

Synopsis:

Poverty Reduction in an Age of Uncertainty and Change: 2011 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario Campaign 2000

Report Title: Poverty Reduction in an Age of Uncertainty and Change: 2011 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada

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Publication date: 6 February 2012

Retrieved from:

http://www.campaign2000.ca/Ontario/reportcards/2011Ont.%20Report%20Card_Feb2012.pdf

On February 6, 2012, Campaign Ontario 2000, a cross Ontario coalition of over 60 organizations committed to working together to end child and family poverty in Canada, released its 2011 report on child and family poverty in Ontario.

Childhood Poverty in Ontario

Key Findings:

- The child poverty rate in Ontario was 14.6% (LIM after tax) in 2009, a 4.6% decrease over the year before. This translates into 19,000 fewer children under the age of 18 living in poverty in Ontario in 2009 compared to 2008.
- With 393,000, or 1 in every 7 children still living in poverty in Ontario, at least 71,000 more children need to be lifted out of poverty in order for the current poverty reduction target of 25% (by 2013) to be realized.
- In 2009, more than 1 in 3 children in female lone-parent families lived in poverty, compared to 1 in 9 children in two-parent families.
- The unemployment rate for Ontario in December 2011 stood at 7.7%, compared to a national average of 7.5%.
- The unemployment rate for youth between 15 and 24 years of age in Ontario increased to 15.6% in December 2011, more than double the provincial rate of 7.7%.
- Youth who do find employment have to contend with average wages that are as low as \$386.49 a week.

- Of those receiving OW, 30% are sole support parents – the vast majority of these being lone mothers.
- Current social assistance rates are seriously inadequate. As of December 2011, a single parent on OW with one young child receives \$931 a month plus a maximum Ontario Child Benefit of \$92 – if we include provincial and federal child benefits and tax credits; these families live on \$9,122 less than the low income measure.
- 37.7% of children and youth referred for mental health treatment in Ontario in 2010 were from households with an annual family income of \$30,000 or less.
- In 2009, 5% of Ontario households in deep poverty with children under 18 lived spent 40% of their income on housing

Key Recommendations:

- Despite austerity rhetoric, the Ontario government must prioritize poverty reduction in the 2012 budget and work towards the eradication of child and family poverty.
- The Ontario government must increase the minimum wage to \$11/hour in 2012 & fully index it to inflation.
- The Ontario government must improve the delivery of social assistance. The government can immediately start making changes to the current system by implementing the short-term recommendations made by the *Social Assistance Review Advisory Council* even before the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario releases its final report in summer 2012
- The Ontario government must improve the current Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, introducing targets and timelines and ensuring that it responds to the immediate needs of families and housing providers in Ontario.