

For immediate release

Young families in Toronto face worst situation in 20 years, new reports reveal

TORONTO, July 22, 2004 - Toronto's young families have suffered a dramatic economic downturn compared to previous generations of young families. Job uncertainty, poverty, debt and cuts to social programs have dealt deep blows to the prospects of Toronto's young generation, especially affecting parents under 35 years of age.

Falling Fortunes: A Report on the Status of Young Families in Toronto, released today by Family Service Association of Toronto and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, reveals that the poverty rate for younger families with children increased by 56% between 1981 and 2001. In 2001, 38.1% of all young families with children in Toronto lived in poverty.

"After nearly seven years of economic growth, Toronto's young families still face serious roadblocks to making a good life for themselves and their children. Opportunities for permanent, full-time jobs are few and far between. At the same time, governments have not stepped up their investments in key services such as child care, housing, post-secondary education and income benefits," said Pedro Barata, project coordinator at FSA.

An accompanying report, entitled *Community Voices: Young Parents in Toronto Speak Out About Work, Community Services and Family Life*, gives voice to the day-to-day struggles of young families as gathered in focus groups throughout Toronto.

"The experience of today's younger families is fundamentally different from their predecessors who reaped the benefits of wide access to good jobs and expanding investments in social programs," says Beth Wilson, *Community Voices* coordinator. "Young families—especially lone parents, immigrant families and families in racialized communities—are facing enormous challenges to achieving a decent standard of living and building a foundation for prosperity for all of us."

To reverse the downward spiral that has gripped young families over the past two decades, the authors are calling for a Mayor's Summit and Task Force on Good Jobs as a catalyst to build solutions to young families' employment woes. They also recommend investments in income security programs and action to strengthen Toronto's community infrastructure of programs and supports.

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Family Service Association of Toronto (www.fsatoronto.com) is a non-profit, social service agency offering a wide range of multilingual counselling and support programs that reflect the needs of Toronto's diverse communities. FSA Toronto is a United Way member agency.

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (www.socialplanningtoronto.org) promotes independent social planning at the local and city-wide levels in order to improve the quality of life for all people in Toronto. FSA Toronto is a United Way member agency.

Media Contacts: Jo-Anne Liburd, 416-595-4045
Family Service Association of Toronto

John Campey, 416-351-0095 x260
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto