

Child poverty decreasing 'pitifully slowly' in B.C., report finds ^[1]

1 in 5 kids in B.C. live in families that struggle to pay bills, rent and living costs

Author:

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 19 Nov 2018

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

One in five children continue to live in poverty in British Columbia, according to the latest child poverty report card.

The report, released by the First Call B.C. Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition on Tuesday, covers statistics from 2016.

While there have been some slight improvements compared to previous years, following the general trend of a decline in poverty year after year, First Call says there is still a long way to go to eliminate child poverty.

"It's been going down since 2010 very slowly, pitifully slowly," said Adrienne Montani, the provincial coordinator of First Call.

"We still find ourselves at one in five children are poor and that's what it was last year."

That equates to 172,550 children across B.C. who live in families that struggle to pay bills, rent and living costs.

'All those factors, we haven't fixed them'

The report, which uses a different methodology from previous years because of changes made by government reporting and Statistics Canada, actually puts the child poverty rate three per cent higher — but figures from previous years were also re-calculated to make comparisons, and showed an overall slight decline.

It again found poverty rates are higher than average among Indigenous children, immigrant children and children in visible minority groups.

"The factors that make those groups over-represented still exist and that's discrimination in the labour market, discrimination in housing sometimes, historical disadvantages," Montani said.

"All those factors, we haven't fixed them."

Living wages and precarious work

Precarious work and stagnating wages are two other major factors contributing to child poverty, according to the report.

"Unstable work makes low-income families have to choose sometimes between paying the hydro bill or making sure they can cover the rent," Montani told Stephen Quinn, host of CBC's The Early Edition

"It creates lots of stress."

Phyllis Joseph, a parent of two living in Vancouver, knows first hand the stresses of raising children in poverty.

She's overcome addiction issues and poverty to get to where she is now and says that having the proper support resources in place makes all the difference.

"I knew that I had to get better for myself before I could get out of poverty," Joseph said.

"Having resources available and services and having housing, basically [make the biggest difference]."

Long-term plan

Both the federal and provincial governments are putting together poverty reduction strategies.

B.C. will release its plan next March, promising to reduce the child poverty rate in the province by 50 per cent in the next five years.

"If the will is there, they can reach [that goal]," Montani said.

The report puts forward several recommendations, such as direct income support and reducing housing and childcare costs for families as key ways to address poverty.

"We have 20 recommendations that we're issuing. If they act on all on them, we think that they could actually exceed that goal and reduce child poverty by 50 per cent before five years," said Montani.

Related link:

2018 Provincial reports and supporting material on child and family poverty: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, [3]

Region: British Columbia [4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/11/child-poverty-decreasing-pitifully-slowly-bc-report-finds>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/18/11/child-poverty-decreasing-pitifully-slowly-bc-report-finds> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/first-call-1-in-5-child-poverty-1.4913082> [3] <http://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/18/11/2018-provincial-reports-and-supporting-material-child-and-f> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860>