

December 2008

Right Hon. Mr. Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

We write to express our concern that Canada's child poverty rate is 11.3% - virtually the same as it was in 1989 when all MPs in the House of Commons resolved to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, according to the latest Campaign 2000 Report Card, the national non-partisan coalition of organizations committed to ending child and family poverty in Canada.

As preparation for the 2009 federal budget continues, NOW is the time for Parliament to adopt a poverty reduction strategy for Canada. In a recent Environics poll, more than three out of four (77%) Canadians say that in a recession, it is more important than ever to make poverty reduction a priority (<http://www.growinggap.ca>). Investments in poverty reduction help to stabilize communities because low income families spend their money to pay rent, purchase food and other necessities. 760,000 children are growing up in poverty according to Statistics Canada, and 281,000 children have to rely on food banks according to the Canadian Association of Food Banks. We need government action. It's time to make child poverty history in Canada.

As a partner of Campaign 2000 I urge your government to commit to a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Canada with targets of at least a 25% reduction in child poverty rates over the next 5 years and at least a 50% reduction over 10 years, with the goal of poverty eradication.

Components of an effective Poverty Reduction Strategy should include:

- Increase child benefits to \$5,100/year (\$2007) for low income families
- Increase federal work tax credits to \$2,400/year
- Set a federal minimum wage of \$10/hour (\$2007)
- Restore broad Employment Insurance eligibility
- Invest major federal funding in affordable housing, and in early childhood education and care services
- Adopt specific poverty reduction targets and timelines for Aboriginal poverty.

Please tell us what actions your Government will be taking to develop and implement a national Poverty Reduction Strategy – we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Address: