

February 21, 2023

Via e-mail

Dear Members of the Legislative Assembly:

On February 14, First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society released the 26th annual BC Child Poverty Report Card. This report found that during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, BC's child poverty rate dropped significantly largely due to the enhanced income supports from the federal and provincial governments.

In 2020, the year this report covers, 13.3% of BC children and youth (0-17), or 116,500 kids, were living in poor households, down from 18% in 2019.

Additional key findings from 2020 include:

- The poverty rate for BC children in lone-parent families overall was 38%, down from 49% in 2019, but still very high. Eighty percent of lone parents in BC were women in 2020.
- BC's early years (0-5 years old) child poverty rate, at 13%, was lower than Canada's at 14.2%.
- The average child poverty rate on fifty-nine BC First Nations reserves in 2020 was 29.2%.
- Many of the regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were located in coastal areas, particularly along the north and central coast, with rates as high as 20-26%.
- 10% of BC's richest families with children have nearly as much of the income pie as the combined incomes of the lowest income 50% of families with children.
- 153,630 BC children were kept out of poverty thanks to government help in 2020.
- 94% of BC families with children received some sort of government pandemic benefit in 2020.

The report also contains 25 child poverty reduction recommendations for the provincial and federal governments. Some key recommendations for the BC government include:

- indexing the BC Family Benefit to inflation to ensure the value of the benefit does not erode over time;
- continuing to prioritize new child care investments;
- raising social assistance rates; and
- and automatically enrolling all young people transitioning out of care in an income support program that meets their basic living costs and ensures they have safe, secure and affordable housing.

While it is apparent that government support played a critical role in reducing child poverty in 2020, in 2022-23 families have been facing record high inflation rates. Progress made towards decreasing both the rate and depth of family poverty in 2020 may be all but wiped out by increasing costs in subsequent years.

**putting children and youth first**

Now, more than ever, it is critical for governments at all levels to ensure that public services are robust and reach those most in need, that families can access affordable housing and that inflation is curbed.

The 2022 BC Child Poverty Report Card, maps and other materials are posted on our website at [www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org).

I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these findings and any questions you may have, so don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adrienne Montani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adrienne Montani  
Executive Director