



To: The Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Dear Right Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Ministers:

### **LET ALL CHILDREN ACCESS CANADA CHILD BENEFITS**

As a Canadian organization with a mission to promote awareness of women's human rights, we are writing to express concern about the rise of child poverty and income inequalities in Canada, we ask you to extend the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) to all children in Canada regardless of their parents' immigration status.

Your Government has rightly put CCB as a centre piece of Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy. Since 2015, over 1 million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty, including 334,000 children.[1] We also commend you for introducing a one-time additional payment of \$300 per child during the pandemic to all families in receipt of CCB.

Yet not every child in Canada, and not every family in need, is eligible for CCB.

Under the *Income Tax Act*, to qualify for the CCB, the parent must be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, protected person, or a "temporary resident" who has lived in Canada for at least 18 months. Under the current immigration law, a temporary resident visa is granted to visitors and tourists. Excluded from accessing CCB are refugee claimants and other individuals who are living in Canada with precarious status – even if they are legally working and filing a personal income tax return. In some cases, these families have Canadian born children, but are still denied CCB because of the parents' immigration status.

It is fundamentally unfair to deny CCB to families who are working and contributing to Canada's economy based solely on their immigration status, while granting the same benefits to people who are visitors to Canada and may not even be paying any Canadian income tax. The denial of CCB to low income families on the basis of status constitutes a violation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and a breach of Canada's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ending the limitation on CCB would also cement Canada as an international leader in human rights. This would provide stability and agency for migrant labourers, often here to supply domestic and child care services for Canadian families. Extending this benefit to a historically marginalized group would not only set an example of equality and justice, but would make Canada a stable employer for foreign domestic labour upon which we rely, and an equitable alternative to the exploitation that can often plague people with precarious status. As women are still the primary caregivers for children in most Canadian families, the denial of CCB also has a disproportionate impact on women and reinforces pre-existing gendered poverty. Furthermore, as the vast majority of people with precarious immigration status are people of colour, this

exclusion adversely impacts racialized communities – the communities that already face a higher risk of poverty.

This discriminatory law is hurting women like [Natalie](#) and her children, who came to Canada to seek protection from gender based persecution. Natalie had to spend three years in a shelter while waiting for her refugee hearing. She received CCB for about a year, only to be told that she had to repay it all because she and her children did not deserve to receive it. Natalie's story is not unique. How many women and children have to suffer before our government takes action?

The federal government has committed to a rights-based approach to poverty reduction based on the principles of universality, non-discrimination and equality. It should not legislate discriminatory practices by unfairly tying a family's access to child benefits to the immigration status of the parents. These benefits have proven to lift children out of poverty and each child has an inherent right to access them.

The exclusions of CCB based on immigration status have been on our law books for years. It did not start with the current government. But we hope that it will end with you.

As we anticipate an end to the pandemic shut-down, your government has promised to build back our country better. Let's take the first step by removing immigration status as an eligibility requirement for CCB.

We look forward to your response and action to address this issue.

Sincerely,

The Institute for International Women's Rights - Manitoba

CC: The Honourable Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Opposition

CC: Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party

CC: Niki Ashton, MP for Churchill – Keewtinook Aski

CC: Daniel Blaikie, MP for Elmwood – Transcona

CC: Terry Duguid, MP for Winnipeg South

CC: Kevin Lamoureux, MP for Winnipeg North

CC: Candice Bergen, MP for Portage -Lisgar

CC: Jim Carr, MP for Winnipeg South Center

CC: Ted Falk, MP for Provencher

CC: Larry Maguire, MP for Brandon – Souris

CC: Dan Vandal, MP for Saint-Boniface – Saint Vital

CC: James Bezan, MP for Selkirk – Interlake – Eastman

CC: Raquel Dancho, MP for Kildonan – St. Paul

CC: Leah Gazan, MP for Winnipeg Center

CC: Dan Mazier, MP for Dauphin – Swan River – Neepawa

CC: Patricia Bovey, Senator for Manitoba

CC: Raymonde Gagné, Senator for Manitoba

CC: Mary Jane McCallum, Senator for Manitoba  
CC: Marilou McPhedran, Senator for Manitoba  
CC: Donald Neil Plett, Senator for Manitoba

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<https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/03/05/more-1-million-canadians-lifted-out-poverty>