

Latest Alberta Child Poverty Report Calls for Governments to Properly Invest in Families for All Times, Not Just Pandemic Times

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDMONTON – The Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta have jointly released a report on the state of child poverty in Alberta. The report finds that over 130,000 children in Alberta are living in poverty, a decrease from prior years. However, since the data is from 2020 when a variety of pandemic relief programs like CERB were in effect, we know this drop in child poverty was only temporary as virtually all these programs have winded down by now.

As we enter a post-pandemic world, the lessons of investing in families and children that meaningfully shielded them from poverty during COVID need to be remembered and incorporated into what should be a new normal.

“Just because the global health emergency is over, it does not mean that a family’s ability to keep themselves fed, clothed, and sheltered should be over,” said Bradley Lafortune, Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta. “The numbers show that robust investments from our government can meaningfully make a difference in poverty reduction. We must continue to pursue policy levers that strengthen our social safety net for all circumstances, not just for a pandemic.”

With Alberta experiencing the highest rates of food insecurity in the nation and the number of people who are unhoused on the rise, child poverty needs to be an election issue as Albertans head to the polls and elect a new government on May 29.

“With inflation at an all-time high, livable incomes are crucial for families to make ends meet,” said Sydney Sheloff, the Strategic Research Coordinator at the Edmonton Social Planning Council. “Ensuring that parents are paid a living wage will improve children’s well-being as they grow up. According to our Alberta Living Wage Network’s calculation, the hourly living wage ranges from \$17.50 in Medicine Hat to \$32.75 in Canmore. With the minimum wage still stagnant at \$15 an hour, we know that too many working families are not earning a living wage to properly support their families. Alberta families deserve a raise!”

The report examines common sense policy solutions to the crisis of child poverty, including robust investment into affordable and non-market housing and a robust and accessible network of high-quality and affordable child care options to foster healthy childhood development and allow for greater workforce participation.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Laura Kruse, Director of Communications and Organizing
Public Interest Alberta
780-420-0471
communications@pialberta.org