



ERADICATE CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

Media Release

July 14, 2014

TORONTO – Re-released today, Budget 2014 holds promise for more effective poverty reduction initiatives in Ontario through investments that will improve the lives and well-being of Ontarians in poverty. Ontario Campaign 2000 calls on government to improve social assistance rates and rules and to create a system of affordable childcare and housing to create stability for children and families.

The investments outlined in the budget are promising for Ontario because public spending is an efficient and effective way to boost the economy, particularly in periods of slow growth. Among the investments is a commitment to index the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) to inflation starting in July 2015." Since 2007, the OCB has allowed families to provide children with essential items like healthy food, diapers and clothing. As the cost of these items rise with inflation, indexation will help families receiving the OCB to afford items that no child should be without," said Anita Khanna of Ontario Campaign 2000. "Ontario Campaign 2000 is committed to the eradication of deep poverty in Ontario and will continue to call on all three parties to make increases in the OCB of \$100/year in addition to investing in indexation."

The budget includes an important plan to expand access to health benefits, starting with low income children and then expanded to adults. According to Khanna, "Parents working contract jobs or for minimum wage rarely have access to extended health benefits and are forced to choose between feeding themselves or paying for prescription glasses for their children. Expanding access to prescription drugs, assistive devices, vision care and mental health services will help level the playing field for children living in poverty. We urge government to begin this program, for children and all other Ontarians on low income, as soon as possible."

Ontario Campaign 2000 commends Budget 2014's revenue raising efforts through the taxation system. "In order to eradicate poverty and reduce income inequality, we need to restore progressivity to the taxation system and to dedicate revenue streams and consistent investments in effective poverty reduction programs," said Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000. "As Premier Wynne has declared, the federal government must come to the table with a serious commitment to providing resources to the provinces in order to strengthen progress in reducing and preventing poverty."

There is more to be done in the area of social assistance as Budget 2014's rate increases for single people on Ontario Works signal a step in the right direction but continue to fall short of lifting recipients out of deep poverty. Important rule changes are also still required. "Arbitrary rules that claw back the full increase of the OCB and child support payments from some families on social assistance are not addressed in this budget. It is unfair to punish children for their family's source of income, and we encourage immediate action to address these rules," said Khanna.

The budget takes important first steps on the issues of childcare and housing. "Increasing the wages of childcare workers recognizes the vital role they play in providing high quality early childhood education and care services in Ontario," said Khanna. "We also commend the commitment to fund the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative at an additional \$42 million a year, as demanded by various advocacy groups and people living on low income since January 2013. Funding for the Investment in Affordable Housing Program is also important, stepping up to the Federal government's offer to match funding with the provinces," she added.

The next step for families is to create a comprehensive childcare policy framework that will deliver affordable, high quality, universally accessible, high quality services so that parents can access training, education and employment

opportunities. In order to address housing affordability, Ontario needs to invest in building new housing and maintaining aging existing units.

“We are pleased that poverty reduction is a priority for this government and will continue to work with people in low income to realize the goal of poverty eradication in Ontario,” said Khanna.

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