

# Province needs to do more to fight child poverty [CA-ON] <sup>[1]</sup>

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Ontario is the child poverty capital of Canada. Campaign 2000, a coalition of social action groups devoted to ending child poverty, reports 345,000 Ontario children live below the poverty line. What's most troubling is the fact that a job is no answer to escaping poverty. The most recent available figures show that 41 per cent of all low-income children live in families where at least one parent had a full-time job.

There is hope. We can win the fight against child poverty. All we need is leadership and some political will from all levels of government. In Sudbury, we've seen this leadership with city councillors passing resolutions in support of public, non-profit child care and an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. Now, we need the provincial government to act.

A good start would be real action to sustain Ontario's vanishing manufacturing and forestry jobs. Setting an industrial hydro rate would lower energy costs for our major employers, sustain jobs and sustain communities that have been badly hurt by high energy costs. A government "Buy Ontario" policy would sustain jobs by giving preferred treatment to goods manufactured in Ontario.

Finally, a jobs commissioner would bring labour, management and government to the table to avert plant closures and job losses.

Other elements of a poverty reduction strategy include a \$10 minimum wage now. That would ensure working people get a fair day's pay for a hard day's work. A woman working 40 hours a week at \$8 an hour earns \$320 a week or \$16,640 a year. Statistics Canada estimates that a single person needs \$18,260 to escape poverty in most urban cities. If that person has two children she has to earn \$27,965 to lift her family out of poverty. At the current minimum wage, she would have to work 67 hours a week to earn that much. Also important are more not-for-profit child care spaces, more affordable housing and ending the clawback of National Child Benefit Supplement that takes \$1,500 away from low-income families - all of them practical, affordable measures that would make a real difference in the lives of low-income children across Ontario.

Finally, what Ontario needs is a much more ambitious public dental care plan to help the thousands of Ontarians who can't afford dental coverage. The government has put forward a plan that leaves out thousands of needy Ontarians. A serious dental plan should cover all low-income Ontarians without coverage and all children regardless of their family's income.

Ending poverty can be more than a wish. We are a prosperous society. We have the resources that we need to lift children and their families out of poverty. Working together, let's make the eradication of child poverty a reality.

-reprinted from The Sudbury Star

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