

# Child poverty rates on their way up in B.C., but stats may not show full problem in Burnaby [CA-BC] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

New figures from Statistics Canada suggest that B.C.'s child poverty rates are significantly rising, but a representative from one Burnaby community group feels that the problem is greater than the numbers suggest.

The statistics show a steady increase in provincial child poverty rates over the last three years in particular.

B.C.'s child poverty rate jumped from 19.9 per cent in 2001 to 24.2 per cent in 2002, dipping slightly to 23.9 per cent in 2003.

However, Jeanne Fike, with the Burnaby Family Life Institute, said the provincial statistics don't necessarily illustrate child poverty rates in Burnaby.

"That data is lower than what we believe is actually going on in Burnaby," Fike said.

"There's just not the resources to tend to the need."

Fike said the city's immigration rates, and the lack of services available to these new Canadians, directly affect child poverty rates in Burnaby.

She points to the fact Burnaby receives about 33 per cent of the refugees arriving in B.C., and that some of these families face insurmountable challenges upon arrival - a lack of affordable housing and transportation, child care concerns and illiteracy.

"It's unconscionable the lack of services for these families, and it's escalating," Fike said. "It's a huge, tragic loss that these people aren't employable - the result is devastating."

Fike said the hardships facing some new Canadian families are reflected by their children's behaviour in some instances.

"The young children are acting out their life experiences in inappropriate ways and we need to put the supports in place for them to prevent these situations from reoccurring," Fike said.

"Immigrants with little children can't even afford the bus fare to reach the few resources that are available to them."

Members of First Call, a coalition of provincial and regional organizations dedicated to child advocacy, have also expressed shock and concern over the report's findings.

Steve Kerstetter, a member of the First Call coordinating committee, suggests that political parties have downplayed the problem.

"Child poverty is a much bigger problem than our political leaders would have us believe, and it's certainly a much bigger problem in B.C.," Kerstetter said in a press release. "It's disturbing to see B.C. bucking the national trend."

- reprinted from Burnaby Now

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy <sup>[3]</sup>

poverty <sup>[4]</sup>

funding <sup>[5]</sup>

statistics <sup>[6]</sup>

availability <sup>[7]</sup>

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