

Aboriginal, immigrant kids suffer in poverty [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Child poverty rates for aboriginal, immigrant, and visible minority children are twice the national rate, according to an annual Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada.

The report, entitled Decision Time for Canada: Let's Make Poverty History, says 49 per cent of children in recent immigrant families are poor, as are 40 per cent of off-reserve aboriginal children.

As well, 33 per cent of minority children and 28 per cent of children with disabilities live in poverty. That is compared to the national rate of 18 per cent.

Having a stable job also does not appear to help. The report says 48 per cent of all poor children live in families with parents who are employed year-round.

The report, prepared by the coalition Campaign 2000, is being released as the first ministers prepare to meet in Kelowna, B.C., to discuss aboriginal issues.

"Canada's economy is strong with the jobless rate and corporate profits at their best levels in 30 years, and healthy federal surpluses forecast for the next five," said Laurel Rothman, national co-ordinator of Campaign 2000.

The gap between the richest and poorest families has also widened. And poor families are very poor. They stretch an average annual salary of \$14,875 to cover costs totally close to \$25,000 in a large city.

The report also found that 41 per cent of poor children relied on food banks last year, and that the highest incidence of child poverty was in British Columbia, at 23.9 per cent.

The report recommends:

- Increasing Ontario's minimum wage to \$10 an hour
- Boosting the maximum federal child benefit to \$4,900 a year from its current \$3,240
- Hiking social assistance amounts
- Establishing more affordable housing

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