

14 October, 2019

Dear supporters of Campaign 2000,

Thank you for writing, for providing us with the opportunity to share the Green Party of Canada's position, and for your continued advocacy. Please find our response below.

Best regards,

Steve Parkinson  
Director of Policy  
Green Party of Canada

**1. Poverty as a priority We know that governments are faced by many issues and must set priorities. QUESTION: What priority would your government give to eliminating child and family poverty?**

Of all Canada's social problems, child poverty may be the most shameful. In 1989, the old-line political parties voted unanimously to end child poverty by the year 2000. Despite recent improvements, far too many Canadian children still grow up in poverty. Child poverty rates are especially high among Indigenous Peoples, single-parent households headed by women, and new Canadians. Canada now ranks a dismal 25th out of 38 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development in terms of relative child poverty rates.

We can eliminate child poverty in Canada. We must start by recommitting to a vision of Canada as a just society built around a progressive, fair, and compassionate social safety network. Unlike the old-line parties, the Green Party believes reducing child poverty is not just about expanding the middle class; we must undertake real structural change to tackle the root causes of poverty. The Green Party is committed to doing so.

**2. Poverty definition and measurement Canada's official poverty measure is the Market Basket Measure. It is an absolute measure of material deprivation that does not account for social exclusion, exposure to stressful environments and discrimination as well as the relative Low-Income Measure, which is more strongly related to poor health status and negative developmental outcomes. QUESTION: How would your government further define poverty and what poverty measure would it use?**

The Green Party recognizes that the Market Basket Measure has weaknesses and would consult further on strengthening poverty measurement.

**3. Poverty reduction strategy** It is important that Canada has a poverty reduction strategy. The national strategy needs more ambitious targets than reducing poverty by 50% in 12 years. It requires a clear investment of \$6 billion in the next budget, a comprehensive implementation plan and outcomes framework for policies and programs, and negotiated roles for provincial, territorial and municipal governments. **QUESTION: How would your government strengthen Canada's poverty reduction strategy?**

Greens believe reducing child poverty starts with a stronger commitment to guaranteeing that all families have the ability to provide for their children. Research has demonstrated that programs providing a universal basic income reduce expenditure on health care – since poverty is the single largest determinant of ill health – and the justice system, and increase school retention. Such programs are affordable, but the savings and costs of implementation are experienced in different orders of government. To proceed will require cooperation of each province, territory and Indigenous community through a vehicle such as the Council of Canadian Governments.

A Green government will support the model of collaborative federalism, working with and ensuring fair treatment for provinces, territories, municipalities and Indigenous Peoples by establishing a Council of Canadian Governments to set higher order policy priorities, with the goal of policy coherence to optimize public spending. It would include the federal government, provincial/territorial governments, representatives of the local order of government with large city mayors and smaller and rural municipalities, and Indigenous (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) governments. This is similar to one in place in Australia.

**4. Indigenous child and family poverty** Indigenous families suffer from shockingly higher poverty rates than other Canadian families, in general. The Government of Canada must authentically collaborate with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments and other Indigenous governance organizations to develop plans to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in Indigenous communities. It must advance the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and Calls to Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry. It must also comply with the rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal by providing adequate funding for child welfare services on reserve and ensure the full application of Jordan's Principle for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. **QUESTION: What action would your government take to eliminate Indigenous child and family poverty?**

A Green government will respect the holding of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for children who were taken from their homes on reserve. We have committed \$2 billion to compensate those affected, in line with the Tribunal's decision.

We will appoint a federal Children's Advocate, who will speak out on issues that often go otherwise unnoticed, such as the disproportionately large number of Indigenous children in foster care.

It is unacceptable that any child suffer due to bureaucratic disputes. The Green Party is committed to upholding Jordan's Principle in full, ensuring Indigenous people receive the health care they need without being delayed by bureaucratic disagreements over jurisdiction. A Green government, we will



respect the principle that the government of first contact will pay for the services and seek reimbursement later as needed.

A Green government will implement all recommendations of the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), which requires engagement across policy areas. We will work with Indigenous organizations to develop a national action plan to end violence against women, girls, and gender-diverse people. This will be complemented by an increase in access to shelters through increased investment in the Shelter Enhancement Program, providing more than 2,100 new and renovated spaces in first-stage shelters and hundreds of spaces in transition houses. Our national transportation strategy will also specifically address the need for affordable and accessible transit, as recommended in the MMIWG report.

We recognize that while a firm commitment is required from any government, policy solutions need to be developed collaboratively. Our renewed model of collaborative federalism under the Council of Canadian Governments, will provide a forum to discuss long-term solutions among different orders of government.

We look forward to working with First Nations to make nationwide improvements.

**5. Inadequacy of income support payments for families with children For families living in deep poverty the CCB needs to be supplemented by the Dignity Dividend, a GST credit top-up suggested by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' 2018 Alternative Federal Budget. Extra efforts are needed to ensure the CCB is accessed by families with higher poverty rates such as First Nations families on reserve, children whose parents have irregular immigration status and those in families receiving social assistance QUESTION: Exactly how would you increase the adequacy of income support payments to move families with children out of poverty?**

A Green government will establish a universal Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) program to replace the current array of income supports, such as disability payments, social assistance and income supplements for seniors. Payment would be set at a “livable” level for different regions of the country. The negotiation to implement a livable income across the country would take place through the Council of Canadian Governments. Unlike existing income support programs, additional income would not be clawed back. Those earning above a certain total income would pay the GLI back in taxes.

**6. Inaccessibility of high-quality early learning and childcare (ELCC) services for children living in low income families Early learning and childcare services are necessary to provide safe care while mothers work and to enhance the development of all children, but it is especially important in buffering the effects of poverty on child development. We recommend building on federal/provincial/territorial/Indigenous early learning and childcare frameworks and agreements by:**

- **making federal transfer funds conditional on provincial/territorial action plans using evidence based approaches to building accessible, affordable, high quality, inclusive ELCC systems;**



- **In 2019-20, transferring \$1 billion to provinces/territories/Indigenous communities to build these ELCC systems with the understanding that earmarked ELCC funds will grow by an additional \$1 billion each year;**
- **strengthening collaborative childcare system-building through key elements including a childcare workforce strategy, national ELCC legislation, a federal Secretariat and supporting the capacity of the childcare community.**

**QUESTION: How would your government go about enhancing access and the quality of early learning and childcare for children whose families live on low incomes within a universal system?**

Canada needs a plan – a road map to affordable child care for all children. A Green government will collaborate with provinces/territories, local communities, Indigenous communities and the child-care sector to ensure that a comprehensive short-, medium- and long-term policy road map – based on the principles of universality, affordability, quality, inclusivity and equity – finally becomes a reality.

Canada must dedicate additional resources to making a universal, affordable, early learning and child-care (ELCC) system a reality. It cannot occur without public funding. Canada needs an ELCC system that contributes to a green Canada. Thus, a Green Party government's child care plan will provide the early educator jobs that sustain local GREEN PARTY OF CANADA 2019 63 communities. It will also recognize that sparsely and unevenly available child-care services force parents to take out-of-their-way routes to child care and work, often by car. Green Party plans for child care take into account not only parents' convenience but also climate goals. Location of child care must reflect the diversity of family needs and be placed along existing public transit routes, including neighbourhood schools, other local buildings, workplaces and transportation hubs.

The best evidence suggests that ELCC is best situated within the context of other policies that support families and children. A Green Party government will follow the example of Quebec and other countries, improving and strengthening maternity/parental leave by making it more inclusive, more flexible and better paid. Well-designed ELCC is also fundamental to meeting broader equity and social justice goals, for fighting poverty, as a foundation for children's life-long learning, and as part of the backbone of a thriving society. Quality child care yields high social and economic returns in the short and long term by:

- Supporting women's workforce participation, education and training.
- Strengthening children's health, development and well-being in the early years to provide a strong foundation for learning and living in later years.
- Strengthening inclusion and respect for diversity for children with disabilities, diverse ethnic and racial groups, newcomers and disadvantaged Canadians.
- Countering Canada's slide towards being a more unequal society.

A Green Party government will immediately begin to ramp up federal child care funding to achieve the international benchmark of at least one per cent of GDP annually, adding an additional \$1 billion each year until this benchmark is reached with a mature ELCC system. We will eliminate GST on all construction costs related to child-care spaces.



**7. Limitations in the Canadian Social Transfer We recommend increasing funding for the Canada Social Transfer by \$4 billion and removing arbitrary growth restrictions to provide sufficient, stable and predictable funding that recognizes regional economic variations, and ensures that both federal and provincial governments are accountable for meeting their human rights obligations to provide adequate income support for all low income Canadians. This will require the development of minimum standards for income benefits and social services funded through the Transfer, which allow necessary flexibility to provinces and territories. As part of this, it is necessary to ensure that important income supplements are not deducted from social assistance benefits. Children in lone-parent families should retain child support payments, child-related Employment Insurance (EI) benefits should not be deducted from provincial income or disability benefits and the federal government should initiate binding agreements with provinces and territories to ensure no portion of the CCB is deducted. QUESTION: Exactly how would your government improve the Canada Social Transfer?**

The Green Party is committed to bringing in a Guaranteed Livable Income to provide adequate income support to all low income Canadians. However, changes to the Canadian Social Transfer could be pursued as a stop-gap measure. We would pursue evidence-based solutions negotiated through the newly established Council of Canadian Governments.

**8. Canada's labour market is not effective enough in decreasing poverty It is necessary for the federal government to focus on creating and sustaining high quality employment opportunities and restoring the minimum wage for federally regulated industries, to be set at \$15/hour and inflation-indexed annually. Employment insurance should be improved by reducing the number of qualifying hours to 360 and raising inadequate benefit levels. QUESTION: How will your government improve the performance of Canada's labour market in reducing poverty?**

The Green Party agrees with these positions and has committed in our platform to:

- Establish the federal minimum wage of \$15 per hour. Canada once had a national wage standard but it was removed by a previous Liberal government and in that time regressive wage policies – like training wages well below minimum wage – have been introduced in various provinces. Reinstating a federal minimum wage will create a wages floor for every Canadian no matter where they live or work.
- Work with the Council of Canadian Governments and Statistics Canada to set municipal minimum wages in accordance with the differential costs of living across the country

**9. Women, Indigenous Canadians, racialized Canadians, Canadians with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians experience discrimination and inequity in Canadian workplaces Discrimination contributes to high child and family poverty rates in these communities. The federal government should enact proactive strategies, including improved employment equity, in the public, non-profit and private sectors. QUESTION: How will your government work to end workplace discrimination?**

There has been considerable progress in the ongoing campaign for LGBTQI2+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer, intersex, Two Spirit, plus) equality in Canada with significant and rapid changes to



legislation on same-sex benefits and pensions and prohibitions against harassment and discrimination. But there is still a lot to do.

A Green government will:

- Repeal all federal laws and policies that are discriminatory on the grounds of sexuality, including Section 159 of the Criminal Code, and that refer to intersex reality as a defect, aberration, or by any other derogatory terms.
- Establish a funding program within Health Canada to support community-based organizations offering targeted LGBTQI2+ youth's mental health and well-being programs, including suicide prevention, peer support, coming out, and counselling.
- Fund community-driven education and awareness programs that lead to a greater understanding of intersex realities and the diversity of sexualities and gender identities, and referral programs to direct for trans\*, non-binary and Two Spirit people to appropriate services.
- End the discriminatory blood ban.
- Ban and condemn the practice of medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children.
- Ban and condemn the practice of conversion therapy, in all its forms.
- Ensure access to comprehensive sexual health care and gender affirming health care, including hormone treatments and blockers, and gender confirmation surgeries.

**10. Many low-income families live in substandard unaffordable housing We recommend enhancing the National Housing Co-investment Fund with an additional \$1 billion in grant money to provide between 10,000 and 15,000 new units annually. We also recommend an allocation of \$1 billion/year to a new supportive housing initiative for vulnerable populations, and an allocation of \$1.5 billion for the immediate implementation of the Canada Housing Benefit. In addition, we recommend the federal government accelerate work to co-develop the Indigenous Housing Strategy, recognizing the critical need for adequate housing both on- and off-reserve. Question: What would your government do to enhance the availability, affordability and quality of housing for poor families with children?**

Federal incentives for purpose-built rental housing were eliminated in the 1970s. During decades of encouraging home ownership, federal support for co-ops, rental housing, social housing and supportive housing has languished. We now face a national shortage of affordable housing and as a result, a growing problem of homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Liberal government's National Housing Strategy does not address immediate core housing needs across Canada. Funding for affordable housing will roll out over 15 years but it is needed now. The first-time home buyer grant has been criticized for exacerbating housing speculation and commodification.

It is past time that the government of Canada moves to ensure that everyone has access to safe, affordable housing. The Green Party will enhance the federal government's contribution to meeting the housing needs of Canadians through direct investments, changes to tax policies, and lending and granting programs, putting the government's focus where it is urgently needed.

**DIRECT INVESTMENTS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**



A Green government will:

Legislate housing as a legally protected fundamental human right for all Canadians and permanent residents.

Appoint a Minister of Housing to strengthen the National Housing Strategy so that it meets the needs for affordable housing that are unique to each province, and oversee its implementation in collaboration with provincial ministers. This recognizes that housing is provincial jurisdiction. The target would be 25,000 new and 15,000 rehabilitated units annually for the next 10 years.

Increase the National Housing Co-investment Fund by \$750 million for new builds, and the Canada Housing Benefit by \$750 million for rent assistance for 125,000 households.

Create a Canada Co-op Housing Strategy that would update the mechanisms for financing co-op housing, in partnership with CMHC, co-op societies, credit unions and other lenders.

#### FINANCING

Include new and existing housing as eligible infrastructure for funding purposes, allowing the Canada Infrastructure Bank to support provincial and municipal housing projects.

Provide financing to non-profit housing organizations and cooperatives to build and restore quality, energy efficient housing for seniors, people with special needs and low-income families.

Restore tax incentives for building purpose-built rental housing and provide tax credits for gifts of lands, or of land and buildings, to community land trusts to provide affordable housing.

Remove the “deemed” GST whenever a developer with empty condo units places them on the market as rentals.

Re-focus the core mandate of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) on supporting the development of affordable, non-market and cooperative housing, as opposed to its current priority of supporting Canadian lenders to de-risk investment in housing ownership. With many housing markets demonstrably overvalued, and home ownership rates among the highest in the world, individual home ownership should not be the preoccupation of a public service housing agency and a national housing strategy.

Change the legislation that prevents Indigenous organizations from accessing financing through CMHC to invest in self-determined housing needs.

**11. Publicly insured services under the Canada Health Act do not include all goods and services required for health care We recommend implementation of an enhanced Medicare program that includes national universal pharmacare, preventive and restorative dental care and various rehabilitation services. QUESTION: How and when would your government enhance Medicare?**

Expand the single-payer Medicare model to include Pharmacare for everyone as well as free dental care for low-income Canadians. These measures have been fully costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer and budgeted for in our platform costing document, starting in 2020-2021.

**12. Inequality of income and assets in Canada is high with many aspects increasing This leads to many negative health and social outcomes. Part of the solution is to continue to restore fairness to the personal income taxation system and to re-introducing the principle of taxation based on ability to pay. QUESTION: What will your government do to reduce income and asset inequality for families with children?**

In a Green economy, everyone contributes their fair share to the collective wellbeing. Today, the growing gap between rich and poor indicates that something is wrong. The burden of taxation is not fairly distributed. A Green government will undertake root-and-branch tax reform:

- Establish an arm's length Federal Tax Commission to analyze the tax system for fairness and accessibility, based on the principle of progressive taxation. The last Tax Commission was in the 1960s, so reform is long overdue. This will include recommending an appropriate way to tax cryptocurrencies.
- Close tax loopholes that benefit the wealthy. The stock option loophole is one of the most expensive and unfair tax loopholes. Executives with stock options as part of their remuneration package only pay half the rate of income tax on this portion of their income. The capital gains loophole allows people and corporations to only add half of their capital gains to their taxable income, while those with only employment income pay taxes on their entire income. Over 90 percent of the value of this tax break goes to the richest 10 percent, and about 85 percent goes to the top one percent.
- End offshore tax dodging by taxing funds hidden in offshore havens and requiring companies to prove that their foreign affiliates are actual functioning businesses for tax purposes. Provide adequate funding to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to collect tax revenue hiding in offshore tax havens. Several Auditors General have recommended that the CRA should focus on people who hide vast wealth, rather than conduct random audits of ordinary Canadians.
- Apply a corporate tax on transnational e-commerce companies doing business in Canada by requiring the foreign vendor to register, collect and remit taxes where the product or service is consumed. The e-commerce sector – giants like Netflix, Facebook, Amazon, Google, and Uber command a significant share of the Canadian market but pay virtually no tax.
- Impose a financial transactions tax of 0.5 per cent in the finance sector as France has done since 2012.
- Eliminate all fossil fuel subsidies, including payments and tax write-offs, valued at several billion dollars annually. These include the accelerated capital cost allowance on liquefied natural gas (LNG) and tax write-offs for oil and gas wells, coal mining exploration and development, flow-through share deductions for coal, oil and gas projects, and oil and gas properties. Despite a promise 10 years ago to eliminate subsidies to fossil fuel companies, these subsidies have actually expanded for fracking and LNG development.
- Increase the federal corporate tax rate from 15 to 21 per cent to bring it into line with the federal rate in the United States, our biggest trading partner. Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank





of Canada, said corporations are holding “hundreds of billions of dollars in their bank accounts,” rather than reinvesting in the economy. This dead money needs to be mobilized for the transition to a green, renewable economy.

- Maintain the current level of taxation for small business.
- Charge a five per cent surtax on commercial bank profits. Commercial banks accumulate huge profits – \$43.15 billion for the five largest banks in 2018 alone. 14 Credit unions, caisses populaires and co-ops will be exempt.
- Prohibit Canadian businesses from deducting the cost of advertising on foreign-owned sites such as Google and Facebook which now account for 80 percent of all spending on advertising Canada.
- Eliminate the 50 per cent corporate meals and entertainment expense deduction, which includes season tickets and private boxes at sporting events.
- Apply a one per cent tax on net (family) wealth above \$20 million.

