



February 19, 2025

To: British Columbia MLAs

Via Email

Re: First Call 2024 BC Child Poverty Report Card

Dear MLA,

Congratulations on your recent election to the BC legislature. If you are unfamiliar with First Call, we are a non-partisan registered charity that does research and public policy advocacy on child and youth rights and well being. We have a network of over 100 affiliate organizations. We invite you to visit our website at <https://firstcallbc.org>.

In December, we released First Call's [2024 BC Child Poverty Report Card](#). The report finds that after a sharp decline in poverty rates from 2019-2020, due to CERB payments made during the COVID-19 pandemic, child poverty rates in BC and across Canada have sharply increased in the subsequent two years.

In 2022, the year this report covers, 16.7% of BC children and youth (0-17), or 147,570 children, were living in poor households, up from 14.3% in 2021, and up from 13.3% in 2020. This represents a 25.6% increase in the child poverty rate in BC over the two years from 2020 to 2022. This report uses Statistics Canada taxfiler data measured against the Census Family Low Income Measure after-tax (CFLIM-AT).

Additional key findings from 2022 include:

- Children in lone-parent families have one of the highest poverty rates in BC at 45.5%, up from 40.1% in 2021. Seventy-nine percent of these lone-parent BC families were female-led. This year's report contains the stories of several courageous single mothers to highlight the barriers they face. We encourage you to read them here: [2024 BC Child Poverty Report Card](#).
- The average child poverty rate on sixty-one BC First Nations reserves in 2022 was 35%. This is only a snapshot of some reserves in BC, and doesn't represent the full picture for Indigenous child poverty in the province.
- Many of the regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were located in coastal areas, particularly along the north and central coast and northern Vancouver Island, with rates as high as 28-37%. See our regional and local maps [here](#).
- In 2022, 10% of BC's highest income families with children had more of the income pie than the combined incomes of the poorest 50% of families. The top 10% of families had 24 times

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the income of the lowest 10% of families with children, a much higher ratio than in 2020 (15 times). Income inequality is growing in our province

- 99,110 BC children were kept out of poverty thanks to government help in 2022. The Canada Child Benefit, including the BC Family Benefit, was the most effective government transfer for families with children.
- Despite increases to benefit rates in recent years, total welfare incomes for families with children in 2022, adjusted for inflation, lost value between 2021 and 2022.

The report also contains 24 child poverty reduction recommendations for the provincial and federal governments. Some key recommendations for the BC government include:

- indexing the BC Family Benefit to inflation to ensure the value of the benefit does not erode over time and adjusting the formula to better target poverty reduction for the poorest families;
- continuing to prioritize new child care investments to expand access to \$10aDay child care for all BC families with young children;
- scaling up funding for social and rental housing units that are affordable for families with very low incomes and controlling rent increases between tenants;
- significantly raising income and disability assistance rates and indexing them to inflation;
- Improving supports and services for families raising children with disabilities;
- increasing the BC minimum hourly wage to \$20 by 2026; and
- increasing the monthly income and rental supports for young people transitioning out of government care and ensuring they have safe, secure and affordable housing.

The 2024 BC Child Poverty Report Card, maps and other materials are posted on our website at:

[BC Child Poverty Report Card 2024 - First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society \(firstcallbc.org\)](https://www.firstcallbc.org/BC-Child-Poverty-Report-Card-2024)

Too many BC families' incomes are falling short of the cost of basic living expenses, including shelter and food. The trend of rising child poverty rates and growing income inequality over the last two years outlined in this report must be reversed.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the information and recommendations in this research report.

Sincerely,



Adrienne Montani
Executive Director