

May 9, 2017

Dear Mr. Ford, Ms. Horwath, Mr. Schreiner and Ms. Wynne,

Ontario Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, provincial coalition of over 70 partners that has been tracking progress, or lack thereof, against child and family poverty since 1997. We are putting together a short analysis of where the four parties stand on poverty reduction and inequality. Evidence shows that investing in the success of children and families today is good for all of us in the long-term. It creates the kind of fair society that we can all feel proud of, where everyone belongs and has an opportunity to contribute. It leads to a healthier population, safer communities and reduced costs for healthcare and social services down the road. And it drives a resilient, productive workforce where all hands are on deck to move Ontario forward.

That is why we are looking for all parties to show vision, leadership and a concrete commitment to action. We will release our analysis in advance of the election to inform debate on an issue that is important to all Ontarians.

We are looking for your position—in as clear and specific terms as possible—in response to these questions:

1. In 2009, all parties voted unanimously to pass the *Poverty Reduction Act*. The Act requires public consultation and development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy by government every five years. Will your party introduce a multi-year Poverty Reduction Strategy with targets and timelines to lift children and families out of poverty? What specifically will your party do?
2. From diapers, healthy food and extracurricular opportunities, families face significant costs to provide their children with the best start in life. Will your party introduce further increases to the Ontario Child Benefit to help families support their children's health and development? What specifically will your party do?
3. Working full time, all year should never leave anyone in poverty. Workers caring for a sick child should never have to choose between parenting and a pay cheque. Will your party raise Ontario's minimum wage to \$15/hour on January 1<sup>st</sup>? Will you increase the number of paid sick days from two days and enforce the protection of vulnerable workers? What specifically will your party do?
4. Social assistance incomes are well below the cost of living in Ontario. These low incomes force people to rely on food banks and compromise their health in substandard housing. Will your party adopt the recommendations of the Income Security Roadmap for Change report and its plan for transforming income security in Ontario - starting with a significant increase to basic OW and ODSP rates and moving to a standard flat rate structure? What specifically will your party do?

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5. It is increasingly difficult for low-income families to find safe, affordable housing, especially if there are family members with special needs. What specifically will your party do to get more low-income households into stable, long-term homes? Will your party support the construction of new social housing where low-income tenants pay no more than 30% of their total household income on rent? What specifically will your party do?
6. Many families in Ontario face childcare fees that are as high as a second mortgage payment. Will your party commit to making child care more affordable by funding child care programs instead of individuals and putting in place low fees or no fees for parents? What specifically will your party do?
7. Children in families that face discrimination in our society live in poverty in greater numbers – nearly half of children in recent immigrant families are in low income. Will your party introduce targeted strategies to support groups at higher risk of poverty, including women, single parents, racialized and Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ2S+ communities? What specifically will your party do?
8. Research shows that child poverty is a leading cause of poor health and health inequities that can last a lifetime. Will your party expand pharmacare so that everyone has access to affordable prescription drugs? Will your party expand public dental programs so that everyone has access to oral health care? What specifically will your party do?

We would appreciate receiving your response by 5:00 pm on Friday May 18.

Please let me know if you have any questions. On behalf of our 70 partners, please accept my thanks for your time to respond. Addressing poverty and inequality is fundamental to the success of all Ontarians and the prosperity of our province.

Sincerely,



Anita Khanna

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and Director, Social Action and Community Building  
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