



***Flourishing Together: A Public Justice Approach  
to the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy***

Submission to Employment and Social Development for  
Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy Consultations

June 2017

***Citizens for Public Justice*** seeks human flourishing and the integrity of creation as our faithful response to God's call for love and justice.

***We envision*** a world in which individuals, communities, societal institutions, and governments all contribute to and benefit from the common good.

***Our mission*** is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of Creation.

*My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.*

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

## Introduction

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) is a faith-based policy organization that believes federal policy can and must serve the public good. Our research, policy analysis, education, and advocacy work are grounded in an understanding of the sacredness of creation and the dignity of all people.

CPJ has worked for over a decade to address poverty eradication in Canada through the development of a national anti-poverty plan. We have co-led the Dignity for All campaign since 2009, the goals of which are: the development and implementation of a comprehensive federal plan for poverty elimination; a federal anti-poverty act that would ensure accountability; and sufficient funding to support both.

We are very pleased to see that the federal government is moving forward in the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy (CPRS). We want to ensure that this strategy is comprehensive, accountable, and enhances the dignity of all people.

The Dignity for All campaign has worked in collaboration with social policy experts, academics, service providers, faith-based organizations, and people with lived experience of poverty to develop recommendations for a plan to end poverty in Canada. This resulted in the development of the Dignity for All National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada. It is a model strategy that outlines a human rights framework and policy recommendations in six key areas: income security, housing and homelessness, healthcare, food security, jobs and employment, and early childhood education and care.

**CPJ recommends that the CPRS reflect the human rights framework and policy recommendations of the Dignity for All model plan,<sup>1</sup> which this brief outlines.**

**The CPRS must:**

### **1. Be comprehensive, effective, and funded.**

- Include ongoing broad consultation and engagement, involving people with lived experience of poverty, particularly those disproportionately impacted, including Indigenous peoples, newcomers to Canada, racialized Canadians, people with disabilities, and single parent, female-led families.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dignity for All campaign, A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada (2015); [https://dignityforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/DignityForAll\\_Report.pdf](https://dignityforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/DignityForAll_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Citizens for Public Justice, *Break the Barriers* (October 2016); <https://cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/Break%20the%20Barriers.pdf>

- Prioritize in the strategy ongoing support for and engagement with social enterprises<sup>3</sup> and projects that work with low-income populations most in need, who must be free to become the architects of their own flourishing and community building.
- Build on the work of anti-poverty, social policy, and faith-based organizations that have prioritized the voices of those with lived experience and have worked for decades on policy analysis.
- Address *at minimum* six policy areas: income security, housing and homelessness, health, food security, jobs and employment, and early childhood education and care.
- Establish clear targets and timelines, along with a commitment for adequate resources and strong accountability mechanisms to ensure the plan's full implementation and evaluation.

The CPRS can only work if there is dedicated funding attached. Costing for the development and implementation of the strategy should not be a barrier. It already costs governments more to deal with the impacts of poverty, such as health costs, than it would to implement a strategy to end poverty.<sup>4</sup> According to a 2008 study, referenced in the well-known Senate sub-committee report, *In From the Margins* (2009), poverty in Canada costs us between \$72 and \$86 billion each year.<sup>5</sup>

## Defining and Measuring Poverty

### **2. Use multiple low-income measures, as well as multiple deprivation and wellness indicators, in measuring poverty in Canada.**

Poverty is a complex reality that exists when people do not have their basic needs met and cannot fully participate in economic, political, social, and cultural life. It involves social isolation and an erosion of a sense of self-worth and spiritual vitality.

Poverty does not just involve individual life choices or circumstances, but social relationships including structures, systems, and institutions, some of which exclude and marginalize people. While poverty has a broad impact in Canada, there are some populations that are highly

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<sup>3</sup> See Shaun Loney, *An Army of Problem Solvers: Reconciliation and the Solutions Economy* (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Poverty policy costing recommendations are outlined in the 2017 Alternative Federal Budget (to which CPJ is a contributor);

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> These estimates are in 2007 dollars, and include healthcare, crime, inter-generational impacts, and lost productivity. Ontario Association of Food Banks, *The Cost of Poverty* (2008);

<https://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/CostofPoverty.pdf> This study is also referenced in the 2009 Senate Sub-committee Report, *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* (p.37);

[https://www.feednovascotia.ca/images/In\\_From\\_the\\_Margins.pdf](https://www.feednovascotia.ca/images/In_From_the_Margins.pdf) See also Canada Without Poverty estimates; <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/the-cost-of-poverty/>

vulnerable, including: Indigenous people; recent immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; children; single-parent families; people with disabilities; and seniors.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty is more than a matter of low income, but it always includes low income. It is important that appropriate measures are available to provide accurate and current data about the broad reality of poverty.

While we recommend the Low-Income Measure, After Tax (LIM-AT) as a measure that provides broad, comparable data on low income, multiple indicators are required, not only to measure income levels, but also other forms of deprivation and well-being.

CPJ supports the continued use of the Market Basket Measure (MBM) subject to regular updates on the basket. This type of measure draws on local level expenditures patterns and provides the best way to track the impact of particular types of interventions, along with differences in the cost of living. The government could also explore different types of poverty measures for different at-risk groups, such as people with disabilities, single-parent families, newcomers to Canada, and seniors.

It is important, too, to look at the assets communities bring to comprehend their whole sense of themselves, through approaches like the Asset-Based Community Development model<sup>7</sup> or wellness measures, like the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.<sup>8</sup> A combined view of low income, multiple deprivations, as well as well-being measures provides a broader and more holistic approach to understanding and addressing poverty.

### CPRS Framework

#### **3. Include a framework that ensures review and accountability, including internal and external mechanisms for monitoring progress based on strong targets and timelines and legislation for a federal anti-poverty act.**

The Dignity for All model national anti-poverty plan calls for both internal mechanisms (like an ombudsman or a commissioner) and external mechanisms (like a council) to make up the accountability framework.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> CPJ Poverty Report, *Break the Barriers* (2016); <https://cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/Break%20the%20Barriers.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), see <http://www.deepeningcommunity.org/abcd-canada-home>

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Index of Wellbeing, University of Waterloo; <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/>

<sup>9</sup> Dignity for All, A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada; [https://dignityforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/DignityForAll\\_Report.pdf](https://dignityforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/DignityForAll_Report.pdf)

It is important that both internal and external accountability mechanisms independently review and publicly report on the performance and outcomes of the CPRS. They would also engage communities in a regular review process.

Legislation of a Federal Anti-Poverty Act would help to ensure that targets, goals, and timelines are followed and that input from review processes are acted upon – and assist monitoring bodies in effectively guiding the CPRS.

It is important that the federal targets, goals, and timelines work along with municipal and provincial/territorial targets and goals set out in their poverty reduction strategies. Joint planning tables can be created to ensure communication and collaboration on achieving these goals.

It also is important to ensure that the strategy is a “living document” that adjusts as progress is made and allows for ongoing opportunities for engagement, especially with people who have lived experience of poverty.

The CPRS should include short, medium, and long-term rolling targets, so that the most urgent needs are addressed immediately, and so that the strategy can build on policy already in place and working effectively.

## CPRS Policy Recommendations

Income security

### **4. Index the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to inflation.**

In July 2016, the federal government followed through on its commitment to implement the CCB, which should have an important role in increasing child poverty.<sup>10</sup> In order to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the CCB to address child and family poverty, it is important that it be indexed to inflation immediately, rather than in 2020, as promised by the federal government.

### **5. Include provisions for improved access to Employment Insurance (EI), including setting a national eligibility threshold of 360 hours.**

In Budget 2016, the federal government introduced EI reforms that involve lower eligibility thresholds, with fewer required insurable work hours for eligibility and extension of benefit weeks in 12 regions.

While this can be considered a positive step, the impacts of unemployment are being experienced significantly by people across the country. EI regional variation for eligibility should be replaced with a standard, universal threshold of 360 hours, so that those with precarious

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<sup>10</sup> While the federal government claimed that it has already decreased child poverty by 40% after several months of its implementation, the Alternative Federal Budget 2017 projects a decrease closer to 14%, which is still significant;  
[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

work (often from marginalized and racialized populations), have better protection and support.<sup>11</sup>

**6. Improve the Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) programs by increasing the GIS by the amount required to lift seniors out of poverty and modifying the residency requirement for seniors' programs.**

Single seniors (most of whom are women) are at risk of increasing poverty rates.<sup>12</sup> The federal government 2016 decision not to increase the age of eligibility for OAS/GIS will help prevent further disparity, but increasing the GIS (indexed to average wage rates<sup>13</sup>) is required to further assist low income seniors.

**7. Include a plan to reinstate a federal minimum wage at \$15/hour.**

National minimum wage standards can be promoted through reinstating a federal minimum wage at \$15/hour (indexed to inflation) and promoting the phase in of provincial/territorial minimum wages of \$15/hour (indexed to inflation).<sup>14</sup> The province of Ontario has recently committed to a \$15/hour minimum wage starting with an increase to \$14/hour in 2018 and then to \$15/hour by 2019.<sup>15</sup> The federal government should be able to adopt a more immediate phase in schedule. These standards must reflect living wage policies, recognizing that costs of living vary in different regions and communities.<sup>16</sup>

**8. Include additional income security measures, such as an enhanced Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB), focused Guaranteed Livable Income options for working-aged adults, as well as additional supports for people living with disabilities.**

While some of the millions of people in Canada who experience poverty are struggling to get by through accessing the degrading and enforced poverty levels of social assistance across the country, many others living in poverty are employed, working one or more jobs at a time.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>11</sup> See the Alternative Federal Budget 2017 recommendation of 360 hours;

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada CANSIM table July 2016 (2014 data) puts the single senior poverty rate at 28.8%;

<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=2060041&&pattern=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=-1&tabMode=dataTable&cscid=>

<sup>13</sup> See the Alternative Federal Budget 2017 recommendation;

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Currently, only two provinces and one territory index their minimum wages, with some having a number of exceptions. See the Service Canada database; <http://srv116.services.gc.ca/dimt-wid/sm-mw/rpt1.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> <https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2017/05/ontario-raising-minimum-wage-to-15-per-hour.html>

<sup>16</sup> See the Canadian Living Wage Framework:

[http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/files/3913/8382/4524/Living\\_Wage\\_Full\\_Document\\_Nov.pdf](http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/files/3913/8382/4524/Living_Wage_Full_Document_Nov.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Some estimate that 70% of those in poverty are “working poor.” See Maytree Foundation, “Working Income Tax Benefit” (2017); <https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Working-Income-Tax-Benefit.pdf>

increasing reality of precarious work, work that is short-term, low-pay, and lacking benefits, is keeping more and more people poor and vulnerable.<sup>18</sup>

Enhancements to the current WITB program can assist in ensuring that those who are employed in paid labour do not remain poor and are more easily able to transition to full time employment. The WITB should be enhanced to be more accessible and should be increased to raise working adults above the LIM.

Further, the federal government should explore a Guaranteed Livable Income system that begins with targeted programs for poor working-aged adults at a threshold high enough to foster social participation and ensure access to basic needs (with additional provisions for people with disabilities).<sup>19</sup>

Given the multiple barriers to employment and the high cost of living, due to additional medical and technological needs, people with disabilities require additional supports to address their ongoing vulnerability to poverty. The federal government made some positive steps in budget 2017, with improvements to accessibility legislation, the Disability Tax Credit, and Workforce Development Agreements.<sup>20</sup> However, more can be done through recognizing the rights of people with disabilities in the workforce<sup>21</sup>, and dedicating federal transfer payments to increasing disability benefit rates and improving access to benefits.<sup>22</sup>

Housing and Homelessness

## **9. Include a National Housing Strategy that has clear goals, timelines, and monitoring provisions, and that is supported by legislation and funding.**

Increasing numbers of people in Canada are spending 50% or more of their income on housing,<sup>23</sup> while many others are experiencing periods of homelessness or housing insecurity. People who are already vulnerable, such as those who are unemployed, low-waged, disabled, newcomers, members of single-parent families, Indigenous peoples, or seniors, are often those

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<sup>18</sup> Canada Without Poverty, “Un- and Under-Employed: The “New Normal” of Precarious Work” (2017); <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/2017/04/un-and-under-employed-the-new-normal-of-precarious-work/>

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed discussion of CPJ’s position on a Guaranteed Livable Income, see *Towards a Guaranteed Livable Income Briefing Note* (March 2017);

<https://cpj.ca/sites/default/files/docs/files/Towards%20A%20Guaranteed%20Livable%20Income.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Association of Community Living; <http://www.cacl.ca/news-stories/blog/federal-budget-2017-positive-steps-canadians-disabilities-accountabilities-needed->

<sup>21</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, “Canada needs to lead on disability rights” (2016); <http://canadianlabour.ca/news/news-archive/canada-needs-lead-disability-rights>

<sup>22</sup> CCPA, *Alternative Federal Budget* (2017);

[https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Housing Rental Index; [rentalhousingindex.ca](http://rentalhousingindex.ca) and *Raising the Roof, Beyond Housing First: A Holistic Response to Homelessness in Canada* (2015); [homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/2015\\_HousingFirstReport\\_EN-WEB.pdf](http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/2015_HousingFirstReport_EN-WEB.pdf).



most affected. CPJ is particularly concerned that refugees and refugee claimants are currently not adequately housed as they face the multiple challenges of settlement.<sup>24</sup>

CPJ welcomes the federal government's commitment to invest \$11.2 billion in affordable housing over eleven years,<sup>25</sup> and to develop a National Housing Strategy, which reported on its fall consultation process with a recognition of the urgent need for safe, affordable housing.<sup>26</sup> However, it is not clear what the strategy will look like at this point, and only a small amount of the budget commitment will be allocated in the next two years. This does not address what many consider to be a national housing crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Increased and long-term funding of at least \$2 billion *per year* (matched by provinces and territories) is needed for improvements to existing affordable housing and additional affordable housing developments to meet the current housing crisis, with a focus on energy efficiency.

**10. Partner with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments and organizations to develop focused Indigenous infrastructure development strategies that are responsive to the unique needs of Indigenous communities (on and off reserve and in Inuit and northern contexts).**

CPJ calls on the government to dedicate immediate funding to address safe housing and water, as well as funding in resilient infrastructure in areas vulnerable to melting permafrost and rising sea levels and upgrades to emergency preparedness and response systems.

The federal government's commitment to invest \$3.4 billion in new money in Indigenous communities over the next three years is significant, following on commitments of the previous budget (\$8.5 billion over five years), but progress is unacceptably slow. A further \$250 million per year is required for investments in ecosystems that function as natural infrastructure<sup>28</sup> and \$514 million per year should be provided for green infrastructure.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bolu Coker, CPJ (2017), "Canada Must Pay Attention to Refugees in Poverty"; <https://cpi.ca/canada-must-pay-attention-refugees-poverty>

<sup>25</sup> Government of Canada, *Budget 2017: Building a Strong Middle Class*; <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-02-en.html#Toc477707403>

<sup>26</sup> Conference Board of Canada, *What we heard: Shaping Canada's National Housing Strategy* (2017); <https://www.letstalkhousing.ca/pdfs/what-we-heard.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Guy Dauncey, "Eight Solutions to Canada's Housing Crisis," *The Tyee* (2016); <https://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2016/12/10/Eight-Solutions-Canada-Housing-Crisis/>

<sup>28</sup> Green Budget Coalition, "Recommendations for Budget 2016: Infrastructure and Climate Change Adaptation," (2016); [greenbudget.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/GBC-Infrastructure-and-Climate.pdf](http://greenbudget.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/GBC-Infrastructure-and-Climate.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Green Budget Coalition, "Recommendations for Budget 2016: Green Infrastructure for First Nations Communities," (2016); [greenbudget.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/GBC-FN-Infra.pdf](http://greenbudget.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/GBC-FN-Infra.pdf).

Additional benefits from these investments would be achieved were Indigenous people to be fully trained and employed in the development, construction and ownership of such needed infrastructure.<sup>30</sup>

Healthcare

**11. Include a universal, publicly funded National Pharmacare Program that provides prescription drug coverage at little to no cost to all, regardless of income, age, or region.**

No one in Canada should go without required medication, but many are having to skip or stretch out prescriptions because they are unaffordable. Approximately three million people in Canada cannot afford their prescriptions.<sup>31</sup>

In its submission to the Romanow Commission on the future of Health Care in Canada, the Ecumenical Health Care Network of the Canadian Council of Churches in 2002 recommended that prescription drugs be included as a fully-funded component of Medicare.<sup>32</sup>

Fifteen years later, CPJ is pleased to see that the federal government has been exploring the possibility of a National Pharmacare Program through a Standing Committee on Health study.<sup>33</sup> A CPRS should include a National Pharmacare Program that would be a publicly funded, universal prescription drug insurance plan that would cover essential drug costs.<sup>34</sup>

**12. Include the immediate and full implementation of Jordan's Principle.**

While the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled in 2016 that the federal government discriminated against Indigenous children by not granting them equal access to services, action has not yet been taken to comply with this ruling. In fact, the Tribunal issued a third non-compliance order against the federal government in May 2017.<sup>35</sup>

The federal government must follow through on its legal and moral obligation to address Indigenous child welfare through fully implementing Jordan's Principle, which would resolve jurisdictional disputes involving Indigenous children.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Shaun Loney, *An Army of Problem Solvers* (2016).

<sup>31</sup> Canadian Association of Community Health Centres; <https://www.cachc.ca/pharmacare/>

<sup>32</sup> For background on the EHCN brief, see Joe Gunn, Charter and Covenant: The Churches and the Struggle for Public Health Care in Canada; [https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/health\\_gunn\\_charter\\_and\\_covenant.pdf](https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/health_gunn_charter_and_covenant.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Standing Committee on Health; <http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/HESA>

<sup>34</sup> Kyle Duggan, "MPs begin study on pharmacare, warned of high drug costs" iPolitics, April 13, 2016; <http://ipolitics.ca/2016/04/13/mps-begin-study-on-pharmacare-warned-of-high-drug-costs/>

<sup>35</sup> First Nations Child and Family Caring Society; <https://fncaresociety.com/jordans-principle>

<sup>36</sup> First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

## Food security

### **13. Include the development of a comprehensive National Right to Food Policy and improvements to the Nutrition North program.**

Statistics from 2012 show that over 4 million people in Canada can be considered moderately or highly food insecure, with the rate of household food insecurity reaching a staggering rate of 45.2% in Nunavut.<sup>37</sup>

A comprehensive national food strategy should include food safety, healthy food, household food security, and environmental sustainability,<sup>38</sup> as well as better access to traditional food and country food for Indigenous communities.<sup>39</sup>

Enhancements to the Nutrition North program should include increased funding that is more broadly distributed, as well as better supports for Inuit and Northern communities to access traditional country food and to grow and harvest their own food, where possible.

## Employment and Training

### **14. Include a National Jobs Creation and Training Strategy.**

Such a strategy would work to ensure the development of secure employment, with a focus on community development and green jobs, as well as access to benefits and labour standard protections. It would also develop training and education opportunities in secure employment areas, particularly directed toward Indigenous communities and marginalized populations.

In addition, funding for training and skills development in low-carbon sectors, directed to marginalized populations, is needed. Research indicates that “by investing up to 5 per cent<sup>40</sup> of the annual federal budget in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and public transportation over five years, Canada could create one million new jobs while reducing our annual GHG emissions by 25 to 35 per cent.”<sup>41</sup>

### **15. Invest an additional \$500 million per year over the next five years (\$2.5 billion total) for Indigenous education, skills training and economic development.**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #7 calls on the federal government to work with Indigenous organizations to develop a “joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> In Nunavut, 62.2% of children live in food insecure households; <http://proof.utoronto.ca/>

<sup>38</sup> Conference Board of Canada, Canadian Food Strategy Report; <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/cfic/cfs.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> Sima Sahar Zerehi, “National Food Strategy will include Aboriginal input, says Agriculture Minister” CBC News (Feb 5, 2016); <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/national-food-strategy-1.3434908>

<sup>40</sup> With a federal budget of \$290 billion (Budget 2016), 5 per cent equals \$14.5 billion.

<sup>41</sup> Green Economy Network, One Million Climate Jobs; <http://greeneconomynet.ca/>

<sup>42</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action; [http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)

The federal government will continue investing \$50 million in in 2017 in the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy,<sup>43</sup> which has been in place since 2009. It is clear that meaningful consultation and additional funding are needed to ensure that improvements are made for the program to respond to community needs.

Early childhood education and care

**16. Include a national early childhood education and care (ECEC) program that is universal, publicly funded, high-quality, and regulated.**

While over 70% of mothers in Canada are in the paid labour force, only 25% of young children have child care spaces.<sup>44</sup> High quality and accessible ECEC provides both strong early childhood development and inclusion, particularly important to vulnerable children. It also provides options for parents in the workforce and supports women's equity.<sup>45</sup>

While it is important to see that the federal government has committed \$7 billion over the next 10 years to support child care in Canada, it is not clear how the new national early learning and childcare framework will work with provinces and territories to meet the urgent need. As well, the first five years of budget allocation is not sufficient to address accessibility, affordability, and quality.<sup>46</sup>

A national ECEC program should be legislated with Canada-wide goals and principles outlined, including quality, access, and respect for diversity, and culturally appropriate programming. It would be accessible to children ages 0-5 (preschool) and school-aged up to 12 years. This ECEC program would also require federal transfers to assist in the development of these services to achieve high quality and accessibility.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Budget 2017; <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2017/docs/plan/chap-01-en.html#Toc477707325>

<sup>44</sup> CCPA Alternative Federal Budget (2017); [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017\\_Main\\_Document.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2017/03/AFB2017_Main_Document.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> CCPA Alternative Federal Budget (2017).

<sup>46</sup> Laurie Monsebraaten, "Federal budget money for child care is a good first step, but not nearly enough, advocates say," *Toronto Star* (March 2017); <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/03/22/federal-budget-money-for-child-care-is-a-good-first-step-but-not-nearly-enough-advocates-say.html>

<sup>47</sup> CUPE and Child Care Advocacy Association advocate for \$500 million federal transfer to provinces/territories: FINA pre-budget report March 2016; <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=8137950&Language=E>