

Fri 2026-03-06 7:53 AM, Via Email

Dear Adrienne Montani,

On behalf of the Honourable Anna Gainey, Secretary of State (Children and Youth), thank you for your correspondence of January 21, 2026.

You wrote to share with us First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society's recent publication of the *2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card*, and to highlight the 14 recommendations for federal action to reduce both the rate and depth of child poverty. We appreciate your organization's continued contributions to advocacy of the rights and well-being of children and youth. Your annual *BC Child Poverty Report Card* is an important contribution to public dialogue and remains a valued resource for policymakers at all levels. Congratulations on this important work and thank you for highlighting it for the Secretary of State and departmental officials.

Many of the recommendations noted in the report align closely with the Government's continued prioritization of the wellbeing of children, youth and families through new and existing policies and programs. These include initiatives mentioned in your report, such as, the Canada Child Benefit, the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system, the Canadian Dental Care Plan, the National School Food Program (made permanent), Employment Insurance programs for maternity, parental leave, and care of critically ill children, and Automatic Federal Benefits. These investments are already making a meaningful difference and will continue to strengthen resilience and improve outcomes for children and youth from across Canada.

I would like to highlight additional federal initiatives currently in place that directly contribute to improving the social and economic well-being of all Canadians, including children and youth. These include: the Youth Mental Health Fund, National Pharmacare Plan, and Canada's first National Housing Strategy. As well, the Canada Strong Pass, supported by Budget 2025's investment of \$116.3 million over two years (starting in 2025–26), offers Canadians free or discounted admission to participating Parks Canada site, museum, gallery, or VIA Rail, helping more youth and families save and explore Canada's natural and cultural richness.

The new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit will start in Spring 2026 and will:

- Provide a one-time top-up payment to be paid as early as possible this spring and no later than June 2026 equal to a 50% increase in the annual 2025-26 value of the GST Credit. This would deliver \$3.1 billion in immediate assistance to individuals and families who currently get the GST Credit.
- Increase the value of the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit by 25% for five years starting in July 2026. This increase would deliver \$8.6 billion in additional support over the 2026-27 to 2030-31 period, including to an additional 500,000 individuals and families.

Combined, this means that a family of four will receive up to \$1,890 this year, and about \$1,400 a year for the next four years; and a single person will receive up to \$950 this year, and about \$700 a year for the next four years. The new Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit will provide additional, significant support for more than 12 million Canadians.

Since 2015, significant investments such as these have been made to improve the social and economic well-being of all Canadians and to help meet legislated poverty reduction targets outlined in *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*. As you are likely aware, the Strategy established an official poverty line (the Market Basket Measures, MBM) and ambitious and concrete targets: a 20% reduction in poverty by 2020 and a 50% reduction in poverty by 2030 (relative to 2015 levels). Additional and updated information about the Strategy, and other governmental efforts to reduce poverty, are available at: www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction.

To implement this vision, the Government introduced the *Poverty Reduction Act* (2019), which established the MBM as Canada’s Official Poverty Line. The Act requires that the MBM be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the up-to-date cost of a basket of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living. Updating the MBM methodology starts with a comprehensive review and includes engagement and outreach activities undertaken by Statistics Canada. The reviews help ensure that Canada’s Official Poverty Line remains relevant, accurate and reflective of the realities that Canadians face today.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy also fully recognizes the multidimensional nature of poverty – including many of the key aspects the BC Child Poverty Report Card emphasizes. Tracking of Canada’s progress on poverty reduction and the full dashboard of indicators are available on the Dimensions of Poverty Hub, which features the latest data released on May 1, 2025: www.statcan.gc.ca/en/topics-start/poverty.

To advance and measure the work outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy and design initiatives that will help reduce poverty in Canada, the Government engages with individuals with lived experience of poverty and those who work to address poverty across the country. Notably, engagement can be done through:

1. Engagement sessions led by the National Advisory Council on Poverty, such as the one your group recently participated in on January 15, 2026, in Vancouver, BC. The National Advisory Council on Poverty was established to provide independent advice to the Minister of Jobs and Families on poverty reduction. As part of its mandate, the Council maintains an ongoing dialogue with Canadians about poverty and reports publicly annually on the progress made towards meeting the poverty reduction targets set in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The report is informed by the conversations led with individuals across the country, available poverty data, and the Council’s expertise.
2. Future Comprehensive Reviews of the MBM, which will continue to include engagement with stakeholders through various channels. For information on engagement activities completed during the last comprehensive review of the MBM, please see the *What we heard report: Engagement activities for the third comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure* at the following link: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2024006-eng.htm>. If you are interested in contacting Statistics Canada regarding the MBM and future Reviews, you may email statcan.market.basket.measure-mesure.du.panier.de.consommation.statcan@statcan.gc.ca.

In your letter you also flagged an alarming trend: the apparent stagnation in child poverty rates in British Columbia between 2022 and 2023. Similar statistics can be seen across the country, though the longer-term trends do show improvement. Although pandemic benefits temporarily pushed child poverty rates to record lows in 2020, the phasing out of these supports, combined with high inflation and affordability pressures, has contributed to an upward trend since then. Even so, child poverty in 2023 remains 31.1% lower than in 2015. This progress, however, does not diminish the importance of sustained efforts: as you rightly note in your report, this is a critical reminder of the need for continued, coordinated action to support families facing economic hardship and to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

We value the evidence-based advocacy that First Call BC provides and will carefully consider your recommendations as we continue to work to strengthen Canada's social supports and advance the wellbeing of children and families. The Government of Canada recognizes that these are challenging times for many Canadians and remains deeply committed to helping Canadians facing hardship get ahead. Thank you for taking the time to write and share your valuable, evidence-driven work.

Sincerely,

Peggy Papamarkakis
Senior Director
Social Policy Directorate
Employment and Social Development Canada

cc: The Honourable Anna Gainey
Secretary of State for Children and Youth