



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

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PETITION No.: **421-01518**

BY: **MR. OUELLETTE (WINNIPEG CENTRE)**

DATE: **JUNE 14, 2017**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE GINETTE PETITPAS TAYLOR**

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Response by the Minister of Finance

SIGNATURE  
Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Social benefits**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**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. The Government of Canada is making investments that will lay the foundation for inclusive economic growth that benefits all Canadians. These investments will strengthen our communities, and build a better quality of life for our children and grandchildren.

To that end, the Government of 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. If the Government is to tackle poverty and inequality and have real results, this work will need to be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback. That is why on September 2, 2016, the Government 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, Toronto, Winnipeg, Tisdale, Trois-Rivières and Yellowknife). All six communities selected 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 Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy. A final report outlining what was heard in all six communities will be released in the upcoming months.

The Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy will build upon a number of flagship measures that this government has undertaken to reduce poverty, including the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) and making important investments in childcare, affordable housing and seniors.

Supporting families and ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life is a priority of the Government of Canada. To this end, the Government introduced the CCB in July 2016, which 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. The CCB 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, with 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 since 2014.

Moreover, the Government recognizes that access to affordable, quality child care that is culturally appropriate is critical for parents and children. To help Canadian children get the best start in life and better support Canadian families, Budgets 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 Government of Canada 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.

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.

Budget 2017 proposes to invest more than \$11.2 billion over the next 11 years for initiatives designed to ensure that more Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. It provides \$3.2 billion to provinces and territories for a renewed federal-provincial-territorial partnership in housing to support key priorities for affordable housing, which include initiatives to support safe, independent living for Canada's seniors, persons with disabilities and other individuals requiring accessibility modifications.

Finally, the Government has made important investments to strengthen the Old Age Security (OAS) /Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) program and improve outcomes for Canadian seniors. In particular:

- Budget 2016 increased the GIS top-up benefit by up to \$947 annually starting in July 2016 for low-income single seniors, who are significantly more likely to live in poverty than seniors generally. This enhancement more than doubles the maximum GIS top-up benefit and represents a 10 percent increase in the total maximum GIS benefit available to low-income single seniors.
- Budget 2016 announced that the increase to the eligibility age for OAS and GIS benefits to 67 would be cancelled, which will put thousands of dollars back in the pockets of Canadians as they become seniors. These benefits are an important part of the retirement income of Canadians, particularly for lower-income seniors.
- Budget 2016 announced that benefits for couples living apart for reasons beyond their control will not be based on individual income rather than the couple's combined income. These couples will receive higher benefits in recognition of their higher costs of living and increased risk of living in poverty.

The Government will continue to monitor closely the developments in the recently announced Guaranteed Minimum Income pilots in Ontario and Quebec in order to learn from their conclusions and recommendations.