



January 21, 2026

To: Members of Parliament  
via Email

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

Dear Member of Parliament,

*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 governments to advance policies that improve children's lives—contributing to the introduction of the **BC Family Benefit**, supporting expanded investments in Early Learning and Child Care, advancing child poverty measurement and reporting in collaboration with Campaign 2000, and advocating for a National School Food Program. 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 analysis of the latest Statistics Canada taxfiler 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.
- **Federal 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.

### **Federal Recommendations**

The 2025 Report Card includes 14 recommendations for federal action to reduce both the rate and depth of child poverty in BC:

#### **Strengthen income supports:**

- Ensure the Canada Child Benefit and related federal programs help all families with children rise above the after-tax poverty line, with targeted supports for lone-parent, Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer families.
- Expand Employment Insurance to increase access, duration, and benefit levels, reducing inequity for lower-income workers and families.
- Ensure maternity and parental benefits are universally available, with a minimum of \$500 per week and a maximum of \$1,000 per week.

#### **Targeted initiatives for groups over-represented in poverty:**

- Restore funding that was cut from federally-funded newcomer settlement programs in 2025 that reduced and eliminated valuable programming for families with children in BC;
- Collaborate with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments and organizations to address child and family poverty, including full application of Jordan's Principle.
- Increase the federal Child Disability Benefit, doubling the maximum monthly amount to \$500.
- Ensure grandparents raising grandchildren on CPP Disability continue to receive the children's benefit after turning 65.

**Invest in universal programs that improve children's lives:**

- Continue federal contributions to early learning and child care, including \$10aDay, for all families. Work with Indigenous leadership to ensure there are adequate resources and support for the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.
- Scale up funding to build thousands of new social and affordable rental housing units.
- Contribute to establishing a universal, cost-shared healthy school food program for all K-12 students.
- Expand universal coverage for prescription drugs, eye care, hearing aids, assistive devices, and mental health care.

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 an 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,



**Adrienne Montani**

Executive Director

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society

Email: [adrienne@firstcallbc.org](mailto:adrienne@firstcallbc.org)

Cell: 778-320-4561

[www.firstcallbc.org](http://www.firstcallbc.org)