



Toronto – Ontario’s 2016 Budget signals some renewed attention on poverty reduction for children and families with investments and proposed policies in the areas of housing, social assistance and post-secondary education. Long-term, dedicated investments are now needed to help families keep up with the skyrocketing costs of living and to wipe out child and family poverty for good.

Ontario Campaign 2000 and others have long called on the Ontario government to stop deducting child support from lone parents on social assistance. The network is delighted by this budget’s announcement that there will be movement to end the deductions in 2016. “This change can’t come soon enough for children in families on social assistance who live in poverty. We urge government to proceed by allowing families to keep 100% of their child support, as British Columbia has recently done and as parents and advocates in Ontario have called for,” says Anita Khanna, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000.

Long term investments in income security are needed to meet government’s commitment to reducing child and family poverty. Budget 2016’s indexation of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) is important but without annual increases to the base amount, the OCB’s ability to cushion families dealing with climbing food and utility costs will erode. “A \$163/year increase in the OCB is required to reduce child poverty and support families. In addition, we are seeking confirmation from the Ontario government that the coming increase in federal child benefits through the Canada Child Benefit will improve incomes of families on social assistance and will not be subject to any type of claw back,” adds Khanna.

Ontario Campaign 2000 notes the 1.5% increase in OW and ODSP rates and the additional \$25/month for single people. We continue to stand firm in our call for significant increases in rates to address income adequacy and end what is legislated poverty in Ontario. It is disappointing that family members of people with disabilities on ODSP will not receive an increase in the amounts that support them.

Unfortunately, Budget 2016 ignores the growing momentum and consensus among low and middle income families that universal, accessible and high quality childcare is essential to their lives and livelihood. It is disheartening that Ontario’s sky high fees, lengthy wait lists, inadequate subsidies and dearth of spaces will remain the reality for families. Ontario has the highest childcare fees in Canada – much higher than university tuition – making it nearly impossible for low and middle income families to pursue work and higher education. With a willing federal partner committed to action on childcare, Ontario must step up right away with significant action.

Ontario Campaign 2000 welcomes positive movements in the area of housing and post-secondary education. “Budget 2016’s \$178 million in housing supports for vulnerable people are much needed,” notes Khanna. “The housing benefit pilot for those fleeing domestic violence and increased investment in the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) are very promising. Finally, we see the provision of non-repayable grants to cover the costs of average tuition for students in families with incomes below \$50,000 as visionary. This can remove the debt wall that looms over the aspirations and potential of students in low income and provide them with a direct pathway to opportunity.”