

# CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN ONTARIO: THE BIG PICTURE



Best Start Forum  
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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's health?

Children who live in persistent poverty are:

- More likely to have: low birth weights, asthma, diabetes, malnutrition
- More likely to have a disability, and less able to access medical & community supports
- More likely to experience exposure to emotional abuse, neglect and sexual abuse
- Unlikely to have benefit plans for prescription drugs, vision and dental care.

# What are some of the long term impacts of poverty on children?

- 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
- As adults, more likely to experience addictions, mental health difficulties, physical disabilities, premature death

# What are the latest figures on child poverty?

## Canada:

- Almost 1 in every 10 children live in poverty
- Canada ranks a poor 13<sup>th</sup> out of 17 OECD countries in terms of child poverty rate.

## Ontario:

- Child poverty rate of 11.7% (2007). Almost 1 in every 9 children.
- Rate for children in Aboriginal, racialized, new immigrant, lone mother families is about double the provincial child poverty rate
- High number of working poor families: 34% of low income children in families with parent/s who are working equivalent of full time/full year.

# What does it mean to be poor in Canada?

- Not being able to get dental care if needed
- Not eating fresh fruits & vegetables daily
- Not eating meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent at least every 2<sup>nd</sup> day
- Having pests like cockroaches in your home
- Not being able to get around your community by car or transit

# Why the persistence of child & family poverty?

- Weakened social safety net.
  - Only 30% of unemployed in Ontario receive EI.
  - Social assistance benefits are far below poverty line.
- Getting a job doesn't guarantee poverty escape.
  - Growth of temp, contract, part-time, self employed jobs: 37% of all Canadian jobs are "precarious".
- Systemic discrimination.
  - Obstacles faced by Aboriginals, single mothers, racialized communities

# Why the persistence of family poverty?

- High cost of housing
  - 45% of Ontario tenants spend over 30% of income on housing
- Limited access to affordable child care
  - quality regulated child care for only 14% of children

# 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 reduce child poverty by 25% by 2013**
- **Spring '09: all parties approved new anti poverty legislation, with annual reporting on progress**
- **Increased Ontario Child Benefit; planned review of social assistance**
- **Developing Affordable Housing Strategy**
- **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 child poverty reduction target.

- Email your MPP to show support & call for budget investments
- [www.waitingforchildcare.ca](http://www.waitingforchildcare.ca) to email Premier to save childcare subsidies
- 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