

## Child and family poverty on the rise in Ontario, immediate action from decision-makers needed

**For Immediate Release** – Ontario Campaign 2000 is a provincial coalition of over 70 partner organizations committed to eradicating child and family poverty in Ontario. The coalition works to increase public awareness of the levels and consequences of child and family poverty by publishing research on the indicators of child poverty and developing public education resources. Their latest report documents the reality of child and family poverty in Ontario.

This year's report card examines the shift in direction between lowered child and family poverty rates in 2020 and the increase in poverty in 2021. The number of children in poverty in Ontario fell from 17.6 % to 13.4 % between 2019-2020, largely as a result of temporary federal assistance, and then increased to 16% (449, 380 children) in 2021.

"It's troubling to see such an upswing in child and family poverty levels in 2021 and it's not unique to just Ontario, but nationwide," said Mithilen Mathipalan, Ontario Coordinator for Campaign 2000. "Poverty is a policy choice, and with effective public policy and program interventions, we can choose to reduce child and family poverty and ultimately eradicate poverty in our lifetime."

The new provincial report, *Envisioning a Poverty-Free Ontario*, finds that many factors contribute to a cycle of persistent child and family poverty rates. They include:

- Inadequate minimum wage rates keep workers below the poverty line.
- Disproportionately higher poverty rates among Indigenous and racialized communities; more specifically women from these communities, due to historical systemic discrimination.
- Provincial social assistance rates keep individuals and families in a consistent cycle of poverty.
- Higher poverty rates among lone-parent households, particularly those led by women.
- Lack of investment and heightened barriers to public health further push families into poverty.
- A lack of access to childcare hinders parents, especially mothers, from joining the workforce, limiting their income potential and contributing to poverty.
- A shortage of affordable housing choices in Ontario leads to increased housing costs, forcing families to allocate a significant portion of their income to housing expenses. A lack of affordable and adequate living conditions perpetuates a cycle of poverty by limiting economic mobility and opportunities for affected families.

"Low social assistance rates are keeping Ontarians trapped in poverty," said Asif Khan, Research and Policy Analyst at the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC). "Both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates need to be at least doubled in order to give people living on social assistance a fighting chance to live a healthy, stable life free from poverty."

The lesson of the pandemic is clear: not only can government action reduce the poverty rate, but it can do so extremely quickly. With commitment from decision-makers, Ontario can take action to move children and families out of poverty.

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### CONTACT INFORMATION

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*Ontario Campaign 2000 is a provincial coalition of over 70 active partner organizations committed to eradicating child and family poverty in Ontario, hosted by Family Service Toronto. To download the 2023 report card or for more information, please visit <https://ontariocampaign2000.ca/>*