



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The National Children's Agenda and the Speech from the Throne

Toronto - Monday 30 September 2002

Akaash Maharaj

has released the following statement on the Speech from the Throne:

"I am particularly heartened by our government's re-affirmation of our commitment to the National Children's Agenda in the Speech from the Throne.

"In 1989, when the incidence of child poverty stood at 15.3%, Parliament unanimously moved, 'to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating child poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000'. Yet, by the end of the Conservatives' mandate in 1993, the rate had soared to 21.3%. Over the past nine years, our government has held the line at 18.5%, but this still leaves close to one in five Canadian children living in a state of deprivation.

"This is an outrage not only against our values of social justice, but also against our commitments to long term national prosperity.

"As the most vulnerable members of society, and the most innocent of the calamities that befall them, children have the right of first call on society's resources. Moreover, it is universally understood that early intervention to improve the conditions of childhood is the most efficient and effective way of maximising the likelihood of adults achieving their full potentials: the Mustard report famously concluded that every dollar spent improving the lot of children at risk saves seven dollars in later social costs.

"Accordingly, the elimination of child poverty is both a moral and economic imperative.

"I believe that our government's ability to deliver on this commitment will be the standard by which history will judge our Party."

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