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Campaign 2000 asks Prime Minister Harper to keep interests of children on the agenda for fall session

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TORONTO, Nov. 17 /CNW/ - Campaign 2000, a cross-Canada coalition of more than 120 organizations, is sending this letter to the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition, Jack Layton, Gilles Duceppe and Elizabeth May, urging them to keep the interests of children and families at the forefront of their agenda as they prepare for the new session of Parliament.

Below is an open letter we are sending to the Right Hon. Stephen Harper Prime Minister of Canada.

Campaign 2000 asks PM Harper to keep interests of children on the agenda for fall session of Parliament

- An Open Letter to Prime Minister Harper

November 17, 2008

From Campaign 2000

(Laurel Rothman and Members of Campaign 2000 Steering Committee)

Dear Mr. Harper:

As you prepare for a new session of Parliament, we are writing to urge you to keep the interests of children and their families at the forefront of the agenda. Campaign 2000 is a broad, non-partisan coalition that represents hundreds of thousands of Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Campaign 2000 will see concrete commitments to the reduction of child and family poverty and to the development of a system of early childhood education and care services next session. It's critical that the federal government takes the lead, because far too many children and their families still live in poverty.

Campaign 2000 will be releasing our 2008 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty to the public on Nov. 21st, and we call on you to work with all levels of government and civil society to adopt a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Without action from your government, the current economic downturn means that poverty rates will increase.

A range of Canadians have agreed on what is needed to achieve a economically robust and socially inclusive Canada. Most agree that income support programs including an enhanced child benefit and strengthened Employment Insurance; early childhood education and care services; affordable housing and good jobs are key elements of a poverty reduction strategy. Canadians are eagerly looking for leadership on these issues. (1) A overwhelming majority (92%) say that if countries like the UK and Sweden can significantly reduce poverty, so can Canada. Three-quarters of Canadians (77%) say that the lack of affordable child care is a serious problem in Canada today and 83% think that governments have an important role to play in solving this problem.

We recognize that at this time the state of the economy is paramount and will dominate debate. While investments in physical infrastructure projects will be an important component, we believe that public investments in the social infrastructure can and should be an equally important component in addressing economic uncertainty. Social investments help stabilize markets and protect families from further hardship as consumption by Canadians accounts for 57% of the economy. Investments in low and modest income families are particularly strategic because they use their money in local communities to pay rent and purchase food and other necessities which help grow local economies.

It is more important than ever that our governments take the lead. We are counting on you and the leaders of the opposition parties to make sure that the children and families are at the forefront when addressing the problems facing Canada.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Laurel Rothman, National Coordinator, Campaign 2000

Signed on behalf of members of Campaign 2000 Steering Committee (in alphabetical order by last name):

- Sue Delanoy, Communities for Children, Sask.
- Jody Dellaire, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada
- Sid Frankel, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba
- Martha Friendly, Child Care Resource and Research Unit
- Randy Hatfield, Human Development Council, NB
- Wayne Helgason, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, MB
- Colin Hughes, Metro Toronto Campaign 2000/Children's Aid Society of Toronto
- John Kolkman, Edmonton Social Planning Council website: www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca
- Jacquie Maund, Ontario Campaign 2000
- Andrew Jackson, Canadian Labour Congress
- Adrienne Montani, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
- Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Public Interest Alberta
- Marvyn Novick, Professor Emeritus, Ryerson University
- Rob Rainer, National Anti Poverty Organization
- Pauline Raven, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Nova Scotia
- Simon Rosenblum, June Callwood Campaign Against Child Poverty
- Laurel Rothman, Campaign 2000 and Family Service Toronto
- Penelope Rowe, Community Services Council, Newfoundland and Labrador
- Helen Saravanamuttoo, Canadian Association of Social Workers
- Rebecca Siggner, Social Planning and Research Council, BC

cc:

The Hon. Stéphane Dion, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada

Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party

(1) Hennessy, T., & Yalnizyan, A. (October 2008). Ready for Leadership: Canadians' Perception of Poverty. Toronto, ON. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

(2) Author's calculations. Statistics Canada, Provincial and Territorial Economics Accounts, data tables catalogue 13-018-x. Table 2

