

NATIONAL POST

Canadian poverty is a tragedy, in any measure

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Re: The Toronto Star's Poverty Scam, editorial, Jan. 15.

You are right; there is no official poverty rate in this country. But calling the Star's poverty figures a "hoax," "nonsense" and "dishonest" stretches fair criticism to the point of distortion.

On one hand, groups like UNICEF and Campaign 2000 use numbers (similar to those of the Star) that suggest that up to 17% of Canadians live in poverty (where a family of four earns less than \$32,000 a year). This is along the lines of Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off.

On the other hand, groups such as the Fraser Institute, using the much starker poverty level of \$23,000 for a family of four, pegs the national poverty rate at 5%. That's a measure of only the very bare necessities of life. And, still, even using that most conservative of estimates means that 1.6 million Canadians are living in serious deprivation, including hundreds of thousands of children.

Why spend time quibbling over measurements? No matter how you count them, the real tragedy is that so many Canadians continue to live in deep poverty.

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Illustration:

- Black & White Photo : Arne Glassbourg, National Post / Volunteers sort items at the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto.

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