

I am appalled that, once again, BC has the worst child poverty rate in Canada. Figures released by First Call, the BC partner in Campaign 2000, show BC at a rate of 18.8 percent of children living in poverty in 2007 (the most recent data available). The Canadian average that year was 15 percent.

I support a poverty reduction strategy for BC with targets and timelines. Why are we lagging behind other provinces like Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba? Every province has suffered during the recession; why can't BC take action to prevent further poverty during what is a particularly difficult time for families?

According to the *2009 Child Poverty Report Card*, in 2007 BC had a total of 156,000 poor children, equivalent to the entire population of Nanaimo and Prince George combined. And this was in a year of a strong economy.

If we don't take action soon, we'll be paying for this high rate of poverty in our health care, social services and justice systems. The provincial and federal governments should work to reduce poverty now by raising the minimum wage, increasing the Canada Child Tax Benefit, implementing a safe and affordable public child care system, and building more affordable housing.

Sincerely,