



**Submission for Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2023 Budget**

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First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society

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About First Call

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society is a registered non-profit society based in British Columbia. First Call's advocacy is informed by the cross-sectoral expertise and province-wide reach of our diverse network of affiliates who have united their voices to put children and youth first in British Columbia through public education, community mobilization, and public policy advocacy.

Network affiliates work together to make sure all BC's children and youth benefit from 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 and adulthood
3. Increased economic equality
4. Safe and caring communities

Recommendations:

1. Ensure the Canada Child Benefit, in combination with other income measures, raises all families with children above the CFLIM after tax poverty lines calculated through tax filer data and ensure access to this and other federal benefits for families in population groups with higher rates of poverty.
2. Enhance Employment Insurance to expand access, duration, and level of benefits to reduce inequity for lower-income workers and prevent and reduce child and family poverty, including establishing a minimum benefit floor.
3. Ensure maternity and parental leave benefits are universally available to all parents (regardless of work status), increase the duration of leave and ensure the benefit levels are not less than the CFLIM after-tax poverty lines.
4. Federal investments must support social assistance adequacy through the Canada Social Transfer and tie investments to adequacy standards that bring welfare incomes up to the CFLIM after-tax poverty thresholds and index them to inflation.
5. Address growing income inequality and generate revenue for poverty reduction programs by eliminating or reducing highly regressive and expensive tax loopholes, closing tax havens, taxing extreme wealth and implementing an excess profit tax focused on corporate pandemic windfalls.
6. Collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and Indigenous organizations to address the factors leading to child and family poverty in order to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in Indigenous communities. The federal government must comply with the rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to provide adequate funding for child welfare services on reserve and ensure the full application of Jordan's Principle for First Nations children. Ensure culturally safe supports and public services are also provided to Métis and Inuit children and to other Indigenous children living off-reserve in urban centres not covered under Jordan's Principle.
7. Allow grandparents on CPP Disability who are raising their grandchildren to continue to receive the CPP children's benefit after they turn 65 and work with provinces to remove administrative barriers to receiving the Canada Child Benefit for kinship care providers.

8. Significantly increase the maximum amount of the Child Disability Benefit.
9. Intensify efforts to help immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Canada by enhancing employment assistance, removing long-standing barriers to foreign-trained professionals accessing jobs in their field, making more language training with child care available. Invest in targeted programs to facilitate work permit and residency pathways for temporary foreign workers and international students.
10. Immediately cancel all outstanding refugee transportation loan debt and cease seeking repayment of transportation costs for all new refugees coming to Canada.
11. Continue to prioritize new early learning and child care investments in 2023 budget and beyond to establish universal access to a system of high-quality, publicly-funded, inclusive child care for Canadian children and families that has no parent fee for low-income families. Federal investments must contribute to ensuring early childhood educators are paid compensation that reflects their education and the importance of the work they do. Ensure there are adequate resources and support for the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.
12. Scale up federal funding to build thousands of new social and affordable rental housing units and maintain existing affordable housing stock to reduce the number of families in core housing need and to eliminate homelessness.
13. Invest significant, continuing funding to establish a universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program for all K-12 students, including on First Nations reserves, that is respectful of local contexts, connected to community and curriculum, health-promoting and sustainable.
14. Create a national post-secondary education transfer as part of the federal social transfer to the provinces and territories to eliminate tuition fees.
15. Work with industry to ensure lower income families and youth have internet access so that they are able to apply for financial assistance, learning opportunities and access other supports.
16. Introduce universal coverage for all Canadians for prescription drugs, dental and eye care, hearing aids, and assistive devices and products as essential aspects of health care.

Tax Fairness and Income Support

Canada Child Benefit

The 2023 federal budget should ensure the Canada Child Benefit, in combination with other income measures, raises all families with children above the CFLIM after tax poverty lines calculated through tax filer data and ensure access to this and other federal benefits for families in population groups with higher rates of poverty, e.g., newcomer and Indigenous families and children in lone-parent families.

For some children, their parents' immigration status is a barrier to accessing the CCB. To address this, broaden access to the CCB for families with precarious status by repealing legislation tying eligibility to immigration status. Every parent in Canada who is considered a resident for tax purposes should be eligible for CCB, regardless of immigration status.

Employment Insurance adequacy

The federal government should enhance Employment Insurance to expand access, duration and levels of benefits to prevent and reduce child and family poverty. Too many workers contribute EI premiums but do not qualify for benefits due to eligibility requirements. Low-wage workers cannot survive on the 55% benefit rate while they look for a new job.

Maternity and parental leave benefits

Ensure maternity and parental leave benefits are universally available to all parents (regardless of work status) and that the benefit levels are not less than the CFLIM after-tax poverty lines. Low-wage workers cannot afford to take advantage of these benefits for 52 weeks, as advertised, because their benefits are so low at 55%.

Adequate social assistance rates

Federal investments must support social assistance adequacy through the Canada Social Transfer and tie investments to adequacy standards that bring welfare incomes up to the CFLIM after-tax poverty thresholds and index them to inflation.

Tax measures to reduce income inequality and generate revenue

Growing income inequality is unsustainable and resulting in visible levels of individual and social distress.

First Call recommends that the 2023 federal budget contain measures to reduce income inequality and generate revenue for poverty reduction programs and investments in pandemic recovery by eliminating or reducing highly regressive and expensive tax loopholes, closing tax havens, taxing extreme wealth and implementing excess profit tax focused on corporate pandemic windfalls.

Targeted Initiatives for Groups Facing Additional Challenges

Focus investments on reducing and eliminating poverty in Indigenous communities

The federal and provincial governments must collaborate with First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments and Indigenous organizations to address the factors leading to child and family poverty in order to prevent, reduce and eradicate child and family poverty in Indigenous communities.

Allocate funding toward immediate compliance with the rulings of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to provide adequate funding for child welfare services on reserve, and ensure the full application of Jordan's Principle for First Nations children. Ensure culturally safe supports and public services are also provided to Métis and Inuit children and to other Indigenous children living off-reserve in urban centres not covered under Jordan's Principle.

Targeted measures for children with disabilities and support needs

As growing numbers of grandparents are raising their grandchildren, the federal government must allow grandparents on CPP Disability who are raising their grandchildren to continue to receive the CPP children's benefit after they turn 65 and work with provinces to remove administrative barriers to receiving the Canada Child Benefit for kinship care providers.

The Child Disability Benefit is much too low to significantly improve the quality of life for families and children with disabilities. Budget 2023 must contain funds to increase to this benefit significantly.

Targeted measures for children in immigrant and refugee families

Budget 2023 must recognize the benefit of supporting newcomer settlement by increasing federal investments in helping immigrants and refugees adjust to life in Canada through enhanced employment assistance, removing long-

standing barriers to qualification for professionals trained abroad, making more language training with child care available. Investments are also needed in targeted programs to facilitate work permit and residency pathways for temporary foreign workers and international students.

The federal government should immediately cancel all outstanding refugee transportation loan debt and cease seeking repayment of transportation costs for all new refugees coming to Canada. The inequity of this debt burden on refugee families is shameful and counter productive. Youth sometimes leave school to help their families with loan payments.

Lower Barriers and Improve Lives Through Universal Programs

Reducing poverty and income inequality is about enough income but it's also about affordable, low-barrier access to basic services including child care, education, transportation, employment programs and health care.

Prioritize Universal Access to High-Quality Early Learning and Child Care

An equitable recovery from the recent and continuing pandemic will not be possible without a national child care strategy that is universal, inclusive, flexible and publicly-funded that can provide family-supporting wages for early childhood educators while enabling parents, especially mothers, to work. Federal policy must ensure that Canadian child care shifts away from the current unequal market model towards an equitable, planned, publicly-funded system, with a long-term policy goal of developing sufficient high-quality, affordable services over time with enough licensed child care spaces for all who choose them.

First Call recommends that the federal government continue to prioritize new early learning and child care investments in the 2023 budget and beyond to move Canada towards a fully publicly-funded system, in partnership with the provinces/territories, and ensure adequate resources and support for the implementation of the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework.

Scale up housing investments

The federal government must scale up funding in the next budget to build thousands of new social and affordable rental housing units and maintain existing affordable housing stock to reduce the number of families in core housing need and to eliminate homelessness. The national housing strategy must include a long-term funding commitment to meet these goals and targets for specific low-income populations and those at risk of homelessness.

Ensure children across Canada have access to healthy school meals

The next federal budget should contribute funding, in partnership with provinces, territories and Indigenous governments, to establish a universal, healthy school food program for all K-12 students that is respectful of local contexts, connected to community and curriculum, health-promoting and sustainable.

Ensure affordable access to post-secondary education

Increasingly, students are graduating with higher amounts of student debt. Low-income students pay more for their education paying for both tuition costs and student loan debt. This inequity presents a challenge to the full participation of low and middle income students. It also saddles young adults with unreasonable debt.

First Call recommends the federal government invest in creating universal access to post-secondary education by eliminating tuition fees.

Increase digital equity

Access to the necessary digital devices and affordable internet connectivity have become an essential part of interacting with government and the private sector. The federal and provincial governments must work with industry to ensure lower income families and youth have access to technology (both hardware and internet access)

so that they are able to apply for financial assistance, work and learn from home as needed and access other supports and information.

Implement more comprehensive universal medical care

Access to prescription medication and other essential aspects of medical care remains a challenge for low-income families, including those who are employed in precarious jobs that do not offer benefits. The federal government must work with the provinces and territories to introduce universal coverage for all Canadians for prescription drugs, dental and eye care, hearing aids and assistive devices and products as essential aspects of health care.

Respectfully submitted,



Adrienne Montani, Executive Director
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