



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01465**

BY: **MR. LONG (SAINT JOHN-ROTHESAY)**

DATE: **JUNE 7, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **ADAM VAUGHAN**

Response by the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Poverty

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada is committed to reducing poverty by pursuing a long-term vision of a country that is diverse, prosperous and inclusive, where each individual can access the supports they need to participate in society to their fullest ability both socially and economically. Rising income inequality and the persistence of poverty among some groups may lead certain citizens to feel that they are left behind and not fully benefiting from economic growth. The Government of Canada is making investments that will lay the foundation for inclusive economic growth that benefits all Canadians, including new investments of \$21.9 billion over 11 years to support social infrastructure. These investments will strengthen our communities, and build a better quality of life for our children and grandchildren.

Employment and Social Development Canada is currently working on the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that will align with and support existing provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies. The Government intends to set targets to reduce poverty, and measure and publicly report on progress.

The Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy will build upon a number of flagship measures that this government has announced to reduce poverty, including the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit, and investments in Early Learning and Child Care, a National Housing Strategy, and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

Supporting families and ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life is a priority of the Government of Canada. The Government is therefore committed to giving families more money to help with the high costs of raising their children and to making a real difference in the lives of children in Canada. To this end, the Government introduced the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) in July 2016. The CCB replaced the Canada Child Tax Benefit, the National Child Benefit Supplement, and the Universal Child Care Benefit with one simple, tax-free and targeted benefit.

Because the CCB is tax-free and based on income, it provides more support to those families who need help the most. The CCB provides a maximum annual benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of 6 and up to \$5,400 per child aged 6 through 17. Families with less than \$30,000 in net income receive the maximum benefit. Nine out of 10 families are receiving more in child benefits under the CCB than they did under the previous system. This year, as a result of the introduction of the CCB, about 300,000 children fewer will be living in poverty. This represents a reduction of about 40 percent in child poverty in Canada.

The Government of Canada recognizes that Canadian families need support and that all Canadian children deserve a fair chance to succeed. A strong, shared initiative for Canada's children is one of the best investments that governments can make in the social and economic fabric of this country. Further, the Government recognizes that access to affordable, quality child care that is culturally appropriate is critical for Indigenous parents and children.

To help Canadian children get the best start in life and better support Canadian families, Budget 2016 and 2017 proposed to invest \$7.5 billion over 11 years, starting in 2017-2018, to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country.

On June 12, 2017, the Government of Canada announced a historic agreement with provincial and territorial governments on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. The Framework is seeking to increase the quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, in particular for families that need child care the most.

The Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework sets the foundation for governments to work towards a shared long term vision where all children across Canada can experience the enriching environment of quality early learning and child care. In the coming months, the federal government will work with each province and territory to enter into three-year bilateral agreements that will address the early learning and child care needs unique to its jurisdiction and funding allocation. On June 16, 2017, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Minister Responsible for Early Years & Child Care reached a three-year bilateral agreement that will allocate \$435 million for Ontario investments towards increasing the accessibility and affordability of high-quality licensed child care and quality early learning opportunities.

In addition, the Government is committed to engaging with Indigenous organizations and partners to develop an Indigenous Framework on Early Learning and Child Care. The distinct Indigenous Framework will reflect the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children across Canada.

Of course, if the Government is to tackle poverty and inequality and have real results, we need to be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback. That is why on September 2, 2016, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development launched the first phase of formal engagement on the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Saint John: the Tackling Poverty Together Project.

Work is currently underway to complete this analytical research project which involved case studies of six communities across Canada that expressed interest in poverty as an issue. Saint John was chosen as the first city to contribute to this project and was pivotal in the gathering of information on the impact of federal government programs on those living in poverty, barriers to accessing the programs, and ideas to improve existing programs.

All six communities were selected to ensure a broad cross-section of Canada. Together, they included English and French-speaking communities that are large and small, immigrant and non-immigrant populations as well as Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis). Moreover, they each have some type of local poverty reduction initiative in place and are within a province or a territory with a poverty reduction strategy. A rural community was also included to reflect the unique challenges faced by rural Canadians.

The Tackling Poverty Together Project has allowed the Government of Canada to hear directly from people living in poverty and to learn from organizations who deliver poverty reduction programs. The Project's findings will be essential to the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. A final report outlining what was heard in all six communities, including Saint John, will be released in the upcoming months.

Finally, to better inform the development of the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy, on February 13, 2017 the Government of Canada launched an online and in-person consultation process to engage with Canadians on key issues related to poverty. The Government of Canada has:

- launched a nation-wide online consultation

- held a series of roundtables with businesses, community organizations, academic experts, and Canadians who have experienced poverty;

- held a call for nominations for members of an advisory committee on poverty to discuss ideas from the public consultations and to provide expertise and independent advice to the Minister; and;

- launched a contest (closing August 14, 2017) inviting young people aged 12-24 across Canada to answer one question: "How can we reduce poverty in Canada?"