



CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
ONTARIO OFFICE

EMBARGOED TILL 12:01 AM February 14, 2023

Ontario could reduce child poverty in a hurry if it learned the lessons of COVID-19: report

OTTAWA—Child and family poverty rates fell in 2020 thanks to nearly \$35 billion in income support to Ontario households, 99 per cent of which came from federal programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). This is the finding of a new report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Ontario Office (CCPA-ON).

Poverty in the Midst of COVID-19 examines the correlation between lowered child and family poverty rates in 2020 and COVID-related assistance. The number of children in poverty in Ontario fell from 314,000 to 153,000 that year, based on Canada's official poverty measure and as reflected in the poverty maps of Toronto, Ottawa, and Ontario, included in the report.

"The most obvious lesson of the pandemic is that poverty, including child poverty, can be reduced quickly if adequate government support is available," says report co-author and CCPA-ON senior researcher, Ricardo Tranjan. "With inflation now pushing seven per cent and Ontarians going hungry, the question is, why aren't governments taking action today when COVID-19 has shown them what works?"

Many factors contribute to persistent poverty in Ontario and underscore the need for a significant expansion of support. They include:

- Provincial social assistance rates that keep individuals and families in deep poverty
- Low minimum-wage rates that keep full-time workers below the poverty line
- Disproportionately higher poverty rates among Indigenous and racialized communities
- Similarly higher poverty rates among lone-parent families, particularly those led by women

"Looking at Statistics Canada projections,, we have every reason to believe that poverty rates in Ontario rose in 2021 and 2022," Tranjan said. "Yet Ontario remains a rich province in a rich country. Canada's economy is growing faster than in any other G-7 nation, and provincially, Queen's Park ran a healthy budget surplus last year and is likely to do the same in 2022-23.

"If there was ever a time to tackle poverty in Ontario, that time is now."

Poverty in the Midst of COVID-19 is available at: <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/.....>

-30-

For more information and interviews please contact Amanda Klang, CCPA Senior Communications Specialist (Media & PR) at amanda@policyalternatives.ca or cell: 514 996 3515