

2016 Report Card Provides Roadmap to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada

TORONTO –Canada has a chronic child poverty problem that the federal government can solve but it must get to the roots of the issues plaguing families, says Anita Khanna, National Coordinator for Campaign 2000. Recommendations in the national report card address housing, precarious employment, gaps in the social safety net, income inequality, and early childhood education and care.

“Children and families need bold, unrelenting and collaborative federal leadership for a comprehensive anti-poverty plan that uproots poverty. Nearly 1 in 5 children in Canada live in poverty today because their families are forced to navigate the uncertainty of precarious work, skyrocketing housing costs, and uneven and unaffordable childcare services while they try not to slip through the holes in Canada’s social safety net. The Canada Child Benefit and government’s commitment to reduce and monitor child poverty are important steps forward in the battle against child poverty. But, with over 1.3 million children in poverty, and Canada ranking 26/35 in UNICEF’s international ranking of child inequality, Canada’s work is clearly not done. As an immediate action, we urge government to index the CCB to inflation effective 2017 to help families keep up with the rising cost of living,” says Khanna.

“Any time spent in poverty during childhood has immediate and long-term physical, mental and social implications. Childhood poverty not only holds children back from reaching their potential, but is a threat to public health and our country’s future success. Supplementary health benefits, accessible and affordable child care, and targeted nutrition and housing programs would all help children and youth to thrive and reach their full potential,” says Marie Adele Davis, Executive Director of the Canadian Paediatric Society.

The 2016 Campaign 2000 report card, “A Roadmap to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty,” provides a current snapshot of the depth of Canada’s chronic poverty problem, outlines how poverty stalls children’s progress and potential and proposes policy solutions as a road map to guide eradication. The release of the 2016 national report card coordinates with the release of seven provincial report cards by Campaign 2000 partners in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Investments in reducing child and family poverty must be a cross-governmental priority. In order to stop the indignity of poverty, the federal government must adopt a child and family poverty reduction lens on all spending, policy and program decisions moving forward,” says Dr. Sid Frankel, Professor of Social Work at University of Manitoba. “The federal government is well positioned to examine regional variations in policies and programs, to identify those that are universally detrimental to children and promote action in the best interests of children. For example, the claw back of child support from children in lone parent families receiving social assistance denies children income support to which they are legally entitled. Further, childcare services are a patchwork across Canada, inequitably organized, unevenly distributed and underfunded everywhere across Canada. Strong federal leadership can help level the playing field for children and families wherever they live.”

“We must also focus on ending discrimination experienced by groups of children with higher poverty rates, those who rely on women’s employment incomes, Indigenous children, racialized children, children affected by disability, and children who have recently immigrated ” said Khanna. “Our report card provides government with the roadmap to eradicate child and family poverty in Canada. With children’s lives at stake, our country’s future is at stake. Government must immediately step on the gas pedal so Canada can leave child poverty behind.”

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 all of Campaign 2000’s 2016 report cards, visit <http://www.campaign2000.ca>

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BACKGROUND

Key Findings from the 2016 National Report Card, *A Roadmap to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty.*

Child poverty has increased since 1989: from 15.8% to 18.5% today; 60% of status First Nations children live in poverty on reserve. **Poverty is higher among children under 6;** 19.7% at the national level, up to 45.1% in Nunavut.

The Canada Child Benefit must be indexed to inflation in 2017 to meet its poverty reduction potential. Further access to the CCB must be improved for children in marginalized families with higher rates of poverty, including children living on reserve or whose parents are appealing the denial of their refugee claim.

One in seven of those in homelessness shelters are children. Living in inadequate, crowded and unaffordable housing is associated with higher vulnerability to asthma and injury, an accelerated spread of communicable diseases, anxiety and insomnia, less physical exercise and diminished school performance.

Canada needs a good jobs strategy and decent wages: over 2 million workers are stuck in temporary employment.

Canada still needs a national childcare program. There are only enough regulated child care spaces to cover 25% of children aged 0 – 12 years.

Poverty discriminates against children in families that are lone female-led, racialized, immigrant and Indigenous or affected by disabilities. Marginalized families are at greater risk of living in poverty, leading to persistent social and economic inequality.

307,000 children visit food banks in a typical month, lacking access to adequate, safe, good-quality, nutritious food.

Government transfers prevent poverty: 712,000 additional children would live in poverty without transfers. However, Canada is trailing in public spending on family benefits, spending 1.18% of GDP compared with the OECD average of 2.14%.