

# MAKING ENDS MEET:

## Low Wage Work, Poverty and Healthy Communities in Vancouver

### What is Making Ends Meet?

Making Ends Meet (<https://firstcallbc.org/what-we-do/research/making-ends-meet/>) is a peer-led participatory action research project that aimed to gather data about the experiences of Vancouver parents who are working hard to support their families but still living in poverty due to low wages and/or precarious employment. Our goal was to hear their voices, to identify their day-to-day challenges, and to offer their recommendations for change.

### Key findings

Making Ends Meet research identified child care deficits, unaffordable housing, and inadequate income as the three key issues that keep low-wage, hard-working Vancouver families living in poverty.



**Lack of affordable child care:** Despite recent efforts by government to improve access to child care for BC families, the absence of affordable child care for ages 0-12 remains the most significant barrier to financial stability for many Vancouver families. When child care is unavailable or unaffordable, parents cannot make ends meet.



**Housing:** The skyrocketing cost of housing in Vancouver is a serious barrier to financial stability. Parents work multiple jobs only to spend most of their income on rent, leaving little money for child care, increasing food costs and other basics. The housing crisis in Vancouver is a direct cause of poverty for hard-working parents and their children.



**Inadequate income:** 'Inadequate income' refers to several challenges: low pay, lack of benefits, and systemic failures to ensure that children in single parent homes receive child support.

### Recommendations for change

Project recommendations were developed by our peer research team and the participants who shared their stories. We asked parents what would make life better for their families and what changes might lead to healthier, more financially stable lives and communities. These recommendations are listed on the final pages of the report, and are focused on housing, child care, education, and other supports.

### A few key recommendations from Making Ends Meet participants:

- meaningful rent controls;
- safe, dignified housing for low-income families;
- affordable child care, and before and after school care spaces for all Vancouver children;
- expanded student grants, student loans, and loan forgiveness for parents living in poverty;
- more government-funded food security programs, including direct payments;
- government assessment and collection of child support for children in single parent homes;
- full funding for all prescriptions and medical equipment for children;
- increases to social assistance and disability rates such that monthly payments cover basic needs.