



## Statement

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Jan. 15, 2020

For Immediate Release

Once again, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition has issued a well-researched report that shines a light on the unrelenting struggle of poverty faced each day by many B.C. families with children.

The coalition's [2019 BC Child Poverty Report Card](#) finds that not much has changed for poor children and their families, with one in five children still poor in B.C. (19.1%), although the report notes positive signs that government action is making a difference for some children.

For a number of reasons, I support the findings and the recommendations in this report. The experiences of my Office leave little doubt that poverty is a factor in the lives of too many children and youth who come into contact with the child welfare and youth justice systems. Poverty is often a key driver of children being placed in government care, known to underly many allegations of mistreatment and neglect that result in separating children and youth from their families.

Poverty is often a multigenerational issue that is difficult to escape. This is why my Office has a history of advocating for poverty reduction across the province as it relates to vulnerable children and youth and young people who have aged out of government services.

As highlighted in this report, poverty in B.C. largely affects marginalized populations such as Indigenous people, disenfranchised youth, immigrants, people with disabilities and single-parent families. I support First Call's recommendation to combat this situation with an equity approach to poverty reduction that includes targeted interventions to address poverty for those most impacted.

Poverty is the most important social determinant of health. Long-term studies show that growing up poor increases the likelihood of life-long, persistent health issues, and that growing up poor is a reliable predictor of limited socio-economic mobility as an adult. As First Call's report notes, poverty reduction strategies must be properly resourced, targeted at the most marginalized families and implemented in a timely way.

We owe it to our children – truly the next generation – to take First Call's annual reports seriously.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Charlesworth  
Representative for Children and Youth