



November 22, 2018

*Via email*

Dear BC Members of Parliament,

Please find attached the 2018 BC Child Poverty Report Card from First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. It can also be accessed, along with provincial and local maps, at [www.still1in5.ca](http://www.still1in5.ca). Campaign 2000 also released the national child poverty report card which can be accessed, along with reports from other provinces, [here](#). We are sending our report to all of British Columbia's federal and provincial elected representatives and federal party leaders.

We are disappointed to report that 20.3% (1 in 5) of BC's children were living in poverty, using the most recent data from 2016. This represents 172,550 children. BC's child poverty rate remains higher than the Canadian average of 19.6%. However, between 2015 and 2016, BC's child poverty rate decreased slightly from 22% to 20.3%, representing 12,420 fewer children living in poverty.

Other key findings in the report include:

- More than half (51.2%) of all children living in lone-parent families, the vast majority of them (82%) single mother families, were living in poverty in 2016, compared to 12.5% for children in couple families.
- Other over-represented groups with higher rates of poverty include Indigenous children, new immigrant children and children in visible or racialized minority groups.
- Contrary to popular belief, the majority of poor children have parents in paid work. The median annual income for a low-income single parent with one child was \$22,000 – over \$13,000 below the poverty line. For a family of four, the gap between income and the poverty line was almost \$12,000.
- Inadequate welfare rates meant incomes in 2016 for a couple with two children on assistance were over \$16,000 below the poverty line and single parents with one child on assistance had an income nearly \$10,000 below the poverty line.
- 24 out of BC's 29 regional districts had at least 1,000 children living in poverty. The highest rate was found in the Central Coast Regional District, with a 44% child poverty rate.
- Half of BC's poor children lived in Metro Vancouver in 2016 (86,480 children).
- 1,000 youth age out of government care in BC each year and 50% of homeless youth counted in the 2018 Metro Vancouver youth homeless count reported having been in government care at some point in their lives.
- Income inequality continues to grow in BC. Between 1989 and 2016, the total incomes of the richest 10% of BC families increased by 38%, while the incomes of the poorest 10% of families grew by only 9.4%.

[putting children and youth first](#)

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We are encouraged by the federal government's tabling of Bill C-87, an Act respecting the reduction of poverty, which sets aspirational targets to reduce Canada's overall poverty level 20% below the 2015 level by 2020 and 50% below the 2015 level by 2030, by government's commitment to *Opportunity for All — Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* and to the *National Housing Strategy*. However, we are looking for bold and ambitious actions and investments to meet or exceed these commitments and targets for families with children.

This report's full list of recommendations can be found on pages 33-35. They propose a range of solutions that fall within the scope of both provincial and federal government policies. These are all proposals that have strong support within our broad, cross-sectoral coalition and among the general public.

We urge government to act on the federal recommendations included in the [2018 BC Child Poverty Report Card](#) and the recommendations in the national report card, [Bold Ambitions for Child and Family Poverty Eradication](#). Our federal recommendations are listed below.

#### **Recommendations that address tax fairness and income support:**

1. Governments at all levels should ensure their direct and contract employees are paid a **living wage** that allows them to meet their basic needs, properly support their children and avoid chronic financial stress.
2. The federal government should ensure the **Canada Child Benefit**, in combination with other income measures, raises all families with children above the CFLIM after-tax poverty lines calculated through taxfiler data and ensure access to the benefit for families in groups with higher rates of poverty
3. The federal government should ensure **maternity and parental leave** benefits are universally available to all new parents (regardless of work status) and that the benefit levels are not less than the CFLIM after-tax poverty lines.
4. The federal government should enhance **Employment Insurance** to expand access, duration and levels of benefits to prevent and reduce child and family poverty.
5. The provincial and federal governments should address growing income inequality by continuing efforts to increase fairness in the **personal income taxation system** and re-introducing the principle of taxation based on ability to pay.

#### **Recommendations that address targeted initiatives for groups over-represented in poverty data:**

6. Collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and Indigenous organizations to develop plans to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in **Indigenous communities**. Comply with the rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal by providing adequate funding for child welfare services on reserve and ensure the full application of Jordan's Principle for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.
7. The federal government should allow grandparents on CPP Disability who are raising their grandchildren to continue to receive the CPP children's benefit after they turn 65 and remove administrative barriers to receiving the Canada Child Benefit for **kinship care providers**.
8. The federal and provincial governments should intensify their efforts to **help immigrants and refugees** adjust to life in Canada by enhancing employment assistance, removing long-standing barriers to qualification for professionals trained abroad, making more language training available, and improving employment standards and human rights protections and enforcement.
9. The federal government should immediately cancel all outstanding refugee **transportation loan debt** and

cease seeking repayment of transportation costs for all new refugees coming to Canada. This budget adjustment should not reduce the number of refugees targeted for resettlement.

**Recommendations to lower barriers and improve lives through universal programs:**

10. Both the federal and provincial governments should continue to prioritize **new child care investments** in their 2019 budgets and beyond to establish universal access to a system of high-quality, inclusive child care for BC children and families that has no parent fee for families with annual incomes under \$45,000, creates enough licensed child care spaces for all who choose them, ensures early childhood educators are paid compensation that reflects their education and the importance of the work they do and ensures there are adequate resources and support for the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.
11. Federal and provincial government support for access to **post-secondary education** should be increased both to remove financial barriers for low-income students and lower student debt levels. Policy options include reducing tuition fees at public colleges, institutes and universities, interest-free student loans, and more non-repayable grants for low- and middle-income students.
12. The federal, provincial and local governments should scale up their funding to build thousands of new social and affordable rental **housing** units and maintain existing affordable housing stock to reduce the number of families in core housing need and to eliminate homelessness.

Our coalition members are interested in responses from all parties and parliamentarians to the facts and recommendations in this report and look forward to working together to eliminate child, youth and family poverty in British Columbia and Canada.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Montani  
Provincial Coordinator