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Many ways we can help working poor cope

Louise Hanvey, Canadian Council on Social Develop

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Letters to the Editor - Re: Look after our children (May 2, 2006) We were pleased to read your editorial based on our recent publication, *The Progress of Canada's Children and Youth 2006*.

We would like to draw your attention to one point where our numbers were misinterpreted. You stated that there had been a slight improvement in the proportion of poor children with at least one family member who had worked full-time for the entire year (one in three in 2003, compared to one in four in 1993). From the Council's perspective, this situation is deteriorating, not improving. A higher proportion of poor children are now poor despite parental employment. Given what research reveals about the effects of poverty on children, this is a disturbing trend.

Precarious employment in the form of temporary, part-time, contract and seasonal jobs is increasing. These non-standard forms of employment now make up 37 per cent of all jobs. This makes it much harder for many families to cobble together enough jobs with enough pay, hours and benefits to keep their heads above water. Even more discouraging, full-time jobs are less likely than in the past to protect families from poverty: one-third of poor children now live in families in which a family member works full-time for the entire year.

The solution to working poverty and poverty in general is multifaceted. More stable jobs, higher minimum wages, more accessible quality child care, and more affordable housing would all help to alleviate the pressures on lower-income working families.

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