

For Immediate Release
November 20, 2008

Protecting the rights of children in Ontario during a sluggish economy

TORONTO – On National Child Day, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and its member agencies remind Ontarians to make our most vulnerable children and families a priority.

Many children and youth are denied the basics of a safe home, adequate food and clothing, necessary community supports and opportunities to develop.

- 40% of food bank clients in Ontario are children.
- One in six children in Ontario live in poverty.
- Over the past year, more than 77,000 allegations of abuse and neglect were investigated by Ontario's Children's Aid Societies (CASs). More than 27,000 children were in CAS care.
- Almost 40% of women assaulted by spouses said their children witnessed the violence; in many cases the violence was severe.
- One-third of children seeking mental health services in 2007 were still waiting at the end of the year.

"Today, we recognize the rights of all children to be protected. Despite the current economic environment, we must remain committed to securing a prosperous future for our children," said Jeanette Lewis, Executive Director, OACAS.

Children's Aid Societies support families when parents cannot provide proper care, housing and nutrition for a child. CASs must respond when a downturn in the economy affects children and families. Job loss, family stress, poverty and depression are among the causes of child abuse and neglect. Community social service programs and initiatives designed to support families coping with these stresses need to be sustained, especially during a slowing economy.

"When families face increasing hardships like unemployment, extreme financial need and housing crises, the programs and services they rely on must be available to support them," added Lewis. "As Canadians, we all promised to protect children from harm and ensure their safety. It is time we kept our promise to our most vulnerable citizens."

For more information, visit www.oacas.org

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