

Ending poverty in Canada must go beyond Canada Child Benefit

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EXCERPTS

As part of their Fall Fiscal Statement, the Government of Canada announced its intention today to increase the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) rate by indexing the benefit to keep pace with the cost of living, touting it as a key tool for poverty reduction.

Canada Without Poverty (CWP) applauds the government's announcement to increase the CCB in 2018 as a measure that could positively impact those living in poverty. At the same time, CWP joins other civil society organizations who have concerns that serious gaps remain for the benefit to reach its full potential.

Critically, the CCB is not protected against retrogressive measures or "clawbacks" by provincial and territorial governments through conditions; this means that people who qualify for the program because they live in poverty could be penalized if they are already receiving other assistance. Additionally, the CCB is only accessible to people in Canada who file taxes, which has already resulted in thousands of dollars in unclaimed benefits, particularly in First Nations communities.

CWP also remains concerned at the reliance on the CCB as the government's primary mechanism to address Canada's childcare crisis. Canada's public support for young children and their families is the weakest among the world's rich countries and, with the exception of Québec, the country lags behind in ensuring access to affordable childcare spaces. In the city of Toronto, infant care can be as much as \$1,649 per month and over 14,000 families are on the waitlist for subsidized childcare spots.

"The CCB is one tool among many to tackle poverty in Canada, however, it must be implemented alongside a plan for universal and publicly-funded childcare," said CWP's Legal Education and Outreach Coordinator, Michèle Biss. "It's critical that this increase doesn't let the government off the hook to address our childcare crisis, which keeps people - particularly single mothers - out of the workforce and in poverty."

As part of the Dignity for All campaign, CWP has called for a national anti-poverty plan that comprehensively addresses policy areas such as early childhood care and education, jobs and employment, housing, and food security. Indexing the CCB to inflation is a step in the right direction and ensures the longevity of rates offered in the benefit, but this must be implemented alongside other comprehensive and rights-based anti-poverty measures.

"The federal government must provide national leadership if we are going to meet our Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty by 2030," said Harriett McLachlan, CWP's Deputy Director. "Civil society has long called for an adequately-funded and comprehensive anti-poverty plan that respects our international human rights obligations and commitments, and now it's time for the government to be bold by taking this on."

About Canada Without Poverty

Canada Without Poverty (CWP) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, and charitable organization dedicated to ending poverty in Canada. The organization was created in 1971 as an outcome of the Poor People's Conference, a national gathering of low-income individuals, under the name National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO). For over 40 years, CWP has been championing the rights of individuals experiencing poverty and marginalization through research, awareness-building campaigns, public policy development, and educational programming. See more at: www.cwp-csp.ca [3].

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