

# 2017 report card calls for Federal leadership to build a poverty-free Canada <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

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."

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> <sup>[3]</sup>

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

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