

MEDIA RELEASE

Ending Poverty Is Not Negotiable in Election 2018
Urgent Action Needed to Address Child and Family Poverty Rates

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

TORONTO – Ending poverty for almost half a million children and their families should be a key platform for all political parties heading into next spring’s provincial election, says Ontario Campaign 2000 in its annual review of the state of child and family poverty in the province.

“We need to hold all parties accountable to provide concrete poverty reduction initiatives within their 2018 platforms”, says Jessica Mustachi, Ontario Campaign 2000 Co-ordinator on release of their 2017 report card which outlines a comprehensive plan for eliminating child and family poverty across the province. “There has been slight progress in reducing the rate of child and family poverty, however moving forward, more concrete steps are needed,” adds Mustachi.

One in six (17.2 per cent) of children under 18 live in poverty in the province, according to the report. Rates of child poverty increase exponentially for children who are Indigenous, racialized, recent immigrants and for female lone parent families. Almost one in two (49.1 per cent) of children under 18 who are recent immigrants and arrived between 2011 and 2016 are living in poverty in Ontario.

“You come to Canada thinking you will have a better future, but after years of working you are still struggling,” says Malka Paracha, a parent of five children. “How does the government expect families to survive on such low earnings, and be able to pay for food and rent? It’s just not possible, especially when you have a family.”

“A person’s income is a key determinant of their health. Far too many families and individuals still struggle to make ends meet. If the government is serious about lifting people out of poverty, significant increases to social assistance rates are immediately needed. These increases must be indexed to the cost of living in the same way the government is doing with the minimum wage,” says Doris Grinspun, Chief Executive Officer of the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO).

“The government must address the systemic inequities that result in high rates of poverty amongst different groups in the province,” says Mustachi. “No one moves to Ontario with a dream that their children will have a one-in-two chance of living in poverty. We must ensure that the government takes significant action now to address these disparities through policies that will address the systemic factors causing such high rates of poverty for some children.”

“Heading into the 2018 election, we must remember that in 2009 all parties supported the passage of the Poverty Reduction Act,” notes Mustachi. “Ontarians expect government to take bold steps forward to ensure all children and families can thrive. This can only be done by creating a strong foundation built on sound policy solutions and adequate funding commitments that are targeted towards ending child and family poverty.” As the costs of basic necessities including housing, food and

Family Service Toronto co-ordinates Campaign 2000 - a non-partisan coalition of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations working to end child and family poverty.

www.campaign2000.ca www.ontariocampaign2000.ca

child care continue to climb, families need government action. Building a strong foundation includes prioritizing the provision of safe, affordable and good quality housing; the creation of a universal, affordable child care system; the provision of secure, quality jobs with stable incomes; and the development of an income security system that lifts people out of poverty.

The Ontario report card contains specific recommendations aimed at eradicating child and family poverty in the province. These include raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr for all workers, creating a universal affordable child care system, acting on the Income Security Roadmap for Change report, collecting and reporting disaggregated data and increasing funding for the repair and maintenance of social housing units. By creating stronger foundations to support families, eradicating child and family poverty is possible. As Mustachi emphasizes, “we must ensure that in the 2018 election, all parties commit to creating and funding the policies and programs needed to end child and family poverty in the province. Ending poverty is not negotiable for Ontarians. All families and children deserve not only to live free from poverty but also to thrive.”

Ontario Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, provincial network of over 70 organizations working collaboratively to end child and family poverty. It is affiliated with its national counterpart Campaign 2000, a non-partisan coalition of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations co-ordinated by Family Service Toronto. The Ontario report’s release takes place in coordination with the 2017 National Report Card and reports from partners in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. Visit www.ontariocampaign2000.ca for more information.

- 30 -

Porte-parole français disponible

To arrange an interview with any of these speakers or a parent with lived experience, please contact Jessica Mustachi.

Ontario Report Card Contact (English and French)

Jessica Mustachi – Ontario Coordinator, Campaign 2000, 416-595-9230 x241, JessicaMu@familyservicetoronto.org

National Report Card Contacts (English and French)

Anita Khanna – National Coordinator, Campaign 2000, 416-788-3439 (cell), AnitaKH@familyservicetoronto.org

Liyu Guo – Campaign 2000, 416-595-9230 x244 (work) or 416-624-1885 (cell), LiyuGuo@familyservicetoronto.org

BACKGROUND:

Key Findings from the 2017 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario, *Ending Child and Family Poverty Is Not Negotiable: Building Stronger Foundations for Ontario Families*:

- 1 in 6 Children under 6 (162, 240) and under 18 (475,230) live in poverty in Ontario
- Child poverty reduced from 29.1% to 17.2% as a result of government transfers
- 28.7% of lone-parent families live in poverty
- Depth of low income for a lone parent with two children is \$8,662 and \$11,012 for a couple with one child.
- 49.1% of recent immigrant (2011-2016) children, 29.5% of Indigenous children, 26.3% of racialized children live in poverty.
- 14% of youth aged 15-24 were unemployed (Sept 2016-Sept 2017)
- 36% of lone parent families spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs
- Tuition fees have increased 3.7% for undergraduate students and 2% for graduate students in Ontario

Family Service Toronto co-ordinates Campaign 2000 - a non-partisan coalition of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations working to end child and family poverty.

www.campaign2000.ca

www.ontariocampaign2000.ca

