

Bold steps needed on child poverty [CA-ON] ^[1]

Editorial

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EXCERPTS

All children in low-income families deserve a fair and decent start in life, whether their parents struggle in low-wage jobs or are forced by circumstances to rely on welfare to make ends meet.

But in Ontario, unlike many other provinces, children in welfare families are unfairly punished by a provincial policy that denies their families a small amount of money - just \$122 a month for each child - that would go a long way to help buy food, clothing and pay the rent.

Now, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara has a golden opportunity to right this wrong in his coming provincial budget, expected in April or early May, by taking the bold step of introducing an Ontario Child Benefit as part of a comprehensive and realistic poverty reduction strategy.

Sorbara said earlier this month he is looking at a "basket of tools" to address widespread poverty in this province.

In the Star's view, that basket should include raising the minimum wage to \$10 an hour from \$8 and bringing in a new Ontario Child Benefit to help both those on welfare and the working poor, a move that could then lead to the elimination of Ontario's current clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement, which the Liberals pledged to do in the 2003 provincial election campaign.

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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