

# Child poverty rates in Canada, Ontario remain high <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Almost a generation after Ottawa's vow to eradicate child poverty by 2000, national and provincial report cards show very little sustained progress.

One in seven Canadian children - or 967,000 - still lives in a low-income household, according to Campaign 2000 in its annual report being released Tuesday, the 24th anniversary of the historic federal pledge.

In Ontario, child poverty rates mirror the national average, with about 371,000 children living in poor households, says the group's provincial report card, which is also being released Tuesday.

Alarming, 38.2 per cent of children of single mothers in Ontario are living in poverty.

"As we approach 25 years since the promise to end child poverty in Canada, there's a fork in the road," said Laurel Rothman, national co-ordinator of Campaign 2000, a coalition of labour and anti-poverty groups dedicated to holding politicians to account.

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National child poverty numbers were down slightly from 2010 when 979,000 were living in poverty. But they are still higher than in 1989 when the House of Commons unanimously resolved to end child poverty by the millennium. At that time there were 912,000 children living in poverty, the report notes.

The group praises Queen's Park for boosting its provincial child benefit and continuing to raise the minimum wage despite the 2008 global recession. As a result of those measures, child poverty in the province has declined by 9.2 per cent since then.

But the McGuinty government's austerity budget of 2012 has put many of those gains at risk, said Anita Khanna of Ontario Campaign 2000.

"In order to stop poverty's devastating impacts on our communities, we need a renewed all-party commitment to poverty reduction and eradication through investment," the Ontario report says.

"Low-income Ontario families need investments that will lift them out of poverty such as decent employment, improved child benefits, affordable housing options, livable social assistance rates and high quality, reliable child care services," the report says.

Statistics Canada considers families to be living in low income when their income falls below 50 per cent of the median household income, after taxes. The so-called low income measure in 2011 for a single parent with one child was \$28,185 after taxes. Campaign 2000 and Ontario have adopted the measure to gauge progress on poverty reduction.

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Federally, Campaign 2000 is calling on Ottawa to draft a national strategy to eliminate poverty, develop a long-term affordable housing plan and help build a national child-care system. It wants national child benefits for low-income families boosted from \$3,654 to \$5,400 annually per child and changes to personal taxes that reduce income inequality.

In Ontario, advocates want the province's next five-year poverty reduction strategy to cut child poverty by 50 per cent. They are also calling for a \$500 increase to the \$1,310 Ontario Child Benefit by 2018, a \$14 minimum wage and a \$100-a-month rate hike for single people on welfare. Once these goals have been achieved, they should be indexed to inflation, group adds.

- reprinted from Toronto Star

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[3]</sup>

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