

Child poverty shames Ontario [CA-ON] ^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS

To its shame, Ontario is now the "child poverty centre" of Canada.

That stark statement, contained in a damning report to be released today by the Social Planning Network of Ontario on the level of poverty in this province, should concern every politician running for office in the Oct. 10 election. And every voter should consider that finding as they decide which party to support in the election.

According to the group, 345,000 Ontario children under the age of 18 are now living in poverty. That amounts to 44 per cent of all children in poverty in Canada, the highest percentage ever. The report comes on the heels of another report released yesterday by Campaign 2000, a coalition that fights child poverty, which suggested governments are failing children across the country.

...

With a provincial election in full swing, now is the time when all three major political parties should spell out in detail how they will tackle poverty in Ontario.

As the Star has urged, that strategy should include a \$10 an hour minimum wage effective immediately, an enrichment of the national child benefit, reasonable welfare benefits, a national child-care program that makes child care affordable for poor working parents, a reform of the Employment Insurance system to better protect Canadians who lose a job, and an effective affordable housing program.

And the goal of the strategy should be to lower poverty rates in Ontario and across Canada by 25 per cent within five years.

This target is now being proposed by a growing number of anti-poverty organizations, many of which are planning public and information forums throughout Ontario during the current election.

While each group has different targets and proposals on how best to tackle poverty in the province, as well as in Canada, they are united in their belief that for the last decade, governments have focused too much attention on cutting taxes and too little on helping the poor.

Now, the pressure is mounting, especially in Ontario, to address this appalling social problem. With an election barely four weeks away, it is time all politicians spelled out in detail their poverty reduction plan.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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