



END CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA

Submission to the Standing Committee on
Finance & Economic Affairs
Pre-Budget Hearings
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Campaign 2000 is a national, non-partisan network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working together to end child and family poverty in Canada.

Ontario Campaign 2000 is a provincial partner with 67 member organizations across the province (members listed in Appendix 1). www.campaign2000.ca

Introduction

- Ontario C2000 commends the Ontario government for taking leadership by developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008 with the target to cut child poverty by 25% by 2013.
- Despite the tight fiscal situation the Ontario government has made some smart investments in programs that support Ontario families: full day kindergarten for 4 & 5yr olds, the Ontario Child Benefit, affordable housing, and stepping up in last year's budget to save over 8,000 subsidized child care spaces.
- But child poverty rates in Ontario are rising because of the recession and the tattered state of our social safety nets: social assistance and EI. The latest Statistics Canada numbers tell us that in 2008 more than 1 in every 6 children in Ontario lived in poverty (Low Income Measure After Tax). That was before the full brunt of the recession hit.
- We know that smart government policy does make a difference. Ontario's child poverty rate would have been 40% higher without government transfer programs. Public investments to prevent and reduce poverty are key to Ontario's economic recovery.
- We need the Ontario government to step up investments to tackle poverty – or else the government target to cut child poverty by 25% by 2013 will not be met.

Recommendations:

- We are pleased that the government is following through on the promise to undertake a Social Assistance review. But people on **social assistance** are struggling now on extremely low incomes –a single person receives only \$592/month. As an interim measure we call for an increase to rates of \$100/month for adults.
- We call on the government to make the **short term rule changes** to social assistance that were recommended by the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council in February 2010. These include: increase asset limits; extend asset exemptions to registered savings plans; allow friends and family to give Ontario Works (OW) recipients casual gifts; treat EI benefits as earnings for people on ODSP; extend OW eligibility to people disqualified from OSAP; charge social assistance rent scale to OW/ ODSP recipients with higher earnings; retain eligibility for recipients using windfalls to reimburse government; do not reduce assistance for sharing accommodation; do not treat loans as income; change OW suspensions for non –participation; do not stop payments to dependent children leaving school; low parents to keep partial child support; and increase medical transportation rates.
- We call for a new **Ontario Housing Benefit** that will help low income tenants pay the rent, so they don't have to turn to food bank charities to eat. A new monthly payment for eligible low income tenants, a Housing Benefit would help make existing rental housing affordable by reducing the gap between high rents and tenant incomes.

- We call for new funding in the next budget for **construction of new affordable homes**. The Province should make a significant down-payment on a 10-yr affordable housing strategy by providing funding for 8,000 - 10,000 new units of affordable housing, responding to locally determined needs. Ontario should contribute in 2011 at least the same amount of funding as in the previous two years -approximately \$45 million - to extend the Affordable Housing Program, matching expected federal contributions. Ontario should commit to this funding annually for the next three years.
- New provincial funding is needed to **stabilize the child care system** while full day early learning is being implemented. Without funding in the 2011 budget, child care fees will rise by 15 -30%. Child care centres will experience a wave of closures and staff will leave community child care programs for kindergarten programs in the schools. We support the call of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care for the Provincial Government to invest \$100 million this year and to work with the early learning and child care community to develop a new funding model for child care that makes child care affordable and raises the wages of early childhood educators.
- We ask that the government meet your commitment to increase the **Ontario Child Benefit** to \$125/child/month. We call for an **increase to the minimum wage** to \$11/hour in 2011 with indexation.

Ontario Campaign 2000 Partners:

Ontario Social Development Council (Toronto), Interfaith Social Assistance Review Coalition (Waterloo), Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (Toronto), Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (Toronto), Ontario Association of Social Workers (Toronto), Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services (Toronto), Children's Mental Health Ontario (Toronto), Ontario Public Health Association (Toronto), Ontario Federation of Labour (Toronto), Ontario Public Service Employees Union (Toronto), Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (Toronto), Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (Toronto), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (Toronto), United Steelworkers of America, District 6 (Toronto), Ontario Association of Family Resource Programs (Toronto), Ontario Association of Food Banks (Toronto), Provincial Council of Women of Ontario (Niagara-on-the-Lake), The Community Social Planning Council (Toronto), Children's Aid Society of Toronto/Metro Campaign 2000 (Toronto), Family Service Association of Toronto (Toronto), Our Kids Our Future (Toronto), South Asian Family Support Services (Toronto), Community Development Halton (Burlington), Social Planning Council of Peel (Mississauga), Peel Poverty Action Group (Mississauga); Peterborough Social Planning Council (Peterborough), Durham Child Poverty Task Force (Ajax), 905-Area Faith Community Leaders; Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (Hamilton); Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton (Ottawa), Ottawa-Carleton CPAG (Ottawa), Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton (Ottawa); Hastings & Prince Edward Legal Services (Belleville); Southwestern Ontario CPAG (London), Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, Ontario (London), CAPC Niagara Brighter Futures (Niagara); Lakehead Social Planning Council (Thunder Bay), North Bay Labour Council; Income Security Advocacy Centre (Toronto), Elgin St. Thomas Health Unit (Sudbury), Ontario Association of Interval Transition Housing, Canadian Tamil Women's Community, Children's Aid Society of Peel, Legal Assistance of Windsor, Nellies, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, Workers Action Centre (Toronto), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, African Canadian Social Development Council, Social Planning Council of Sudbury, Social Planning Council of Cambridge & North Dumfries, Kingston Lennox, Frontenac & Addington Children's Services Steering Committee, Ontario Public School Boards Association, Community Development Council Durham, Early Childhood Community Development Centre (St Catharines), The STOP Community Food Centre; Northumberland Coalition Against Poverty; the Help Centre of Northumberland; Northumberland Community Legal Clinic; Family Service Ontario; Interim Place (Mississauga), Sistering, Toronto & York Region Labour Council, Association of Ontario Health Centres.