

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau  
And Members of Canada's COVID-19 Cabinet Committee  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

**Re: Ensuring marginalized children have first call on federal resources in the pandemic response and recovery**

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Members of Canada's COVID-19 Cabinet Committee:

We know that the current COVID-19 pandemic was unexpected and is having detrimental effects on our economic, health and social fabric in unprecedented ways. The situation has required a swift response and we appreciate the scale at which your government has developed policy and deployed resources to support the millions who are being impacted in ways we have not seen before.

We are writing today, however, to express a deep concern with the lack of focus your government has had on children and their caregivers, especially those who are marginalized. Deep social, health and economic inequities and high rates of poverty existed prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Rather than this virus being any sort of equalizer, it is amplifying these inequities multifold and our children are paying the highest price.

There is an unfortunate irony in the fact that the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is providing more generous benefits than what many parents earn in a labour market characterized by precarity in its lower segments. Similarly, this emergency benefit is more generous than those received by many children of single parents who are reliant on provincial or territorial social assistance.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 1 in 5 children lived in poverty. The rates skyrocket for Status First Nation children living both on and off reserve, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous children, as well as newcomer and racialized children, especially where there are family members who do not have status or have precarious status, children with disabilities and children living in female-led lone parent households.

These children are at higher risk during the pandemic. They are much more likely to have compromised health status and experience chronic stress, which can impair the functioning of their immune systems.

Compounding this, they are more likely to experience food insecurity, to live in households that are crowded, have insufficient resources to purchase supplies for frequent hand washing and cleaning of surfaces, and lack access to the internet and personal computers to participate in online learning and socializing opportunities.

**We need immediate investments that will protect children, families and individuals from poverty.**

The focus on emergency responses by the federal government to date has been on workers, businesses and some post-secondary students who have been impacted by COVID-19. This was a needed start. But clearly absent from the policy development and economic aid are robust supports for children, families and caregivers. Early announcements of very modest one-time top ups to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and Goods and Services (GST) credit do not go far enough. Top-up amounts are too low and require families to

wait until the end of May to receive the CCB – more than three months since the pandemic started. We appreciate the new Safe Kids initiative spearheaded by the Ministry for Women and Gender Equality. But with the recent government announcement that we are still weeks away from easing pandemic restrictions and restarting the economy, more investments must be made to ensure that all families including customary care families, kinship and foster families have the resources they need to care for children and youth.

**In addition, bold action must be taken to ensure that marginalized families who are outside the tax delivery system are able to access income security benefits.**

The tax system is currently the broadest delivery system available, but it is not universal. In 2017, 25% of the population did not file taxes and families facing multiple barriers are less likely to file. These include people who are living on low or no incomes, First Nations people, those living in remote communities, women fleeing violence, newcomers, undocumented migrants, homeless, and under/unbanked individuals. Many do not know they can file tax returns to receive benefits, do not have access to information or support on how to file, or do not trust the government system as a result of our long history of colonialism and systemic racism. Some are ineligible for benefits through the tax system because of their immigration status or lack of a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN) - even though they pay taxes.

The federal government must look to other jurisdictions for best practices on financial inclusion in the short term, such as prepaid reloadable credit card systems delivered in partnership with trusted charities that get benefits to all who need them now, and in the medium term, such as mobile or digital transfers as poverty elimination efforts.

**Equally important will be continued investments into poverty elimination efforts as part of our social, economic and health recovery.**

The recovery period cannot be a time for austerity to balance pandemic-related expenditures; it must be the time for assertive policies and investments to reduce child and family poverty. The federal government must strive to honour its human rights obligations outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals and other international covenants specifically concerning children, Indigenous Peoples, persons living with disabilities, women and economic, social, and cultural rights.

Policy decisions and budget allocations must use an intersectional gender-based analysis (GBA+) to identify barriers and inequities faced by all who experience systemic discrimination, and to provide fiscal guidance where investments made can achieve inclusion. This work must rely on robust data collection that disaggregates on the basis of race, gender, ability and age, among other characteristics.

These investments will have the double economic benefit of increasing aggregate economic demand and enhancing the human capital available in the labour market. We must learn from the recession of 2008 when countries that implemented austerity policies did not recover as well as those that made progressive social and economic strategic investments.

**As such, we make the following recommendations:**

All income security measures implemented must ensure that individual and family incomes are brought up to a minimum floor determined using the Low Income Measure based on 60% of median income. This 60% measure will account for the drastically reduced levels of income that result in lower median incomes and reduce the low income measure threshold.

Benefits must be universally accessible. Lack of identification, SIN, immigration or citizenship status, a CRA account or a fixed address should not bar anyone from accessing federal financial benefits, including anyone engaged in precarious, casual or home-based work.

### **Canada Child Benefit (CCB)**

The top up to the Canada Child Benefit must not be one time only. The pandemic and its economic effects will last longer than initially anticipated and this benefit has proven to be an effective income security tool for parents and caregivers who do have access to it. Top ups to the CCB should last the duration of the pandemic response and be a key mechanism for the recovery plan.

Enable different government agencies and departments to share information required for caregivers to access benefits for children, such as birth certificates. Expand the circle of people able to attest to residency to include charities so that impoverished families with children too young for school can meet the requirements to access federal benefits.

Set delivery standards so all children have equal access to federally funded support no matter where they live.

Amend the Income Tax Act by repealing s.122.6 (e) that ties eligibility for the CCB to the immigration status of the applicant parent. This would ensure that currently excluded parents, such as refugee claimants, who pay into the tax system are able to receive the CCB.

Currently, due to bureaucratic barriers, not all family constellations have access to the CCB top up. The federal government must ensure that all families have access to the CCB top up including customary care families, kinship and foster families.

Provide easy web and telephone access to report decreases in income and adjust the benefit paid without delay.

Ensure that in separated and divorced families, primary caregivers who are living on low incomes and relying on child support have access to benefits where the other parent's income has been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

## **Dignity Dividend**

Rather than a modest one-time top up to the GST credit, we strongly recommend immediate implementation of a Dignity Dividend as modeled in the Alternative Federal Budget 2020 that would support in particular single individuals, people with disabilities and children. Functioning like the GST credit, immediately implement a Dignity Dividend of \$1840 this year, and that rises based on inflation in subsequent years, for each adult and child living on low incomes so that they have the necessary incomes to meet their needs.

## **Access to Benefits**

The tax system is not universal. Government must find new ways of reaching marginalized communities who are outside the tax system, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, undocumented migrants/migrant workers without a valid SIN, women fleeing violence, unbanked or underbanked households and people experiencing homelessness. We strongly recommend that the government immediately leverage new technology and look to other jurisdictions that have had success in benefit registration, distribution and poverty elimination with systems such as prepaid reloadable credit cards and mobile or digital transfers, in partnership with trusted non-profits, as ways to quickly and efficiently reach marginalized communities.

Communications about all benefits must be accessible, in multiple languages, large font, ASL and widely disseminated.

Eliminate all wait times for all benefits, especially the CCB, so that individuals and families have access to them immediately.

## **Tax Justice**

While many are feeling the economic downturn, there are the privileged few who are experiencing large gains, which threatens to ultimately reinforce and deepen pre-existing income and wealth gaps. We recommend immediately implementing an excess profit tax or corporate tax focused on windfall gains. As part of an excess profit tax, we recommend an increase to the minimum corporate tax that would apply to 'normal' profits. The revenue from these taxes must be earmarked for 100% investment into poverty reduction initiatives in the recovery period.

In order to protect the integrity of the wage subsidy program, a significant corporate tax on any and all profits generated by corporations while receiving this subsidy must be implemented. The wage subsidy program is an important measure for protecting workers' incomes and employment; but corporations must not be able to make a profit from this public benefit measure. It would be unfair for corporations to use this program to offload their losses while privatizing their gains.

## **Benefits for Individuals**

All who are unemployed or underemployed should have access to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), regardless of their status or how much income they have made in the past year. This must include people who were unemployed prior to March 15, 2020 but who are ineligible for Employment Insurance (EI), as well as people who are under-employed because of reduced hours. It must be extended to workers who do not have work visas or valid SINs, are engaged in precarious, home-based, and casual work, including survival/sex work, many of whom are people with precarious or no status.

EI must be topped up to the same rate as the CERB for those who receive lower EI benefits.

The federal government must stipulate that this benefit not be clawed back from provincial and territorial social assistance recipients as a condition of the Canada Social Transfer.

## **Childcare**

Ensure this fragile system survives the pandemic. Work with provinces and territories to ensure that licenced centres and home-based care providers are financially sustained throughout the shutdown period. These centres should not have to rely on parent fees to pay overhead costs resulting from the pandemic.

Access to childcare and a universal, flexible, publicly funded system will be essential to economic recovery, both by providing decent work for early child care educators and by enabling parents, especially mothers, to return to work.

## **Housing**

Accelerate the co-development of the three distinctions-based Indigenous housing strategies and commit to a fourth complementary Indigenous Housing Strategy to effectively address the needs of urban and rural Indigenous Peoples. There must be an immediate priority to expand the availability of safe and adequate housing for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples, co-developed with Indigenous communities and organizations using a distinctions-based framework.

Immediately double the investment into the Canada Housing Benefit to \$8 billion in order to provide support to families struggling to pay rent. Ensure that at minimum, 25% of these benefits reach diverse women as per GBA+ commitments under the National Housing Strategy.

Prioritize the appointment of a strong, well led, and well-resourced Federal Housing Advocate and Housing Council.

Eliminate core housing need by investing in social housing repairs and the development of new housing stock, including supportive housing. Commit to ending homelessness as part of Canada's international human rights obligations and reassess the definition of "chronic homelessness" to capture the experiences of children and families, including women fleeing violence, immigrants and refugees and Indigenous Peoples.

Sincerely,

The Campaign 2000 Steering Committee:

1. Adrienne Montani, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition (BC)
2. Joel French, Public Interest Alberta (AB)
3. Susan Morrissey, Edmonton Social Planning Council (AB)
4. Janine Harvey, Northwest Territories (NWT)
5. Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (MB)
6. Sid Frankel, University of Manitoba (MB)
7. Meaghan Erbus (MB)
8. Arlene Hache, Keepers of the Circle (ON)
9. Chris Brillinger, Family Service Toronto (ON)
10. Claudia Calabro, Ontario Campaign 2000 (ON)
11. Lesley Frank, Acadia University (NS)
12. Stella Lord, Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Wellbeing (NS)
13. Christine Saulnier, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Nova Scotia (NS)
14. Mary Boyd, Coalition for Poverty Eradication Strategy (PEI)
15. Randy Hatfield, Human Development Council (NB)
16. Leilani Farha, Canada Without Poverty (national)
17. Martha Friendly, Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) (national)
18. Natalie Appleyard, Citizens for Public Justice (national)
19. Laurel Rothman, CRRU and Campaign 2000 (national)
20. Rachel Gouin, Child Welfare League of Canada (national)
21. Terence Hamilton, UNICEF Canada (national)
22. Leila Sarangi, Campaign 2000 (national coordinator)

Endorsed by:

**Organizations**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 23. Action Populaire Rimouski-Neigette   | 34. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives                             |
| 24. Advancement of Women Halton  | 35. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives -<br>Manitoba               |
| 25. Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario  | 36. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-<br>Nova Scotia             |
| 26. Afeas (Association féminine d'éducation et<br>d'action sociale)              | 37. Canadian Multifaith Federation                                      |
| 27. Alliance For Healthier Communities   | 38. Canadian Paediatric Society   |
| 28. Ansaar Foundation  | 39. Canadian Religious Conference /<br>Conférence religieuse canadienne |
| 29. Association d'entraide en santé mentale<br>l'Éveil de Brome-Missisquoi       | 40. Canadian Union of Public Employees                                  |
| 30. Association of Early Childhood Educators<br>Ontario                          | 41. Canadian Union of Public Employees Nova<br>Scotia                   |
| 31. Association québécoise de lutte contre la<br>pollution atmosphérique (AQLPA) | 42. Carrefour d'animation et de participation à<br>un monde ouvert      |
| 32. Beatty Buddies Daycare   |   |
| 33. Canadian Association of Social Workers                                       |   |

**CAMPAGNE 2000** **CAMPAIGN 2000**  
**METTONS FIN À LA PAUVRETÉ** **END CHILD & FAMILY**  
**DES ENFANTS ET DES FAMILLES** **POVERTY**

43. Centre Amitié Ressources et Entraide pour la Jeunesse (CARE Jeunesse)
44. Centre d'écoute Le Havre
45. Centre des femmes de la MRC du Granit
46. Centre justice et foi
47. Child Care Now
48. Chinese & Southeast Asian Legal Clinic
49. Christian Life Community
50. Citizens for Public Justice
51. Colchester Anti-Poverty Network
52. Collectif contre la pauvreté du Centre-du-Québec
53. Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté
54. Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté du Saguenay - Lac-St-Jean
55. Colour of Poverty Colour of Change
56. Columbus House (Pembroke) Inc.
57. Comité logement Rimouski-Neigette
58. Community Advocacy & Legal Centre
59. Droits et Recours Santé Mentale Gaspésie-les-Îles
60. Eau Secours
61. Edmonton Social Planning Council
62. Every Woman's Centre Association
63. Fédération autonome de l'enseignement (FAE)
64. Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec
65. Femmes en Mouvement
66. FoodShare Toronto
67. Harmony Childcare Centre
68. ISARC - Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition
69. Jane Finch Community Ministry
70. John Black Memorial United Church
71. Katherine Moore Consulting
72. Keepers of the Circle
73. L'Arbre de Vie
74. Low income families together (LIFT Toronto)
75. Manitoba College of Social Workers
76. Manitoba Public Health Association
77. Millennial Womxn in Policy
78. Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi (MASSE)
79. Noor Cultural Centre
80. Nova Scotia College of Social Workers
81. Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities
82. Oakwood Children's House
83. Ontario Children's Advocacy Coalition
84. Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
85. Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
86. Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
87. Ordre des travailleurs sociaux et des thérapeutes conjugaux et familiaux du Québec
88. Ottawa Poverty Reduction Network
89. PANTRY
90. PARC
91. Pastorale Sociale diocèse de Rimouski
92. Ralph Thornton Community Centre
93. Red Apple Day Care
94. Regroupement des Auberges du coeur du Quebec
95. Regroupement des ressources alternatives en santé mentale du Québec
96. Relais La Chaumine
97. Renfrew County Child Poverty Action Network (CPAN)
98. Réseau des femmes des Laurentides
99. Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec
100. Rights of Non-Status Women Network
101. SAFSS
102. Scadding Court Community Centre
103. Shining Waters Regional Council, The United Church of Canada
104. Shinning Waters Regional Council of the United Church of Canada
105. South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
106. Table de concertation sur la pauvreté Thérèse-De Blainville

- 107. Table des regroupements provinciaux d'organismes communautaires et bénévoles
- 108. TACAE
- 109. TCMFM
- 110. The 519 Church Street Community Centre
- 111. Today's Child, Tomorrow's Future Children's Centre Inc.
- 112. Toronto Community for Better Child Care
- 113. Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
- 114. Treetop Childrens Centre
- 115. Urban Alliance on Race Relations
- 116. UYVDC

**Individuals**

- 129. Adrian Challis
- 130. Amtul Hussain
- 131. Amy O'Neil
- 132. Anna Willats
- 133. Ash Lowenthal
- 134. Audrey Gosselin Pellerin
- 135. Barbara Bromilow
- 136. Barry Lavallee
- 137. Beatrice Shumey
- 138. Bernard Larouche
- 139. Beverly Suek
- 140. Bill Wall
- 141. Bob Haverluck
- 142. Brenda Friesen
- 143. Brian McIntosh
- 144. Carole Holmes
- 145. Catherine Mullally
- 146. Christa Freiler
- 147. Christina Belanger
- 148. Colleen Cameron
- 149. cornelia mazgarean
- 150. David Alper
- 151. Deborah Cohen
- 152. Delphine Collin-Vézina
- 153. Denise Poirier
- 154. Dennis Butcher
- 155. Desmond Sequeira
- 156. Diane Gagné
- 157. Dominique Arbez

- 117. Vaisseau D'Or (des Moulins)
- 118. Vibrant Communities Revelstoke
- 119. West Broadway Community Ministry
- 120. WICC
- 121. WomanACT
- 122. Women Transforming Cities
- 123. Women's Habitat of Etobicoke
- 124. Working for Change
- 125. Young United Church
- 126. Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition
- 127. YWCA Canada
- 128. YWCA Toronto

- 158. Dominique Brown
- 159. Donna Spreitzer
- 160. Doreen Nicoll
- 161. Doug Kariel
- 162. Dr. Danyaal Raza
- 163. Dr. Joey Edwardh
- 164. Emily Paradis
- 165. Erin Williams
- 166. Faye Moffatt
- 167. Flora Thompson
- 168. Gilles Lecavalier
- 169. gillian novick
- 170. Greg LeBlanc
- 171. Heather Lea
- 172. Heather Robbins
- 173. Hélène Cornellier
- 174. Irene Greenwood
- 175. Irene Rainey
- 176. Jackie Garrett
- 177. James Blanchard
- 178. Joan Jarvis
- 179. Joan Nurse
- 180. Jocelyne Lachapelle
- 181. Joel Kettner
- 182. Johanne Heppell
- 183. Karen Roundpoint
- 184. Karin de Winter
- 185. Katherine Lowery
- 186. Katherine Needham



187.Kathleen James-Cavan  
188.Kathy Mason  
189.Ken DeLisle  
190.Keven Gajeiro  
191.Kimberly Schmidt  
192.Kristy Wellwood  
193.Laura Stymiest  
194.Leslie Campbell  
195.Linda Hiebert  
196.Linda Rodgers  
197.Linda Terry  
198.Lois Brown  
199.Lorraine Desjardins  
200.Lorraine MacDonald  
201.Luc Forest  
202.Lucie mayer  
203.Lynda Trono  
204.Magnolia McCallum  
205.Maria Huijbregts  
206.Marie-Eve Rancourt  
207.Marilyn Birch  
208.Martin Byaruhanga  
209.Maureen A. McCartney  
210.May Ann Kainola  
211.Mbesseh Subinsoille  
212.Megan Donald  
213.Mel Wright  
214.Melanie Joaquin  
215.Mercédez Roberge  
216.Michelle Mahoney  
217.Miguel Sanchez  
218.Muna Mohamoud  
219.Myriam Anouk Augereau  
220.Nancy Koo

221.Nancy Kuipers  
222.Nathalie Khat  
223.Omaida  
224.Pat Froio  
225.Peter Cluttberbuck  
226.Peter Clutterbuck  
227.Réjean Mathieu  
228.Rene Adams  
229.Rh a Rocque  
230.Roz Usiskin  
231.Ryan Friedman  
232.Ryan Friedman  
233.Sarah Prowse  
234.Serge Petitclerc  
235.Shannon Sevigny  
236.Sheila Catto  
237.Shelley Cleverly  
238.Sherry Thorkelson  
239.Sheryl Barton  
240.Shokoufeh Talaei  
241.Sid Ahmed SOUSSI  
242.Suzie Ouellet  
243.Sylvain Caron  
244.Sylvain Lafreni re  
245.Sylvie Bonin  
246.Theresa Sara  
247.Theresa Schrader  
248.Thomas Savy  
249.Ursule Beaulieu  
250.Valentina Sarker  
251.Wanda McConnell  
252.Yanick Noiseux  
253.Yvonne Naismith  
254.Zygmunt Strawczynski

Cc:

Mr. Andrew Scheer. P.C., M.P., Leader of the Official Opposition

Mr. Yves-Fran ois Blanchet, M.P., Leader of the Bloc Qu b cois

Mr. Jagmeet Singh, M.P., Leader of the New Democratic Party

Ms. Jo-Ann Roberts, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, M.P., President of the Treasury Board

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen, M.P., Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P, Minister of Finance

**CAMPAGNE 2000** **CAMPAIGN 2000**  
**METTONS FIN À LA PAUVRETÉ** **END CHILD & FAMILY**  
**DES ENFANTS ET DES FAMILLES** **POVERTY**

Mr. Adam Vaughan, M.P and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development