between the United States and Canada. "Long range programs to equalize costs in Canada and the U.S. will not have a major impact on low income families who struggle to feed, clothe and shelter their children. Families who face unemployment, eroding Employment Insurance benefits or who struggle to make ends meet in precarious work do not go to the USA to shop because they simply can't afford to. Low income families need government to take steps that will improve their incomes to ensure their children never go to school hungry," added Frankel.

*Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada coalition of over 120 organizations committed to ending child & family poverty in Canada. [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)*

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