



END CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Budget 2016: A historic step forward in Canada's battle against child poverty

TORONTO – Budget 2016 is a historic step forward in Canada's battle against child poverty, says Campaign 2000. Investments targeting children and families in poverty lay the ground work to turn the tide against Canada's child poverty epidemic which plagues nearly 1 in 5 children overall and over 40% of Indigenous children.

Budget 2016 boosts incomes through the Canada Child Benefit, which is projected to lift 300,000 children out of poverty. Other positive first steps include investments in First Nations child welfare, education, housing and clean water on reserve; improvements to Employment Insurance; funding for affordable housing and a commitment to developing a National Housing Strategy. Unfortunately, the budget delays indexation of the Child Benefit to Inflation until 2020, as well as much needed funding for childcare until 2017-18. It also fails to allocate funds for the development of the promised Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy and the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action from Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The new Canada Child Benefit (CCB) will be delivered to low and moderate income families starting in July. "It is very positive that the needs of the over 1.34 million children living in poverty in Canada were not eclipsed by recent, fevered discussions of reducing the deficit. Investing in families and children in low and modest income makes smart economic sense. Boosting local economies while building more equitable futures for children is a win-win," says Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000's National Coordinator. "We are now looking for the Federal Government to initiate agreements with the provinces and territories to ensure no portion of the CCB is deducted or clawed back from families on social assistance, who live on some of the lowest incomes in the country. This can be achieved through adding a condition to the Canada Social Transfer that prohibits claw backs. Government should also plan for long term increases in the CCB to such a level that it reduces child poverty by 50% in 5 years as part of a strong Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy."

Ava Williams, a single parent of four children in Toronto, is leaving social assistance to start full time work in a few weeks. The CCB will provide her children with an additional \$4,000 per year. "The new CCB will allow me to do more than provide my children with basics like food and groceries. Now, I can give them a better life and they can participate in school trips, sports and other character-building activities that will teach them discipline and improve their self-esteem." Ava's family currently receives \$703 through Ontario Works and she notes the important role of the CCB for families on social assistance. "Families on social assistance struggle to stretch every penny. Clawing the money back would unfairly punish children, jeopardizing their access to healthy food and shelter."

Campaign 2000 and childcare advocates called for \$600 million in earmarked childcare funding for provinces, territories and Indigenous communities in Budget 2016. By deferring funding for childcare to the 2017 budget, government has missed a chance to act on a fundamental part of reducing child poverty. "Although the government has committed to work with the provinces, territories and Indigenous communities on a National Framework in the long-term, struggling families needed federal funds in this budget to shore up services in the short-term. Without funds for childcare, it's much harder to have an impact on child poverty," says childcare expert, Martha Friendly.

Significant investments for programs for First Nations communities are a step in the right direction, but much more support and funding is needed to eradicate poverty among Indigenous children. "The fact that 50% of status First Nations children are living in poverty is a national disgrace," says Khanna. Campaign 2000 urges government to close the gap in funding for First Nations child welfare agencies immediately and calls for the development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy specific to Indigenous communities.

"Campaign 2000 is encouraged by growing federal leadership against poverty. We look forward to the collaborative development of a national Poverty Reduction Strategy, guided by targets and timelines, in order to end child poverty for good," says Khanna. Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working to end child and family poverty. For more, visit <http://www.campaign2000.ca>.