

GTA's harsh realities ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

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Today, we turn the spotlight on child poverty, a troubling situation that has increased across the city. In fact, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto recently called the GTA the child poverty capital of Ontario. About 50 per cent of Ontario children living in poverty are in the Greater Toronto Area.

And it's not solely an inner city issue; children in all parts of the GTA are living in poverty. For instance, from 1990 to 2005, child poverty in Mississauga jumped to 20 per cent from 12. In Brampton, child poverty rose to 18 per cent from 10.

Life for these children is often plagued by stress and hardship. Many feel isolated and excluded.

"It's largely about not having enough. It's about food insecurity, struggles to pay rent, living with being excluded from lots of things that we take for granted as being pretty normal for most kids' growth," says Colin Hughes, a community development worker with the Children's Aid Society's community development and prevention program.

"There are certainly children who are homeless, living in shelters with their families. They are really experiencing some of the harsher realities because they become dislocated from their homes, communities and schools."

Most troubling for Hughes, in 1989, the House of Commons unanimously resolved to eliminate child poverty by 2000. That date has come and gone and the child poverty rates in Canada, and Toronto in particular, have escalated.

This is attributed to a lack of affordable housing, lack of quality child care and inadequate child benefits.

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