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# SUN News Ottawa & Region

Thu, April 27, 2006

## Report a call to action on youth issues

By NELLY ELAYOUBI, OTTAWA SUN



A new report by the Canadian Council on Social Development is calling on policy and decision makers to address children and youth issues before they become crises.

Carleton University student Peter Amponsah has been directly impacted by such a crisis -- gun violence in Toronto -- which he calls a "tease" for what lies ahead if proper programming isn't put in place here.

"There are many different cultures in Ottawa and if these cultures don't find a way to work with one another I think Ottawa may be seeing what Toronto has," he said.

Amponsah's friend, Jason Huxtable, was gunned down Aug. 30 while visiting a friend in a low-income neighbourhood in Toronto.

Amponsah, 20, has been a volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Ontario for about seven years, working with children and youth in low-income areas.

### 'THROUGH THE CRACKS'

"It is these groups that are lost, that are falling through the cracks," he said yesterday.

The report, called The Progress of Canada's Children and Youth 2006, highlights those trends.

Released yesterday at the Boys and Girls Club Britannia clubhouse, the report revealed 42% of immigrant kids are living in poverty, and among Native youth, poverty rates are almost twice the rate of non-Natives.

"Simply put, poor children are getting poorer. And one child in 17 ... stays in poverty for five years," said Louise Hanvey, lead researcher on the project.

Poverty rates are highest for children of single moms.

"Although there has been improvement between 1993 and 2001 for women who are heading families on their own ... the situation has deteriorated since then," Hanvey said.

### 'GROWING QUICKLY'

Scott Bradford, executive director of Ottawa's Boys and Girls Clubs, said it's important funding is ongoing

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for youth support organizations and that pilot projects are continued.

"We are growing very quickly and there are a lot of youth from immigrant backgrounds that are struggling and a place like this gives them a foothold," he said.

There needs to be a long-term strategy with all levels of government, he said. About 80% of his club's \$2.5-million annual costs comes from fundraising.

"Ottawa is a small community, it's growing quickly and it's soon going to have problems that the big communities have," he said.

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