

New study confirms Toronto as Child Poverty Capital of Canada

Impacts of proposed City cuts feared

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On the eve of potential cuts to city programs and services, a new report has found that Toronto has the highest percentage of children living in low-income families of any large urban area in Canada.

The report also reveals huge gendered, colour-coded, disability-based, family make-up and other disparities in family access to housing, food, transit, childcare and recreation.

“Despite Toronto’s booming housing market and significant wealth, more than one in four children is living in poverty,” said report co-author Michael Polanyi of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto. “Now is definitely not the time to reduce city spending on critical services and programs.”

Toronto City Council is considering cutting up to \$600 million in spending on City-funded programs and services such as community housing, transit, libraries and student nutrition, continuing a trend of service cuts over the past six years.

“We hope the report will put the 133,000 Toronto children living in poverty front-of-mind for Mayor Tory and Council as they debate the City budget,” said Sean Meagher, Executive Director of Social Planning Toronto. “All children deserve a fair start in life, not just those whose parents happen to have high incomes.”

Based on newly-released tax-filer data, the report found that 27% of Toronto children were living in low-income families in 2014, topping the list above Montreal (25%), Winnipeg (24%) and all other urban areas with over 500,000 residents.

The report found huge neighbourhood disparities in child poverty levels, which reflect other inequities. For example, Indigenous families, families of colour, new immigrant families, lone parent families and families with persons with disabilities are up to three times more at risk of living in poverty.

“When you cross Laird Avenue to go from Leaside to Thorncliffe, the child poverty rate increases from 4% to 52%,” said Jessica Mustachi of Family Services Toronto. “This

divide shows how we can and must do more to provide quality services to support low-income residents.”

The report also found that low-income children are struggling to succeed: children in schools in low-income neighbourhoods are less likely to be meeting provincial standards in Grade 3 math, reading and writing than children in higher-income schools.

The report was co-released by Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, Family Services Toronto (Ontario Campaign 2000), Social Planning Toronto, and Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change.

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Report available on November 14 at www.socialplanningtoronto.org

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