

SUMMARY



2016 BC CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD

ARE WE REALLY THE CARING SOCIETY WE THINK WE ARE?

The statistics and stories in this report tell a painful truth about BC. We like to think of ourselves as a caring and civilized society, but in fact have tolerated and sustained shameful levels of child and family poverty for decades.

By allowing our society's wealth to be concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer individuals, we allow more than **160,000 of BC's children** to grow up in poverty, which **we know** hurts their health and ignores their human rights.

Download the full
report at stillin5.ca



BC's current government remains in denial about the need for a provincial poverty reduction plan.

The many root causes of child and family poverty — including low wages and inadequate welfare rates — require bold and urgent action. Here we make 20 specific recommendations, starting with a demand BC's child poverty rate be reduced to **7% or lower by 2020**.

Child poverty matters. **Visit stillin5.ca today** to learn more and let people know you want BC to live up to the stories we like to tell about being a caring society.

1 out of 5
BC children are poor



First Call's first report card two decades ago showed that one in five (over 170,000) BC children were poor. It is profoundly disappointing that 20 years later, the data still shows one in five (163,260) BC children are poor.



IN COLLABORATION WITH



WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF



THE PROBLEM

IN 1989 ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AGREED TO ELIMINATE CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA

But instead, the child poverty rate remains high in Canada and BC.

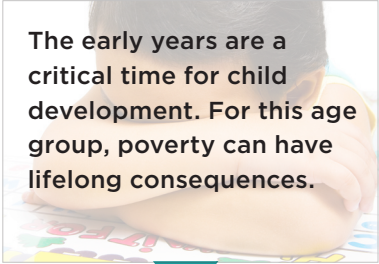
1 out of 5 BC children are poor.



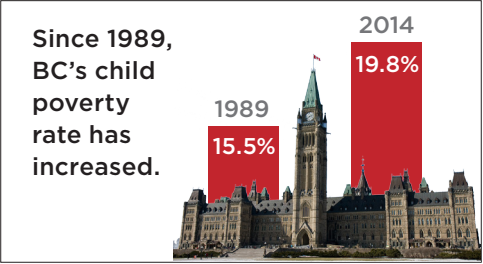
IMAGINE POOR CITY: A city composed only of BC's poor children would have had 163,260 residents and been the fifth-largest city in BC in 2014.



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



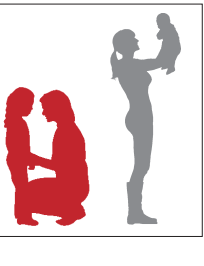
From 2000 to 2014 BC's child poverty rate remained consistently higher than the Canadian average.



Child poverty touches every part of BC. 23 of 29 regions had at least 1,000 poor children.

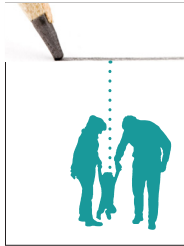


A shocking 1 in every 2 BC children of single parents were poor in 2014.



Many poor families are very poor

In 2014, the average poor two-parent family with one child lived on only \$18,500 per year, 39% below the poverty line.



In 2016, 33,300 BC children relied on food banks, up 33% from 2008.



MEANWHILE

Welfare rates have stayed the same since 2007. Imagine, a family of four has to get by on only \$22,000 a year.



Most poor BC children live with working parents.

In 2014, a single parent working full time, full year in BC on minimum wage earned just \$18,655.



And income inequality in BC is growing.

The richest 10% of BC families received 27% of the total income... ..while the poorest half of families shared 25%.



THE SOLUTION

GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DO MORE TO LIFT CHILDREN OUT OF POVERTY.

In 2016, the BC government still does not have a poverty reduction plan. If the BC government had helped as much as Quebec's, we could have lifted another 42,000 BC children out of poverty in 2014.

BC children lifted out of poverty in 2014:



Quebec children lifted out of poverty in 2014:



"I just got dropped, and I didn't know how to get support on my own." — Lorilynn

BC YOUTH AGING OUT OF CARE

Every year, approximately 1,000 youth in BC age out of government care and youth agreements at the age of 19. Through no fault of their own, these young people are among the groups most vulnerable to poverty.

Make sure these youth have the financial support, long-term relationships and community connections they need. Sign the Fostering Change petition today fosteringchange.ca/petition

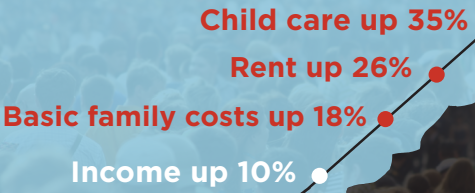


For Lorilynn's full story, along with other stories of youth aging out of care and families with children living in poverty in BC, visit www.still1in5.ca

GENDER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

More than 80% of BC's lone-parent families are female-led, earning just 65% of what male lone parents make.

Between 2007 and 2014, increases in family incomes were far below increases in family costs.



BC needs a poverty reduction plan.

TAKE ACTION NOW: EMAIL THE PREMIER

STILL1IN5.CA

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt a **comprehensive provincial poverty reduction plan** with legislated targets and timelines, a cabinet minister with the authority and responsibility to ensure government achieves 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.

To achieve this goal, the provincial and federal governments can:

1. Raise **minimum wage** to \$15 per hour, index it annually and apply it to all workers.
2. Ensure public sector employers pay a **living wage** to all direct and contract employees.
3. Significantly increase income and disability **assistance rates** and index them annually.
4. Expand **post-secondary** program options eligible for support under the Single Parent Employment Initiative and, in the absence of enhanced student grants, allow all those on income assistance to attend post-secondary programs.
5. Redesign the **BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit** to cover children under 18 and increase the maximum to \$1,320 per child per year.
6. Ensure the new **Canada Child Benefit** reduces the child poverty rate by 50% in five years and index it immediately.
7. Increase **funding for First Nations** child welfare, education and health services, and develop a long-term plan to eradicate poverty among Indigenous families.
8. Adopt and begin implementing the **\$10aDay Child Care Plan**.
9. Enhance **maternity and parental leave** benefits and include all parents.
10. Ensure all **youth aging out of care** can count on consistent financial support and long-term, supportive adult relationships until age 25.
11. Provide housing and other supports to **queer and transgender youth** at risk of homelessness and social exclusion due to the loss of family support.
12. Allow **grandparents on CPP Disability** raising grandchildren to continue to receive the children's benefit after they turn 65.
13. Intensify efforts to help **immigrants and refugees** with enhanced employment assistance, language training and employment standards protections.
14. Extend the waivers of **transportation loans** for Syrian refugees to all new refugees and cancel all transportation loan debt.
15. Improve access to **post-secondary education** for low-income students and lower student debt levels beyond the federal measures announced in 2016; options include reduced tuition fees, more grants, and interest-free loans.
16. Restore the Education Guarantee to reinstate tuition-free **adult basic education**.
17. Enhance **Employment Insurance** to expand access, duration and levels of benefits.
18. Increase efforts to provide housing for low-income people by building more social and affordable rental **housing**, maintaining existing stock, and enhancing rental subsidies and other income support.
19. Introduce **universal coverage** for all Canadians for prescription drugs, dental care and eye care as essential aspects of health care.
20. Create an independent commission on **tax reform** to make recommendations to make the tax system fairer and to reduce income inequality.