

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Introduction

Promises by governments to eradicate child poverty by 2000 have, so far, gone unfulfilled, dashing the hopes and prospects of hundreds of thousands of Ontario children and their parents for healthy, productive lives. New research indicates that the number of children living in low income families increased to nearly one in six children in Canada in 2002. As retired educators, who devoted our working lives to children from all economic levels, RTO/ERO members support action by government on several fronts.

Educational Programs

Adequate base funding for all components of a publicly funded education system is essential. Early Childhood, Special Needs, Nutrition, English as a Second Language, curriculum planning, meaningful apprenticeship, co-operative education and stay-in-school programs are but a few of the fundamental programs needed across the province. (see Education Position Paper)

Child Care

The need for affordable, accessible, subsidized child care programs with qualified, licensed providers continues to expand across the province. Before and after school programs and homework clubs offer a safe environment for children until the parents' work day is over. The provincial government has a responsibility to match the amount of money transferred to municipalities from the federal government for improvements to, and delivery of, quality child care.

Safety

Children deserve protection from internet predators, pedophiles and those who would prey with criminal intent on the young and vulnerable. Safety education, anti-bullying programs, closer surveillance and community awareness are all components of necessary programs to protect our children and grandchildren.

Support for Parents

Improvements to parental support in the form of amendments to workplace legislation, namely the end of 60-hour work week provisions and an increase in the minimum wage, have provided working parents with greater workplace safety, time and money to fulfill their parenting roles. RTO/ERO sees these as first steps in an improvement package to fight poverty within Ontario's families.

Conclusion

The addition of 50,000 new day care spots beginning in the fall of 2005 is an ambitious undertaking from the Best Start Plan. RTO/ERO supports these and other initiatives which will form useful building blocks in the action plan to reduce child poverty.

Questions

1. In what ways will you support funding for specialized educational programs for disadvantaged children?
2. To what extent is child care a priority for your Party?
3. What specific programs will you support to address children's safety issues?
4. What other programs do you propose to eradicate child poverty in Ontario?