



January 21, 2026

To: British Columbia MLAs
via Email

Re: First Call's 2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card — Deepening Poverty for Families with Children

Dear MLA,

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society is pleased to share with you our *2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card*, released on November 26, 2025. First Call is a non-partisan registered charity and society under the Societies Act, dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of children and youth through research, public education, and evidence-based policy advocacy. We confer and work with a network of more than 100 affiliate organizations across British Columbia.

This year marks our organization's 30th anniversary. For three decades, we have worked constructively with government to advance policies that improve children's lives—contributing to the introduction of the **BC Family Benefit**, supporting the expansion of **\$10aDay child care**, advancing **child poverty measurement and reporting**, and helping to embed children's rights into public policy discussions in this province. These achievements demonstrate that **policy choices matter** and that progress is possible when there is political will.

The [**2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card**](#) based on information and analysis of the latest StatsCan data (2023), paints a deeply concerning picture of the economic realities facing families with children in our province. While the overall child poverty rate in British Columbia remained unchanged at **16.7% in 2023**, the report finds that **poverty is deepening**, with families falling further below the poverty line at a time of relentless cost pressures for housing, food, and child care.

In 2023, **149,370 children and youth in BC lived in households below the low-income threshold**, an increase of 1,800 children from the previous year. This apparent statistical "stability" masks a more troubling reality: families are losing economic resilience, and the gap between household incomes and the cost of daily life is widening.

Key findings from the 2025 Report Card include:

- **Depth of poverty is increasing.** In 2023, poor couple families with two children lived an average of **\$15,674 below the poverty line, \$578 more than in 2022**. Poor lone-parent families with two children lived **\$17,109 below, \$1,094 more than in 2022**—a significant deterioration in a single year.
- **Children in lone-parent families face the greatest risk.** An alarming **45.1%** of children in lone-parent families lived in poverty—almost five times the rate of children in couple families. Although lone-parent families represent only 19% of BC children, they account for **53% of children living in poverty**. Most are female-led households.

- **Work no longer guarantees security for too many.** A lone parent working full-time at BC's 2023 minimum wage earned **\$29,738 a year before tax**, nearly **\$19,500 below the poverty line**. Even two parents working full-time at minimum wage fell more than **\$10,000 short** of the poverty threshold.
- **Housing and food insecurity are escalating.** One-third of BC children—**288,000 in total**—experienced food insecurity in 2023. Families with children made up **37% of the Metro Vancouver BC Housing waitlist**, an increase of 77% since 2019.
- **Inequality is extreme and growing.** The highest-income 10% of BC families with children earned **23 times more** than families with the lowest incomes. For lone-parent families, the gap was a staggering **86 to 1**, the highest inequality of its kind in Canada.
- **Government support matters—but is under strain.** Without federal and provincial income supports, BC's child poverty rate would have reached **27.7%** in 2023. Government transfers kept **98,120 children out of poverty**, with the Canada Child Benefit and BC Family Benefit accounting for two-thirds of that reduction. Recent cuts to the BC Family Benefit, however, have reduced support for tens of thousands of low-income families.

Behind these numbers are families making impossible choices—skipping meals, living in overcrowded housing, working multiple jobs while leaving little time for their children, and relying increasingly on food banks and community charity. These pressures are not temporary. As poverty deepens, the risks to children's health, development, and long-term outcomes intensify.

Our Key Recommendations

The 2025 Report Card includes 20 recommendations aimed not only at reducing the child poverty rate, but at reducing the depth of poverty. Key recommendations for the BC government include:

- Increasing the BC hourly **minimum wage** to \$20/hour by 2026;
- Significantly raising **income and disability assistance rates** and indexing them to inflation;
- Indexing the **BC Family Benefit** to inflation to ensure the value of the benefit does not erode over time. Increase the upper net income threshold (\$29,526) to \$45,000 for the maximum annual benefit and double the amount of the annual low-income single parent supplement to \$1000;
- Increasing the monthly income and rental **supports for young people transitioning out of government care**;
- Prioritize **new early learning and child care investments** in 2026 provincial budgets and beyond to expand access to \$10aDay child care for all families across the province;
- Ensure that new social and affordable **rental units are affordable** to families with very low incomes, including at social assistance rates, and there are sufficient units for larger families.

More than twenty-five years after Canada committed to ending child poverty, **one in six children in BC still lives in poverty**, and many are falling further behind each year. These are

more intense and uncertain times for families, but they are also a moment for leadership. Ending child poverty is achievable in the short term if we act on what the evidence clearly shows.

The 2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card, maps, and other materials are posted on our website at: [**BC Child Poverty Report Card 2025 – First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society**](#)

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the findings and recommendations of the 2025 BC Child Poverty Report Card and to explore how, together, we can ensure that all children in British Columbia are able to grow up with dignity, security, and opportunity.

Sincerely,



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