

# **ENDING CHILD POVERTY IN ONTARIO: Where are we at and what can we do?**



**Best Start Conference**

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**[www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)**

# What is Campaign 2000?

- A national non partisan coalition of 120 partners working to end child poverty in Canada
- Formed in 1991, our name dates from 1989 unanimous House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by 2000
- Mandate: research, public education, advocacy to build public and political support for policies to end child & family poverty

# What is the impact of poverty on children?

Children who live in persistent poverty are:

- More likely to have poor health: low birth weight, asthma, diabetes, malnutrition
- Less likely to do well at school: lower academic performance in reading, writing, math, science
- More likely to have emotional and anxiety problems, aggressive behavioural problems, hyperactivity
- As adults, more likely to have low paid work and periods of unemployment

# What are the latest figures on child poverty?

## Canada:

- **Almost 1 in every 9 children live in poverty (2006 after tax LICO) – the same as in 1989.**
- **Canada ranks a poor 19<sup>th</sup> out of 26 OECD countries in terms of child poverty rate.**

## Ontario:

- **Child poverty rate of 11.8% (2006) during good economic times.**
- **Rate for children in Aboriginal, racialized, new immigrant, lone mother families is at least double the provincial poverty rate**
- **Average low income family is very poor: lives \$7,100 below the poverty line**
- **High number of working poor families: 45% of low income children in families with parent/s who are working full time/full year.**

# Why the persistence of child & family poverty during good economic times?

- Our weakened social safety net.
  - Only 29% of unemployed in Ontario receive EI.
  - Social assistance benefits have declined by 43% since 1994 (inflation adjusted).
- Labour market changes.
  - Minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation.
  - Growth of temp, contract, part-time, self employed jobs: 37% of all Canadian jobs are “precarious”.

# Campaign 2000 recommendations:

- Call for national & provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy: multi-year plan with targets, timetable, funding, & tracking.
- Target: 25% reduction in child poverty rate in 5 yrs & 50% reduction in 10 yrs, with goal of ending poverty within a generation.
- Need strategy with
  - ✓ Good jobs at living wages;
  - ✓ Strong social safety net;
  - ✓ Access to early learning & child care;
  - ✓ Affordable housing;
  - ✓ Accessible education & training

# Progress: Ontario's new Poverty Reduction Strategy

- **Announced December '08, Ontario has committed to 25% cut in child poverty over 5 years**
- **Identifies poverty measure & indicators to track results**
- **Spring '09 anti poverty legislation with annual reporting on progress**
- **Increased Ontario Child Benefit; review of social assistance**
- **Affordable Housing review 2009**
- **New Temp Agency legislation & employment standards enforcement**
- **Full day learning for 4 & 5yr olds**

# What actions can you take?

Keep the pressure up to ensure gov't commits sufficient budget funding to meet the target.

- Email your MPP to show support & call for budget investments
- Email Finance Minister Duncan urging investment in spring budget
- Join '25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction' [www.25in5.ca](http://www.25in5.ca) to get updates & action alerts
- Send letter to local paper re links you see between child poverty, health, strong community.
- Become part of Campaign 2000 local MP/MPP lobby meetings