

MEDIA RELEASE

Ontario Children Can't Wait

High rates of poverty among children at half way mark of Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, November 24, 2016

TORONTO – Ontario children continue to face high rates of poverty in Ontario. Ontario Campaign 2000's 2016 Report Card, "The Time To Act Is Now: Ontario Children Can't Wait" reports one in six (18.8%) children under 18 and one in five (20.4%) children under six in Ontario live in poverty in the province.

"Every child in the province should have a safe home to sleep in, enough food to eat and a childhood free from discrimination, ill health and poverty" says Jessica Mustachi, Ontario Campaign 2000 Coordinator.

"The time for action is now."

2016 marks the half-way point of the Ontario government's second Poverty Reduction Strategy.

"The facts speak for themselves: over 300,000 Ontario families living in poverty; 335,000 people in Ontario forced to rely on food banks; over 90,000 households in Toronto alone waiting, often for years, for an affordable apartment," says Chris Pullenayegem from ISARC Faith communities in action against poverty.

"Far more needs to be done to make Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy real."

As the costs of housing, hydro, food, school supplies and health care costs such as prescription drugs continue to rise, families across the province continue to struggle to make ends meet. Coupled with the increasing rate of precarious work and low paying jobs, Ontario families with children face an uphill battle to pay for their basic needs. Almost one in seven families live in poverty, while a staggering 30.4% of lone parent families in the province live in poverty.

"The province must increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, update our labour laws and expand protection to workers in precarious work to ensure paid work leads families out of poverty instead of keeping them there" says Deena Ladd from Worker's Action Centre.

The report urges the Ontario government to act now to implement much needed policy changes to lift families out of poverty and eradicate child poverty in the province. Eradicating child and family poverty is possible and the government must act by creating safe and affordable housing, good jobs, and affordable high quality child care and increasing the minimum wage, Ontario Child Benefit and social assistance rates.

Ontario Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, network of over 70 organizations working collaboratively to end child and family poverty. It is a partner coalition of Campaign 2000 a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partner organizations committed to working to end child and family poverty nationally.

Ontario Campaign 2000's Report Card is being released in coordination with the 2016 National Report Card and report cards from provinces across the country including; Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. Ontario provincial and national contacts are listed below.

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Report available on November 24 at <http://www.campaign2000.ca>

Porte-parole français disponible

To arrange an interview with any of these speakers or a parent with lived experience, please contact the Ontario Report Card Contact below.

Ontario Report Card Contacts (English and French)

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BACKGROUNDER:

Key Findings from the 2016 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario, *The TIME TO ACT IS NOW: Ontario Children Can't Wait*:

- 1 in 6 Children under 18 live in poverty in Ontario (513,850)
- 1 in 5 Children under 6 live in poverty in Ontario (174,250)
- 30.4% of lone-parent families live in poverty
- Annual child care expenses (\$20,000) slightly lower than annual minimum wage
- More than 1 in 6 children under 18 live in food insecure households in Ontario, lacking adequate and secure access to food, due to financial constraints.
- Tuition fees have increased 3.2% for undergraduate students and 2.6% for graduate students in Ontario
- 31% of households on waiting list for Rent Geared to Income are families with children.