



Canada Told to Stop Failing Its Children

Toronto – The Canadian government keeps failing to help children and families living on low-income, according to Campaign 2000's 20th Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada. Over two decades after the unanimous resolution in the House of Commons to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, Canadian families are still waiting to see sustained action from the federal government on its commitment to ensure economic security for all children across Canada.

The 2011 Report Card, *Revisiting Family Security in Insecure Times*, explores child poverty, the conditions it creates, and the issues faced by families living on low-income. The report finds that the number of children living in poverty has only decreased by 20% in 20 years. With 639,000 children still living in poverty, proactive social policies will need to be introduced and implemented immediately if Canada is to avoid an increase in the depth and rate of poverty.

"This is the moment for our government leaders to demonstrate their commitment to working together to eradicate poverty. Thousands of children in Canada live in poverty because their families are unable to find a good job, earn a decent wage and meet even the most basic expenses like housing and food. Every year I am shocked by the lack of progress made in poverty eradication. How has our government let 1 in 10 children continue to live in poverty? It is heartbreaking that 38% of food bank users in Canada are children under 18 yet children are only about 22% of the population. How can our government allow thousands of children to go hungry?"

"We may be subject to the effects of the 2008 recession just now – but the reality is that Canada's economy has more than doubled in size since the 1989 resolution in the House of Commons to end child poverty, yet the incomes of families at the bottom have virtually remained unchanged. The gap between rich and poor families has continued to widen, and low-income and average-income families are left struggling to keep up.

"We have the evidence, we have the united voices of people who have experienced poverty and we have even come up with the policies that will help families thrive – we've done all the work. All we're asking from the federal government is to take action and implement change" says Campaign 2000's National Coordinator, Laurel Rothman.

According to Adrienne Montani of First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and Campaign 2000 Steering Committee member, "There is a growing recognition within Canada and internationally that persistent poverty is a serious health issue that costs all of us. This year as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child conducts its third review of Canada's implementation of children's rights, the gaps in honouring the rights of children and in the weak or non-existent policies to help children thrive are even more apparent. It's shameful that Canada ranks poorly on child poverty among OECD nations. Poverty erodes the social fabric of communities and is a moral blight on the democratic integrity of nations."

"It is encouraging to see that all but three provinces have or will adopt a poverty reduction strategy. The results from Newfoundland Labrador and Québec who were the first to set targets and implement changes have been positive. We need the federal government to adopt a federal poverty reduction plan in conjunction with provinces, territories, First Nations governments, the community sector, the private sector and in consultation with people who have lived experience of poverty. Such a plan would ensure that no one is better off in one province

compared to another and that all Canadians can live with dignity” adds Sid Frankel, board member of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

“All Canadians will benefit from poverty reduction and eventual eradication,” says Margaret Hancock of Family Service Toronto. “By sharing responsibility as a society to prevent child and family poverty, we can reduce costs for health, education and criminal justice services,” she added.

The report card’s key findings, available at www.campaign2000.ca, show Canada has a long way to go to prevent and reduce poverty:

- One in 10 children still lives in poverty in Canada. It’s worse for children living in First Nations communities: 1 in 4 grow up in poverty.
- Employment is not always an assured pathway out of poverty: 1 in 3 low-income children lives in families where at least one parent works full-time year round and 1 in 4 workers is in a low-wage job earning less than \$13.32 per hour.
- Public investments make a difference: without the income transfers in 2009, 1 in 4 children would have lived in poverty. Canada’s public programs brought the child poverty rate down to 14% (LICO Before-Tax).
- Although the rapid rise in the number of working mothers is one of the key social changes of the last century, Canada still has no societal response to the need for child care. Less than 1 in 5 children (0 -12 years) has access to a regulated child care space.
- Housing is the single largest expense for low- and modest-income families. One in 4 households pays more than 30% of their income on housing. And 750,000 children (under 15 years) live in housing that is either unaffordable, substandard, overcrowded or all three.

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Provincial Report Cards on Child and Family Poverty were also released today in BC, Alberta, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Manitoba released its report card in September. The Ontario report will be released in early 2012. All reports are available at www.campaign2000.ca.

Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working to end child and family poverty in Canada. www.campaign2000.ca

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