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News

Wealth gap between rich, poor grows in Canada

AFP

Tuesday, November 05, 2002

OTTAWA (AFP) -- The gap in wealth between rich and poor is growing dramatically in Canada, according to a non-governmental report released yesterday.

According to the sixth annual report from the not-for-profit Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), Canadian families -- whose wealth ranked them in the top 20 per cent of a nationwide scale -- boosted their net income by 43 per cent between 1984 and 1999.

Those at the bottom of the income scale, meanwhile, saw their net wealth slip more than 51 per cent during the same period, the report said.

Families in the middle income range witnessed a small increase in net wealth, of some three per cent.

"Despite the economic boom of the mid to late 1990s, too many Canadian families and their children are barely scraping by and are just one problem away from economic disaster," said Louise Hanvey, CCSD researcher and the report's author.

"The fact that so many kids are heading off to school on empty stomachs is not the reality one expects to see in a G-7 country like Canada that is consistently ranked among the

best places in the world in which to live," she added.

Canadian children living in poverty inched down to 18.5 per cent in 1999, down from 21.3 percent in 1993, but up from the 15.2 per cent recorded in 1989 when the House of Commons committed to eliminate child poverty by 2000.

About 75,000 Canadian families with children under the age of 12 experienced hunger in 1996 -- the last year for which data are available -- or 39 per cent more families than in 1994.

Approximately 300,000 Canadian children rely on food banks every month, it said.

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