



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 29, 2024

Recent data highlights worrisome trends for B.C. children and youth

VICTORIA – Increasing poverty rates, deepening vulnerabilities of children heading into kindergarten and an inability to access affordable childcare are preventing B.C. young people from thriving, says the province’s Representative for Children and Youth.

“We are seeing recent results of three separate surveys that tell us very clearly that many kids in this province are not ok,” said Representative Jennifer Charlesworth. “This frankly alarming data is highlighting that we urgently need to be doing more to support the health and wellness of our young people.”

This week First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society released its annual B.C. Child Poverty Report Card finding poverty rates among children and youth in the province are increasing. Just over 126,000 children and youth are living in poverty, approximately 14 percent of B.C. young people.

“These numbers are far too high,” said Charlesworth. “We need tangible action, and we need it now. Key priorities must include, but not be limited to, affordable and accessible childcare, strengthening supports for children and youth with special needs, and meaningfully working with groups that are over-represented in poverty data.”

The most recent statistics from the Human Early Learning Partnership, a UBC research initiative that has been tracking young people for the past 20 years, indicates children heading into kindergarten in B.C are continuing to be at risk of failing to thrive. Fully one-third of children are struggling in at least one of five areas of vulnerability that impact development and life-long health including gaps in social, emotional, physical, language and communication areas. When looking geographically across the province, two decades ago, B.C. had 22 neighborhoods where childhood vulnerability rates were 15 percent or lower. Today it has just two.

Research confirms that vulnerable children are at greater risk as they grow up. A third study released this month by the McCreary Centre Society is also troubling, says the Representative. That survey shows several trends including an increase of self-harm and disordered eating behaviour among young people as well as decreases in feelings of connectedness to supports. Young people are also less likely to rate their overall health and mental health positively than previously.

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“Taken together this information should make us all sit up and take notice,” said Charlesworth. “Our young people need us all to do more for them. That means government, communities, schools, parents, friends need to come together and step up to prioritize children and youth in this province.”

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