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## **2017 Report Card Calls for Federal Leadership to Build a Poverty-Free Canada**

**OTTAWA** – As Canada’s 150th year since confederation closes, the federal government must seize the opportunity to usher in a new poverty-free era, according to Campaign 2000’s 2017 report card on child and family poverty. The new report calls for Canada’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy to outline a new social contract that responds to the needs of today’s families and lifts individuals and families out of poverty.

“With Canada’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) on the horizon, government must commit to reverse the effects of decades of austerity budgeting and finally prioritize the prevention and eradication of poverty in Canada,” says Anita Khanna, Campaign 2000 National Coordinator. “With 1.2 million children and families living in poverty, it’s clear that the social safety net is not adequately supporting families who face no choice but to piece together precarious work, struggle to afford quality housing and childcare and scramble to pack school lunches.

“New data show that children who are Indigenous, racialized, in families led by a female lone-parent and living with disabilities are in poverty in greater numbers. The federal government is committed to reducing poverty, but how far will it go? The PRS is a golden opportunity to move from the current patchwork towards the full transformation of Canada’s social safety net in order to support families and make poverty history.”

“Building a poverty-free Canada requires strong federal leadership that sets pan-Canadian standards to ensure adequate income supports and access to necessary services,” says Dr. Sid Frankel, Professor of Social Work at University of Manitoba. “The federal government provides provinces and territories with funding for income assistance programs and social services through the Canada Social Transfer. These programs leave the vast majority of children and families across Canada in poverty. With a staggering 450,000 children in families receiving income assistance across Canada, federal action to set enforceable standards - and lead by example - in stamping out poverty is required.”

The 2017 national report card, “A Poverty-Free Canada Requires Federal Leadership” provides a current snapshot of the depth and breadth of poverty among children and families, outlines how poverty stalls children’s progress and potential and proposes practical policy solutions. In the report, Campaign 2000 recognizes the government’s actions to date to improve income security and anticipates the release of the National Housing Strategy.

Actions on income security include introducing the Canada Child Benefit, the recent announcement of indexation as of 2018 and increasing funding for the Working Income Tax Benefit. The crucial next steps include enhancing employment options, improving access to health care services, addressing income inequality and bolstering immediate access to affordable, high-quality housing and childcare.

“The CCB provides important income support to help families buy healthy food and other essentials,” says Laurel Rothman, of the Campaign 2000 Steering Committee. “For the PRS to succeed in lifting families out of poverty, both income supports and services are required. Accessible, high-quality, regulated childcare is essential for mothers to get out the door in the morning to attend training programs that can improve their job prospects. Once she secures decent work, a mother will continue to need childcare to maintain her job and support her family. Campaign 2000 has always called for a universal system of childcare to support child development and enable parents, particularly mothers, to participate in the labour market and escape poverty.”

The release of the 2017 national report card comes on the same day as 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. “Clearly, eradicating poverty is a priority across the country,” adds Khanna. “With decades of research and policy solutions in hand, we need federal action guided by targets and timelines to kickstart immediately. We call for funding for a comprehensive PRS in the 2018 budget to reflect the government’s prioritization of poverty reduction.”

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Family Service Toronto coordinates Campaign 2000 - a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations working to end child and family poverty. For all of Campaign 2000's 2017 new report cards, visit <http://www.campaign2000.ca>

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## **BACKGROUNDER**

### **Key Findings from the 2017 National Report Card, *A Poverty-Free Canada Requires Federal Leadership.***

**Child poverty has increased since 1989:** from 15.8% to 17.4% today; 37.9% of First Nations live in poverty.

**Poverty discriminates against children in families that are lone female-led, racialized, immigrant and Indigenous or affected by disabilities.** One in four racialized children, one in three children of immigrants and two in five of children in lone-mother led families are in poverty, leading to persistent social and economic inequality.

**Poverty is higher among children under 6;** 18.8% at the national level, up to 43.9% in Nunavut.

**The Canada Child Benefit can be further improved 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.

**More families are becoming homeless.** Families stay in shelters twice as long as individuals and 89% of families in shelters are female led.

**Canada needs a good jobs strategy and decent wages:** The federal government should lead by example by instituting a \$15/hour minimum wage for workers in federally regulated industries.

**Canada still needs a national childcare program.** There are only enough regulated child care spaces to cover 25% of children aged 0 – 5 years old.

**One in six children in Canada are food insecure.** Lacking access to adequate, safe, good-quality, nutritious food due to financial constraints.

**Government transfers prevent poverty:** 745,000 additional children would live in poverty without transfers.



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