



END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY

Media Release

April 24, 2015

Toronto –Ontario’s 2015 Budget lacks significant investments in the infrastructure required to reduce child and family poverty in the province. Budget 2015 states an intention to build on the province’s commitments to poverty reduction but it falls short of making the investments in income supports, childcare, housing and extended health benefits that will improve the day to day lives of families in low and modest income today.

“This budget reaffirms commitments made in Budget 2014 and in September’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, but there is little new hope offered to the over 550,000 families still faced with the impossible choice of paying the rent or feeding the kids,” notes Anita Khanna, National Coordinator of Campaign 2000. “As of July 1, 2015, families who receive the maximum Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) amount will receive an additional \$26/child/year. Inflationary increases are important, but without greater investments in the OCB, families in poverty will fall further behind. In the face of soaring income inequality and persistent poverty, Ontario Campaign 2000 calls for a \$100 annual increase to the OCB to help low and moderate income families keep pace with their neighbours.”

Budget 2015 makes small steps in the area of social assistance, but urgent action is required to end poverty among recipients. The announced rate increase of 1% is below the rate of inflation, while the top up to single OW recipients does little to enable recipients to keep up with the cost of living in Ontario in 2015. Parents and advocates calling for an end to the unjust claw back of child support payments from the income of single parents on social assistance will be disappointed by inaction on this rule change. “One in five children in Ontario lives in poverty. It is absurd that child support provided by a parent and intended to improve a child’s quality of life is deducted from family income and that the child is left worse off as a result. This rule unfairly punishes children based on their family’s source of income,” says Khanna. “British Columbia has recently stopped clawing back child support from people on income support. Ontario needs to show leadership and recognize the rights of children and parents on assistance immediately if the province is serious about meeting its child poverty reduction target.”

Investments in childcare are a step in the right direction but more action is required to establish and stabilize the comprehensive strategy of affordable, high quality publicly funded childcare that Ontario families need. This budget’s support for youth through the expansion of the Youth Action Plan is a welcome investment that is much needed in facing high levels of unemployment and limited opportunities through

“Budget 2015’s modest investments do little more than hold the line on poverty reduction programs while children and families in poverty await actions that will turn the tide. Government should attach targets and timelines to its poverty reduction commitments immediately in order to make poverty history in Ontario,” added Khanna.