

## One in 6 Ontario children is poor: report

*toronto.ctv.ca*

One in six children in Ontario is poor and living in deeper poverty than 12 years ago, according to a report released Tuesday.

Campaign 2000, a coalition of 120 organizations, says nearly 500,000 children in the province live in families that are struggling to meet the rising costs of food, shelter and clothing.

The advocacy group says the child poverty rate has been steadily climbing since 2001 and is now at 17.4 per cent. The numbers are based on the latest figures from Statistics Canada.

"The benefits of a strong Ontario economy are not trickling down to lift Ontario's most vulnerable families and children out of poverty," says Jacquie Maund, co-ordinator of Ontario Campaign 2000.

"More low income parents are in the workforce, but they are working poor -- unable to find jobs with sufficient pay, hours and benefits to lift their families out of poverty."

Some 132,000 Ontario children rely on food banks each month, the report says.

Poverty is most prevalent for immigrant, minority and aboriginal families, according to the annual report card.

Campaign 2000 is calling on all Ontario political parties to commit to developing a poverty reduction strategy.

The group says Quebec and Newfoundland each have provincial poverty reduction strategies, and Nova Scotia recently established an all-party commission to develop a plan.

Although praising the McGuinty Liberals for raising the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, the coalition is calling for the minimum wage to rise to \$10 an hour.

The group also wants the provincial government to:

- End the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement;
- Index social assistance rates and increase them to meet the basic needs of recipients;
- Invest \$600 million in early learning and childcare; and
- Continue the investment of provincial funding to meet affordable housing commitments.