

Report says B.C. has highest child poverty rate in Canada for six years straight ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

British Columbia's child poverty rate has remained the highest in Canada for six years in a row and it's time the provincial government took action, says a youth advocacy group.

In a report released Tuesday, First Call said half a dozen other provinces - Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba - have committed to reducing child poverty.

B.C. had 156,000 poor kids in 2007 - during a good year for the economy - said the group's 2009 Child Poverty Report Card.

The proportion of poor children in B.C. was 18.8 per cent while the national child poverty rate was 15 per cent, according to Statistics Canada data cited in the report.

It was released on the 20th anniversary of a unanimous House of Commons vote to end child poverty in Canada by 2000.

"When will the provincial government take action?" said chairwoman Julie Norton.

"We've been at the bottom year after year after year, and our elected officials still don't take seriously the pain and suffering that poverty causes children and their families."

Norton said that in addition to First Call's 92 partner organizations, more than 200 other groups are calling on the B.C. government to come up with a legislated poverty reduction plan that includes the appointment of a cabinet minister committed to the cause.

The report calls on the government to raise welfare rates and the minimum wage - the lowest of all provinces at \$8 - and increase child benefits and access to high quality child care.

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- reprinted from the Canadian Press

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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