

BRITISH COLUMBIA



2015 CHILD POVERTY BC REPORT CARD



firstcall BC CHILD AND YOUTH
ADVOCACY COALITION

IN COLLABORATION WITH



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19TH ANNUAL REPORT CARD ON CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO END CHILD POVERTY BY 2000

**2015 CHILD POVERTY
BC REPORT CARD**

NOVEMBER 2015

PRODUCED BY



IN COLLABORATION WITH



WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF



putting children and youth first

810 – 815 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4

604 709 6962 Toll free 1.800 307 1212 info@firstcallbc.org

firstcallbc.org



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Introduction



First Call
has been
tracking child
and family poverty
rates in BC for two
decades. Our first
BC report card
showed that one in
five (over 170,000)
BC children were
poor. It is profoundly
disappointing that 19
years later the data
still shows that one
in five (167,810) BC
children are poor.

STILL IN DENIAL: BC'S RELUCTANCE TO ACT BOLDLY TO REDUCE CHILD POVERTY

The latest figures from Statistics Canada (2013) once again show that too many BC children—1 in 5—are growing up in poverty. Our child poverty rate continues to exceed the Canadian average and BC remains among the provinces taking the least amount of action to reduce child poverty.

For children living in lone-parent families in BC in 2013, a shocking 50% were poor. This year we've included a new fact sheet on food insecurity and core housing need in BC which shows that children in lone-parent families were much more likely to experience food insecurity and live in inadequate housing than children in couple families. Clearly we must do more to reduce this terrible inequality for children in lone-parent families.

The maps in this report demonstrate that child poverty touches every part of the province. In some regional districts one third or even one half of the children were living in poverty. In some urban and suburban neighbourhoods, more than half of the children were living in poverty with rates reaching 50%, 60% and even 70%.

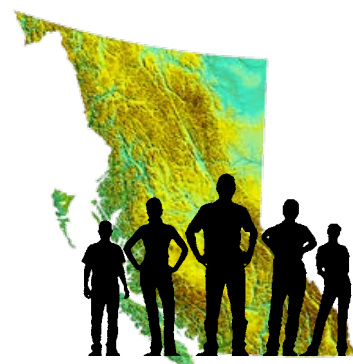
The personal stories in this report illustrate the injustice and suffering behind these numbers.

Stubbornly high child and family poverty rates are a result of growing income inequality in BC and across Canada. They reflect the failure of employers, both public and private, to create decent full-time jobs with wages and benefits that enable parents to lift their families out of poverty. They reflect the choice by our federal and provincial governments to apply the squeeze of austerity to our public institutions and social safety net, while allowing and facilitating the massive accumulation of wealth in very few hands. They reflect an indifference by those in positions of power and influence to the high cost of poverty to individuals, families and society.

This report again calls for government to adopt a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines for focus and accountability. This call has been echoed for many years by the Opposition New Democratic Party, the Select Standing Committee on Government Finance, the Union of BC Municipalities, the Representative for Children and Youth, First Call's 95 member organizations, the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's 450 members and supporting organizations, school districts, and many health, labour, faith, business and other community organizations. Yet our government remains in deep denial about the need for a plan.



Instead we have witnessed the diversion of provincial efforts to “community poverty reduction strategies” that, despite initial promises about scaling up the effort, in practice, in the past three and a half years since the strategies began, have only worked with 96 families in seven municipalities. There have been no actual measures of poverty reduction and no permission to make policy changes that would lower barriers for people trapped in poverty. There were no solutions offered for the families whose poverty was related to a shortage of child care spaces, inadequate income assistance rates, low-paying jobs, loss of affordable housing stock or oppressive student loan debt. The Union of BC Municipalities, an original partner in the initiative, recently noted that they decided to withdraw from this project and focus on continuing to advocate for a provincial poverty plan.



Allowing inequities to grow and specific populations of children to be left out or left behind in poverty is unacceptable to most British Columbians.

WHAT BC TEACHERS SEE

- “[...] I have noticed a marked increase not only in the clearly destitute, but also in the working poor. Many [...] students have parents working two jobs in order to maintain a minimal standard of living and many of our other students need regular aid.” (Okanagan)
- “Our remote community has had many cuts to basic health care and mental health services. Families who can’t afford their own car cannot access dentists, optometrists, etc. since we have lost our bus service. Many students have health issues that are not being addressed because of poverty and lack of local services.” (North Coast)



From *Poverty and Education survey: A teacher’s perspective, Chapter 2 (2013)*, bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx



The severity and longevity of the crisis of child poverty in this wealthy province calls for a much more urgent response from the provincial government.

BC's poor children and families deserve more from government than expressions of sympathy and a defense of the status quo. The statistics in this report clearly indicate the severity of the child poverty problem in BC. Allowing inequities to grow and specific populations of children to be left out or left behind in poverty is unacceptable to most British Columbians.

We appreciate that the BC government has made some steps this past year through welfare policy reforms that will benefit some families on income assistance, particularly the elimination of the clawback of child support payments from single parents' welfare benefits and the recognition of the need to support single parents' access to post-secondary education with financial support for child care and tuition while they are on income assistance. Unfortunately, the larger issue of the inadequacy of welfare and disability rates to cover basic expenses for families remains unaddressed. And while one hand gave, the other took away by cutting free tuition for many adult basic education students, many of whom cannot afford to pay for the courses they need to open up opportunities for further education or employment that would help them and their children exit poverty.

The severity and longevity of the crisis of child poverty in this wealthy province calls for a much more urgent response from the provincial government. In this Report Card we propose 21 recommendations, 15 of which fall within provincial jurisdiction, which together would form the start of a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan. Many of them are easily done, and some require more significant investments over a longer timeframe. All will save us money in the long run as children's lives and prospects are improved.

Thirteen recommendations also call for action from the federal government, some of which may be acted upon based on promises made in the recent federal election. It is up to all of us to let our new federal government know they have our support to invest in Canada's children and in policies that will reduce and eliminate our shameful record on child poverty.

We can do so much better and there is no excuse for further inaction.

BC's Child Poverty Rate Still 1 in 5

BC'S CHILD POVERTY RATES

British Columbia once again had child and overall poverty rates above the Canadian average in 2013, according to taxfiler data.

1 out of 5

BC children are poor
- higher than the
national average on
both measures.

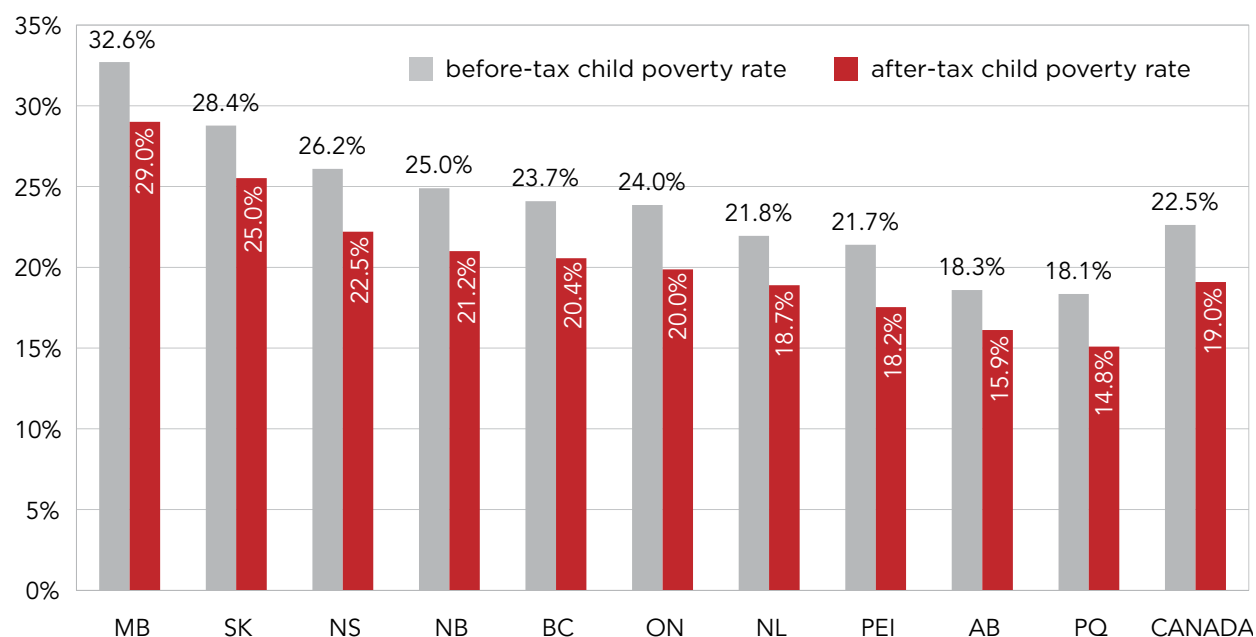


20.4% of British Columbia's children 0-17 years old lived below the poverty line, representing one in five children in the province, as measured by Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure (LIM) after income taxes. This was the fifth-highest child poverty rate among Canadian provinces, with 167,810 BC children living in poverty in 2013.

The BC child poverty rate using the LIM before tax was 23.7%, representing almost one in every four children in the province. Using this measure, this was the sixth-highest child poverty rate among Canadian provinces, with 194,840 British Columbia children living in poverty in 2013.

BC's child poverty rates on both the before- and after-tax Low Income Measures were higher than the national rates of 22.5% and 19.0% respectively.

Child Poverty Rates by Province (sorted by LIM After Tax), 2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.



The number of poor children in BC was **167,810** — enough to fill the Disneyland theme park **four times**.

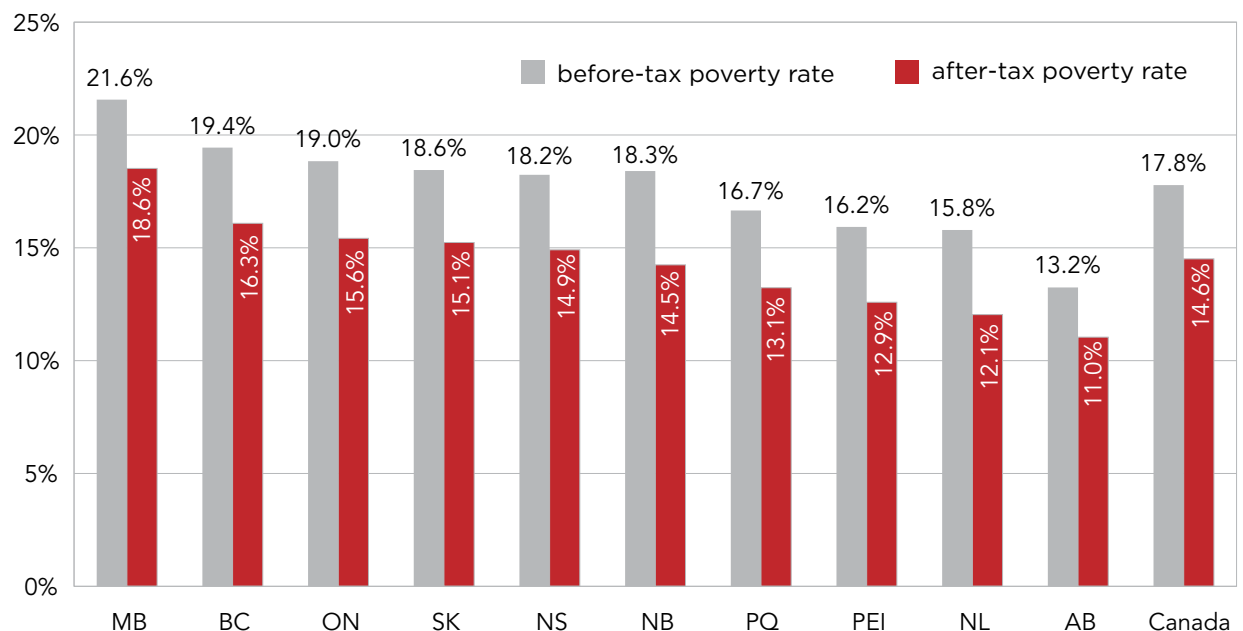
OVERALL BC POVERTY RATES

Using the LIM after tax, 16.3% of British Columbians lived below the poverty line, higher than the Canadian average of 14.6% and also the second highest of any province in Canada, after Manitoba. In 2013, according to this measure, 714,960 British Columbians were living in poverty.

Using the LIM before tax, 19.4% of British Columbians lived below the poverty line, higher than the Canadian average of 17.8% and also the second highest of any province in Canada, after Manitoba. In 2013, according to this measure, 849,070 British Columbians were living in poverty.

The fact that child poverty rates are higher than overall poverty rates in Canada and in every province points to the need for systemic policy changes that better support families in their child-rearing years.

Overall Poverty Rates by Province (sorted by LIM After Tax), 2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.



SOME CHILDREN ARE OVER-REPRESENTED IN POVERTY STATISTICS

The overall child poverty statistics hide the fact that particular groups of children are over-represented in these numbers. Census data has consistently shown there are significantly higher poverty rates for children of recent immigrants, children of Aboriginal identity, children of female lone-parent families, children in racialized (visible minority) families, and children with a disability.

According to a study using 2006 census data, the poverty rate for status First Nations children in BC was 48%, and the rate for other Aboriginal children was 28%, compared to a poverty rate of 17% for non-indigenous children.¹

Data from the 2011 National Household Survey indicated an all-ages poverty rate for recent immigrants in BC of 34% and a rate of 22% for visible minorities, compared to a non-immigrant poverty rate of 14% and a non-visible minority rate of 14%.²

Fact Sheet 3 sets out the dramatically higher poverty rates of children in single parent families.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

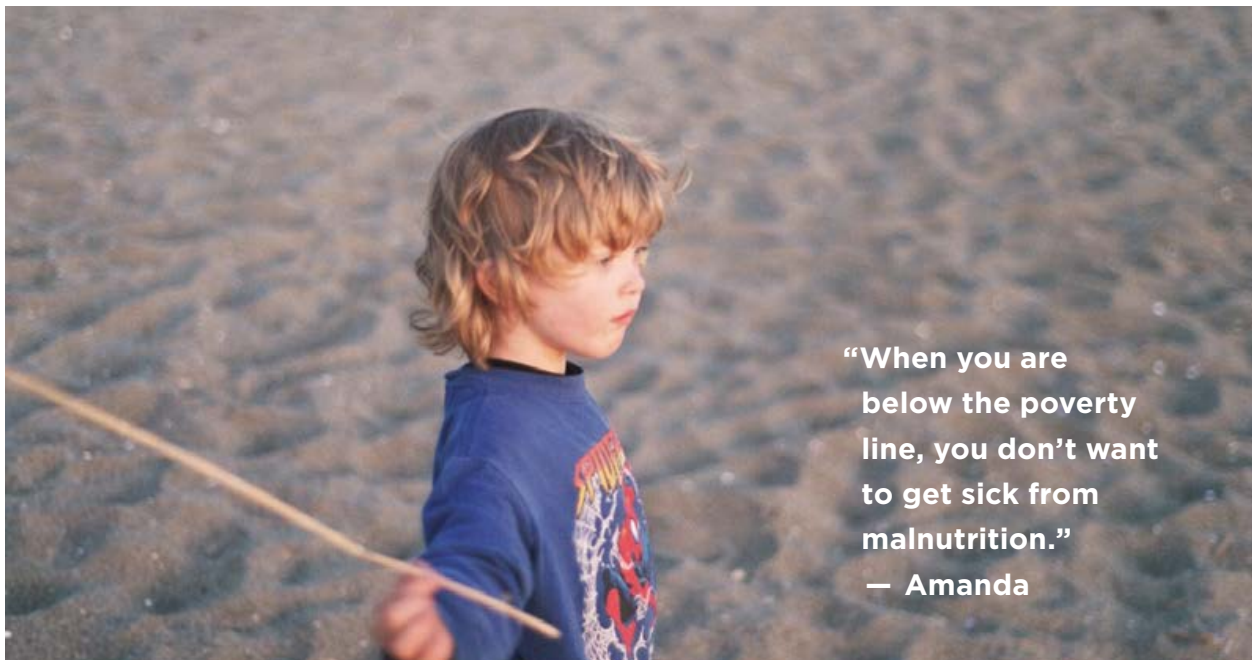
- Adopt a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines, a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government is achieving its targets on time, and a goal of reducing BC's child poverty rate to 7% or lower by 2020.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.

1 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Save the Children, June 2013, Poverty or Prosperity: Indigenous Children in Canada, prepared by David MacDonald and Daniel Wilson, p. 17.

2 Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey: Data tables. This data cannot be compared with previous census data because the voluntary nature of this survey made the results subject to a potentially higher non-response error than the mandatory long form census it replaced. BC's global non-response rate was 26.1%.

Census data has consistently shown there are significantly higher poverty rates for children of recent immigrants, children of Aboriginal identity, children of female lone-parent families, children in racialized (visible minority) families, and children with a disability.



**“When you are
below the poverty
line, you don’t want
to get sick from
malnutrition.”
— Amanda**

Joel and Amanda’s Story

Joel (not his real name), age two, has lived in poverty since he was born. His mother Amanda has a mere \$250 a month after rent to provide for her and her son—and they lived on even less the first year of Joel’s life. All of their \$250 goes toward food. After getting her meagre groceries each week, she has not one dollar left to spend on clothes, transportation, or activities.

To provide Joel with what he needs as a growing toddler, Amanda must access as many services as possible, such as support groups and used clothes give-aways. She spends much of her time in survival mode just trying to get by.

To get around, Amanda sometimes saves up bus tickets given out at the support services she frequents. Without the free bus tickets, she would not be able to take Joel to day care, speech therapy, his monthly pediatrician visits, and activities.

Lack of food is one of the things that impacts Joel greatly; Amanda struggles to provide him with proper nutrition with the scarcity of food in their lives. “When you are below the poverty line, you don’t want to get sick from malnutrition—you don’t want to have to rely on the food banks.”

Amanda says that food banks “are a waste of time,” and often means “waiting for three hours for \$10 worth of groceries.” She avoids them as much as possible, trying to avoid high sodium and quick-fix food that is unhealthy for her son. “When you are very poor, you need to plan your meals and your budget to maximize healthfulness within a certain amount of money,” she explains. She stretches the \$250 she has for groceries each month as far as possible. “I cook twice per week, and we eat dinner and lunch out of those for a week. It gets really boring,” Amanda explains, “there is no excitement in meal times, and little variety.”

Amanda witnesses the impact of child poverty up close every day. It is all around her when she accesses services for poor families, and heart-breaking to see. “I see people saving food in bags from meetings, they grab it to take it home to their kids. That really makes me sad—to see people not having enough food. Food is really important, it affects everything.”

BC's Child Poverty Rates Over Time

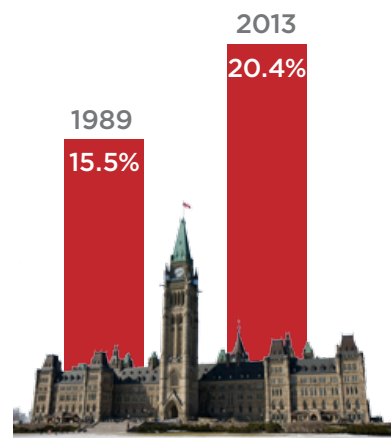
PERCENTAGE OF POOR CHILDREN OVER TIME

Since the passage of the 1989 House of Commons all-party resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000, BC's child poverty rate has risen from 15.5% in 1989 to 20.4% in 2013.

From 2000 to 2013, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of BC children 0-17 years living in poverty, based on the LIM after-tax measure. This was similar to the trend in Canada as a whole. Between 2000 and 2013, BC's child poverty rate decreased from 25.3% in 2000 to 20.4% in 2013, while Canada's child poverty rate decreased from 22.3% in 2000 to 19.0% in 2013.

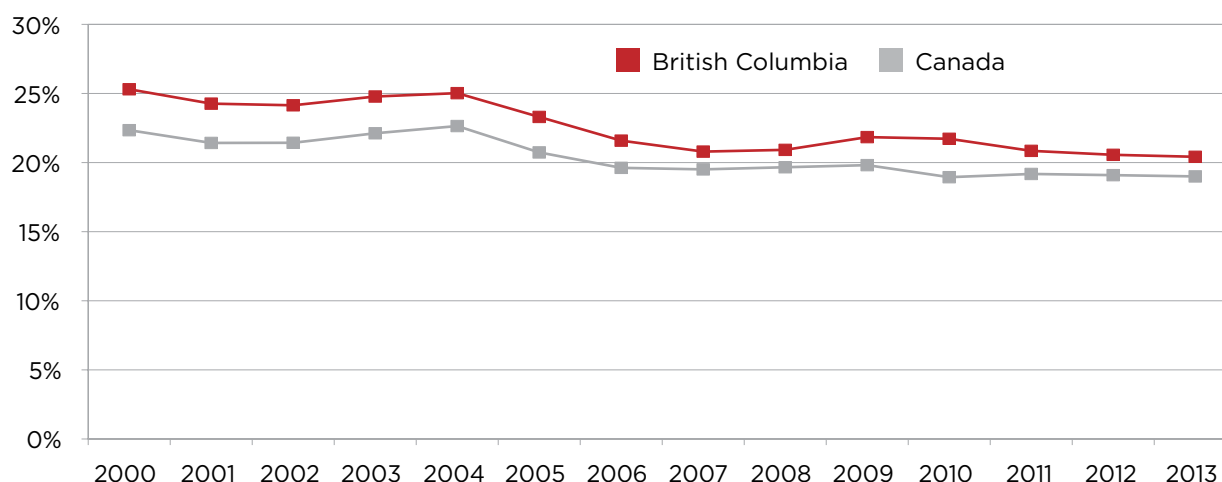
Most of this decrease occurred between 2004 and 2007, when BC's child poverty rate dropped from 25.0% in 2004 to 20.8% in 2007. The province's child poverty rate then increased in both 2008 and 2009, to reach 21.8% in 2009, before falling slowly to 20.4% in 2013.

During this entire 13-year period (2000–2013), BC's child poverty rates were consistently higher than Canada's child poverty rates.



Since the House of Commons passed a resolution in 1989 to eliminate child poverty in Canada, BC's child poverty rate has risen from **15.5%** to **20.4%**.

Child Poverty Rates for Canada and British Columbia, LIM After Tax, 2000–2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.

NUMBER OF POOR CHILDREN OVER TIME

The number of poor children in British Columbia, based on the LIM after-tax measure, decreased by 53,410 children between 2000 and 2013, from 221,220 poor children in 2000 to 167,810 poor children in 2013.

However, most of this decrease occurred between 2004 and 2007, when BC's child poverty rate dropped from 213,480 to 173,450, a decrease of 40,030 children. The province's child poverty rate then increased in both 2008 and 2009, to reach 181,890, before falling slowly to 167,810 in 2013.

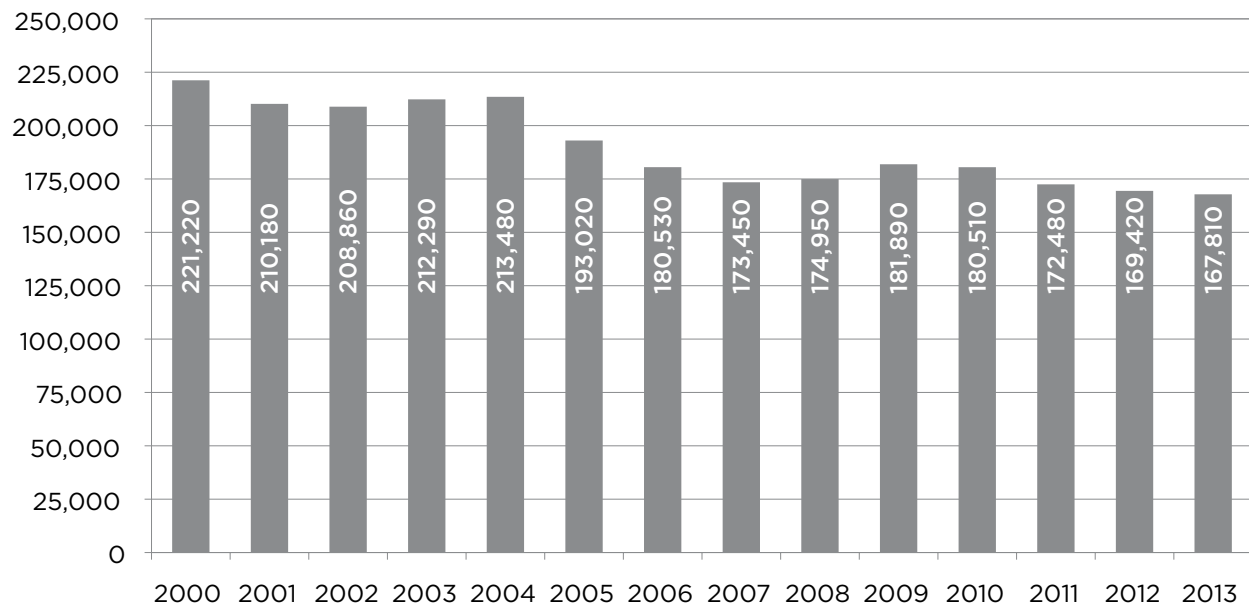
The number of poor children decreased by 1,610 from 2012 to 2013. While it's heartening that the poverty rate is declining, the decline is pitifully slow and 167,810 poor children is unacceptably high. In fact, at this rate it would take over 104 years to eliminate child poverty in BC.

Knowing the toxic effects growing up in poverty can have on children's health and development, this graph showing the hundreds of thousands of BC children our society has allowed to fall into poverty or remain poor over more than a decade is profoundly disturbing. As BC's Minister of Children and Family Development Stephanie Cadieux stated in an email to First Call on behalf of the Premier, "We believe that one child living in poverty is one child too many." Clearly reports showing thousands of poor children living in poverty year after year should call our governments to take urgent action.



BC's child poverty rate from 2000 to 2013 remained consistently higher than the Canadian average.

Number of Poor Children (0-17 years) in BC, LIM After Tax, 2000-2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.

POOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX YEARS OLD

The poverty rate in British Columbia for children under six years old was 20.7% in 2013, down from 22.5% in 1989 and 27.8% in 2000. However, in 2013, 55,520 of BC's youngest children were still living in poverty, or just over one fifth of BC's children under six.

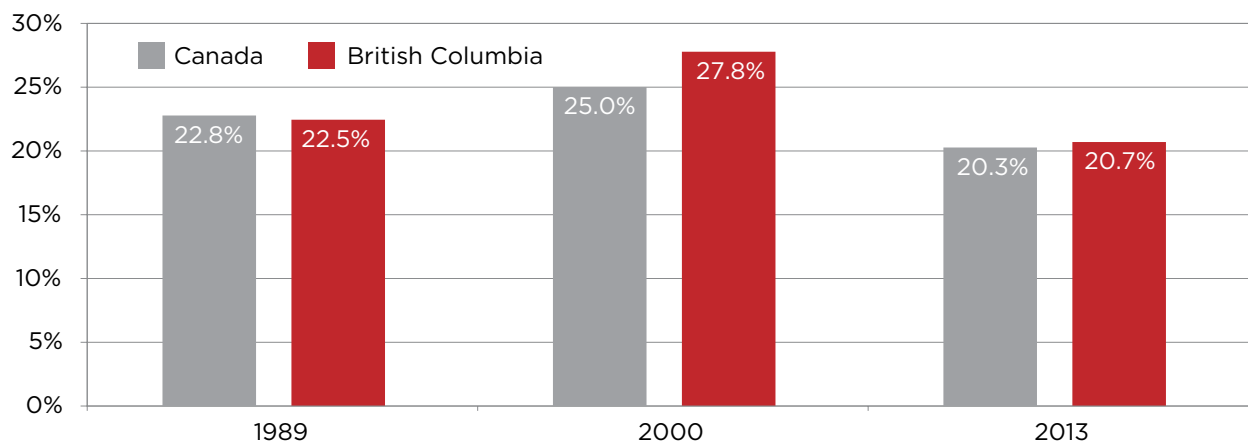
In 2013, BC's under-six child poverty rate of 20.7% was slightly higher than Canada's rate of 20.3% and also slightly higher than the province's overall child poverty rate of 20.4%. Given the critical importance of the early years for children's development, it is alarming that the child poverty rates for young children was higher than the overall child poverty rate in nearly every urban area in the province. In Prince Rupert, Port Alberni, Powell River and Duncan, the early childhood poverty rates were over 5 percentage points higher than their overall child poverty rates. (See details in Appendix 2.)

The devastating effects of high poverty rates for this age group can include lifelong consequences for children's physical, cognitive and social development. BC's Early Development Instrument trend data from the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia is showing 33% of BC children were developmentally vulnerable upon school entry during the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 school years, up from 29% in the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 school years¹.



The early years are a critical time for children's development. For this age group, poverty can have lifelong consequences.

Poverty Rates for Children Under Age Six, Canada and BC, LIM After Tax, 1989, 2000 and 2013



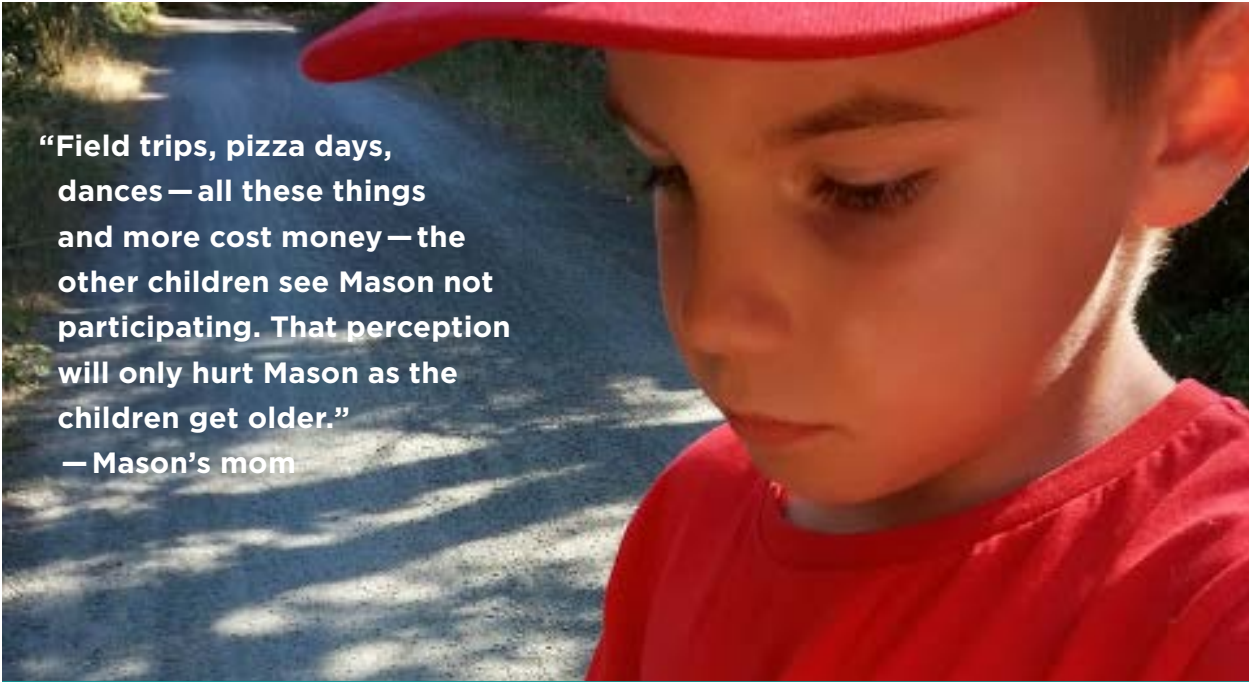
Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation. Taxfiler data.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Adopt a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines, a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government is achieving its targets on time, and a goal of reducing BC's child poverty rate to 7% or lower by 2020.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.

¹ University of British Columbia, Human Early Learning Partnership, Provincial EDI Maps, retrieved October 24, 2015, earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/edi/bc/



“Field trips, pizza days, dances — all these things and more cost money — the other children see Mason not participating. That perception will only hurt Mason as the children get older.”
— Mason’s mom

Mason’s Story

Mason Alford, age nine, wants to go to birthday parties, play sports and take music lessons just like the other kids at school. But as a child living in poverty, his life is defined by what he does not have and what he cannot do.

As one of three children in the family, with a father on disability assistance and a mother who works for minimum wage, his family struggles to offer him anything other than the basics. This reality is devastating for a child with unique talents and intelligence who has been reading since age three, says his mother Jessica Alford.

“I look at my son and my chest aches, because no matter how much I try, I know from personal experience that only the smallest percentage of him is being engaged.”

With Jessica’s erratic work schedule and her husband’s mobility issues, getting Mason to activities is “difficult to impossible.” There is also the expense of materials or equipment.

“Children are beginning to alienate him because they are realizing that he does not come from means,” his mother observes. “Field trips, pizza days, dances — all these things and more cost money — the other children see Mason not participating. That perception will only hurt Mason as the children get older.”

Jessica and her husband work diligently to provide good food for the children, even if it means going without themselves, but “when money is low the variety is low as well,” impacting Mason’s nutrition.

Jessica worries about the impact of poverty on his sense of self-worth. She knows he hears his parents’ “hushed whispers” tallying collected bottles and calculating how many more days they may have to go without.

Raised in poverty herself, Jessica worries a childhood in poverty is a poverty life sentence for Mason. “This kind of poverty is generational. I’m terrified Mason will know my struggle on a personal level himself, yet I know he is destined for so much more.”

BC Child Poverty by Family Type

CHILD POVERTY IN LONE-PARENT AND COUPLE FAMILIES



Child poverty in BC includes all family types.

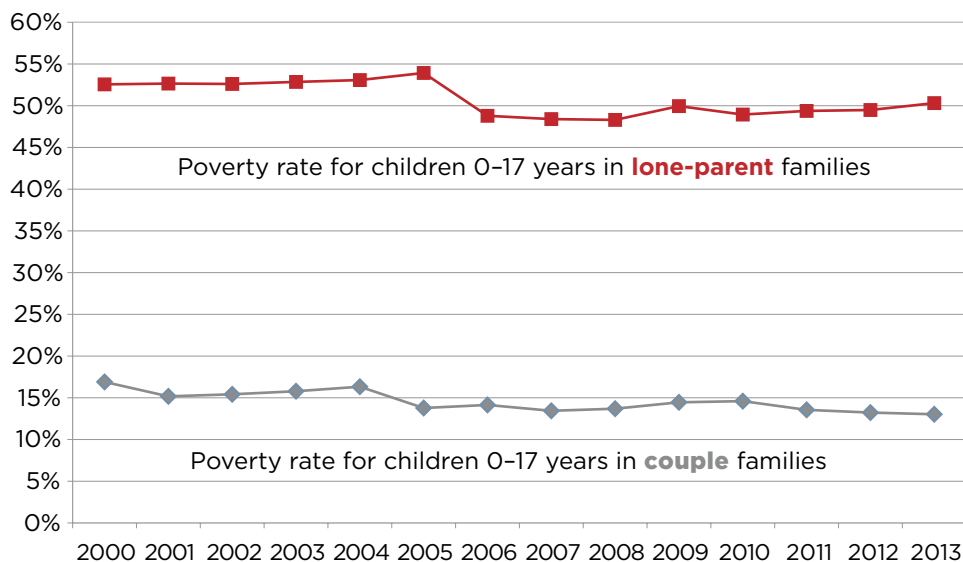
Being a child in a lone-parent family means having a much higher chance of living in poverty than if you were a child in a couple family. In 2013, in British Columbia, more than half (50.3%) of children 0-17 years old in lone-parent families lived in poverty, compared with 13.0% of children in couple families.

The poverty rate for children in lone-parent families in BC has remained shockingly high between 2000 and 2013, hitting a peak of 53.9% in 2005. Over the four years from 2010 to 2013, the poverty rate for children in BC's lone-parent families has increased steadily from 48.9% to 50.3%. 2013 represents the first time since 2005 that more than half of all children 0-17 years old in lone-parent families lived in poverty (81,970 out of 162,920 children in lone-parent families).

BC's meagre 4% decrease in the poverty rate for children in lone-parent families between 2000 and 2013 is the third smallest decrease of all ten provinces. In this same period several provinces with provincial poverty reduction plans made much better progress: Newfoundland Labrador and Quebec both brought their rates down by 21%, and Nova Scotia's rate decreased by 17%.

The poverty rate for children in couple families in BC decreased from 16.9% in 2000 to 13.0% in 2013. However, this child poverty rate in couple families still meant that more than one out of every eight children in couple families lived in poverty in 2013.

Child Poverty Rates by Family Type in BC, LIM After Tax, 2000-2013



One in every two BC children of single parents were poor in 2013.

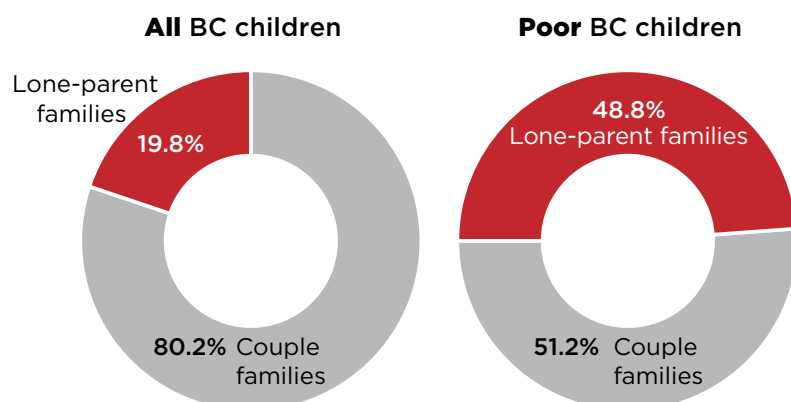


Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.

PROPORTIONS OF BC CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT FAMILY TYPES

While one in five children (19.8%) were in lone-parent families in BC in 2013, almost half of all poor children (48.8%) were in lone-parent families. This represents a significant over-representation of children in lone-parent families among poor children in the province.

Proportions of BC Children in Couple Families and Lone-Parent Families, Age 0-17, 2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015.

Regardless of family type, a large number of children in British Columbia were poor in 2013: 85,840 in couple families and 81,970 in lone-parent families.

GENDER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

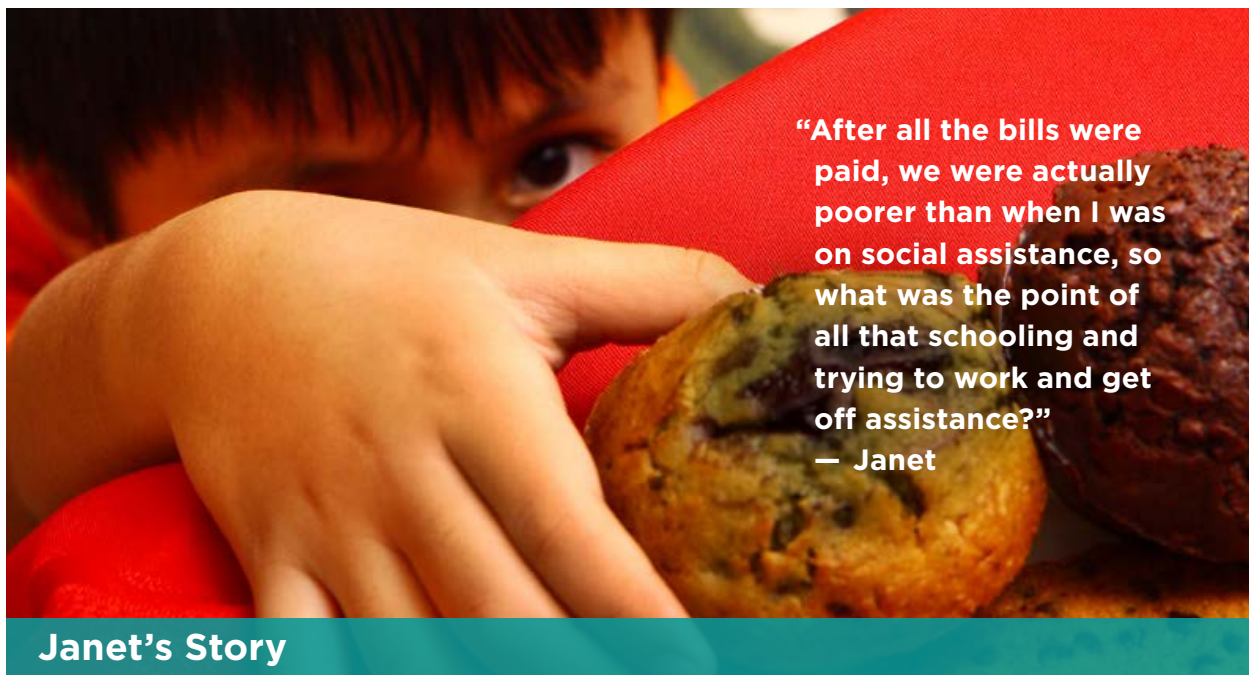
In BC in 2013, the large majority (83%) of lone-parent families were female-led. These families' median annual income was \$36,050, just 65% of the male lone-parent median income of \$55,500.¹

For many lone mothers the difficulty of finding affordable child care so they can sustain employment is one of the most common obstacles that leaves them raising their children in poverty. Many women are forced to work part time due to the lack of child care, when they want and need a full-time income to support their families.

¹ Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 111-0011 (tax filer data)

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Implement the promised Canada Child Benefit with a maximum of \$6,800 per child under 6 and \$5,800 for children 6-17 years.
- Adopt and begin implementing the \$10aDay Child Care Plan.
- Enhance maternity and parental leave to enrich the benefit value, and extend the total duration to 18 months, reserving additional months for fathers.
- Intensify efforts to help immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Canada and improve employment standards and human rights protections and enforcement.
- Immediately restore the provincial Education Guarantee to reinstate tuition-free adult basic education and English language learning.
- Restore the Employment Insurance program so most workers are protected during a temporary loss of wages and receive a benefit they can live on while they look for new employment.
- See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



**“After all the bills were paid, we were actually poorer than when I was on social assistance, so what was the point of all that schooling and trying to work and get off assistance?”
— Janet**

Janet's Story

For Aboriginal single mom Janet, transitioning from welfare to work was a door that swung open only to slam shut again. Her story of hardship, including her struggle to pay for child care, is a common reality for single mothers in BC.

Janet has three sons, ages 22, 19 and 6. She had her first son just shy of her 17th birthday and has cycled on and off income assistance for 17 years. Since beating her drug and alcohol addictions years ago, she has been able to devote herself to securing a better future for her family.

“Having children young has always motivated me to do better,” Janet explains. “I got support from my band council to go to school, and I live in BC housing—my rent is 30% of my income, so that makes all the difference.” While in school, her band council paid her tuition and a monthly living allowance that covered expenses such as child care, food and rent. She graduated ready to work as a trained care aid for the elderly.

In 2012, Janet easily secured a job and started working shifts as a casual care aid. Finding affordable, adequate child care for her three year old, Justyn, was not so easy. “The shift work made it very difficult to find child care, and my teenage son started having to step up and do child care all the time.”

Finally, she secured after-school care when her youngest started kindergarten. Though working as much as she could, she was unable to keep up with the costs. The bills piled up until she had to pull him out.

Janet was working a job that paid a living wage—over \$20 per hour—and as her hours increased she moved up into a higher income category. This meant she no longer qualified for subsidies on child care, medical plan premiums and rent, but she still could not afford to pay those bills.

Juggling the demands of working, parenting and managing a household on her own, Janet floundered. The burden of providing all the child care for Justyn was impacting her older son. She was rarely home. The whole family began to come apart. “I was a zombie and I burnt out.”

“After all the bills were paid, we were actually poorer than when I was on social assistance, so what was the point of all that schooling and trying to work and get off assistance?”

Depth of Family Poverty



In 2013, the average poor two-parent family with one child lived on only \$17,680 per year – 40% below the poverty line.



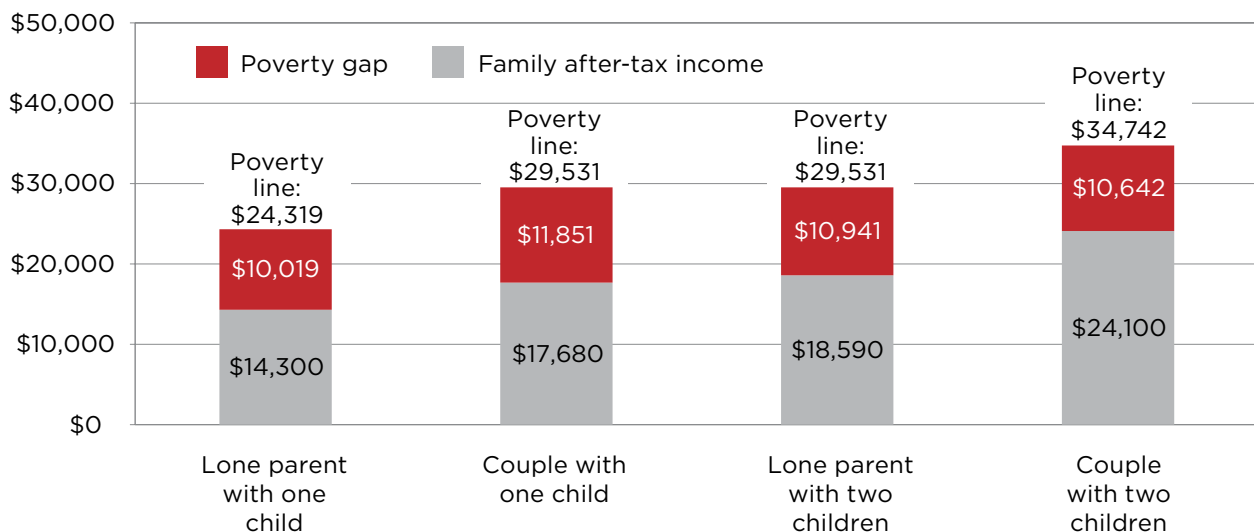
Living at the poverty line is a challenge, but many poor families actually live far below the poverty line. According to 2013 taxfiler data, the median total after-tax incomes for poor families with children in British Columbia were significantly below the Low Income Measure (LIM) after-tax poverty lines for both couple and lone-parent families.

In 2013, the median after-tax family income for poor lone-parent families with one child was \$14,300, or \$10,019 below the poverty line of \$24,319 for this family type. The poverty gap for poor couple families with one child was even larger: their median after-tax family income of \$17,680 was \$11,851 below the poverty line of \$29,531 for this family type.

Poor families with two children were also living well below the poverty line. In 2013, the median after-tax family income for poor lone-parent families with two children was \$18,590, or \$10,941 below the poverty line of \$29,531 for this family type. The gap was similar for poor couple families with two children, whose income of \$24,100 was \$10,642 below the poverty line of \$34,742.

The graph below illustrates how far below the poverty line the median after-tax family incomes were for these four different low-income family type compositions in 2013.

Depth of Poverty for BC Families with Children, Based on Median After-Tax Family Income for Poor Families and LIM After Tax (Poverty Line), 2013



Source: Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 111-0015 and T1 Family File 2013 User's Guide.

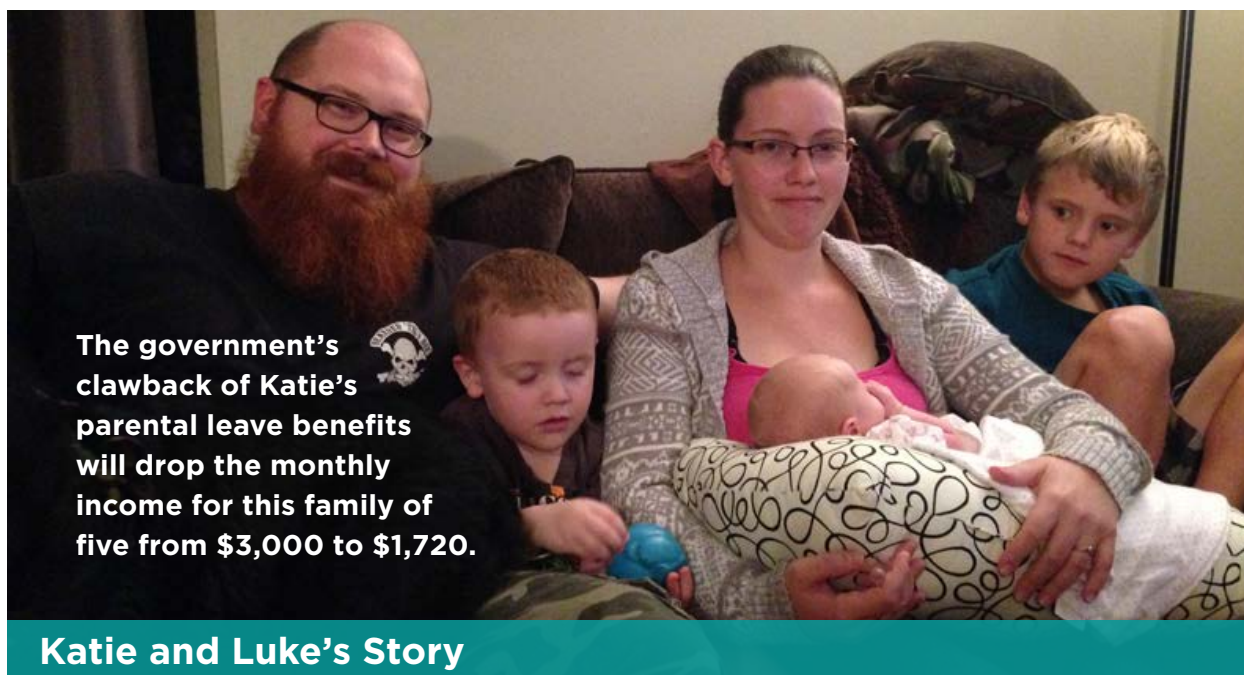


Government policy can sometimes deepen child and family poverty. An example of this is the clawback after the birth of a child of maternity and parental leave benefits paid through the Canadian employment insurance system from the benefits of parents receiving provincial disability assistance. Katie and Luke's story on page 20 illustrates the impact of this clawback of a federal government benefit by a provincial welfare system.

Living at the poverty line is a challenge, but many poor families actually live **far below the poverty line.**

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Significantly increase income and disability assistance rates and index them annually.
- Reduce the number of families in core housing need and eliminate homelessness through enhanced investments in affordable housing.
- Implement the promised Canada Child Benefit with a maximum of \$6,800 per child under 6 and \$5,800 for children 6-17 years.
- Raise the provincial minimum wage to \$15 and index it annually. Make sure this minimum rate applies to all workers.
- Intensify efforts to help immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Canada and improve employment standards and human rights protections and enforcement.
- Cancel all outstanding refugee transportation loan debt and cease indebting new refugees with these costs.
- See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



Baby Adelaide, of Maple Ridge, BC, is just three weeks old. Her parents, Luke and Katie, and siblings Connor, 10, and Hunter, 3, are adjusting to life with their new baby sister, but their struggle will be greater than that of other families. Luke suffers from severe depression and anxiety, and receives disability income assistance of \$1,540 a month. Prior to having Adelaide, Katie worked at a paint store for \$12.75 an hour to earn the maximum the family is permitted to “earn” when a parent is on disability, making around \$1,000 a month. They also receive \$780 in Canada Child Tax Benefits.

Now that Adelaide has arrived, however, the family is plunging into much deeper poverty, as their monthly income will be cut in half due to the government’s clawback of parental leave benefits. Although Katie has been paying into Employment Insurance (EI) premiums at work, her maternity leave benefits from EI will be deemed unearned income, and all parental leave benefits Katie or Luke receive this year will be clawed back dollar-for-dollar from Luke’s disability cheque. “We are not going to see what she gets, it is going to get taken away,” Luke said.

As a result, their monthly income will drop from over \$3,000 to \$1,720—a pittance for their family of five. A lack of affordable housing exacerbates their situation. Katie and Luke have been on the waiting list for subsidized housing since Connor was 5. At \$1,325 a month, Katie and Luke’s three-bedroom home is somewhat affordable when Katie is working, but now, more than two thirds of their income goes to rent and they cannot make ends meet. Katie and Luke will not be able to take their boys to the local recreation centre by bus as the \$11 per round trip is now entirely out of their budget. “They get all cooped up—they are highly active, but we can’t take them to do anything. We have a flexi-pass for the leisure centre, but it is 45 minutes away.”

“My stress has gone up,” Luke says, “and it is hard enough with my depression. It comes up in anxiety and anger, and causes us to fight more, have less patience for the kids, and they miss out on a lot because we just can’t afford it.”

Over the past year, the BC government clawed back \$443,000 in EI maternity and parental benefits from 150 families on assistance.¹

¹ BC government cited in “Maternity EI, disability assistance clawback hurting B.C. family,” May 2015, cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/maternity-ei-disability-assistance-clawback-hurting-b-c-family-1.3075038

Poor Families Facing Food and Housing Challenges

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

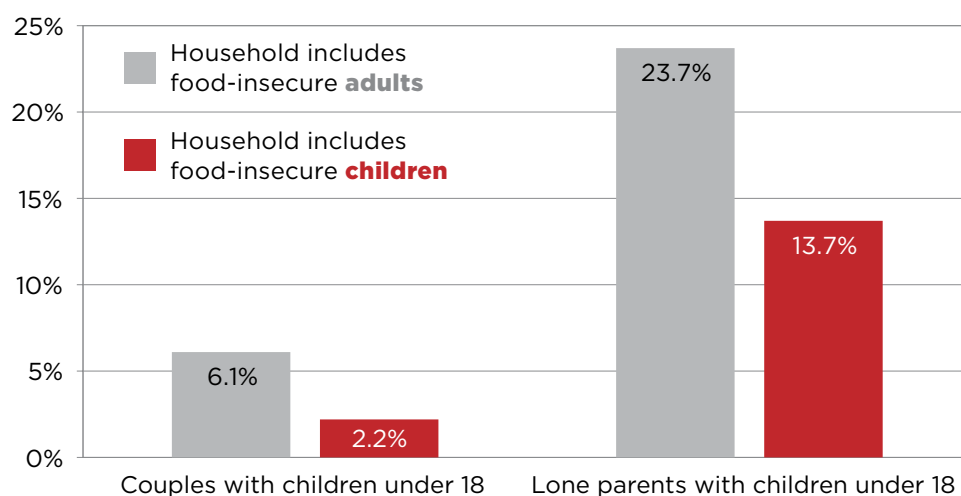
Low incomes can make it difficult for families to meet their nutritional needs—compromising both the quality and the quantity of food available for parents and children. Families reporting these compromises are considered to be experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity.

For poor families with children, it is common for the adults to sacrifice their own nutritional needs to ensure that their children have enough food. As a result, the proportion of households with children in which adults were experiencing food insecurity was much higher than those in which children were experiencing food insecurity.

Levels of food insecurity for both adults and children were dramatically higher for lone-parent families. In 2011/2012, almost one in four lone-parent families with children (24%) in British Columbia included adults who were food insecure, while 14% included children who were food insecure. Children in lone-parent families were more than six times more likely to experience food insecurity than children in couple families.

In summary, in 2011/2012, there were many hungry and undernourished families in British Columbia: 41,108 households with children included food-insecure adults, while 18,916 included food-insecure children. Hunger and poor nutrition have well-known effects on children's growth and development. In addition to the impacts on their physical health, poorly nourished children have trouble concentrating on learning at school and may exhibit behaviour problems. Parents who go hungry or have poor-quality diets also struggle to be the best they can be, both from the physical and mental effects of poor nutrition and the stress of raising children in poverty while living in a wealthy society.

Proportion of BC Households with Children with Food-Insecure Adults and Children, 2011/2012



For poor families with children, it is common for the adults to sacrifice their own nutritional needs to ensure that their children have enough food.

Source: Statistics Canada. Canadian Community Health Survey. CANSIM Table 105-0545.

FOOD BANK USE

In March 2014, 841,191 people were helped by food banks in Canada; more than one third (37% or 310,400) were children. Years after the end of the recession, food bank use remains close to record levels, and is 25% higher than in 2008, before the recession began.

In BC, 97,369 people were helped by food banks in 2014, a 25% increase since 2008. Of those, 31% or 29,990 were children.

Of those helped, 36% were families with children, and nearly half of these (45%) were two-parent families. Of those helped, 11.5% were currently employed and another 4% were recently employed.

Source: Food Banks Canada, *Hunger Count 2014*.

In 2014, **30,000**
BC children
relied on food
banks, up
from 2008.



BRITISH COLUMBIA FAMILIES FACING HOUSING CRISIS

One of the biggest challenges facing families in British Columbia is housing. A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing falls below at least one of these three standards and if it spends 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative acceptable local housing:

- **ADEQUACY** — not requiring any major repairs
- **AFFORDABILITY** — dwellings cost less than 30% of total before-tax household income
- **SUITABILITY** — has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements

Children in lone-parent families are especially at risk for being in core housing need: in 2011, in every province in Canada, the rates of core housing need were much higher among children in lone-parent families than among children in two-parent families.

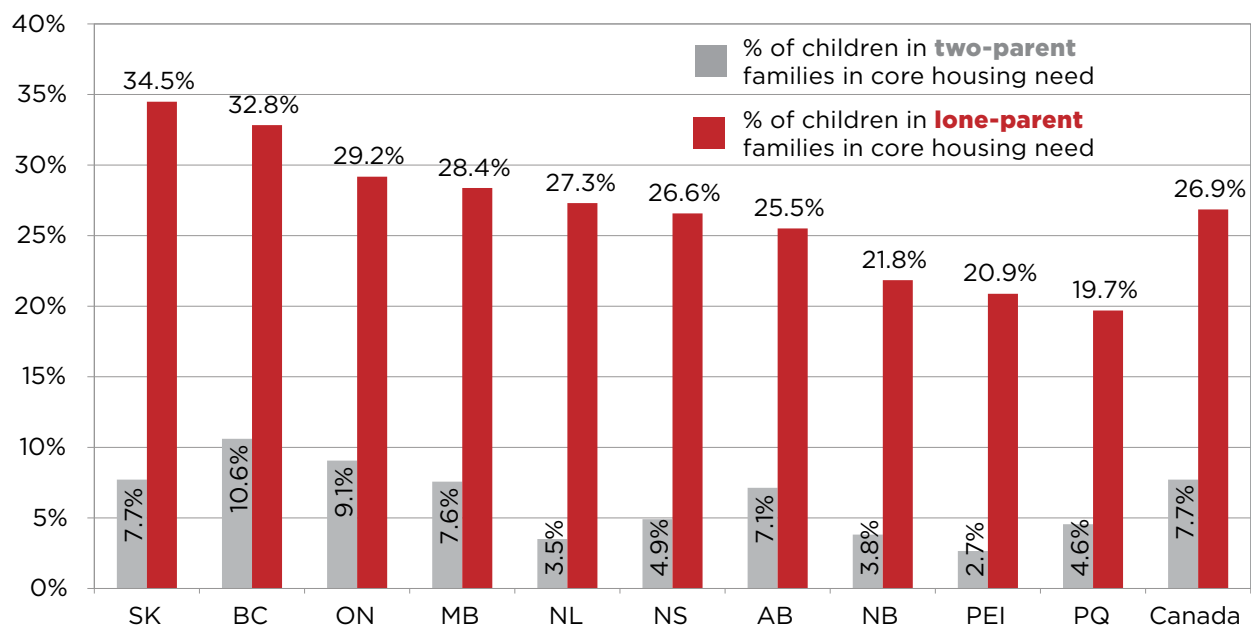
In 2011, BC was the only province with more than one in 10 children in couple families (11%) living in core housing need.

With one third of children in lone-parent families (33%) living in core housing need in 2011, BC was second only to Saskatchewan for core housing need among children in lone-parent families among Canadian provinces.

In 2011, BC was the only province with more than one in 10 children in couple families (11%) living in core housing need, the highest rate of children in couple families in core housing need of any province in Canada.

BC had 173,875 children in families experiencing core housing need in 2011. This exposes them to a variety of risks and stresses, including unhealthy and unsafe living conditions due to poor upkeep, chronic financial stress, frequent moves to find more affordable housing and overcrowding.

Proportion of BC Children in Core Housing Need, by Province and Family Type (sorted by % of Children in Lone-Parent Families in Core Housing Need), 2011



Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Core Housing Need Status for Population*.

The calculated core-housing-need rates do not include households living on First Nations reserves, which often endure deplorable housing conditions. In addition, the concept of core housing need is based on the assumption that families will be able to “find” an affordable unit at the median rent.

However, in markets such as the Vancouver metropolitan area, vacancy rates have been very low for the past few decades, usually below 2%, making it difficult for families to find rental housing even if they are able to afford it. Therefore, the stated rates of core housing need likely understate the degree of housing difficulties that families in British Columbia face.



FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Reduce the number of families in core housing need and eliminate homelessness through enhanced investments in affordable housing.
- Provide additional funds to groups who provide housing and other supports to queer and transgender youth at risk of homelessness and social exclusion due to the loss of family support.
- Increase funding for First Nations child welfare, education and community health services, and develop a long-term plan to eradicate poverty among Aboriginal families.
- See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.

BC has the highest rate of core housing need for children in two-parent families in Canada.



“They say just ‘get a job’, but it is so much more complicated than that. So many things worked against my huge efforts to move forward. So what’s the point?” — Susan

Susan's Story

Susan (not her real name), an Aboriginal single mother to three boys, is facing overwhelming food and housing challenges. She worked hard and was supported in upgrading her education, which allowed her to leave income assistance for a well-paying job. Then she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. Since her diagnosis, her status at work and her precarious economic situation has plunged her into a full-blown crisis.

Though she has worked for her employer for three years, she still has “casual” status and is now on unpaid medical leave. She cannot apply for income assistance because she technically still has a job — and her employer can't let her go now for legal reasons because she is sick.

The future she was trying to build for her family is now collapsing around them.

“We are surviving on handouts, the food bank, Salvation Army, and because of my health I am not getting the proper foods I need. I have to eat what I can, but I have Crohn's, and fruits and veggies cost money, but I can't afford them.”

The Canada Child Tax Benefit she receives monthly goes as far as it can to pay the bills. As for extra-curricular activities or outings for her six year old — those “don't exist.”

“My little guy has to pay for transit now because he is six, I accumulate points to take him to go see a movie, but we can't afford to get there on the bus.”

Susan owes four months of rent, and an eviction notice has been served. A collection agent calls about child care bills she has no way of paying. Most days, she just tries to cope with her new illness, and feed her boys as much as she can.

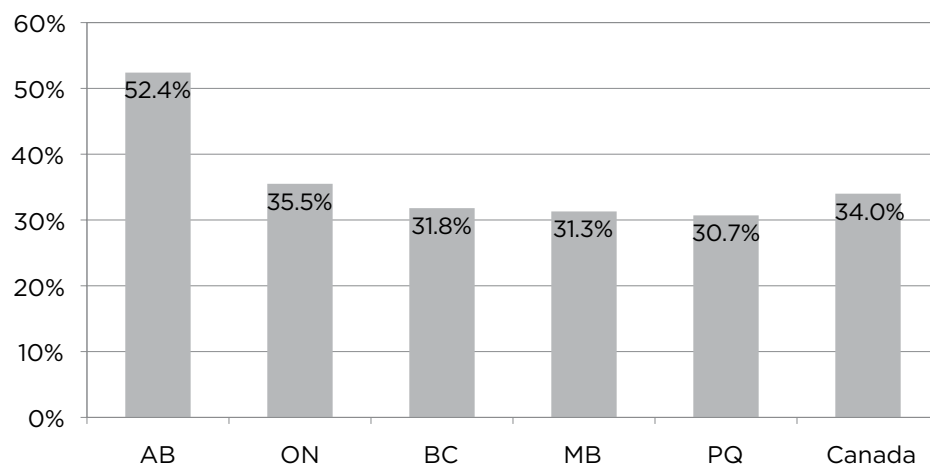
“They say just ‘get a job,’ but it is so much more complicated than that. So many things worked against my huge efforts to move forward,” Susan laments, “so what's the point?”

Child Poverty and Working Parents

In 2011, 31.8% of the poor children in BC — 44,500 children — lived in families with at least one adult working full time, full year. For the children in these families, the problem is their parents' low wages. Whether full-time, full-year workers can earn enough to lift their families out of poverty depends on their wage levels compared to the poverty line for their family size and the community in which they live. Many other poor children lived in families with at least some income from part-time or part-year employment.

The large number of low-wage jobs in BC and other provinces has long been a problem, even for workers with steady periods of employment. For families with children, low wages mean they often have to take on multiple jobs and work more than full time to earn enough to support their families. This leaves them little time to spend with their children or to participate in community life outside of work.

Percentage of Poor Children with One or More Parents Employed Full Time, Full Year, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation. SLID masterfile using LICO Before-Tax, 2011.

MINIMUM WAGES

In September 2015 the provincial government increased the minimum wage by a mere \$0.20, bringing it to \$10.45 an hour. The increase will do next to nothing to improve the situation for more than half a million low-wage workers in BC. Under the current government plan, which includes annual indexing for inflation, minimum wage won't reach \$15 per hour until 2034. BC's minimum wage is currently lower than minimum wages in every other province except New Brunswick. When New Brunswick raises its minimum wage to \$11 an hour in 2017, BC will again have the lowest minimum wage in the country.



A single parent working full time full year for minimum wage earns only **\$19,019.**



The large number of low-wage jobs in BC and other provinces has long been a problem, even for workers with steady periods of employment.



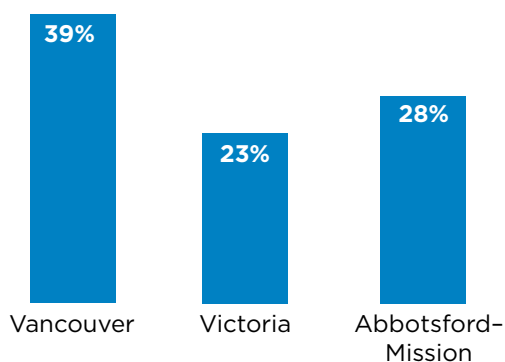
Some BC workers are not even guaranteed the full minimum wage, for example, farm workers who are paid a piece rate and liquor servers who can be paid a lower minimum wage of \$9.20 an hour.

A single parent with one child, working full time, full year, but earning only \$10.45 an hour, would have earned total wages of \$19,019, more than \$8,400 below the Low Income Measure (LIM) before-tax poverty line of \$27,437 for this family. Two parents with two children, both working full time, full year at this minimum wage would have earned \$38,038, leaving them \$1,158 below the before-tax poverty line of \$39,196 for this family.

LIVING WAGES FOR FAMILIES

First Call hosts the Living Wage for Families Campaign to raise awareness about the negative impact of low-wage poverty on families and communities. When employers pay a living wage they are contributing to a key solution to the issue of child and family poverty. The living wage is well above the poverty line, but still only provides a bare-bones budget without room for savings or paying off debt. It is recalculated annually to take into account family expenses.

Couple families with children with total incomes below regional living wages, 2013



Source: Statistics Canada Table 111-0013.

Living wages calculated for many BC communities are what a two-parent, two-child family, with both parents working full time, would need to earn to meet their basic needs such as food, rent, transportation and child care.

As shown in the graph above, significant proportions of two-parent families with children in Vancouver, Victoria and Abbotsford-Mission were earning less than the regional living wage.

To learn more about the Living Wage for Families Campaign and to see a current list of certified Living Wage Employers visit www.livingwageforfamilies.ca

LIVING WAGE RATES IN BC

Vancouver (2015)	\$20.68
Fraser Valley (2015)	\$17.27
Greater Victoria (2015)	\$20.05
Qualicum/Parksville (2015)	\$17.66
Prince George (2015)	\$16.82
Cowichan Region (2015)	\$17.55
Port Alberni/Huu-ay-aht First Nation (2014)	\$17.22
Kitimat (2014)	\$20.61
Terrace (2014)	\$18.17
Revelstoke (2014)	\$18.87
Golden (2014)	\$20.46
Cortes Island (2014)	\$16.29
Central Okanagan (2013)	\$18.01
Lower Columbia Region (2014)	\$18.15
Nanaimo (2015)	\$17.99



THE \$10 A DAY CHILD CARE PLAN

Access for families to a public system of affordable, high-quality child care is key to an effective poverty reduction strategy. Child care is the second highest cost (and in some places the highest) in living wage family budget calculations in BC.

BC families face a crisis in accessing quality, affordable child care:

- Fees are too high—the second highest family expense after housing.
- Wait lists are too long, with a regulated space for less than 20% of children.
- Too often, families are forced into unregulated care, with no safety standards.

Since its release, the \$10aDay Child Care Plan has been enthusiastically endorsed and supported by an impressive number of individuals and organizations across the province. Local governments, boards of education, labour, business, community service, women's and advocacy groups understand that the plan offers a made-in-BC solution to the child care crisis facing families with young children today.

Learn more and endorse the plan at www.10aday.ca



STUDENT DEBT BURDENS YOUNG FAMILIES AND LIMITS POTENTIAL

Many young couples just starting their careers are burdened by huge student loans and are wondering how or when they will be able to afford to have children. At the post-secondary level, financial barriers to access and soaring student debt are limiting many young people's potential.

Today, public funding accounts for roughly half of post-secondary education institutions' operating budgets, down from more than 90 percent in the 1960s and 1970s. The lack of public financing has created a funding gap for universities and colleges, which has been increasingly filled by relying on private sources of funding, primarily in the form of tuition fees.¹

BC offers the lowest levels of non-loan student aid in Canada² and student debt in BC averages \$35,000 for a four-year degree, well above the national average of \$27,000.³ One in every two students graduate from university in debt. Nearly 60% of those in debt owe \$20,000 or more upon graduation and 22% owe at least \$40,000.⁴ Students who must borrow to finance their education are paying an estimated 30% more than those who do not have to borrow.⁵

- 1 *The Impact of Student Debt Canadian Federation of Students*, Glenn Burley and Adam Awad, cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/03/Report-Impact-of-Student-Debt-2015-Final.pdf
- 2 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, *Tier for Two: Managing the Optics of Provincial Tuition Fee Policies*, September 2014.
- 3 Student Survey, Bank of Montreal, 2013.
- 4 BC Baccalaureate Outcomes 2013 and 2012 Surveys of Baccalaureate Graduates." Government of BC, 2014.
- 5 Canadian Federation of Students – British Columbia, *Submission to the Select Standing committee on Finance and Government Services*, October 2012.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Raise the provincial minimum wage to \$15 and index it annually. Make sure this minimum rate applies to all workers.
- Ensure that direct and contract employees are paid a living wage by all public sector employers.
- Adopt and begin implementing the \$10aDay Child Care Plan.
- Enhance maternity and parental leave to enrich the benefit value, and extend the total duration to 18 months, reserving additional months for fathers.
- Remove financial barriers for low-income students and lower student debt levels through tuition fee reductions, student grants instead of loans, and interest free loans.
- Immediately restore the provincial Education Guarantee to reinstate tuition-free adult basic education and English language learning.
- Restore the Employment Insurance program so most workers are protected during a temporary loss of wages and receive a benefit they can live on while they look for new employment.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



For Jessica Alford of Sooke, BC, working at minimum wage means her three children will spend their entire childhood living below the poverty line.

Jessica was herself raised in poverty, one of three daughters brought up by a single dad. “Food was always at a minimum. Security was a luxury to us,” she explains. Jessica completed some engineering and science studies at college, but left when she had her first son. Now, with Mason, 9, Maria, 5, and Morganna, 14 months, daily life is tough, with Jessica working part-time at \$10.45 an hour without benefits to make ends meet.

Not long after they had their first child, her husband developed paralysis and fibromyalgia. When he could not work or keep a job due to his condition, he accessed monthly disability income assistance. Their situation is precarious. Rent and hydro consumes the majority of their total income, and counting meals is a necessity. Limited funds for any kind of transportation curtails their mobility, and her sons miss important extracurricular bonding time. Since they can’t afford birthday presents, they don’t attend other children’s birthday parties.

Adding insult to injury, when Jessica went on maternity leave after the birth of Morganna, the BC government clawed back their earned maternity and parental benefits from her husband’s disability cheque.

Now that she is back at work again, Jessica is frustrated by the treadmill of minimum wage. With minimum wage at a mere \$10.45 an hour, she would have to work “two full-time jobs” to make a living wage, which is impossible. Even though she is working hard, her minimum wage job will do nothing to lift them out of poverty.

Jessica worries about the impact of her low-wage work on her children’s self-esteem. “Watching mommy go to work for nothing also hurts their self-value. This is time I am spending away from my family, and it is for a pittance. How is that worth it?”

Families with Children on Welfare

Year after year, people on welfare in British Columbia live far below the poverty line, according to calculations by the former National Council of Welfare and the Caledon Institute for Social Policy.

In 2013, a BC two-parent family with two children aged 10 and 15 on income assistance received a total income of \$22,041. That's \$12,701 below the Statistics Canada poverty line, using Low Income Measure (LIM) after tax, for this family of four. This family's poverty gap grew by \$1,287 between 1989 and 2013, using constant 2013 dollars.

A BC lone-parent family with one child aged two received \$17,329, which is \$6,990 below the poverty line for this family of two. This family's poverty gap grew by \$529 between 1989 and 2013.

Total welfare incomes in 2013 actually decreased compared to 2012. BC's welfare rates have not been increased since 2007. The total income of a lone parent with one child on income assistance has been decreasing steadily since 2009, despite the rising cost of living over the last eight years.

Statistics from the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation show a monthly average of 35,280 children in British Columbia lived in families receiving income assistance in 2013, with the majority of these children (22,618 on average, or 64.1% of all children in families receiving income assistance) living in families with a disabled parent, a parent with medical conditions, a parent with persistent multiple barriers, or a parent temporarily excused from work.

Over 80% of the children on income assistance were in lone-parent families, mostly families led by lone-parent mothers. Based on this average number, about 21% of BC's poor children in 2013 lived with parents on welfare.

Welfare recipients in BC and other provinces have consistently struggled to survive on incomes well below the poverty line. They are frequently forced to rely on food banks and other sources of charity to feed and clothe their children. In 2013, the sample BC two-parent family was at 63% of the poverty line, and the BC lone-parent family was at 71% of the poverty line.

Funding for welfare programs has changed significantly over the past two decades. The federal government got rid of cost-sharing for welfare in favour of block grants to the provinces. Another important change was the introduction of the Canada Child Tax Benefit, which increased federal benefits for parents but also allowed provinces to "claw back" part of the payments they made for welfare.



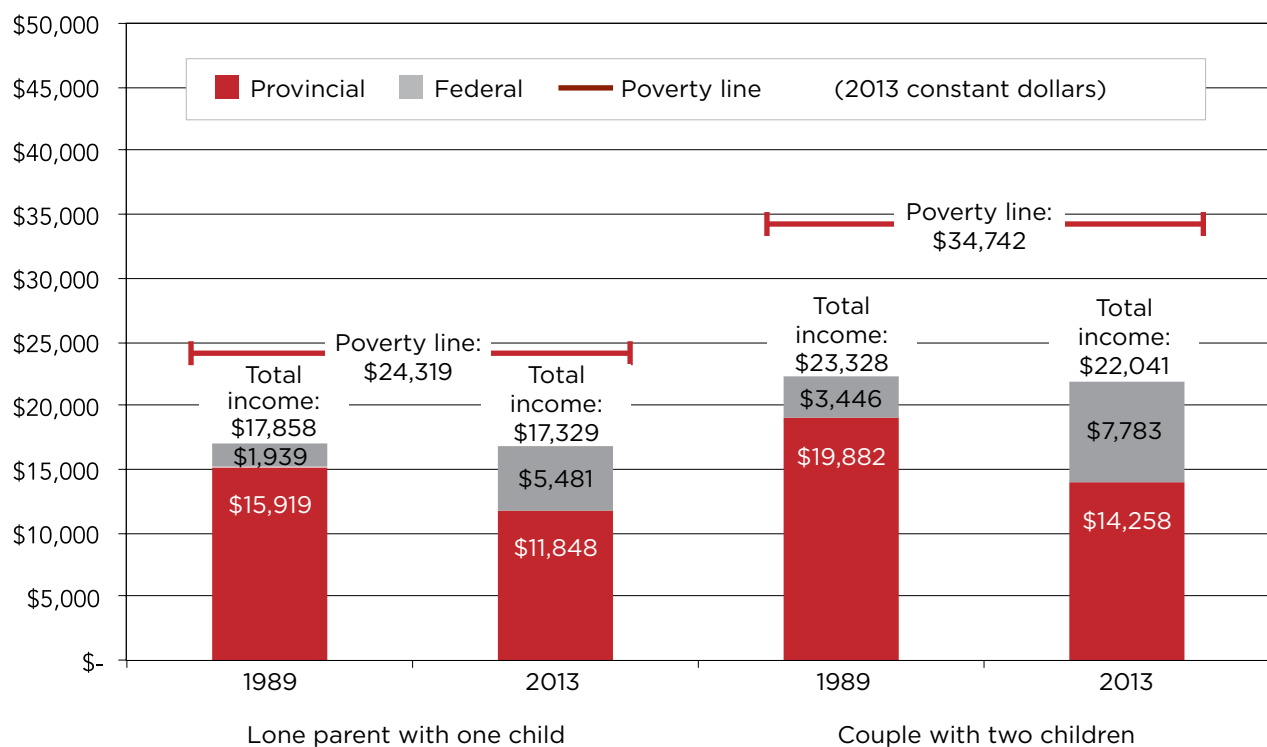
What gets cut
when there is
not enough?

A family of four
on welfare has
to get by on only
\$22,041 a year.



The graph below shows the changes in federal and BC payments to two-parent and one-parent families between 1989 and 2013. The 1989 figures have been converted to 2013 dollars to account for changes in the cost of living between 1989 and 2013. The graph also shows the poverty lines for each family.

Federal and Provincial Shares of Welfare Incomes, 1989 and 2013



Source: Caledon Institute of Social Policy; poverty lines from Statistics Canada, LIM After-Tax.

The total welfare incomes of both the lone-parent family of two and the two-parent family of four were lower in 2013 than in 1989. Additionally, federal payments to families more than doubled over the 24 years. The proportionately larger increase for the lone-parent family with a child under six occurred because of the addition of the Universal Child Care Benefit. Meanwhile, provincial payments to both families declined significantly.

POSITIVE CHANGES IN BC'S WELFARE POLICIES

There have been some recent positive changes to BC's welfare policies. First Call applauds government for listening to the pleas of single mothers and eliminating the clawback of child support from single parents on income assistance. This single policy change, effective September 1, 2015, has reduced the depth of poverty for over 5,400 children. On income assistance, they will still be living in poverty, but the depth of their poverty will be reduced, in some cases significantly.

The September 2015 elimination of the welfare clawback on child support reduced the depth of poverty for over 5,400 children. They will still be living in poverty, but the depth of their poverty will be reduced, in some cases significantly.

Additionally, the clawback of the Canada Pension Plan Orphan's Benefit, paid to widowed welfare recipients when their disabled partner dies, was also eliminated. This will benefit another 50 to 100 children.

Another positive change was the introduction of the new Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI) aimed at removing barriers for single parents on income assistance to obtaining the education or training they need to make the transition to the workforce. This initiative will allow single parents to continue to receive income and disability assistance benefits for a year while they attend an approved program. Their tuition and school-related transportation costs will be paid for while they are in the SPEI. Importantly, their child care costs will also be covered for a year while they are in school or training, and for a second year if they transition into work. Single parents will also now be allowed to keep education-related bursaries and grants.

Other recent positive policy changes include an increase in earnings exemptions for families with children and allowing these families to retain health supplements (dental, optical, and premium-free Ministry of Health Medical Services Plan and Pharmacare programs) for up to 12 months after leaving assistance for employment.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Significantly increase income and disability assistance rates and index them annually.
- End the clawback of federal maternity and parental leave benefits from people on income and disability assistance and allow all those on income or disability assistance to retain benefits while attending a post-secondary institution.
- Continue to pay the children's benefit to grandparents on CPP Disability after they turn 65 when they are raising their grandchildren.
- Establish universal public dental care, prescription drug and eye care programs.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



When the BC government ended the clawback of child support from children living on social assistance in September 2015, hope and health entered the lives of Rebecca Bodo and her six-year-old daughter, Sophey. The positive impacts of being able to keep and spend \$400 a month have been immediate. “I feel awesome,” Rebecca says, and her daughter is “thriving.”

With the end of the clawback, Sophey has not had to go without her favourite healthy foods to eat, Rebecca explains. “I haven’t needed to use the food bank! I can go to Safeway, other shops, and get high-quality meat, cheese, vegetables and fruit she asks for, and we can have a consistent amount, too.” She recently enrolled Sophey in yoga classes, which she loves—an opportunity she never could have afforded before the end of the clawback—as well as quality after-school care.

The end of the clawback “is one more hurdle that takes us away from that poverty level where we need food banks and charity clothes. Now we can both get proper shoes, and enough shoes for all the weather,” she adds. Most of all, Rebecca is more present as a mother, no longer parenting with the debilitating stress of poverty. “Sophey is a lot more confident now. She is happier and more outgoing and free spirited, because we are under much less stress,” she says.

Rebecca is also considering accessing the new Single Parent Employment Initiative, launched alongside the end of the clawback by the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation in September 2015. “I want to take training to become a unit clerk in a hospital, I have the admin skills ... Then, I could access the earnings exemption.”

How did it feel for Rebecca to share her story and help end the child support clawback in BC? “It brings about a sense of accomplishment—that we can negotiate with the system, we can feel inclusive with the system, and we can bring our needs forward,” Rebecca says.

“With the stroke of a pen, the government does have the power to bring children and families out of poverty.”

Child Poverty Across BC Regions

Child poverty affects children in every corner of British Columbia. According to 2013 taxfiler data and the Low Income Measure (LIM) after tax, more than three in five (62%) of British Columbia's regional districts had child poverty rates of 20.0% or higher, with British Columbia as a whole having a child poverty rate of 20.4%.

23 out of the 29 regional districts in BC had at least 1,000 children living in poverty.

It is important to note that over half (51%) of all poor children in BC — that's 85,450 children — live in the Metro Vancouver Regional District. A breakdown of poverty in this region is provided in Fact Sheet 9.

Overall, out of 29 regional districts in BC:

- One regional district, Central Coast, had a child poverty rate above 50.0%
- 14% of all regional districts (four) had child poverty rates between 30.0% and 39.9%
- 45% of all regional districts (13) had child poverty rates between 20.0% and 30.0%
- 38% of all regional districts (11) had child poverty rates between 15.5% and 19.9%

Every regional district except for Stikine (which only had 200 children total living there) had at least 100 children living in poverty, and the majority of the regional districts (23 out of 29) had at least 1,000 children living in poverty.

The regional districts in the northeast and some parts of the Kootenays and Okanagan had the lowest child poverty rates in British Columbia. The regional districts on Vancouver Island, particularly the northern and western parts of Vancouver Island and the northern and central coastal areas of British Columbia had the highest child poverty rates. Lone-parent families with one child or two children in the Central Coast Regional District had median incomes of only \$708 or \$907 per month respectively.

The regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were:

- Central Coast Regional District (50.6% child poverty rate)
- Mount Waddington Regional District (35.1% child poverty rate)
- Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District (33.0% child poverty rate)

The regional districts with the lowest child poverty rates were:

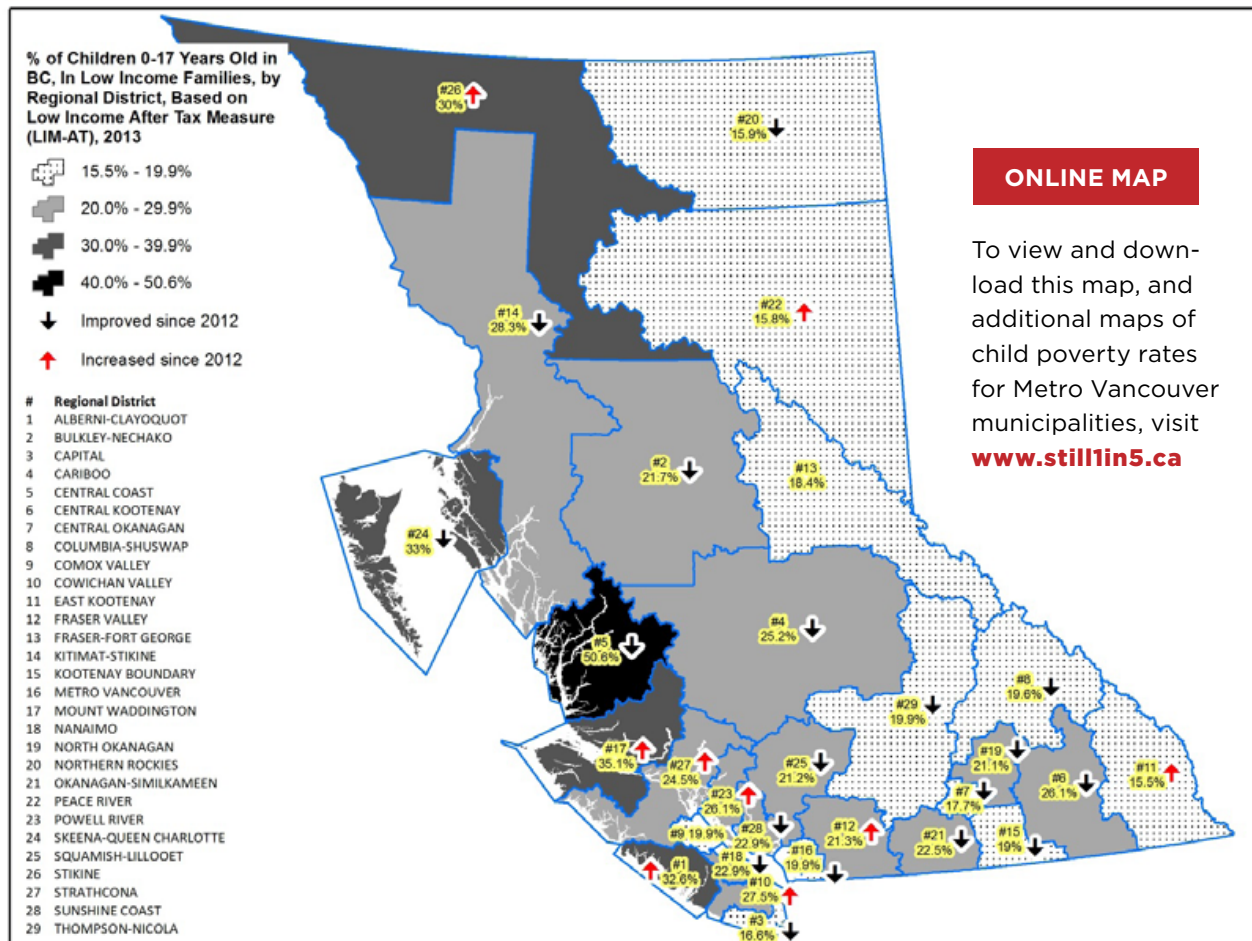
- East Kootenay Regional District (15.5% child poverty rate)
- Peace River Regional District (15.8% child poverty rate)
- Northern Rockies (15.9% child poverty rate)

Between 2012 and 2013, most regional districts (18 out of 29 regional districts) saw decreases in their child poverty rates, while nine regional districts saw increases in their child poverty rates and two regional districts saw their child poverty rates stay the same in both years. The regional districts in the south, central, and north interior generally saw decreases in child poverty rates between 2012 and 2013. The

regional districts with increases in child poverty rates were concentrated along the south coast and Vancouver Island.

Child Poverty Rates by Regional District, LIM After Tax, 2013

% of Children 0-17 Years Old in BC in Low Income Families, by Regional District,
Based on Low Income After Tax Measure (LIM-AT), 2013



Source Data: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, 2013, Annual Estimates for Census Families and Individuals, 13C0016
Table F-18 Family data - after tax low income (based on after tax low income measures, LIMs) 2013
Notes: © This data includes information copied with permission of Canada Post Corporation

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FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Adopt a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines, a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government is achieving its targets on time, and a goal of reducing BC's child poverty rate to 7% or lower by 2020.
- Recognizing that children of recent immigrants and refugees, Aboriginal children, children of female lone-parent families, children in racialized families and children with a disability, are at greater risk of living in poverty, efforts should also be targeted to achieve major reductions in poverty levels for these populations.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.

Child Poverty in Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver (MV) was home to 85,450 poor children in 2013, representing 51% of the poor children in the province. These children were spread throughout every census tract in the region. Based

BC's highest child poverty rates were in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Chinatown, followed by South Surrey, and the Capilano First Nations Reserve.

on taxfiler data using Low Income Measure (LIM) after tax, every MV census tract had at least 20 poor children. In fact, most census tracts had even larger numbers of poor children, with 354 out of the region's 453 census tracts¹ (78%) having at least 100 poor children. Overall, one in five MV children (20%) were poor, similar to the provincial average, with rates varying by census tract.

Metro Vancouver was one of two regions in BC where the overall child poverty rate of 20% was higher than the rate for children under 6 years, which stood at 19%.

The distribution of census tracts by child poverty rates was:

- 3% of all census tracts (15) had child poverty rates of 40% or more
- 11% of all census tracts (51) had child poverty rates of 30%–40%
- 36% of all census tracts (161) had child poverty rates of 20%–30%
- 44% of all census tracts (199) had child poverty rates of 10%–20%
- 6% of all census tracts (27) had child poverty rates of less than 10%

The Metro Vancouver area had clusters of census tracts with high child poverty rates including:

- Northeast Vancouver (census tracts in and around the Downtown Eastside)
- Along Kingsway in Burnaby through the Metrotown and Edmonds areas
- Parts of the Whalley, Newton and Guildford areas of Surrey
- North and central Richmond
- North and central Langley City

The five census tracts in Metro Vancouver with the highest child poverty rates were:

- Census tract 58.00 (Downtown Eastside in Vancouver) with a child poverty rate of 70%
- Census tract 57.01 (Chinatown area in Vancouver) with a child poverty rate of 59%
- Census tract 180.02 (in South Surrey) with a child poverty rate of 50%
- Census tract 130.04 (Capilano First Nations Reserve) with a child poverty rate of 48%
- Census tract 57.02 (Strathcona area in Vancouver) with a child poverty rate of 48%

¹ Note: Metro Vancouver has 457 census tracts, but only 453 census tracts had enough information available for child poverty rate calculation.

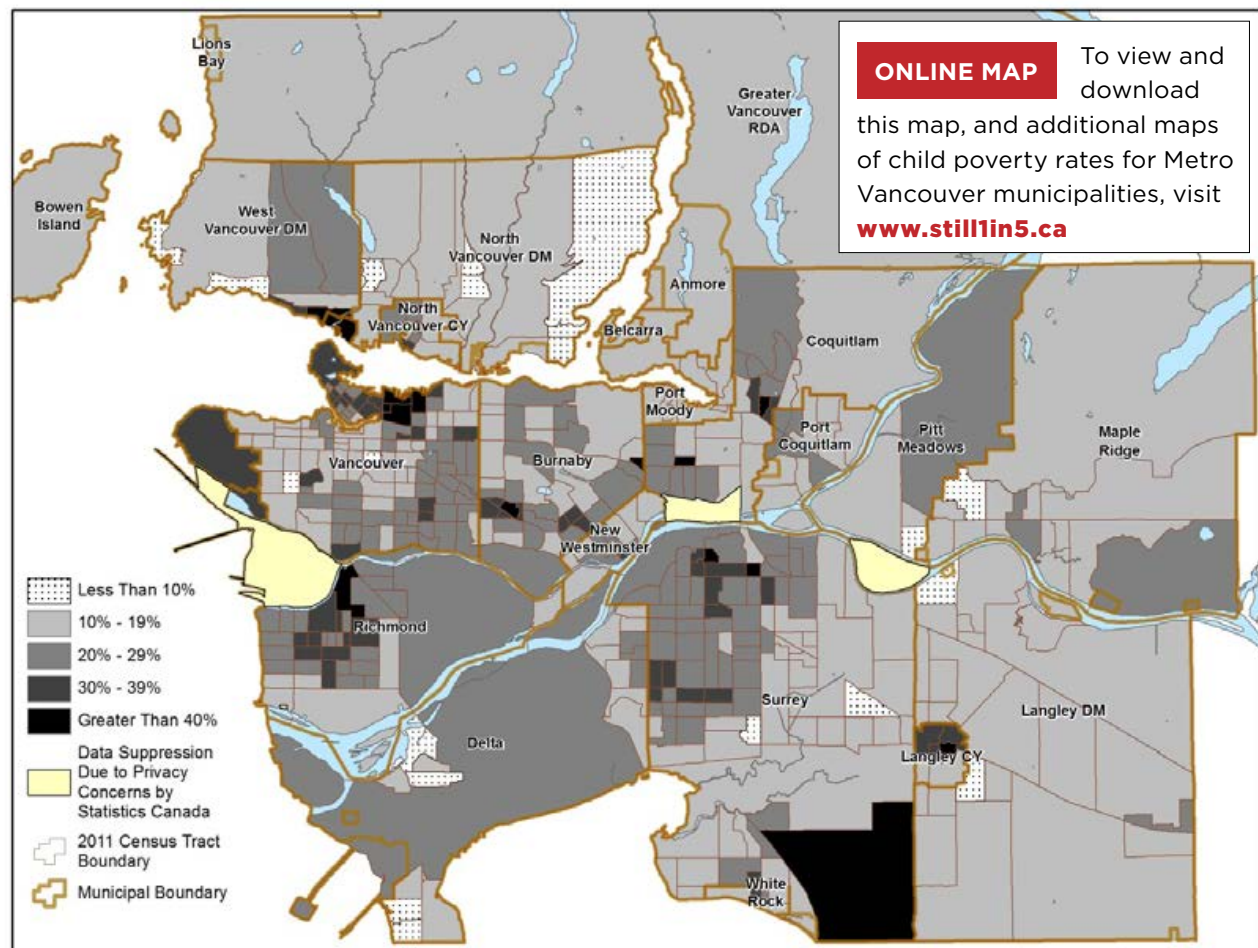
The five census tracts in Metro Vancouver with the largest numbers of poor children were:

- Census tract 69.00 (UBC area) with 840 poor children
- Census tract 189.08 (Guildford area in Surrey) with 750 poor children
- Census tract 189.10 (Guildford area in Surrey) with 660 poor children
- Census tract 190.03 (Whalley/Guildford area in Surrey) with 650 poor children
- Census tract 185.11 (Newton area in Surrey) with 640 poor children

In terms of the proportion of children living in poverty, Northeast Vancouver had the most severe child poverty situation. However, in terms of the total number of children living in poverty, the Guildford, Newton and Whalley areas of Surrey had the most severe child poverty situation—this was due to a combination of high child poverty rates and large numbers of children living in these areas.

Child Poverty Rates by Metro Vancouver Census Tract, LIM After Tax, 2013

% of Children 0-17 Years Old in BC in Low Income Families, by Metro Vancouver Census Tract, Based on Low Income After Tax Measure (LIM-AT), 2013



Source Data: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, 2013, Annual Estimates for Census Families and Individuals, 13C0016
Table F-18 Family data - after tax low income (based on after tax low income measures, LIMs) 2013
Notes: © This data includes information copied with permission of Canada Post Corporation

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It is true to say that every municipality in Metro Vancouver has child poverty challenges: in 2013, every municipality (even the smallest ones) had at least one census tract with child poverty rates of 10% or more. In fact, most municipalities had multiple census tracts with child poverty rates of 20% or more.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Adopt a comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines, a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government is achieving its targets on time, and a goal of reducing BC's child poverty rate to 7% or lower by 2020.
- Recognizing that children of recent immigrants and refugees, Aboriginal children, children of female lone-parent families, children in racialized families and children with a disability, are at greater risk of living in poverty, efforts should also be targeted to achieve major reductions in poverty levels for these populations.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.

FACT SHEET

10

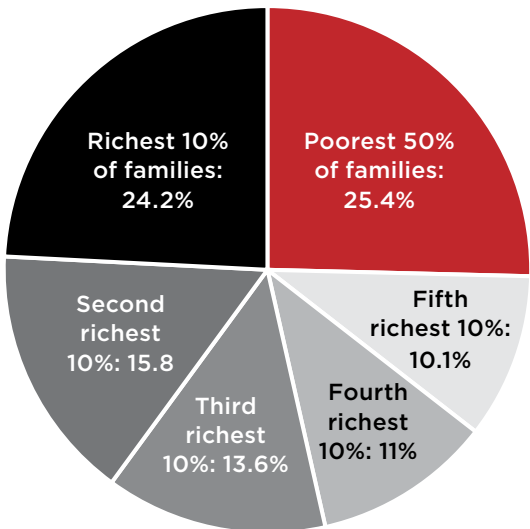
Incomes of Families with Children: Growing Inequality

In the past 20 years, income inequality in Canada has increased and continues to grow. The richest group of Canadians has increased its share of total national income, while the poorest and middle-income groups have been losing ground. International research shows that high rates of income inequality negatively affect both rich and poor people.

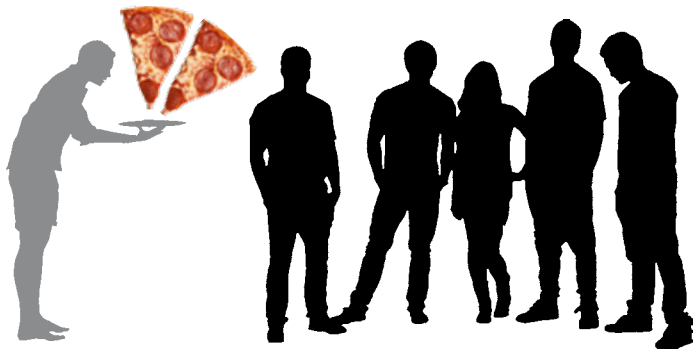
As shown in the following graph, in BC in 2011, the richest 10% received 24.2% of all the income of BC families with children. The top five deciles (or half) collected three quarters (75%) of all income received by BC families with children, leaving only 25.4% for the other half. Some families in the bottom half are poor, but many others are middle-class families living well *above* the poverty line.

The graph, using data from Statistics Canada prepared for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, measures the total income of families with children. Total income refers to all income before taxes, including wages and salaries, earnings from self-employment and earnings from investments. It also includes government benefits from the federal and provincial governments, such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, GST credits, Employment Insurance and welfare payments.

Percentage of Total Income Among BC Parents with Children, 2011



The richest 10% of BC families with children received 24% of the total income, while the poorest 50% shared 25%.



In the past 20 years, income inequality in Canada has increased and continues to grow. The richest group of Canadians has increased its share of total national income, while the poorest and middle-income groups have been losing ground.

Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives based on Statistics Canada data.

The table below shows how total income has changed for each of the 10-percent groups or “deciles” since 1989. Families in the three lower deciles actually lost money over time, while those in the higher deciles, especially the top half of the income groups, gained significant amounts of income—much of it during the last several years.

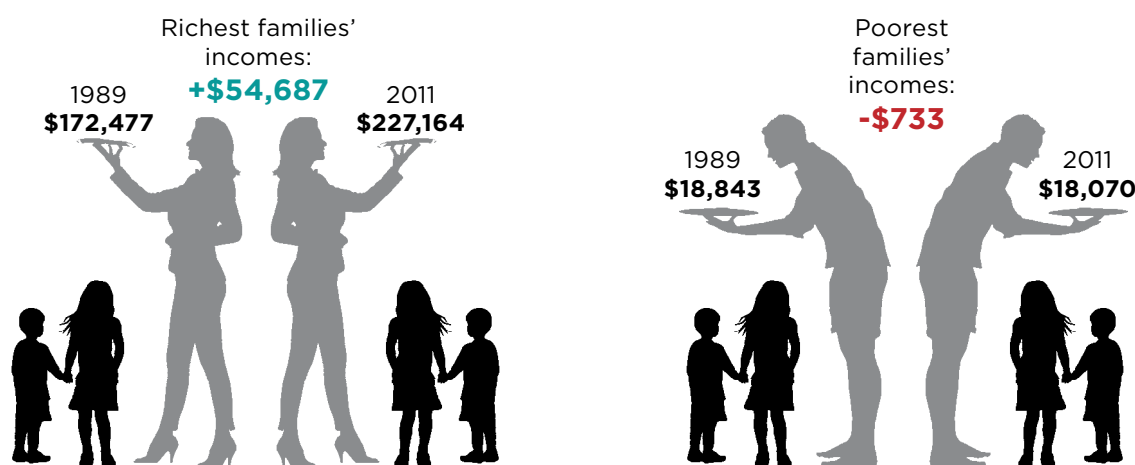
Changes in Average Total Incomes by Decile Group, All BC Families With Children, in Constant 2011 Dollars

Decile	1989	2011	Difference
Decile 1: Poorest	\$ 18,843	\$ 18,070	\$ -773
Decile 2: Second poorest	36,986	33,197	-3,789
Decile 3	52,488	47,427	-5,061
Decile 4	63,564	64,802	1,238
Decile 5	72,727	79,731	7,004
Decile 6	81,752	93,401	11,649
Decile 7	92,764	109,143	16,379
Decile 8	105,300	124,924	19,624
Decile 9: Second richest	121,055	152,025	30,970
Decile 10: Richest	172,477	227,164	54,687
Average for families with children	81,873	95,439	13,566

Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives based on Statistics Canada data.

All provinces have grossly unequal income distributions, but in 2011 the distribution in BC was the most unequal. The average income of the richest decile in BC was \$227,164 and the average for the lowest decile was \$18,070, a ratio of 13 to one. At the other end of the scale was Manitoba, with a ratio of \$208,952 to \$23,082 or nine to one.

The primary reason that British Columbia had the largest ratio was the very low incomes among families in the lowest decile: the average income of the lowest decile families in British Columbia (\$18,070) was the lowest in Canada and below the Canadian average (\$23,024).

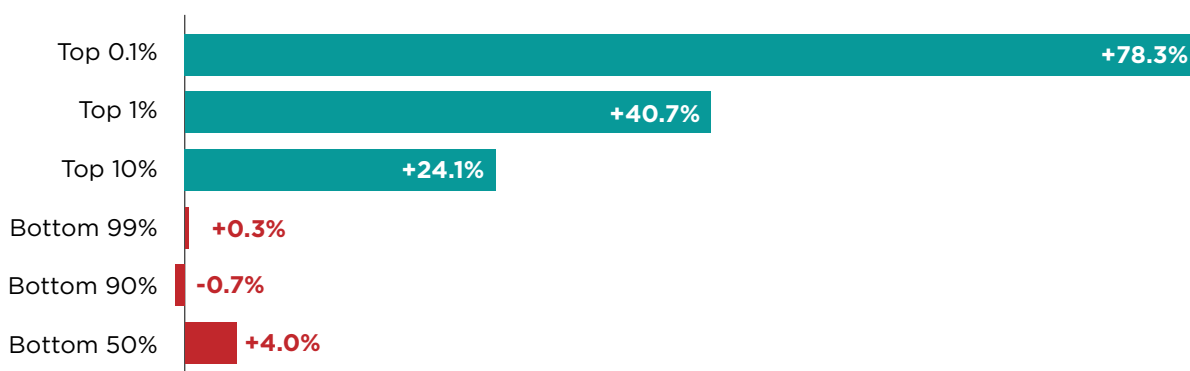


GROWING INCOME FOR THE RICHEST LEAVES EVERYONE ELSE IN THE DUST

As the following graph illustrates, this growing income inequality is driven by a huge growth in income for BC's richest, while everyone else found their incomes stagnating or shrinking. After adjusting for inflation between 1982 and 2012, real median after-tax income for BC's top 1% grew by 40.7%, while the income growth for the bottom 99% was a tiny 0.3%. Income growth for the top 0.1% grew at an even higher rate of 78.3%.

Sliced another way, incomes for the bottom 90% shrank by 0.7%, while incomes for the top 10% grew by 24.1%. People in the bottom 50% experienced a mere 4% growth in median income over this 30-year period.

Real Median After-tax Income Growth (BC) 1982-2012



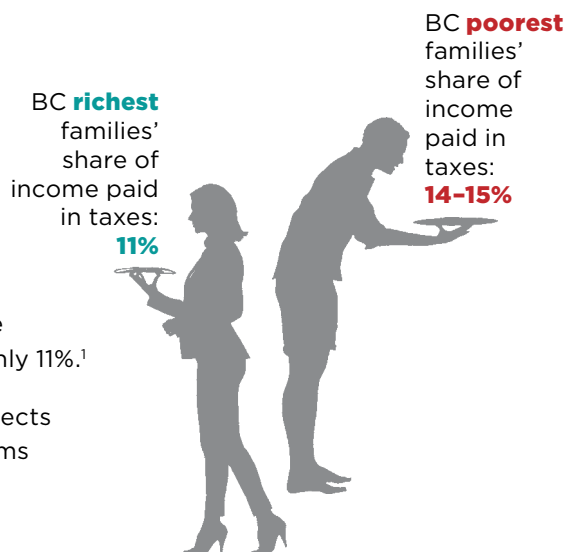
Source: Statistics Canada Table 204-0002.

INEQUALITY AND TAXES

BC's tax system has become more unfair over the past 10 years, with the rich now paying a lower total provincial tax rate than middle- and low-income earners.

In 2010, the poorest fifth of BC households paid 14% to 15% of their income in tax, middle-income households paid 13% and the richest fifth paid only 11%.¹

Additionally, the provincial government now collects more money from Medical Services Plan premiums (MSP—BC's most unfair tax) than it does from corporate income taxes.²



1 Seth Klein, Iglia Ivanova and Marc Lee, *A Decade of Eroding Tax Fairness in BC: Time for progressive tax reform*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, June 2012

2 Seth Klein and Iglia Ivanova, *Progressive Tax Options for BC Reform Ideas for Raising New Revenues and Enhancing Fairness*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, January 2013, policyalternatives.ca/bc-tax-options

POVERTY MAKES YOU SICK



If you are poor, you are more likely to suffer more illness, have a chronic health condition and die earlier. The Canadian Medical Association, in their report, *What Makes Us Sick?* notes, "Poverty in childhood can be a greater predictor of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adults than later life circumstances and behaviour."¹

Poverty is a major contributor to health inequities, which in turn results in higher costs for our health and social service systems, as well as negative social impacts on people and our communities. It is estimated that \$1.2 billion in health care costs could be saved if disadvantaged British Columbians were as healthy as those with higher education and incomes.²

1 Canadian Mental Health Association cma.ca/En/Pages/health-equity.aspx

2 Public Health Association of BC, *Health Voices*, povertybadforhealth.wordpress.com/poverty-health/poverty-is-bad-for-your-health/



FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Implement the promised Canada Child Benefit with a maximum of \$6,800 per child under 6 and \$5,800 for children 6-17 years.
- Scrap the income splitting provisions for families with children and invest the money saved in the other recommended federal program enhancements.
- Increase funding for First Nations child welfare, education and community health services, and develop a long-term plan to eradicate poverty among Aboriginal families
- Create an independent commission on tax reform in BC aimed at making the tax system fairer and reducing income inequality.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



Though only 22, Victoria Johnson has been through more than most mothers can imagine, struggling to provide needed medical care for her infant son, Daysan, while living in deep poverty.

Victoria, who is Aboriginal and grew up in foster care in BC, had her son while she was still in foster care at the age of 18. When Daysan was one month old, a bacterial infection attacked his lungs and heart; he was hospitalized for eight months and remained very sick until age two. In his first year of life, he endured both heart and lung surgery, and now suffers from asthma and breathing problems.

Victoria was able to remain with her kind foster mother during his surgeries and hospitalization. When she turned 19, however, she had to transition out of care immediately with her sick baby. She found a one bedroom in east Vancouver for \$610 a month.

“As a teen mom in the foster system, when you age out of care, that is it, you just go on welfare, and it sucks,” Victoria says. Life on welfare was ugly for Victoria and her fragile infant. Each day was often a choice between having enough to eat or affording her son’s medication. While on welfare, only one of the many items her son needed was covered by MSP. Victoria did all she could to provide Daysan with his medication. She would ask the ministry for an emergency food voucher for \$40, which she would put towards it, visiting food banks to survive. “I would go and clean to pay for his medication or food for him. It was illegal, but I had to get him his medication,” she says.

Despite her best efforts, Daysan often had to go without. “Sometimes I would not have it, and he would have an attack and end up in hospital.”

Victoria believes the government should prevent infants like her son from suffering because their parents can’t afford medication while on assistance. “For single parents on income assistance with ill or sick children, or even children with a disability, they need to provide respite and help sick kids get all the medication they need to survive. It was so hard, it was just me, and he suffered so much.”

Importance of Government Help: Public Policy Matters

63,890 BC
children were
lifted out of
poverty in
2013 thanks to
government help.



Over **two million**
Canadian children
would have
been poor using
family market
income alone.
With federal and
provincial transfers,
the number of
poor children
was lowered to
1,334,930.

GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS REDUCE CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA

Federal and provincial government income support programs play a huge role in reducing child poverty in Canada. If parents had been forced to rely only on earnings, income from investments and other sources of market income to make ends meet, the proportion of children in poverty in Canada would have been 29.1% in 2013. Government transfers reduced the poverty rate to 19%—a reduction of 35%.

Over two million Canadian children would have been poor using family market income alone. With federal and provincial transfers, the number of poor children was lowered to 1,334,930.

GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS REDUCE CHILD POVERTY IN BC

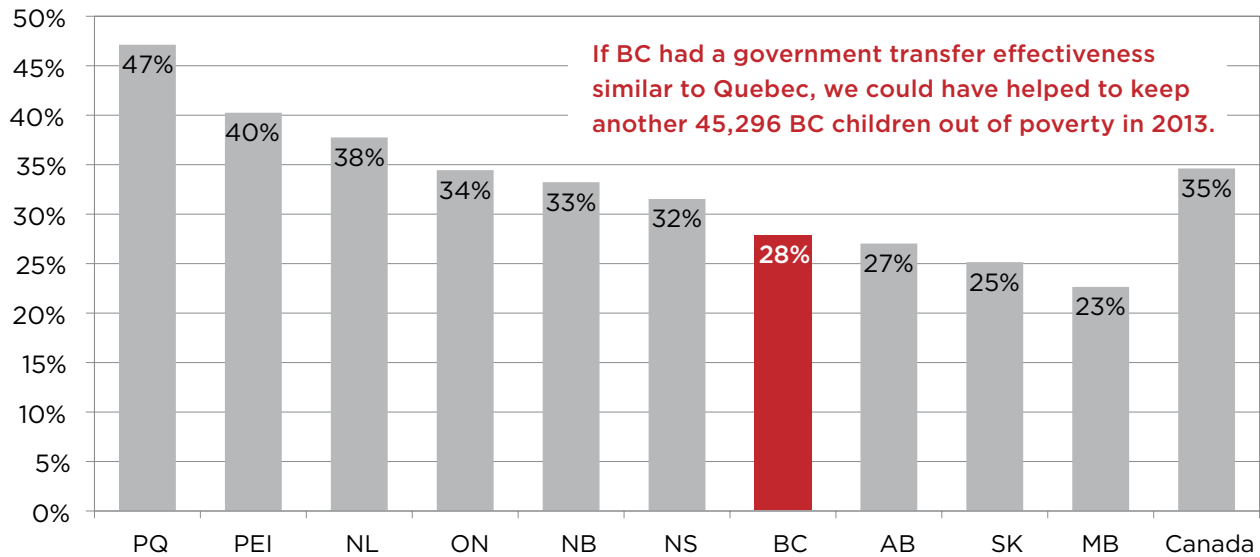
Without government transfers, using only family market income, British Columbia's child poverty rate was 28.2% in 2013. It came down to 20.4% after government transfers, a reduction of 28%. A total of 231,700 BC children were poor using market income alone, and 167,810 were poor once transfers were added to family income, meaning 63,890 BC children were lifted out of poverty that year thanks to government help.

GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS BY PROVINCE - HOW DOES BC COMPARE?

The graph below shows the rate of reduction in child poverty in 2013 in Canada and individual provinces as a result of government transfers. Quebec and Prince Edward Island had the largest reductions. BC was among the provinces that did less to reduce their child poverty rates than the Canadian average of 35%.

Although government transfers played an important role in reducing BC's child poverty rate, in six other provinces, government transfers had a greater impact on reducing their child poverty rates in 2013. In Quebec, government transfers reduced the child poverty rate by 47%, keeping 203,830 children out of poverty. If BC had a government transfer effectiveness similar to Quebec, we could have helped to keep another 45,296 BC children out of poverty in 2013.

Percentage Reduction in Child Poverty Rates in 2013 Due to Government Transfer Payments



Source: Statistics Canada custom tabulation. Taxfiler data.

HOW GOVERNMENT HELPS

Both the federal and provincial governments have programs that reduce child poverty. One of the most powerful programs helping reduce child poverty has been the monthly Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), which provides families with children under 18 with income support. Another federal program is the taxable Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) for children under six, expanded in 2015 to include payments for children up to age 17.

The federal government also pays a quarterly GST credit to low-income families and individuals. Ottawa administers the Employment Insurance (EI) fund to assist Canadians who are temporarily out of work and to pay maternity and parental leave benefits. EI is considered a government program, even though the money in the fund comes from contributions by workers and employers.

The federal and provincial governments also provide a refundable Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) for eligible families who are in the workforce. The 2015 upper-income threshold for this benefit for a family of any size with children in BC is \$28,328 per year.

The BC government provides welfare payments for people who have exhausted other sources of income. Part of the cost of welfare is covered by the federal government through the Canada Social Transfer (CST). The CST is a government-to-government transfer designed to defray the costs to provinces of welfare and social services, early childhood development and early learning and child care, and post-secondary education. In 2015-16, BC is expected to receive \$1.69 billion under the new Canada Social Transfer.

The BC government also assists some low-income families directly with rent supplements and child care subsidies. While they benefit some families, these programs have a limited reach. Many low-income families do not meet the eligibility criteria for the rent supplement. Similarly, child care subsidy rates increasingly are insufficient to cover the actual cost of care, leaving many low-income parents unable to make up the difference and, as a result, unable to access quality care for their children.

FEDERAL ELECTION PROMISES FOR FAMILIES

The newly elected federal Liberal majority government promised during the October 2015 election to create a new non-taxable Canada Child Benefit, which will increase income supports to families at a variety of income levels, before phasing out at \$200,000 in annual income. They also promised to eliminate the Universal Child Care Benefit and use the money to pay for the new Canada Child Benefit. We should be able to see the impacts of these policy changes on child poverty rates in future years' report cards.



BC'S EARLY CHILDHOOD TAX BENEFIT

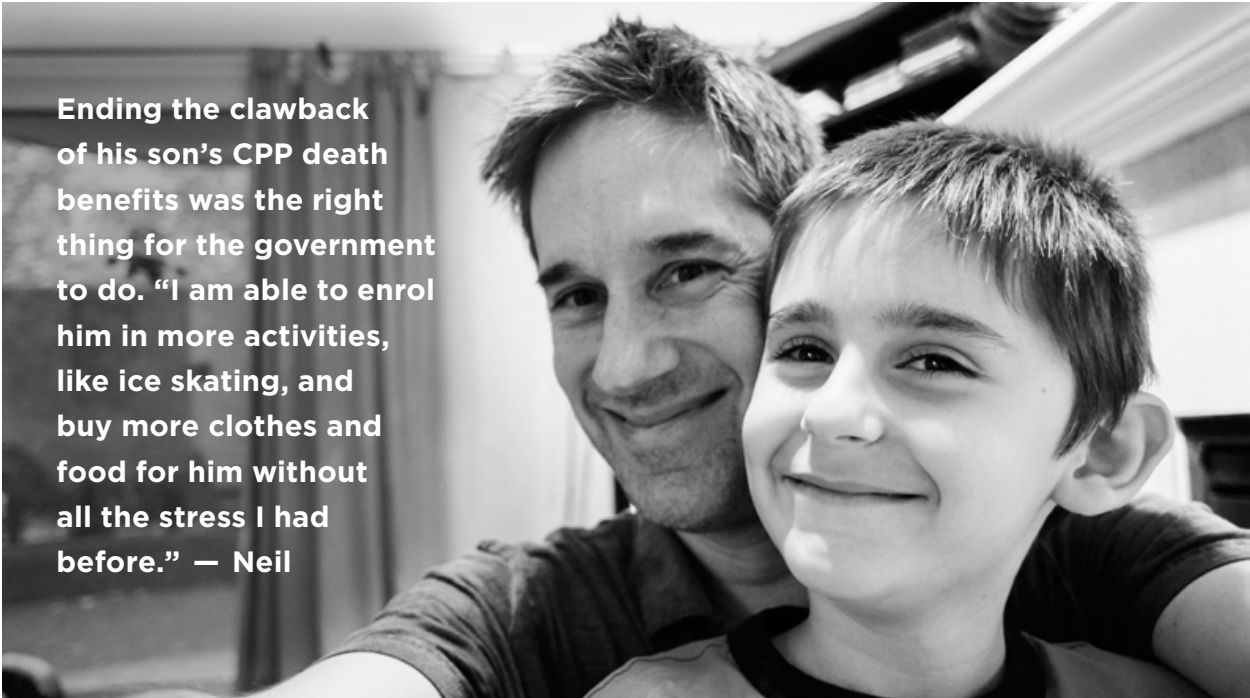
Starting in April 2015, some families became eligible for a new BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit (BCECTB) of \$55 per month per child under age six. Benefits from this program will be combined with the federal CCTB and the BC family bonus program into a single monthly payment. Benefits are based on the number of children in the family and the family's net income. The BCECTB will be reduced if the family's net income exceeds \$100,000 and will be zero once the family's net income exceeds \$150,000. Ontario's monthly child tax benefit is double the amount of BC's and includes payments for children up to age 17.

Ontario's monthly child tax benefit is double the amount of BC's and includes payments for children up to age 17.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDS

- Redesign the BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit into a BC Child Benefit covering children under 18 and increase the maximum benefit to \$1,320 per child per year.
- Extend and enhance supports for youth transitioning out of government care at age 19 and offer the extension of foster care for youth up to the age of 25.
- Remove financial barriers for low-income students and lower student debt levels through tuition fee reductions, student grants instead of loans, and interest free loans
- Establish universal public dental care, prescription drug and eye care programs.
- Adopt and begin implementing the \$10aDay Child Care Plan.
- End the clawback of federal maternity and parental leave benefits from people on income and disability assistance and allow all those on income or disability assistance to retain benefits while attending a post-secondary institution.

See the full list of recommendations on pages 48 and 49.



Ending the clawback of his son's CPP death benefits was the right thing for the government to do. "I am able to enrol him in more activities, like ice skating, and buy more clothes and food for him without all the stress I had before." — Neil

Neil and Jake's Story

For dad Neil Matheson, who lives on disability assistance with his six-year-old son Jake, August 2013 brought the unthinkable into their lives: the loss of Jake's mother. Neil's wife, Elana, who also lived with a disability on assistance, was a music teacher in the Langley public school system. She earned what she was permitted to take home while on disability to support her family, and paid into her pension throughout her working life. Grieving and coping with becoming a single dad, Neil was shocked to discover the BC government had immediately begun clawing back Elana's Canada Pension Plan (CPP) death benefit amounts allocated for himself and his son—about \$700 a month—from his disability assistance.

Neil lent his voice to the call to end this clawback and as of September 2015, the provincial government ended the children's portion of the death benefits clawback. Now, his son Jake can keep his portion of the death benefit—about \$240 a month. The change has brought some welcome light and hope into their lives. The \$240 dollars immediately had a positive impact on Jake, Neil says. "I am able to enrol him in more activities, like ice skating, and buy more clothes and food for him without all the stress I had before."

"My wife paid into this thing for 17 years, thinking it would be security for her son. That is the point of a pension—that \$240 means more security, more comfort for my son," he says, adding that ending the clawback of his son's CPP death benefits was the right thing for the government to do.

However, Neil is still coping with the loss of his wife's income and the clawback of his portion of her CPP death benefits—around \$400 per month—plus the loss of income he suffered when he left his job to help his son through the bereavement period.

Neil believes the government should continue to do the right thing and allow people on disability to benefit from their deceased spouse's death benefits.

"The way they designate 'earned' versus 'unearned' income—they should just throw out that whole term. The BC government says it is 'unearned'—but she did earn it."

Recommendations: What Needs to Happen

Over a quarter century has passed since the House of Commons unanimously passed the 1989 resolution “to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.”



BROKEN PROMISES

Over a quarter century has passed since the House of Commons unanimously passed the 1989 resolution “to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.” In 2009 the entire House of Commons voted to “develop an immediate plan to end poverty for all in Canada,” and a third resolution was passed in February of 2015 pledging to “eradicate child poverty in Canada by developing a national poverty reduction plan.”

The continued high child poverty rates in Canada and provinces like BC expose the lack of political will to act on these promises by the governments in power in the intervening years.

Canada has repeatedly drawn criticism from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for failing to live up to our obligations to uphold and promote children’s rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As recently as 2012, the UN review committee, made up of knowledgeable representatives from countries around the world, again chastised us for the level of inequality and the resulting inequities we not only tolerate, but sustain among different groups of children through our lack of investment and lack of remedial action. BC is also a signatory to the UNCRC.

We offer the following recommendations as concrete steps that federal and provincial governments can take to live up to their promises.

FIRST CALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The First Call Coalition recommends that the provincial government adopt a comprehensive poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines and a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government is achieving its targets on time. We recommend the plan contain a goal to reduce BC’s child poverty rate to 7% or lower by 2020.

Recognizing that children of recent immigrants and refugees, Aboriginal children, children of female lone-parent families, children in racialized families and children with a disability, are at greater risk of living in poverty, efforts should also be targeted to achieve major reductions in poverty levels for these populations.

Actions federal, provincial and local governments can take to achieve a reduction of BC's child poverty rate to 7% or less by 2020:

1. **P** The provincial government should raise the minimum wage to make sure that the lowest paid workers earn more than a poverty wage if they work full time, full year. The minimum wage should rise to \$15 an hour as soon as possible and be indexed annually thereafter to increases in the cost of living. All workers in BC should be covered by this minimum wage, including workers who serve alcoholic beverages and agricultural workers who are currently paid using piece-work rates.
2. **F P L** Governments at all levels should ensure their regular 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.
3. **P** The provincial government should significantly raise income and disability assistance rates (both the shelter and support components) to bring them more into line with actual living expenses and index them to inflation.
4. **P** The provincial government should immediately end the clawback of federal maternity and parental leave benefits from those on income and disability assistance and allow all those on income and disability assistance to retain benefits while attending a post-secondary institution.
5. **P** The provincial government should redesign the BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit into a BC Child Benefit covering children under 18, and increase the maximum benefit to \$1,320 per child per year.
6. **F** The federal government should implement the proposed Canada Child Benefit with a maximum of \$6,800 per child under 6 and \$5,800 for children 6-17 years.
7. **F** The federal government should continue to pay the children's benefit to grandparents on CPP Disability who are raising their grandchildren after they turn 65.
8. **F P** Guided by the calls to action in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the federal and provincial governments should implement immediate increases to funding for First Nations child welfare, education and community health services and services for urban Aboriginal people, and develop a long-term poverty eradication strategy in collaboration with First Nations and other indigenous organizations and communities.
9. **F P** The provincial government should adopt and start implementing the \$10aDay Child Care Plan put forward by the Early Childhood Educators of BC and the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, to establish universal access to high quality, affordable child care for BC children and families. The federal government should support this initiative with a national early childhood education and care program that includes the transfer of adequate and sustained resources to the provinces and territories to create quality, affordable child care spaces and services available to all children (0-12).

Area of responsibility:

- F** Federal
- P** Provincial
- L** Local

10. **F** The federal government should enhance maternity and parental leave to enrich the benefit value, and extend the total duration to 18 months, reserving additional months for fathers.
11. **F** The federal government should scrap the income splitting provisions for families with children and invest the money saved in the other recommended federal program enhancements.
12. **F P** 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.
13. **F** The federal government should immediately cancel all outstanding refugee transportation loan debt and cease seeking repayment of transportation costs for new refugees coming to Canada.
14. **F P** Federal and provincial government support for access to post-secondary education should be increased both to remove financial barriers for low-income students and to lower student debt levels. Specific policy options include tuition fee reductions, providing lower income students with grants instead of loans and making student loans interest free.
15. **P** The provincial government should immediately restore the Education Guarantee to reinstate tuition-free adult basic education, to enable adults to upgrade secondary courses needed for entry to post-secondary programs, and for adults needing to learn English as an additional language.
16. **P** The provincial government should extend and enhance supports for youth transitioning out of government care at age 19 and offer the extension of foster care for youth up to the age of 25.
17. **P** The provincial government should provide additional funds to social service agencies and non-profit housing societies to provide housing and other supports to queer and transgender youth at risk of homelessness and social exclusion due to the loss of family support.
18. **F** Cuts in Employment Insurance made by successive federal governments should be rescinded, so that most workers are protected during a temporary loss of wages and receive a benefit they can live on while they look for new employment.
19. **F P** The federal and provincial governments should increase their efforts to provide housing for low-income people. This should include building more social housing and maintaining existing affordable housing stock (e.g. co-ops) to reduce the number of families in core housing need and to eliminate homelessness. There is also a need to enhance and expand rental subsidies and other income supports to families living in or near poverty to reduce housing insecurity.
20. **F P** The federal and provincial governments should work together to introduce universal coverage for all Canadians for prescription drugs, dental care and eye care as essential aspects of health care.
21. **P** The provincial government should create an independent commission on tax reform to study taxes levied in BC and to recommend ways to make the tax system fairer and reduce income inequality.

Canada does not have an official way of measuring poverty, but Statistics Canada does produce three main measures of low income: the Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs), before- and after-tax versions, the Low Income Measures (LIMs), before- and after-tax versions, and the Market Basket Measure (MBM).¹

As with our *2014 Child Poverty Report Card*, this year's report features the LIM after tax (rather than LICO as we have used in previous years), following a shift in recent years to the use of this measure by others in the anti-poverty community across Canada and some provincial governments. According to Statistics Canada, the LIM is the most commonly used low income measure for the purpose of making international comparisons.

The LIM is a fixed percentage (50%) of median adjusted household income, where "adjusted" refers to household size or the number of members in a household.

The LIMs for this report are calculated three times; with market income, before-tax income and after-tax income using taxfiler income data, which was made available to Campaign 2000 through a custom tabulation. Some of it is also available to the public on the Statistics Canada website.

The data used in the child poverty report card has always been two years old at the time of publication, as it takes Statistics Canada 18 months to release it. Thus the data in the *2015 BC Child Poverty Report Card* is for 2013, or earlier in some cases if newer data has not been made available yet.

The following chart contains the LIMs after tax used in this report card for different family sizes based on the number of adults and children in each family type.

Statistics Canada's Low Income Measures for 2013 (After Tax)

Number of adults*	Number of children less than 16 years of age				
	0	1	2	3	4
1	17,371	24,319	29,531	33,005	38,216
2	24,319	29,531	34,742	39,953	45,165
3	31,268	36,479	41,690	46,902	52,113
4	38,216	43,428	48,639	53,850	59,061

* Includes parents/spouses, children 16 years of age and over and the first child in lone-parent families regardless of age.

Source: Statistics Canada T1 Family File 2012 User's Guide.

¹ A detailed description of each measure can be found in the Statistics Canada publication, *Low Income Lines, 2012-2013*; statcan.gc.ca/olc-cel/olc.action?ObjId=75F0002M2014003&ObjType=46&lang=en

This second chart contains the LIMs before tax for different family sizes based on the number of adults and children in each family type. These are used when comparing minimum wages to poverty lines, as wages are before-tax income.

Statistics Canada's Low Income Measures for 2013 (Before Tax)

Number of adults*	Number of children less than 16 years of age				
	0	1	2	3	4
1	19,598	27,437	33,317	37,236	43,116
2	27,437	33,317	39,196	45,075	50,955
3	35,276	41,156	47,035	52,915	58,794
4	43,116	48,995	54,874	60,754	66,633

* Includes parents/spouses, children 16 years of age and over and the first child in lone-parent families regardless of age.

Source: Statistics Canada T1 Family File 2012 User's Guide.

CHILD POVERTY IN BC URBAN AREAS OUTSIDE OF METRO VANCOUVER

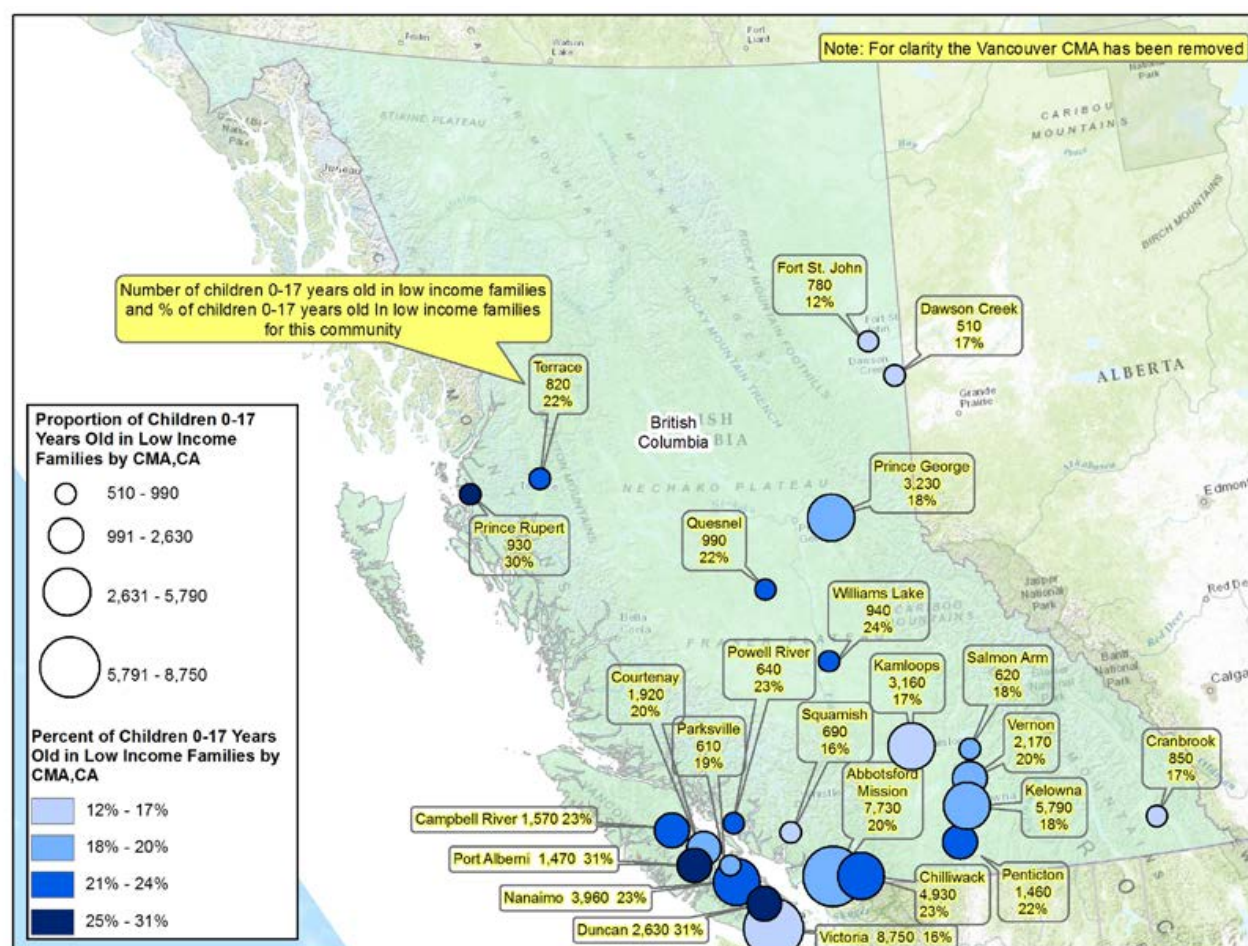
The two maps in this appendix show the child poverty rates and the numbers of poor children in urban areas across BC outside of Metro Vancouver for all children (0-17 years) and for very young children (0-5 years).¹ Approximately 34% of the poor children in BC live in the urban areas discussed in this appendix.

CHILD POVERTY (0-17 YEARS) BY URBAN AREA

Child poverty affects children in every urban area in BC. Based on 2013 taxfiler data and LIM (Low Income Measure) after tax, child poverty rates varied greatly across the urban areas outside Metro Vancouver:

- Six urban areas had child poverty rates between 12% and 17%;
- Seven urban areas had child poverty rates between 18% and 20%;
- Eight urban areas had child poverty rates between 21% and 24%; and,
- Three urban areas had child poverty rates between 25% and 31%.

ALL CHILDREN: Children 0-17 Years Old in BC in Low Income Families in 2013 by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Census Agglomeration Area (CA)



Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File (TIFF) based on the final tax file (based on after-tax low income measures, LIMs), 2013

¹ Metro Vancouver is not discussed in this appendix, as the analysis of the Vancouver CMA can be found in Fact Sheet 9. The Metro Vancouver overall child poverty rate in 2013 was 20% and the poverty rate for children under 6 years was 19%, representing 85,450 and 26,440 children respectively.

The three urban areas with the highest child poverty rates (Duncan at 31%, Port Alberni at 31% and Prince Rupert at 30%) had rates more than double the urban area with the lowest child poverty rate (Fort St. John at 12%). After Fort St. John, Victoria (16%) and Squamish (16%) had the lowest child poverty rates. The urban areas with the highest child poverty rates were concentrated in coastal areas, whereas the areas with the lowest child poverty rates were spread throughout the province.

In terms of the number of poor children in each urban area:

- Eleven urban areas had between 510 and 990 poor children;
- Six urban areas had between 991 and 2,630 poor children;
- Five urban areas had between 2,631 and 5,790 poor children; and,
- Two urban areas had between 5,791 and 8,750 poor children.

The BC urban areas outside Metro Vancouver vary greatly in terms of their overall child population (for example, Victoria had 54,440 children, while Powell River had 2,770 children). Therefore, the number of poor children by urban area was generally much more reflective of the total number of children living in each urban area than the child poverty rate in each area. For example, despite having the second lowest child poverty rate, Victoria, with 8,750 poor children, had the greatest number of poor children of any urban area outside of Metro Vancouver. Abbotsford-Mission (7,730 poor children) and Kelowna (5,790 poor children), which had the second and third largest child populations, also had the second and third largest number of poor children of any urban area outside of Metro Vancouver.

EARLY CHILDHOOD POVERTY (0-5 YEARS) BY URBAN AREA

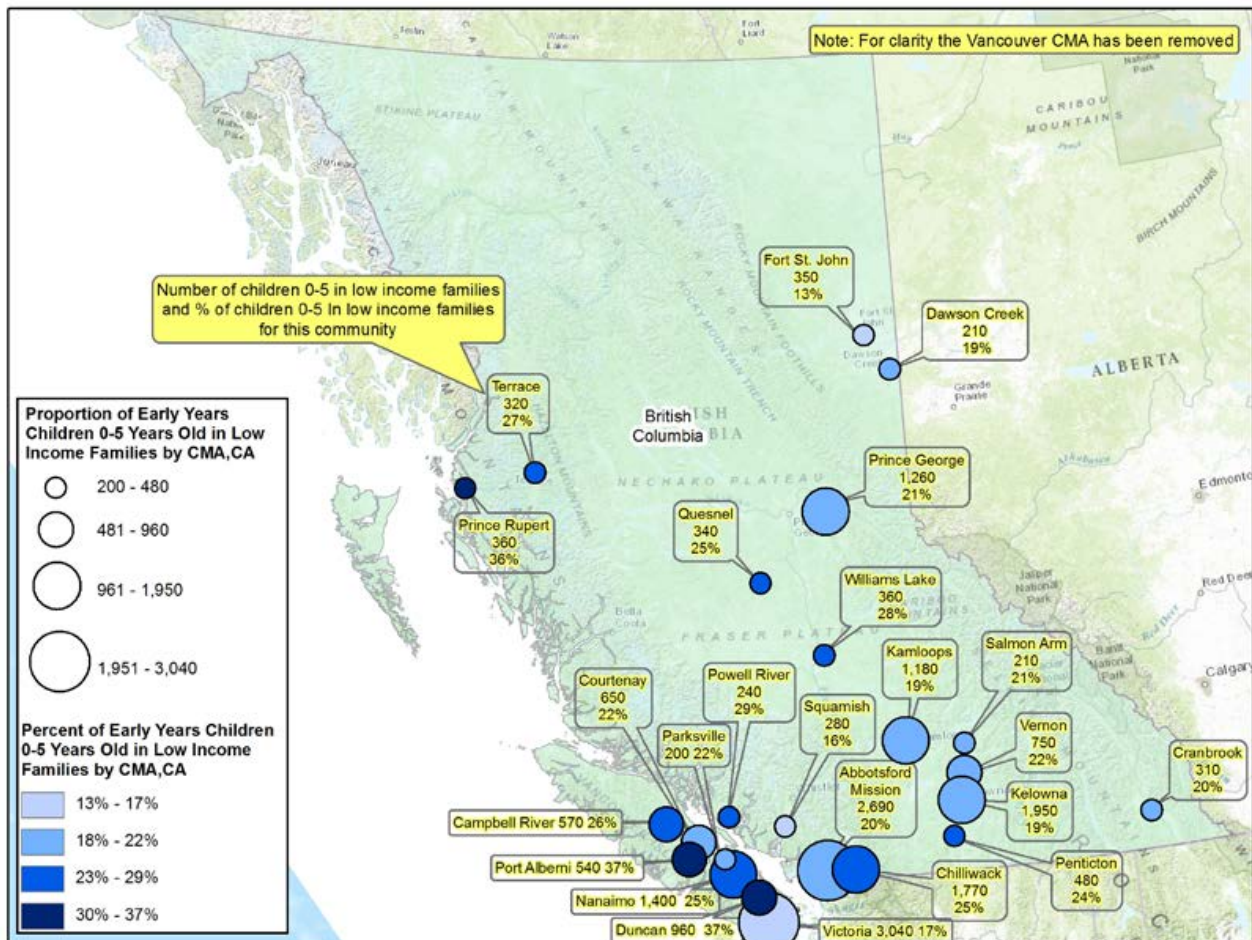
The early years (0-5 years old) are very important to the overall development and well-being of children. Therefore, early childhood poverty can cause many challenges later in life for children. Based on 2013 taxfiler data and LIM (Low Income Measure) after tax, early childhood poverty rates varied greatly across the urban areas in British Columbia.

- 3 urban areas had early childhood poverty rates between 13% and 17%;
- 10 urban areas had early childhood poverty rates between 18% and 22%;
- 8 urban areas had early childhood poverty rates between 23% and 29%; and,
- 3 urban areas had early childhood poverty rates between 30% and 37%.

Cut another way, in 10 out of these 24 urban areas one in four young children were poor.

The three urban areas with the highest early childhood poverty rates (Port Alberni at 37%, Duncan at 37% and Prince Rupert at 36%) had rates more than double the rate of the urban area with the lowest early childhood poverty rate (Fort St. John at 13%). After Fort St. John, Squamish (16%) and Victoria (17%) had the lowest early childhood poverty rates. The urban areas with the highest early childhood

EARLY YEARS: Children 0-5 Years Old in BC in Low Income Families in 2013 by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and Census Agglomeration Area (CA)



Source: Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, T1 Family File (TIFF) based on the final tax file (based on after-tax low income measures, LIMs), 2013

poverty rates were concentrated in coastal areas, whereas the areas with the lowest early childhood poverty rates were spread throughout the province.

In terms of the number of poor children under age 6 in each urban area:

- 12 urban areas had between 200 and 480 poor children under age 6;
- 5 urban areas had between 481 and 960 poor children under age 6;
- 5 urban areas had between 961 and 1,950 poor children under age 6; and,
- 2 urban areas had between 1,951 and 3,040 poor children under age 6.

The urban areas outside Metro Vancouver varied greatly in terms of their overall child population under the age of 6, (for example, Victoria had 18,240 children under 6, while Powell River had 840 children under 6). Therefore, the number of poor young children by urban area was generally much more reflective of the total number of young children living in each urban area than the early childhood poverty rate in each area. For example, despite having the third lowest early childhood poverty rate, Victoria, with 3,040 poor young children, had the greatest number of poor young children of any urban area outside of Metro Vancouver. Abbotsford-Mission (2,690 poor children under age 6) and Kelowna (1,950 poor children under age 6), which had the second and third largest young child populations overall, had the second and third largest number of poor young children of any urban area outside of Metro Vancouver.

EARLY CHILDHOOD POVERTY RATES VERSUS CHILD POVERTY RATES BY URBAN AREA

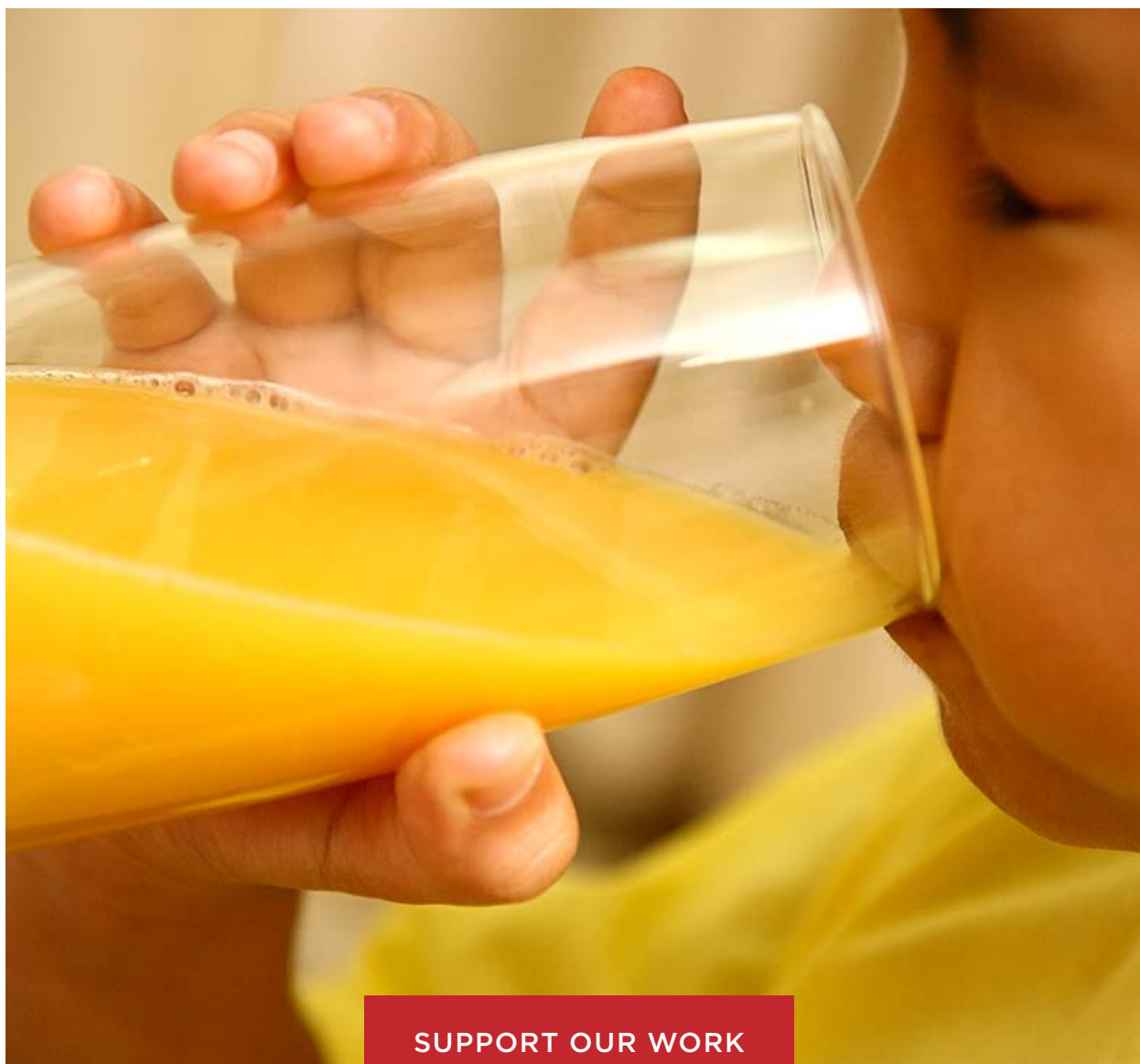
In 2013, early childhood poverty rates were higher than overall child poverty rates in 22 out of these 24 urban areas. Prince Rupert, Port Alberni, Powell River and Duncan had the largest differences, with early childhood poverty rates that were more than 5 percentage points higher than their overall child poverty rates.²

² The differences between early childhood and overall child poverty rates by urban area may vary slightly from what is shown on the maps due to data rounding.

OUR MEMBERS



ACT – Autism Community Training	Check Your Head: The Global Youth Education Network	National Council of Jewish Women of Canada- Vancouver Section
Adoptive Families Association of BC	Children's and Women's Health Centre of BC	Pacific Association of First Nations Women
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Alternate Shelter Society	Columbia/Kootenay Advocacy and Education Resource Society	Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
Association for Community Education BC	Communities that Care- Squamish	Parent Support Services Society of BC
Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia	Community Action Toward Children's Health	PeerNetBC
Autism Society of BC	Council of Parent Participation Preschools BC	Penticton & District Community Resources Society
Baobab Inclusive Empowerment Society	Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children of Greater Victoria Society	Phoenix Human Services Association
BC Aboriginal Child Care Society	Deaf Children's Society of BC	PLEA Community Services Society of BC
BC Association for Child Development & Intervention	Developmental Disabilities Association	Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
BC Association of Family Resource Programs	Dietitians of Canada, BC Region	Provincial Association of Residential & Community Agencies
BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs	Directorate of Agencies for School Health BC	Public Health Association of BC
BC Association of Social Workers	Early Childhood Educators of BC	Single Mothers' Alliance of BC
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils	East Kootenay Childhood Coalition	Social Planning & Research Council of BC
BC Council for Families	Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver	Society for Children and Youth of BC
BC Crime Prevention Association	Family Services of Greater Vancouver	S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
BC Federation of Foster Parents Association	Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks	Summit Negotiations Society
BC Government & Service Employees' Union	Federation of Community Social Services of BC	Sunshine Coast Community Services Society
BC Play Therapy Association	Health Officers' Council of British Columbia	Take a Hike Youth At Risk Foundation
BC Recreation and Parks Association	Helping Spirit Lodge Society	United Way of the Lower Mainland
BC Retired Teachers' Association	Hospital Employees' Union	University Women's Club of Vancouver
BC Society of Transition Houses	Immigrant Services Society of BC	Vancity Community Foundation
BC Teachers' Federation	Inclusion BC	Vancouver Coastal Health Authority- Population Health
Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland	Indigenous Perspectives Society	Victoria Child Abuse Prevention & Counselling Centre
Boys and Girls Clubs of BC	Justice Institute of BC	West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund
Breakfast for Learning	Kamloops and District Elizabeth Fry Society	Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
Canadian Association for Young Children	Learning Disabilities Association of BC	Westcoast Family Centres Society
Canadian Federation of Students – BC	McCreary Centre Society	Western Society for Children
Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division	Métis Commission for Children and Families of BC	Women Against Violence Against Women
Canadian Red Cross – RespectEd	Mom to Mom Child Poverty Initiative	YWCA Metro Vancouver
Capilano Students' Union	MOSAIC	
Centre for Child Honouring		
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Cerebral Palsy Association of BC		



SUPPORT OUR WORK



First Call's annual Child Poverty Report Cards have helped countless individuals & groups like YOU advocate for BC's children & youth.

Help support our work by making a donation at firstcallbc.org



First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition is a non-partisan coalition of over 95 provincial and regional organizations who have united their voices to **PUT CHILDREN AND YOUTH FIRST** in BC through public education, community mobilization and public policy advocacy.

OUR VISION is that all BC's children and youth have the rights, opportunities and resources required to thrive.

First Call's work is guided by the **4 KEYS TO SUCCESS** for children and youth:

1. A strong commitment to early childhood development
2. Support in transitions from childhood to youth to adulthood
3. Increased economic equality
4. Safe and caring communities

First Call puts children and youth first through **3 STRATEGIES**:

1. Public Education: First Call works to raise the public profile of child and youth issues through public education, including our weekly child and youth sector newsletter, public presentations, regular media commentary, and the publication of research reports.
2. Community Mobilization: First Call works to mobilize local and provincial support for children and youth through coalition and Early Childhood Development Roundtable meetings, campaigns for public policy changes, and developing advocacy tools.
3. Public Policy Advocacy: First Call advocates for public policies and the allocation of resources for the benefit of children and youth through annual provincial and federal budget submissions, regular correspondence and dialogue with government decision-makers, producing this annual BC Child Poverty Report Card and by hosting the Living Wage for Families Campaign.

First Call's charitable activities are hosted by the Vancity Community Foundation.

putting children and youth first

810 – 815 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4

604 709 6962 Toll free 1 800 307 1212 info@firstcallbc.org firstcallbc.org