

Women and children still last: No thank you, Mr. Flaherty! ^[1]

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Text of the press release:

This federal budget doesn't even remotely make a dent in Canada's abysmal rate of child and family poverty. The Throne Speech claims that "Canada is the best place in the world to raise a family." Sorry, Mr. Prime Minister, Canada is nowhere near the podium! says Campaign 2000, the national coalition of over 120 partners working to end child and family poverty in Canada. There is no new support for our most vulnerable families - especially the 637,000 low income children and their mothers - who feel the double burden of job loss at the workplace and at home.

"Going into this budget, Campaign 2000 looked for a mix of social infrastructure and income supports to prevent further poverty and to reduce our 9.5% rate of child and family poverty. We were looking for expanded eligibility for EI, increases to worker tax credits and the Canada Child Tax Benefit along with public expenditures on social infrastructure including early childhood education and child care services (ECEC) and social housing," said Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator. "But this budget contains none of these measures."

What's missing is an enhancement to the Canada Child Tax Benefit the will ensure that parents working full time throughout the year can lift their families out of poverty and that those unable to work can live in dignity.

"It's wrong-headed that this budget aims for the "new measures Canada needs for success in the modern economy" yet does not include any funds for early childhood education and childcare (ECEC)," said Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, a partner in Campaign 2000. "Tinkering with enhancing the UCCB for sole support lone parents is far from being a substitute for a system of accessible high quality ECEC."

Since 2006, expansion of childcare has slowed, with spaces for less than 20% of zero - five year olds if parents can afford the fees which range from \$600 - \$1,200 per month. Parents cannot work or get training if they can't find reliable, affordable child care. Low- and modest-income families, Aboriginal and rural families, parents of infants and children with disabilities are especially excluded. Across the country growth in provincial child care funding has slowed. In Ontario, a child care crisis is looming as budget shortfalls threaten parents, especially low income parents with loss of subsidies and spaces.

"We, too, are disappointed to see no mention of a national child care program nor any improvements to income supports especially for lone parents. We had also aimed for enhanced funding for the 120 friendship centres across the country that serve Aboriginal families off-reserves," commented Peter Dinsdale of the National Association of Friendship Centres. "We welcome the additional funds for residential school survivors and look forward to the details regarding improvements for child and family support programs and education in First Nations' communities," he added.

"This short-sighted budget recognizes that the demographic shift presents a challenge to all of us but neglects to support measures to improve the prospects for low- and modest-income children and their parents, most of whom are in the labour market. We need every child to be the best that he or she can become," said Sid Frankel, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and Campaign 2000 Steering Committee.

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