

August 13, 2018

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) adopted as policy in 2016 support for a basic income guarantee. Investments in a basic income guarantee program have proven to help alleviate poverty, support people in their efforts to participate in the economy, decrease societal costs, improve educational outcomes and improve the quality of life and sense of dignity, for individuals, families and children.

Income insecurity and poverty in Canada continue to grow as social assistance rates across Canada fall far short of income adequacy. Precarious employment is steadily rising, with automation and artificial intelligence playing an increased role, and working full time no longer provides assurance of living above the poverty line.

Today's economy is not the economy of our parents or grandparents. In the 1970s there were lots of good high-paying manufacturing jobs, job stability, and jobs that could support a household. Today we have a precarious job market – where many jobs are temporary, contract, short- or long-term – but not permanent; they don't come with pensions and few if any benefits.

The December 2009 Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, report "In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness" (Chair Hon. Art Eggleton and Deputy Chair Hon. Hugh Segal) recognized the "*emergence of a new and growing group not evidenced forty years ago – the 'working poor.'*" This report states that even when programs are working, the resulting income often still keeps people living in poverty, and at their worst, entraps people in poverty.

Some of the "In From the Margins" Senate Report conclusions were:

- Employment is no longer a sure route out of poverty.
- Past studies on mental health and population health have shown how health and poverty interact.
- Fundamentally, people do not want to live better in poverty, they want to get out of poverty.
- Poor people are excluded from opportunities most take for granted.
- Income programs are a patchwork, with "*hoops, mazes, and barriers.*"
- Lifting people out of poverty has to be the goal of policies and programs.
- We need to raise incomes of families raising children, to get children out of poverty.
- Many poor people are employed, but do not earn enough to support their families.
- More and more jobs – 40% of the total – are part-time or temporary.
- People cannot afford to live on the minimum wage the way it is.
- Even when programs are demonstrated to be successful and to meet identified community needs, too many resources are allocated to getting, keeping, and reporting on funding from government at all levels.

The cost of poverty is often quoted as \$75 billion/annually; the human cost of living in poverty is much harder to measure but we know the devastating results. In Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 book Where do we go from here: Chaos or Community? he advocated for a guaranteed annual income. *"The time has come for us to civilize ourselves by the total, direct and immediate abolition of poverty."* (Remembering Martin Luther King, Jr's, Solution to Poverty, Jordan Weissman, www.theatlantic.com, January 20, 2014) Dr. King also stated: *"The dignity of the individual will flourish when the decisions concerning his life are in his own hands, when he has the assurance his income is stable and certain, and when he knows that he has the means to seek self-improvement."*

NCWC is extremely disappointed at the short-sightedness of the Ontario government in cancelling the basic income pilot program just eighteen months into the three-year program after stating that they would continue it. A commitment had been made to these participants, many of whom were making great strides in improving their situations.

We strongly urge the federal government to ensure completion of what was the Ontario pilot project, and use the information gathered to develop a plan for all Canadians. In this way, not only will the participants' lives not be so unfairly disrupted, but we are sure the results from the program will replicate others, such as in Dauphin, Manitoba, in the 1970's, i.e., improvements and cost savings in areas of health, education and community wellbeing. These could then form a base upon which your government could build a forward-looking national program to meet current Canadian needs, in a fair, equitable, sustainable and humane way.

Sincerely,



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The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) has been the leading national voice of women for the past 125 years. A plaque has been erected in Allan Gardens in Toronto recognizing the establishment of NCWC as a National Historic Event. NCWC's initiatives have contributed significantly to the establishment of Canada's social welfare system, and the Council continues to work to improve the lives of women, children and society.