

Bill C-12 provides some necessary future relief, misses current crisis for seniors

TORONTO – Campaign 2000 is pleased that Minister Khera has introduced Bill C-12 *An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (Guaranteed Income Supplement)*. This will surely give low income seniors a sense of relief and security that pandemic benefits they accessed, and were entitled to, in a time of crisis will not negatively impact their GIS in upcoming tax years.

However, it is of utmost importance to address the current and urgent issue of their GIS payments that have already been clawed back. “For months, seniors have been trying to find ways to make ends meet with the sudden loss of their GIS, and the situation gets more dire by the day” said Leila Sarangi, National Director of Campaign 2000, a national anti-poverty coalition. “They are borrowing from family, neighbours, churches, or going into debt by accessing lines of credit or advances from payday lenders. They are forced to go without food, medications and dental care. Their mental and physical health is deteriorating by the day, and in worst cases we’ve heard of seniors losing their lives to suicide and illness.”

Campaign 2000 has been raising the concern of claw backs to income supplements for low- and moderate-income individuals and families who accessed pandemic benefits. On Monday, February 7, the group organized a [day of action](#) to raise awareness of the hardships seniors are facing and to urge the government to fast track an emergency payment. They also called for the creation of an emergency fund to help seniors with housing costs.

The clawbacks from benefit programs intended to help those who are financially vulnerable has left many in impossible and dangerous circumstances.

“This situation runs counter to the government’s principle of leaving no one behind in their pandemic response, it runs counter to poverty reduction initiatives, and counter to a feminist approach to governance and policy-making” said Sarangi. “Unfortunately, some of the most vulnerable in our communities are suffering as a result of a policy error, through no fault of their own. They cannot wait any longer for the promised repayment to GIS clawbacks.”

Included in Bill C-12 must be the release of immediate interim payment of \$2500 to each senior who has lost at least that amount, and the creation of a \$100 million emergency housing fund to help claw back victims stay housed, or to be re-housed for those who have lost theirs.

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Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, pan-Canadian network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working to end child and family poverty, hosted by Family Service Toronto. To download 2021 report cards or for more information, please visit <http://www.campaign2000.ca>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

National Contacts:

Leila Sarangi, National Director of Campaign 2000, 647-393-1097, leilasa@familyservicetoronto.org