



END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

MEDIA RELEASE

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2008 Report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario

Toronto - Ontario's child poverty rate is stubbornly high and will get far worse if the province plunges into a recession, says a report by Ontario Campaign 2000.

Now More Than Ever: Ontario Needs a Strong Poverty Reduction Strategy, shows Ontario's child poverty rate remained high, at 11.8 per cent, during economic growth.

"We're concerned that an economic downturn will mean more families and children falling into poverty," says Jacquie Maund, Coordinator of Ontario Campaign 2000. "Now, more than ever, we need the Ontario government to make a solid financial downpayment on a comprehensive poverty reduction plan."

The report shows 324,000 Ontario children are living in poverty, with the average low-income family living \$7,100 below the poverty line. Almost half (45%) of low-income children live in families with at least one parent working full-time all year, but still living in poverty.

"These aren't just numbers," says Dr. Michael Rachlis, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. "Many poor Ontarians cannot afford needed drug and dental care. The poor are at much greater risk for developing illnesses including heart disease, diabetes, and almost all forms of cancer. Far too many poor Ontarians develop preventable conditions which mean they're unable to provide for themselves and their families. Reducing poverty now will pay large health and economic dividends in the future."

The report outlines five areas for the Ontario government to reduce child and family poverty: Raise the minimum wage to \$11 by 2011 with indexation and develop a Good Jobs Strategy; fix social assistance, increase and index rates to support people moving out of poverty; fund more affordable housing, child care spaces, and post-secondary education and training.

October 2008 Environics polling shows 89 per cent of Ontarians would be proud if their Premier took leadership to reduce poverty. And 81 per cent believe a recession is all the more reason to help poor Ontarians.

"If Ontario committed to reduce poverty by 25 per cent in five years, this would lift at least 80,000 children out of poverty by 2012," says Maund. "It's time to act."

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To view the report see www.campaign2000.ca/on/index.html