

February 2024

“Back to normal” should not mean rising poverty

Alberta Child Poverty
Report 2023

Acknowledgments

Written by: Sydney Sheloff, Brett Lambert, Bradley Lafortune, Olivia Neufeldt

For a copy of this report, please visit
www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca

This report is published by Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta.
Any errors, omissions, and opinions are strictly those of the authors.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0
International License.



Introduction

Nearly 1 in 6 Albertan children were living in poverty in 2021, that is over 160,000 children who face inequities in accessing the conditions they need in order to thrive mentally, physically, and socially. Child poverty has persisted for decades in Alberta, and the crisis continues to deepen.

In 1989, the House of Commons resolved to end child poverty by the year 2000 (Campaign 2000, n.d.). We are now more than 23 years past this goal, and in many ways child poverty is more entrenched than ever.

We have the means to end child poverty, allowing it to persist over decades is a choice. It's a choice by decision-makers who have not prioritized the eradication of child poverty.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada instated a suite of income security measures to protect families from falling into poverty, including the creation of temporary benefits and tops-ups to existing benefits. This led to a steep decline in child poverty rates with 30,000 fewer Albertan children experiencing poverty in 2020 than in 2019. However, as people went back to work, these benefits were phased out. In 2021, we are right back to the same child poverty rates as before the pandemic. The government has proven it has the means to significantly reduce child poverty. It needs to take up the lessons learned during the first year of the pandemic and make permanent and meaningful policy changes to address child poverty.

Past Alberta Child Poverty Reports have explored that children in poverty experience significant challenges, including poor health outcomes, learning disabilities, academic underachievement, low literacy rates, a decreased likelihood of completing high school and post-secondary education, and poorer incomes as working adults.

Stressors related to poverty include, but are not limited to, food insecurity, unemployment, poor education, unsafe living conditions, lack of access to medical services, mental health and well-being, and material hardships. There are broader social benefits to ensuring that these disadvantages are addressed, so that children can grow up to become healthy adults. Preventing adverse childhood outcomes saves public dollars and can break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

The federal government created a poverty reduction strategy in 2018, built on the pillars of “living in dignity; providing opportunity and inclusion; and enhancing resilience and security” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). However, Alberta does not have a poverty reduction strategy of its own, let alone a strategy to address poverty among children. This is a missed opportunity to coordinate efforts between governments on child care initiatives, income supports, health care, and education. The provincial government has a long way to go to become a province where all citizens—especially children—can live in dignity.

The Alberta Child Poverty Report is an annual report produced by the Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta. It is designed to inform policy-makers, advocates, and decision-makers in their work to end child poverty and create an equitable Alberta for all. This year's report explores some of the current issues faced by children living in poverty, including: child poverty statistics, lifting children out of poverty, poverty within Indigenous and racialized communities, the state of childcare, food insecurity, housing, and taxation and income redistribution. It concludes with recommendations in all these domains that will contribute towards reducing and ending child poverty.



Child Poverty Rates

How Do We Measure Poverty?

There are multiple methodologies to measure poverty, each having different utility in different contexts. The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is Canada's official poverty measure.

It determines poverty thresholds based on the regional cost of a basket of food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other necessities meant to represent a modest standard of living. Families with a disposable income lower than the threshold (i.e. families that cannot afford these basket items) are considered to be in poverty (Djidel, 2020). The Census Family Low Income Measure, based on after-tax income (CFLIM-AT), is a relative measure of poverty - it is calculated as 50% of the median income in Canada, adjusted by family size (Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being Statistics, 2021). The Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) is also calculated as 50% of the median after-tax income in Canada, but is based on household income rather than family income (Pinard & Page, 2018). A "family" refers to a married or common law couple or a lone-parent with a child under the age of 25 who live in the same dwelling whereas a "household" refers to people who are living in the same dwelling, regardless of if they are family or not.

Despite being Canada's official poverty measure, the MBM has several limitations. First, the MBM uses data from the Canadian Income Survey, and due to small sample sizes, it is not as reliable when analyzing smaller geographies. The CFLIM-AT uses taxfiler data and is therefore more reliable in the Edmonton context, and is more comparable to other data from Statistics Canada (Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being Statistics, 2021). Second, while the MBM purports to show a modest standard of living, critics argue that the basket may not reflect the full realities of people living in poverty and as such underestimates rates of poverty (Sarangi, 2017). The CFLIM-AT has a higher threshold for poverty, and reports a higher prevalence of poverty. Third, the MBM currently only publishes data for a family of four, whereas the CFLIM-AT can be used to examine the poverty rates of several different family types. For these reasons, the Alberta Child Poverty Report uses the CFLIM-AT, or the LIM-AT to measure rates of poverty.

Timely, high quality data is necessary for understanding the scope of child poverty in Alberta. However, high quality data takes time to collect and analyze. Taxfiler data used in this report are based on the year 2021, the most up-to-date data available.

Poverty Rates

In 2021, 16.1% of children in Alberta were living in poverty according to the CFLIM-AT, that is 164,830 children whose basic needs are not being met (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

Poverty rates vary considerably by family type, 45.8% of Albertan children in lone parent families lived in poverty in 2021, compared to 8.1% of children in couple families (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

The poverty gap describes the difference between the poverty line threshold and the median after-tax income of all low-income families living below that threshold. Most low-income families live well below the poverty line. Lone parents experience the largest poverty gap—in 2021, lone parents with two children had an average income that was \$15,147 below the poverty line (Statistics Canada, 2023c; Statistics Canada, 2023d).

FIGURE 1
Poverty rate by family type, Alberta, 2021

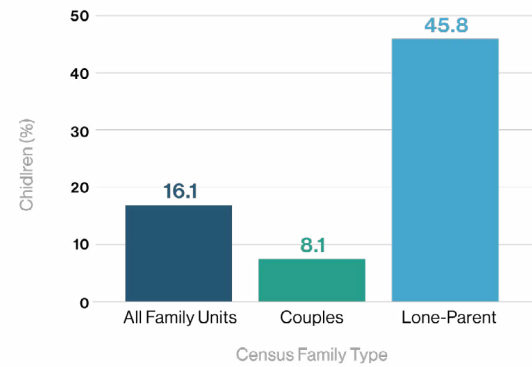
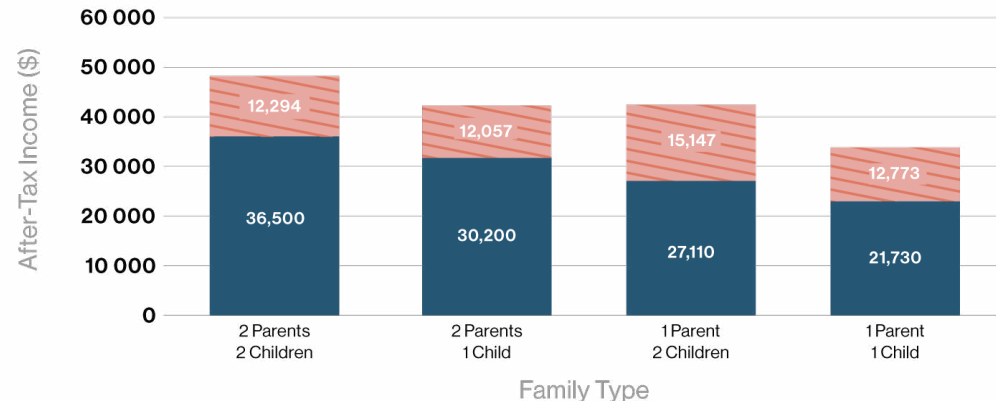


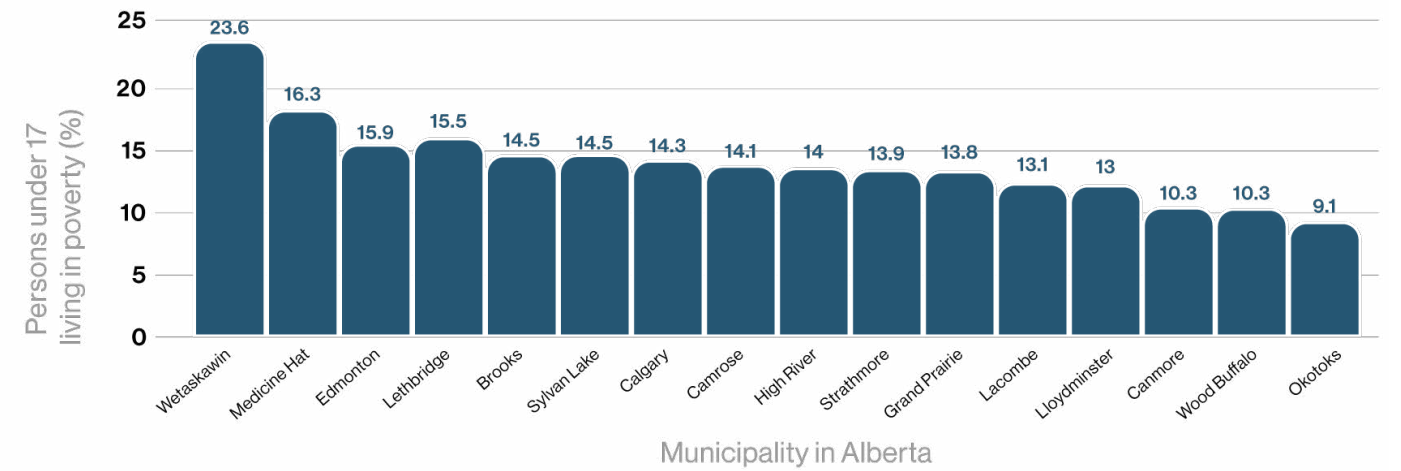
FIGURE 2
Poverty gap by family type, Alberta, 2021

■ After-tax Median Family Income
■ Poverty Gap



Across Alberta, different communities have different costs of living, employment opportunities, and access to social services. As such, experiences of poverty can vary significantly between different communities. In 2021, poverty rates varied from 9.1% in Okotoks to 23.6% in Wetaskiwin (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

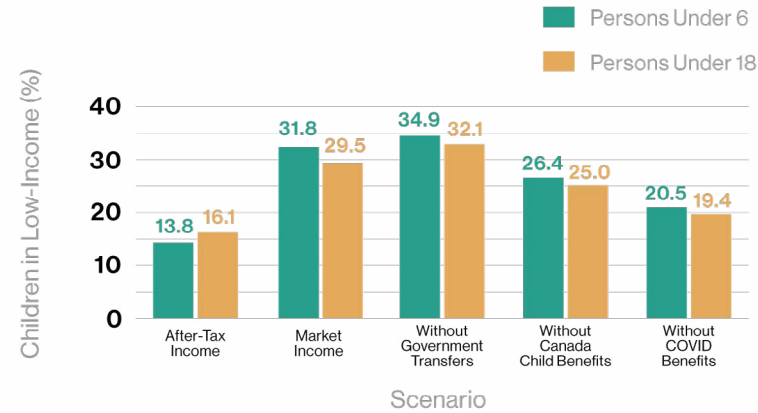
FIGURE 3
Percent of children living under the CFLIM-AT threshold, by municipality, Alberta, 2021.



Lifting Children out of Poverty Government Benefits

Both the provincial and federal government provide families with income transfers to help them with the cost of raising children, and to improve those children's quality of life.

FIGURE 4
Percent of children in families with adjusted income below the After-tax LIM, Alberta, 2021



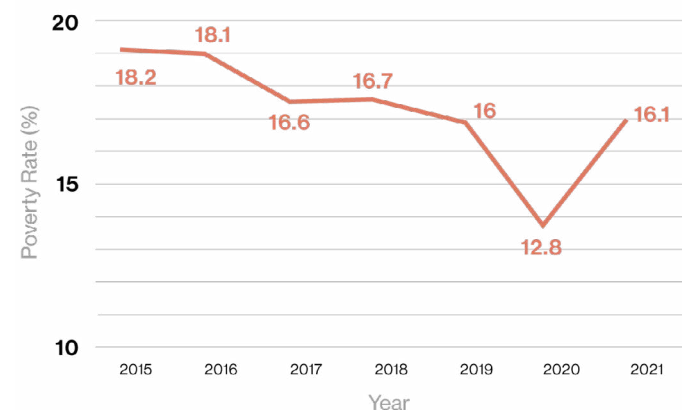
The Canada Child Benefit (CCB), along with the Alberta Child and Family Benefit (ACFB), are paid directly to eligible families with children under the age of 18. Families also have access to benefits available to all Canadians, such as the GST/HST credit. Payments are based on the incomes of families, with lower income families receiving higher benefits.

Government income transfers are an essential tool used to lift children and youth aged 0 to 17 years out of poverty. For example, the introduction of the CCB in 2016 contributed to child poverty rates decreasing 1.5 percentage points the following year. However, since then, poverty rates have remained relatively stagnant, with the exception of 2020 when temporary COVID benefits were introduced.

Under Canada and Alberta's current benefits arrangement, 13.8% of children under 6 and 16.1% of children under 18 live in poverty. Without government benefits, those rates become 34.9% and 32.1% respectively (Campaign 2000, 2023).

These numbers together show that governments have the power to reduce poverty when they invest in the social safety net, but more investments need to be made. There are still too many children living in poverty.

FIGURE 5
Child Poverty Rate, Alberta, CFLIM-AT



The Pandemic and Child Poverty Rates

The COVID-19 pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020. Shortly thereafter, many people temporarily lost their jobs as a result of public health restrictions and shutdowns, 11.3% of Albertans experienced unemployment in 2020, up from 6.8% in 2019 (Statistics Canada, 2023b). However, quickly created COVID-19 benefits, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), and top-ups to existing benefits, including the Canada Child Benefit, ensured that these individuals and their families would not fall into poverty. The child poverty rate dropped from 16% in 2019 to 12.8% in 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2023a). This represented the first significant drop in poverty since 2016.

Beginning in May 2020, Albertans experienced a succession of business and public institution openings and re-closures, and public health restrictions being lifted and reinstated (Calgary Herald, 2022). By 2021, most people were back to work, with an unemployment rate of 8.6% (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Throughout this confusing time, government support wound down. CERB ended September 26, 2020, and was replaced by the Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), as well as the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) and Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB). These benefits lasted until May 2022 (Government of Canada, 2023b).



With these changes, child poverty rates returned to normal. At 16.1%, child poverty rates in 2021 are comparable to what they were before the pandemic.

Remaining COVID benefits are continuing to have a small but measurable impact in 2021. Without the CRB, CRCB, and CRSB, child poverty rates would be 19.4%. These numbers suggest that once COVID-19 related benefits are fully phased out, poverty rates may further increase.

Benefits introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic have proven that governments can significantly reduce poverty when they invest in the social safety net. Yet these lessons were lost almost immediately.

Governments could have used COVID-19 benefits as a framework to make long-term improvements to the social safety net, through measures such as increasing benefit amounts, widening eligibility criteria, and reducing punitive claw backs. However, no significant changes have been made since CERB ended.

Allowing poverty to persist is a choice. It is time for policy makers to choose to learn from the Pandemic and make investments into the social safety net, if they do not, more families will suffer.

Parental Wages

Aside from improved child benefit programs, increased parental wages can also reduce child poverty rates. Children cannot work, and as such are reliant on their parent's incomes to meet their needs. All parents, regardless of their job, should be paid a living wage.

A living wage is defined as the hourly wage that a worker needs to provide for themselves, their families, and reach basic financial security. It represents more than just a survival wage, and includes the things a family needs to live in dignity and participate in their community. This includes child care, allowance for one adult to attend school, extended health and dental plans, and a minor emergency contingency fund (Sheloff, 2023).

The living wage is the weighted average of the income needs of three different family types - a two-parent family with two young children, a lone parent with one young child, and a single adult living alone (Sheloff, 2023).

Living wages are essential to improve the well-being of children. If a child's parent is making a living wage, they can purchase recreation center passes, sport equipment, a trip to the movies, books, and birthday and holiday presents. Furthermore, parents can spend more time with their children if they do not need to work multiple jobs and long hours to make ends meet (Alberta Living Wage Network, n.d.).

The living wage varies significantly across the province because the costs of goods and services are different everywhere. The Alberta Living Wage Network has calculated that the living wage ranges from \$17.35 in Medicine Hat to \$38.80 in Canmore (ALWN). Ensuring that parents are paid a living wage will improve children's well-being as they grow up. (Alberta Living Wage Network, 2023).

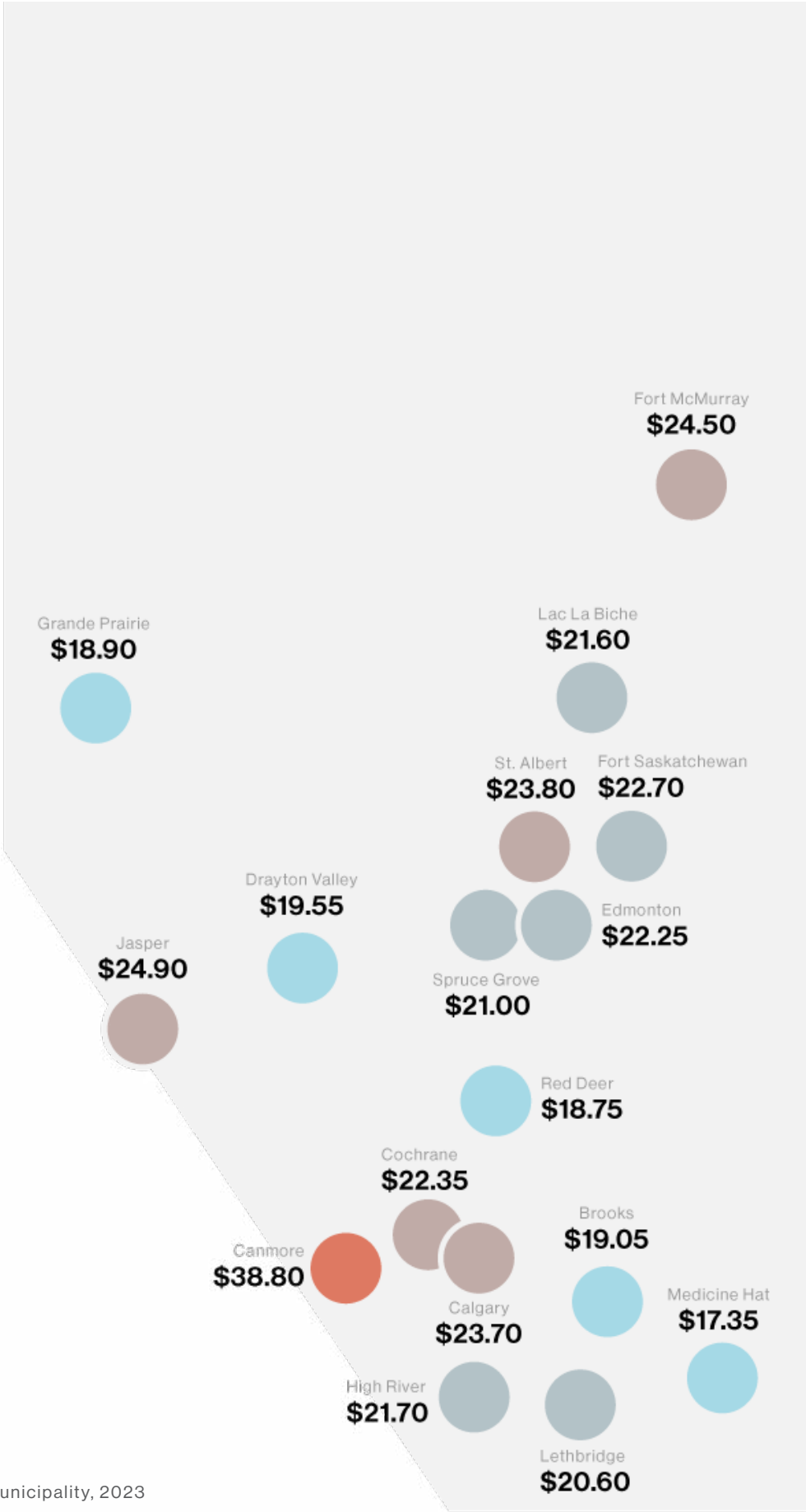
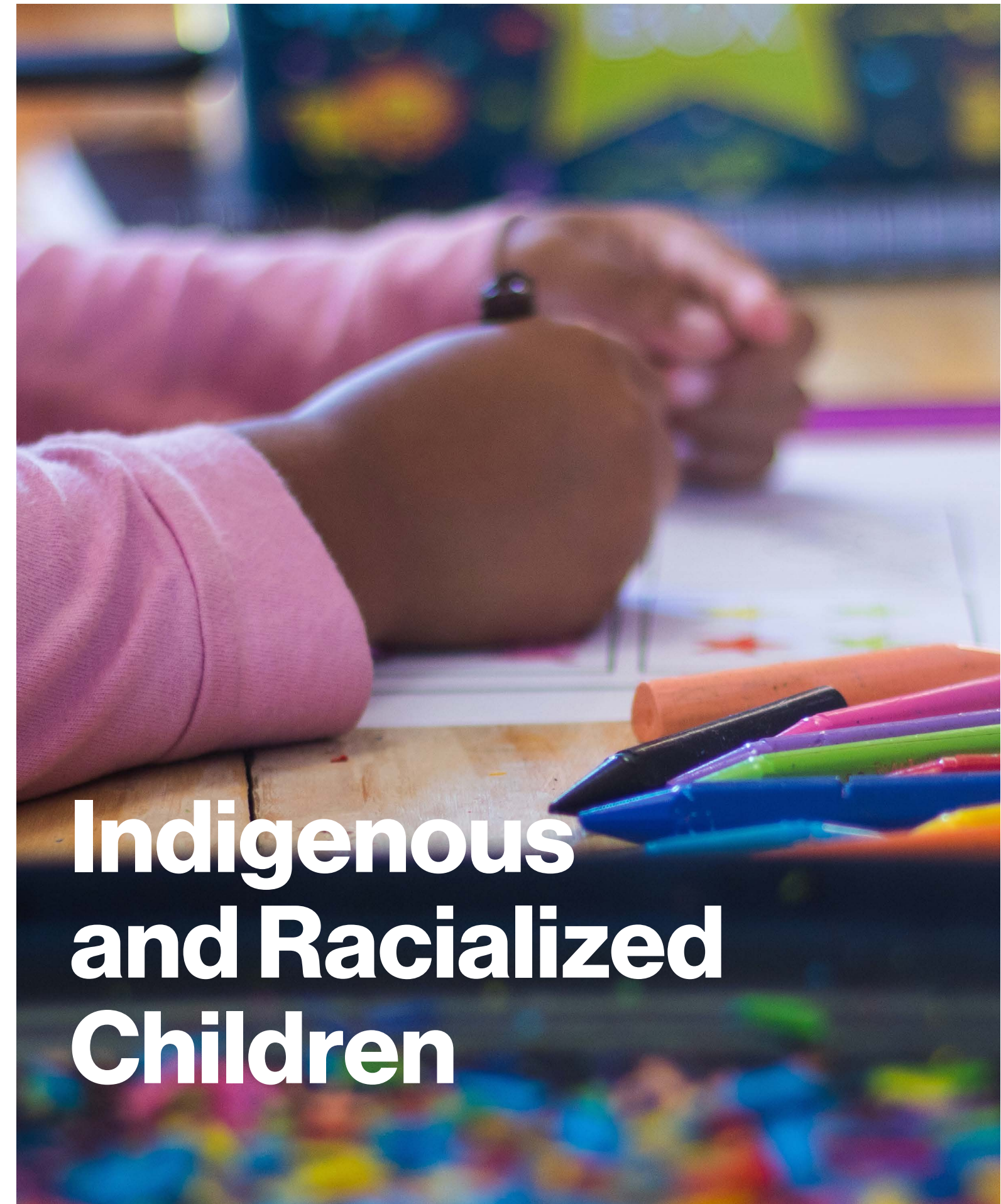


FIGURE 6
Living Wage by Municipality, 2023



Indigenous and Racialized Children

Poverty rates among racialized and Indigenous children are generally higher than the overall population.

High poverty rates in racialized and Indigenous communities are a direct result of racism and colonialism deeply embedded in all systems racialized folks deal with in Canada, which structure opportunities in a way that disadvantages them. Legacies of colonialism, racist immigration policies, exclusion, and cultural erasure, along with contemporary discrimination, continue to impact racialized and Indigenous people living in Canada today.

In 2020, 13.1% of racialized children were experiencing poverty, although experiences within this group ranged significantly. Filipino children living in Alberta had the lowest poverty rate at 3.7%, whereas Arab children had the highest rate at 30.1%. Indigenous children experienced a poverty rate of 22.3%. Within this group, 28% of First Nations children experienced poverty, and 14.7% of Metis children experienced poverty (Sheloff, Lambert, & Lafortune, 2023).

Poverty rates among Indigenous and racialized children are sourced from the federal Census, which is conducted every 5 years, the most recent conducted in 2021. High quality and accurate data is essential to understand both the nature and scope of racial inequity in Canada, and to advocate for systemic change. However, there is a notable gap in this information regarding Indigenous and racialized Albertans.

This issue is especially salient in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As taxfiler data has shown, overall child poverty rates have increased significantly as temporary COVID income benefits have been phased out. However, there is currently no data on what this trend looks like in racialized and Indigenous communities. While it can be safely assumed that poverty rates have increased, there is no data on how much, or how varying groups may have been impacted differently.

Going forward, if the most up-to-date information on poverty within racialized and Indigenous communities is based on an outlier year with temporary income measures, it will give an inaccurate (and underestimated) picture of what poverty looks like until the next census is completed in 2026.



The State of Child Care

Child Care Principles and Poverty Reduction

Early learning and child care is vital for Canadian children and families.

According to Article 18(3) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), “children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities” and governments are expected to play a part in ensuring that parents and their children are able to access this right. This right should be extended to families with one or more parents who are not working, regardless of the reason. The lack of affordable child care can be a barrier that prevents parents, specifically mothers, from entering and remaining in the workforce (Zhang et al., 2021). Parents may spend their disposable income on child care, or lose income if they need to work part-time or leave their job in order to care for their children (Government of Canada, 2023a). Albertans as a whole experience a decrease in provincial income tax revenue when parents cannot work (Government of Canada, 2023a).

In 2021, the provincial and federal government signed the Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement that puts forth a series of objectives for early learning and child care to be achieved by 2026 that include: high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive (Government of Canada, 2022). The primary focus of Alberta has been on affordability.

Child Care Coverage

In March 2023, Alberta had a total of 116,660 licensed child care spaces for children 0 to 5 years old across the province, which are divided into 48,368 non-profit spaces (33,242 facility-based and 15,126 family day home spaces) and 68,292 private, facility-based spaces (Children's Services, 2023b). According to Macdonald & Friendly (2023b) “for-profit ownership is associated directly and indirectly with multiple factors that are linked to poorer program quality, including lower wages, poorer working conditions, fewer ECE [early childhood educator] trained staff, more staff turnover, [and] less compliance with regulations” (p. 31). In most Canadian cities, profit-making centres are more expensive than not-for-profit centres, though in Lethbridge and Edmonton, not-for-profit centres were slightly more expensive (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a).

Affordability is an important objective within the Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement but does not fully address the other objectives of quality, flexibility, and inclusivity.

As child care costs decrease and more families are able to afford child care, demand for child care will increase. This raises questions as to whether there are enough spaces available to meet the demand, and enough qualified staff members to accommodate more children (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a). In Alberta, 61% of children who are not old enough to attend kindergarten live in a child care desert (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023b). A child care desert can be described as a postal code in which there are “more than three children below school-age for every full-time licensed child care space” (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023b, p. 15).

Children living in smaller Alberta communities are more likely to be living in a child care desert than children living in more densely populated cities (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023b). For example, Southeastern Alberta (Drumheller) and the Wainwright region (Tofield) both have child care coverage rates of 17% (The Monitor, 2023) while Edmonton as a whole has a coverage rate of 47% (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023b). There may be “available” spaces, but these are not in rural areas or small communities.

Even if child care is affordable, some children will inevitably be left out if there are not enough licensed child care spaces available.

Only one-third of child care centres in Edmonton said that they could enroll a new child in full-time care in the next week and out of 30 Canadian cities, 14 had “little to no spare capacity for an additional preschool-aged child” and 22 cities had “little or no spare capacity” for additional infants and toddlers (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a, p. 9). Many child care programs are licensed for a certain number of children, but they may lack the physical space and staff required to care for this number of children (Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta, n.d.).

Child care centers face difficulties in expanding their services, in part because of a lack of trained early childhood educators (ECEs) (The Muttart Foundation, 2023).

ECEs often experience poor working conditions and receive low pay and few benefits. Consequently, work in early childhood education is undesirable and undervalued, making it difficult for child care centers to recruit and retain qualified ECEs (The Muttart Foundation, 2023). ECE wages vary depending on employee certification and the type of child care facility. After receiving wage top-ups in January 2023, ECEs in facility-based programs received an average of \$19.51/hour (Level 1), \$23.31/hour (Level 2), and \$28.64/hour (Level 3) (Children's Services, 2023b).

As Canada reaches closer to the goal of an average of \$10/day childcare, greater attention needs to be paid to the recruitment, retention, and treatment of early child care educators (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a).

Without qualified staff, programs may not be able to run at full capacity; children requiring specialized support may be turned away; and specific services such as food service, specialized supports for children with special needs, and services in northern communities may no longer be offered (The Muttart Foundation, 2023).

Consequently, there may be affordable childcare, but may not be accessible to families who need it.

Child Care Budget for 2023 and Current Child Care Costs

In 2023-2024, child care fees will average roughly \$15 per day as a step toward reaching an average of \$10 per day child care by 2026 (Government of Alberta, 2023a).

As of April 2023, Alberta has reduced its average licensed childcare fees by 50% compared to 2019 (Government of Canada, 2023c), though individual cities fell short of these targets. From 2019 to 2023, Edmonton and Lethbridge lowered median child care fees, yet were unable to meet federal targets of lowering fees by 50% over this period of time (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a). Infant fees in Edmonton and Lethbridge were lowered by 48% and 45% respectively, while toddler and preschool age fee targets were missed by wide margins.



Alberta's approach to reducing child care fees is through the use of market fees, reducing them by a flat dollar amount through affordability grants paid directly to child care providers and income-based fee subsidies (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a). Jurisdictions that use market fees, such as Alberta, tend to show inequalities in fees among parents. With Alberta's market fee approach and set dollar reduction, fees vary among cities and also differ within a given city (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a). Since fees are reduced by a flat rate, this does not take into account the variation in cost among different child care centres in different areas of the province. Consequently, families in more expensive cities may experience a reduction in fees that is less than 50% and within a given city, parents may experience a reduction in fees greater than 50% if their fees were already lower (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023a).

Macdonald and Friendly (2023a) suggest that having set fees allows for greater equity among families in addition to “administrative simplicity, predictability for parents, ease of monitoring so affordable fees can be more clearly ensured” (p. 52).

Cost Control Framework and For-Profit Expansion Plan

In January 2023, the Alberta government released its Cost Control Framework and For-Profit Expansion Plan.

This framework promotes for-profit expansion despite aims of the federal government to support the development of public, non-profit spaces. It claims to support parents' choice of care yet creates a two-tiered system of child care. The framework includes "core child care costs" and "enhanced services" (Children's Services, 2023a, p. 4). Enhanced services are optional in that families must pay additional fees for their children to access these services, which may include "transportation, field trips, special programming or other additional costs that support innovation and creativity within the child care program" (Children's Services, 2023a, p. 6), though there is not a comprehensive list of what services will be considered core and which will be considered enhanced.

The framework does not mention whether additional fees will be charged for culturally appropriate care, meal services, or the specialized services accessed by children with physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities.

As such, it is unclear whether certain services which were previously included in standard child care costs will now be considered an additional expense. Moreover, the framework does not outline how child care centres will need to adapt their programming and staff ratios to provide different services.

While the separation of core child care expenses and enhanced services is described as ensuring that parents have access to affordable childcare options, some families do not have the luxury of choice because they can only afford the most basic child care. As this framework produces a two-tier system of child care, children will be excluded from activities and resources if parents cannot afford enhanced services (Bisanz, 2023). Programming and services that were previously included in child care costs may only be available to families who can pay extra. Moreover, the quality of child care services will likely differ between core and enhanced programming as some children will have access to services that others do not (Bisanz, 2023). The government frames the additional costs of enhanced services in terms of services that "support innovation and creativity" (Children's Services, 2023a, p. 6), suggesting that core services will lack these qualities. This raises questions about the impacts this framework will have on child development and outcomes.

This division puts a price on quality education that many parents will not be able to afford and may result in some children receiving better child care than others. The framework sends a message that money is more important than ensuring that all children have access to high quality child care.

Culturally Appropriate Child Care

One quarter of Edmonton's population consists of immigrants, with the city welcoming roughly 12,000 people each year (City of Edmonton, n.d.).

Those who are new to Canada may find it difficult adjusting to the new culture and struggle with finding housing, work, and child care that meets their families' needs. Two-earner families are less common among families with immigrant mothers than in families with Canadian-born mothers (Choi, 2023), which may in part be related to a lack of culturally appropriate child care.

Newcomers and those who may not identify with the dominant culture, may not see themselves and their cultures represented in early learning and child care. Families have unique experiences and cultural backgrounds that may not be understood by other families or early childhood educators, which presents difficulties in terms of finding child care that can respond appropriately to these experiences (de Vos et al., 2022). For newcomers, the stress of moving and the adjustment to a new cultural, social, and economic context can impact family structures and relationships, traditional gender roles, and parenting responsibilities. Language barriers may make it difficult for parents to understand what child care options are available and communicate their needs and their children's needs with early childhood educators.

A lack of acknowledgement of everyday cultural experiences, an absence of trusting relationships with others in the community, a societal preference for the dominant worldview, and the process of immigrating can create a sense of distance between newcomers and the dominant culture.

Given the diversity of Canada, child care must be culturally responsive to the unique cultural needs and strengths of newcomer families.

Priorities for culturally appropriate child care include: empowering parents; supporting language and culture; facilitating inclusion and belonging; improving access and navigations; and advancing equity; changing policies and practices (de Vos et al., 2022). These priorities may take the form of giving parents the opportunity to contribute to and be a part of the education process; ensuring that a child's language and culture are nurtured within the child care setting; support for parents trying to find child care; accessible child care in which language and affordability barriers are minimized; addressing equity and discrimination with regard to child care staff; and ensuring that child care resources promote respect, equity, and the cultural diversity

Lastly, empathy is key to building a deeper sense of mutual understanding and support between families and child care providers.



Food Insecurity

Food insecurity and poverty are closely linked together.

The prevalence of food insecurity in Canada is primarily a result of inadequate incomes being a barrier to affording nutritious food.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and rising inflation (coupled with record profits from major grocery retailers) contributing to the high cost of living, levels of food insecurity have seen a dramatic rise in recent years and there seems to be no signs of the situation improving, especially in Alberta.

According to recent data from Statistics Canada's Canada Income Survey, 21.8% of Albertans lived in a food insecure household in 2022, exceeding the national average of 18.4%. In 2019, the rate was 19.2%. Alberta has the 5th highest rate of food insecurity among the provinces, behind Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador, and Nova Scotia. Nevertheless, Alberta has the highest prevalence of severe food insecurity (i.e. skipped meals, reduced food intake, or going days without eating) at 6.6%. Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity.

While nearly 1 in 4 children (24.7%) lived in a food insecure household in Canada, in Alberta that number is 27.2%.

This represents a nearly 3 percentage point increase in childhood insecurity since 2019 when it was 24.3% (PROOF, 2023).

In 1981, Edmonton's Food Bank became the first food bank in Canada to open its doors. Food banks were initially set up to help existing organizations meet the demands for food within a community while others were started in order to distribute surplus food that otherwise would have been wasted to those in need (McCracken, 2015). While the hope was that food banks would only be a temporary solution during a time of economic recession (Vandergrift, 2014), unfortunately the need for food banks has not gone away more than 40 years later as food security continues to be a persistent problem in Alberta and Canada.

Rising food insecurity levels has also meant increased visits to food banks. According to Food Banks Canada's latest HungerCount 2023 report, food bank usage across Canada rose to its highest level since their survey started in 1989.

Within Alberta, nearly 175,000 people used food banks in March 2023 alone, a 11.9% increase from 2022 and a 94.1% increase from 2019. About one in three children under 18 accessed food banks in Canada (Food Banks Canada, 2023).

This high-level data is in line with reporting from various local food banks across the province. St. Albert Food Bank has reported a 38% year-over-year increase in demand (Farrell, 2023), Strathcona Food Bank's usage of hampers has increased by 25% (Morey, 2023), and Edmonton's Food Bank has reported a 26% increase in food bank hamper requests in the first half of 2023 compared to the previous year (Trans, 2023). Additionally, Calgary Food Bank handed out 61% more hampers in July 2023 compared to the year prior and nearly one-third (32%) of those hampers went to children under 18 (Ferguson, 2023). Red Deer Food Bank has reported that food bank usage has increased 81% since 2019 (rdnewsNOW Staff, 2023).

This alarming picture of food insecurity has detrimental health impacts on our community, particularly children. Research has shown that children living with food insecurity were 55% more likely to access medical services for mental health or substance use disorders than those who had access to an appropriate diet. They were also 74% more likely to use an emergency department and be admitted to the hospital compared to those who were food secure. These unmet basic needs can be a stressor, impacting the well-being of children (La Grassa, 2023).

Indigenous children continue to experience higher rates of food insecurity than other communities. Research has shown a disproportionately higher rate of moderate to severe food insecurity among Indigenous people living both on and off reserve.

This food insecurity has been linked to high food costs as well as colonization that disrupted sources of healthy food such as traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering. This can lead to malnutrition, negatively impacting the physical and emotional development of the child (Ireland, 2023).

School nutrition programs are an important measure to address the immediate food needs of school-age children, which currently serves about 40,000 students in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2023b).

Students in schools with a universal breakfast program have experienced fewer discipline problems, improved behaviour, better attendance and learning, and improved psychosocial well-being (Maimann, 2019). Advocates have been calling for a national school food program to overhaul current programs, which are a patchwork of initiatives typically funded from corporate and community donations and grants. This makes it difficult to keep up with growing demand from families in need, especially in a time of high food prices. While the Government of Canada has promised to implement a national school food program, timelines for implementation have not been finalized (CBC News, 2023). Despite the positive outcomes of school nutrition programs, they only address food needs for children during the time they are in school, and cannot be accessed during evenings, weekends, and school breaks.

Governments at all levels need to pursue policy levers that would make a meaningful difference towards addressing food insecurity among children.

This includes living wages, improved social assistance rates, a more generous Canada Child Benefit for low- and moderate-income households, access to culturally appropriate foods, tighter regulations on grocery store chains to address food prices to make the cost of food more affordable, supporting Indigenous food sovereignty, among many others. If we want fewer people to rely on food banks to meet their everyday food needs – as opposed to emergency needs – it will take a comprehensive rethinking of food policies and the food system.



Housing

Alberta and Canada are both falling well short of realizing the progressive right to housing for all.

Despite Canada establishing the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, Alberta continues to lag behind when it comes to addressing inadequate housing, core housing need, homelessness, and affordable housing across the housing spectrum (Houle, 2022).

Right now, Alberta is experiencing a rapid deepening of the affordable housing crisis, and in January 2024 the City of Edmonton declared a housing and homelessness emergency. Combined with a lack of adequate shelter spaces, new housing starts, transitional and supportive housing, adequate income supports, and rental regulations, the situation has gone from bad to catastrophic. Today, in Calgary and Edmonton, rents are rising at the fastest and third fastest rates in the country, respectively (Aldrich, 2023).

Housing insecurity, unaffordability, and inadequacy is deeply connected to child poverty and child and family health outcomes (Green, Bovell-Ammon, & Sandell, 2021). Unless Alberta seriously addresses the current housing crisis, child poverty will continue to affect too many Alberta households.

Adequate housing is more than just a roof over a child's head. True adequate housing means seven criteria are being met to ensure good housing:

1. **Security of tenure, which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction or harassment**
2. **Availability of services, such as safe drinking water, food storage, heat, adequate sanitation**
3. **Affordability, where shelter costs do not exceed 25% of household income**
4. **Habitability, which offers protection from the elements**
5. **Accessibility, which meets the needs of marginalized groups**
6. **Location, which offers accessibility to employment opportunities, health care, schools, and other amenities**
7. **Cultural adequacy, which takes into account the expression of cultural adequacy.**

For children specifically, the quality of housing they live in heavily influences their educational advancement and overall well-being. A lack of adequate housing negatively impacts the growth and development of children and inhibits their human rights, including the right to education, health, and personal security. If they become homeless, children can be vulnerable to a range of emotional problems, including anxiety, sleeplessness, aggression, and withdrawal (Youth Without Shelter, n.d.).

With a shortage of affordable and adequate housing that is protected from the volatility of the market, secure housing is increasingly out of reach for families and caregivers of at-risk youth across the province (Cryderman, 2023).

Within Alberta, the 2022 Point in Time (PIT) Homeless Count found staggering numbers of Albertans and youth experiencing homelessness (all types—unsheltered homelessness, emergency sheltered, and transitional housing):

City	Total (individuals of all ages)	% of those identifying as youth
Calgary	2,782	10% (ages 13-24, excluding 0-12)
Edmonton	2,519	11.6% (ages 13-24, excluding 0-12)
Grand Prairie	328	7% (ages 0-24)
Lethbridge	454	N/A
Medicine Hat	70	N/A
Red Deer	334	.3% (ages 15-24)
Wood Buffalo	162	14% (ages 0-17); 8% (18-24)

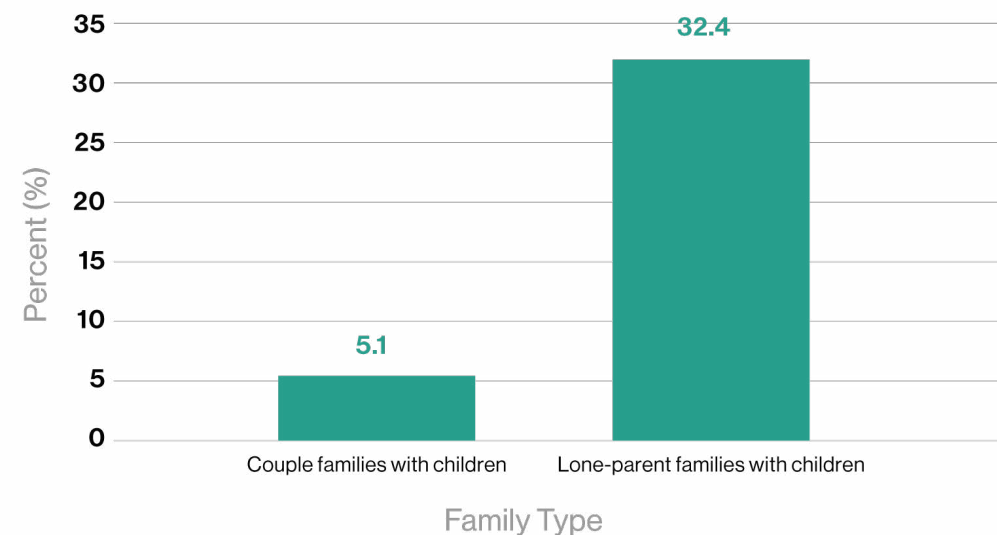
(Homeless Hub, n.d.).

The province of Alberta has downloaded the responsibility for housing needs assessments to municipalities, despite housing being a primary responsibility of provincial governments (Government of Alberta, 2023c).

As a result, precise and up-to-date information regarding children and families in core housing need or experiencing homelessness is not readily available. However, many municipalities have conducted their own assessments and the results are deeply troubling.

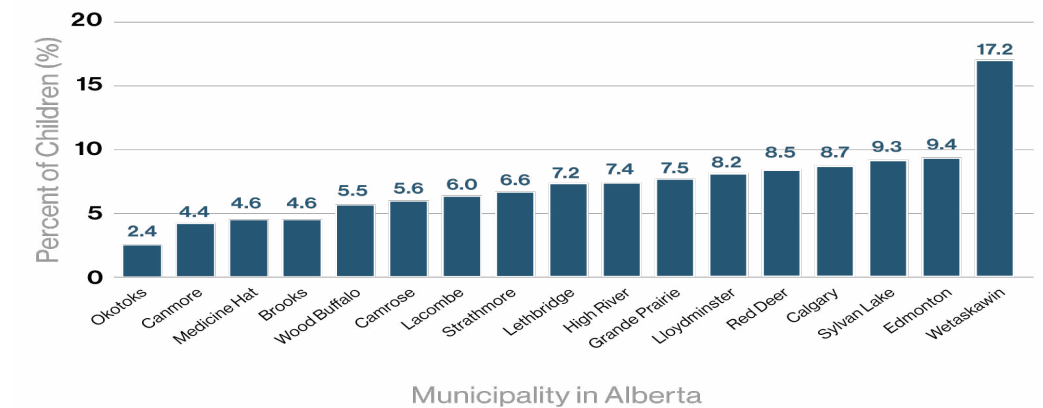
In Edmonton for example, as of August 2022, 1 in 7 households were in core housing need, and the trends show that number is rising. While Edmonton has more than 360,000 homes, it has fewer than 15,000 affordable housing units, and as of summer 2023 the city has the 3rd highest rates of rent increases in the country. As noted in Edmonton's current housing needs assessment, a shift away from housing investments by all governments has led to a situation that lays bare the market's inability to respond adequately to the housing crisis. By 2026, the number of households in core housing need in Edmonton is expected to skyrocket from 49,000 to 59,000 without urgent and bold policy interventions (City of Edmonton, 2022).

FIGURE 9
Percent of children living in core housing need, Alberta, 2021



With individuals and families facing housing insecurity, this means more children are living in core housing need. A household lives in core housing need when their housing situation falls below at least one threshold for housing adequacy (not requiring major repairs), affordability (spending no more than 30% of household annual income), or suitability (enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household) (Statistics Canada, 2022). According to the 2021 Census of Canada, children in homes led by single-parents are more likely to live in core housing need. While 5.1% of households with children in Alberta live in core housing need, 32.4% of children in lone-parent households in Alberta live in core housing need (Statistics Canada, 2022).

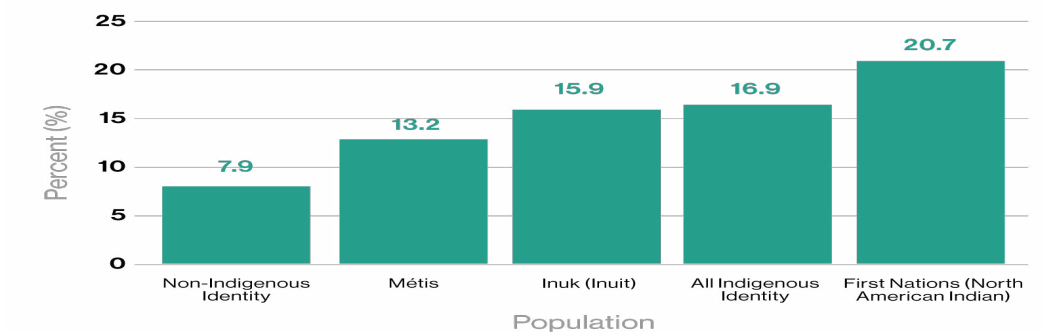
FIGURE 10
Percent of children in core housing need, by Municipality, Alberta, 2021



The prevalence of children living in core housing need varies quite a bit throughout Alberta, with the highest concentration being seen in Wetaskiwin (17.2%) followed by Edmonton (9.4%), Sylvan Lake (9.3%), and Calgary (8.7%). The lowest concentration of children living in core housing need can be found in Okotoks (2.4%), Canmore (4.4%), and Medicine Hat (4.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Indigenous children in Alberta are disproportionately more likely to be in core housing need. Among non-Indigenous children, 7.9% live in core housing need compared to 13.2% of Métis, 15.9% of Inuit, and 20.7% of First Nations children (Statistics Canada, 2022).

FIGURE 11
Percent of children living in core housing need, by Indigenous identity, Alberta, 2021



The status quo of our housing situation is leaving many households – especially those with children – struggling. An over-reliance on the private housing market does not adequately meet the needs of a diverse population. The financialization of housing – treating housing as a commodity prioritizing wealth and investment at the expense of housing being a human right and social good – places significant barriers for low-income renters in accessing affordable and habitable housing (August, 2022).

Ultimately, housing is a human right, but right now Alberta is not upholding that right for all Albertans nor Alberta children. The situation from housing adequacy and security for housed children, to those tragically experiencing homelessness, has gone from bad to worse – and the numbers bear that out. Rather than waiting for inadequate market actors to respond, the landscape of housing needs to be reimagined, so all Albertans can have good housing.

Taxation and Income Redistribution

Taxation policies, including tax collection, and adequacy of funding for programs and services are directly related to systemic child poverty.

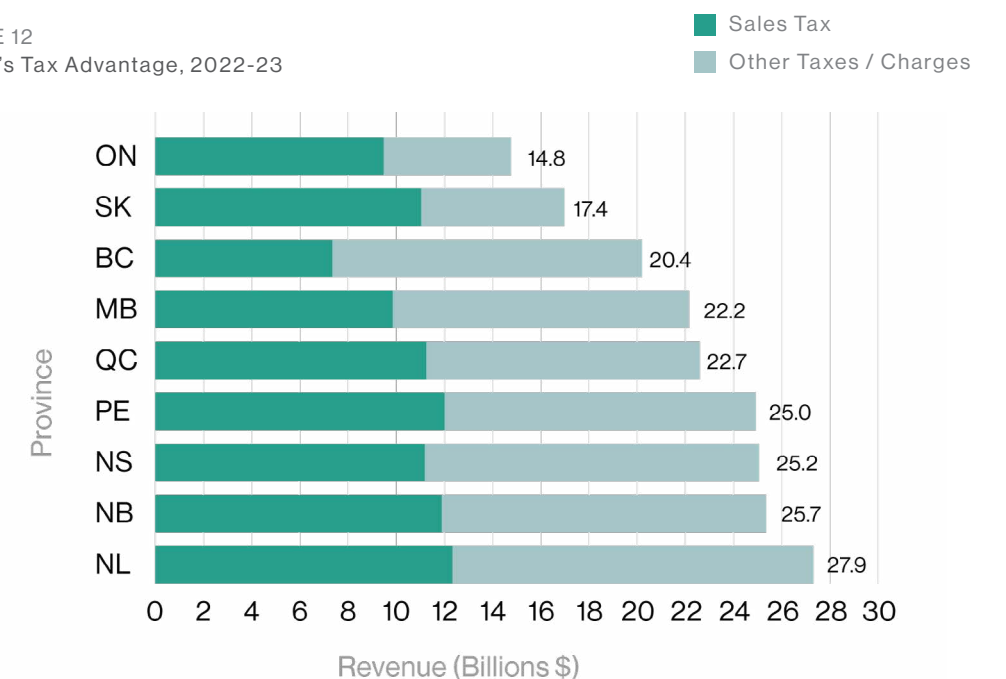
In fact, inadequate funding for programs and services are a major reason why Canada and the provinces have not achieved their shared goal of eradicating child poverty by the year 2000.

Any report with recommendations to address child poverty would be fundamentally lacking if it did not include analysis and recommendations to address Alberta's broken revenue and funding system. In 1999-2000 tax revenue accounted for 53% of all government program spending, while non-renewable resource revenues accounted for 28% of all program spending. By 2016-17 that number was 38% and 6%, respectively (Acuna, 2018). For too long, Alberta's program spending has relied upon a volatile mix of revenue, which compromises the government's ability to sufficiently provide programs and services and plan for future population and demographic changes. Unfortunately, we are still in the midst of that challenge today. As a direct result, funding for programs and services that should be adequate, stable, and predictable are not, and child poverty rates continue to become further entrenched.

Without income redistribution achieved through a variety of integrated interventions, poverty and child poverty will not be meaningfully alleviated, let alone eliminated. Reforms to tax policy, income transfers, and employment standards; guaranteed incomes; universally accessible services; and market regulation are all tools that governments must explore in order to address inequality and poverty. In the end, a combination of some or all of these policies are necessary if the Albertan and Canadian governments are truly invested in ending child poverty. Inaction on these structural fiscal and economic policies is the foundational reason why the Child Poverty Report is still necessary today – some 23 years after the House of Commons originally pledged to end child poverty.

According to Alberta's most recent budget from 2023, Alberta would have up to 19.7 Billion more dollars to spend on programs and services if it had the same tax system as any other province (Government of Alberta, 2023a).

FIGURE 12
Alberta's Tax Advantage, 2022-23



Reforming Alberta's revenue system can be accomplished by implementing progressive tax reforms such as: reformed progressive personal income tax steps, returning to a fair corporate income tax, implementing an excess profits tax to provide relief for lower income Albertans, a wealth tax and luxury goods tax, and reforming the royalty system (Kilgannon, 2022).

When it comes to tax collection, Alberta and Canada should address the discrepancy between statutory and effective tax rates – often colloquially referred to as ‘tax loopholes’, these gaps in policy greatly benefit corporations and harm the average Canadian, who could otherwise benefit from the strengthening of programs and services. The ‘effective tax rate’ is the amount a person or corporation actually ends up paying as a percentage of total income. Ultimately, your effective tax rate is calculated after all tax credits have been applied. While the average taxpayer does not have the same access to tax and accounting resources, corporations have benefited greatly from the effective tax rate calculations. According to Canadians for Tax Fairness, corporations in Canada have ‘saved’ a “combined 1.1 Trillion dollars due to statutory tax rate cuts and effective tax rate loopholes, benefits and havens” (Cochrane, 2022). Ultimately, until Canada and Alberta reform tax policies and tax collection, then system issues like child poverty will go largely unaddressed.

Even with Alberta’s currently volatile revenue system, at the time of writing, Alberta is currently projecting a \$5.5 billion surplus for this year alone, up \$3.2 billion from the original Budget 2023 projections (Government of Alberta, 2023d). While B.C. has committed itself to a time-bound, evidence-based, and funded Poverty Reduction Strategy, no such strategy exists in Alberta. With a community-developed poverty reduction strategy of its own, Alberta could easily identify the requisite surplus resources needed to eliminate child poverty in the province.

At a moment when Alberta’s policies are contributing to record levels of homelessness, child poverty, opioid poisoning deaths, and deaths of children in care, the inaction from the provincial government regarding fiscal policies is unacceptable (Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, 2023).

Canada and Alberta’s taxation policies, the persistent privatization of social services, and deregulation of markets has led to a system more favourable to high-income earners and already profitable corporations than to working families and children.

Alberta should renovate its fiscal and tax policy on the principles of sustainability, equity and predictability. This process should be undertaken in consultation with Albertans, workers, economists from different schools of thought, and policymakers who understand the impact of tax policy’s impact on the lives and livelihoods of Albertans and of the economy in the short and long-term.

In the long-term, Alberta should introduce new measures to assess the real human impact of its revenue, spending, programs and services, referencing other jurisdictions that have introduced ‘well-being’ metrics to more closely connect fiscal measures with people-based policy outcomes.

Simply put, a well-being economy centers people and our natural environment over economic growth, which generally externalizes human, social, and environmental costs. Scotland, for example, has recently adopted a “Wellbeing economy monitor” which regularly updates citizens and policymakers on a range of indicators “to provide a baseline for assessing progress toward the development of a wellbeing economy” (Government of Scotland, 2022, page 2).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Poverty has long-lasting impacts on the physical, mental, and social well-being of children and youth. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting government interventions proved that governments have the means to make significant reductions in child and family poverty.

Yet this progress was almost immediately lost with the phasing out of COVID-related government supports. Albertan children continue to be denied access to affordable, inclusive, and high-quality child care; affordable and nutritious food; and secure, affordable, and adequate housing. We cannot let progress die with the pandemic. Below are recommendations for the Canadian, Albertan, and various municipal Governments to consider to reduce child poverty:

Poverty rates

Ensure that all children can realize the right to an adequate standard of living by creating and implementing a provincial poverty reduction strategy with targets and timelines.

Consider the development of a complementary Strategy for Children and Youth.

Track progress using the Census Family Low Income Measure, After Tax (CFLIM-AT) calculated with T1 Family File data, rather than the Market Basket Measure (MBM) which currently is being used as Canada's official poverty measure.

Learn from the COVID-19 pandemic and improve benefits available to families, including the CCB and ACFB. Increase benefit amounts given to parents and change reduction rates so parents are not penalized for increasing their incomes.

Reverse government benefit reductions due to receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for moderate income families and protect the CCB from future clawbacks with legislative amendments. Implement CERB Repayment Amnesty for everyone living below or near the CFLIM-AT

Increase the Provincial Minimum Wage to bring it closer in line with the living wage. Remove the tiered minimum wage structure so that both youth and adults are guaranteed the same minimum wage. Ensure all minimum wages are indexed to inflation moving forward..

Indigenous and Racialized Children

Statistics Canada needs to measure and release disaggregated poverty and income data related to Indigenous and racialized Albertans on an annual basis, just like it does with the general population.

Collaborate with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments and organizations to develop plans to end child and family poverty.

Entrench Nation to Nation, government to government and Inuit-Crown relationships by ensuring respect for inherent rights, treaties, title, and jurisdiction; full participation in economic growth; sufficient, predictable, long-term funding to achieve well-being; and evidence-based closure of socio-economic outcome gaps

Meaningfully move forward anti-racism action plans at all levels of government. Governments should be in regular communication with racialized communities to ensure that plans are enacted in a way that serve their needs and reflect their lived experience

Child Care

Promote licensed public and not-for-profit care that prioritizes quality over profit.

Increase the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators by providing higher wages, benefits, and incentives to pursue professional development to demonstrate respect and value of the profession.

Ensure that the new licensed child care spaces being created have enough qualified early childhood educators and resources to make them available to children who need them.

Support the creation of licensed non-profit and public child care services in child care deserts.

Consider implementing a set fee approach to minimize the inequalities in child care costs that families in Alberta currently face with a market fee approach.

Reconsider the implementation of the Cost Control Framework and For-Profit Expansion Plan. The lack of clarity of this plan suggests that it has not considered what impact a two-tiered child care system will have on children living in poverty.

Consult immigrant and minority families, as well as early childhood educators on what culturally appropriate child care means, and what this could look like in child care settings.

Food Security

Given that food (in)security is deeply tied to income security and access to financial resources, enacting any of the other recommendations listed will go a long way to advancing food security.

Expand the School Nutrition program to address increased demand for the program so students can properly learn without having to deal with hunger while in school.

Temporary measures like the Government of Alberta's \$600 affordability payments and the Government of Canada's one-time Grocery Rebate in 2023 are helpful for alleviating immediate financial concerns, but long-term tax credits to offset the high cost of living are necessary.

Housing

Invest in more social and affordable housing so that marginalized groups (especially those with children) are less likely to live in core housing need.

Enhance the Canada Housing Benefit so that families with children are not left behind. Increase income thresholds so that more families may access the benefit.

Take immediate action on the commitment to ending homelessness as part of Canada's international human rights obligations.

Consider policies such as rental regulations to curb the rising cost of housing.

Taxation and Income Redistribution

Review Alberta's income tax system and ensure a more progressive system applies to corporations and the highest earners.

Explore and implement an excess profits tax and make sure tax loopholes are closed.

Eliminate public subsidies to profitable corporations, including the UCP government's planned oil well clean up incentive program.

Review Alberta's non-renewable royalties system and raise rates to further benefit Albertans now and into the future.

Review all legislation and regulations impacting cost of living for low and middle income Albertans, beginning with the Employment Standards Code and Residential Tenancies Act for opportunities to reduce family poverty.

Urgently review Alberta's surplus and direct significant investments to income supports and programs proved to reduce family and child poverty. Tenancies Act for opportunities to reduce family poverty..



Acuna, R. (2018). The State of Alberta's Finances. Public Interest Alberta Revenue Reno.

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta. (n.d.). Why we need a child care system. <https://aecea.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/Why%20We%20Need%20A%20Child%20Care%20System.pdf>

Alberta Living Wage Network (n.d.). A case for a living wage: Individual lens. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63ebf58a5a658d0c030f0f25/t/64b057a4dee5a44f476a1e26/1689278372834/Living+Wage+Case+Study+-+Individual+Lens.pdf>

Alberta Living Wage Network (2023). Alberta living wage report: community calculations and methodology. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63ebf58a5a658d0c030f0f25/t/654ac42cf99ae079957e8ff6/1699398702196/Living+Wage+Report+2023+DRAFT4-combined.pdf>

Aldrich, J. (2023). Calgary Rent Increases Fastest in Canada. Calgary Herald. <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/calgary-rent-increases-fastest-in-canada>

August, M. (2022). The Financialization of Housing in Canada: A Summary Report for the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. Canadian Human Rights Commission. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/august-financialization-summary-report-ofha-en.pdf>

Bisanz, J. (2023). Questions about Alberta's cost-control framework and for-profit expansion plan. Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f170b16bf7d977d587e43c4/t/645e6e5dc6fab50d63392faa/1683910238096/Questions+About+Framework+and+Plan+2023-05-08.pdf>

Calgary Herald (2022). Two years of COVID-19: A timeline of the pandemic in Alberta. <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/two-years-of-covid-19-a-timeline-of-the-pandemic-in-alberta>

Campaign 2000 (n.d.). Our Story. <https://campaign2000.ca/about-us/our-story/>

CBC News (2023). Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program. Advocates say it's time. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canada-national-school-food-program-advocates-1.6980950>

Centre for Income and Socioeconomic Well-being Statistics. (2021). T1 family file, final estimates, 2019. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/72-212-x/72-212-x2021001-eng.htm>

Children's Services. (2023a). Alberta cost control framework and for-profit expansion plan. Government of Alberta. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/1fbc3670-abe7-4edf-a2e0-cd748019dd6e/resource/173a4415-5b73-4db3-bd99-780e65e828aa/download/cs-alberta-cost-control-framework-forprofit-expansion-plan-2023.pdf>

Children's Services. (2023b). Children's services 2022-2023 annual report. Government of Alberta. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/476d1e4b-bdfa-4330-a88a-79bdacee1a9a/resource/1050cff2-098d-4295-940b-7df1c6265534/download/cs-annual-report-2022-2023.pdf>

Choi, Y. (2023). Labour market participation of parents with young children. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/36-28-0001/2023011/article/00003-eng.pdf?st=sQ44pAxf>

City of Edmonton. (n.d.). State of immigration and settlement. https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_new_residents/state-of-immigration-settlement#:~:text=Edmonton%20is%20a%20city%20that,speak%20more%20than%20125%20languages

City of Edmonton. (2022). Housing Needs Assessment. <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/assets/PDF/Housing-Needs-Assessment-August-2022.pdf>

Cochrane, D.T., (2022). January 7th is corporate income tax freedom day. Canadians for Tax Fairness. <https://www.taxfairness.ca/en/resources/reports/report-january-7th-corporate-income-tax-freedom-day-2022>

Cryderman, K. (2023) Canada's Housing Affordability Crisis Comes to Alberta. Globe and Mail. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-canadas-housing-affordability-crisis-comes-to-alberta/>

de Vos, P.F., Mukhi, N., Illumin, P., Chiu, Y., Gokiert, R., and the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (2022). Journeys through early learning and childcare in Edmonton: The experiences of ethnocultural families. Community-University Partnership, University of Alberta and the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f170b16bf7d977d587e43c4/t/63d0315373b26008b8f48655/1674588509947/Journeys+Narrative+Report_Dec2022_.pdf

Djidel, S., Gustajitis, B., Heisz, A., Lam, K., Marchand, I., & McDermott, S. (2020). Report on the second comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2020002-eng.htm>

Employment and Social Development Canada. (2018). Opportunity for all - Canada's first poverty reduction strategy. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html>

Farrell, J. (2023). 'It's really scary': Local food bank demand still increasing. St. Albert Gazette. <https://www.stalbertgazette.com/local-news/its-really-scary-local-food-bank-demand-still-increasing-7320907>

Ferguson, E. (2023). Children in Calgary facing higher risk of hunger this summer without school nutrition programs. Calgary Herald. <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/kids-facing-higher-risk-of-hunger-this-summer-without-school-nutrition-programs>

Food Banks Canada (2023). HungerCount 2023. <https://foodbankscanada.ca/hungercount/>

Government of Alberta. (2023a). Fiscal plan: Securing Alberta's future 2023-26. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/fe2a75b5-571b-4b44-8b04-66a6d81aaba4/resource/7f532f18-4416-4b40-b387-e7d03b43d6dd/download/budget-2023-fiscal-plan-2023-26.pdf>

Government of Alberta (2023b). School Nutrition Program. <https://www.alberta.ca/school-nutrition-program>

Government of Alberta. (2023c). Affordable housing needs assessment. <https://www.alberta.ca/affordable-housing-needs-assessment#jumplinks-1>

Government of Alberta (2023d). 2023-24 Mid-year Fiscal Plan Highlights. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/9c81a5a7-cd1f-49ad-a923-d1ecb42944e4/resource/d6a548c7-35a7-4fa3-8503-eed9ad518cf9/download/tbf-2023-24-mid-year-fiscal-update-and-economic-statement.pdf>

Government of Canada. (2023a). Alberta's action plan for fiscal year 2022 to 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/alberta-2021/action-plan-2022.html>

Government of Canada (2023b). Repay COVID-19 benefits: Why you may need to repay. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/payments-cra/individual-payments/repay-covid-benefits/why-may-need-repay.html>

Government of Canada. (2023c). Toward \$10-a-day: Early learning and child care. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/child-care.html>

Government of Canada. (2022). Canada - Alberta Canada-Wide early learning and child care agreement-2021 to 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/alberta-canada-wide-2021.html>

Government of Scotland (2022). Wellbeing Economy Monitor 2022. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-monitor-december-2022-update/pages/8/>

Green, K.A., Bovell-Ammon, A., & Sandel, M. (2021) Housing and Neighbourhoods as Root Causes of Child Poverty. *American Pediatrics* 21(8S). <https://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/1-s2.0-S187628592100437X-main.pdf>

Homeless Hub (n.d.). Community Profiles. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/community-profile/calgary>

Houle, M. J. (2022). Housing Is A Human Right: The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate's 2021-2022 Annual Report to the Minister. Canadian

Human Rights Commission. https://housing.chcreport.ca/pdfs/office_of_the_federal_housing_advocate-annual_report_2021.pdf

Ireland, N. (2023). Food insecurity among Indigenous kids is a 'public health crisis,' doctors say. Alberta Prime Times. <https://www.albertaprimetimes.com/edmonton-news/food-insecurity-among-indigenous-kids-is-a-public-health-crisis-doctors-say-7615845>

Kilgannon, B. (2022). Better Way Alberta: Revenue Reform. https://betterwayalberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/BWA_IssueReport_Revenue_Reform.pdf

La Grassa, J. (2023). Kids who go hungry more likely to access care for mental health, substance use: Ontario study. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/food-insecurity-mental-health-youth-ontario-1.6911381>

Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023a). Measuring matters: Assessing Canada's progress toward \$10-a-day child care for all. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2023/10/measuring-matters-FINAL-October%2027%202023.pdf>

Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023b). Not done yet: \$10-a-day child care requires addressing Canada's child care deserts. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2023/05/not-done-yet.pdf>

Maimann, K. (2019). United Conservative government confirms funding for Alberta school nutrition program. The Star. https://www.thestar.com/edmonton/united-conservative-government-confirms-funding-for-alberta-school-nutrition-program/article_3d6dbd2f-cfcc-5886-9f1f-976d983fa31c.html

McCracken, K. (2015). Food Insecurity and the 'Temporary' Relief of Food Banks. *Active History*. <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2015/08/17/food-insecurity-and-the-temporary-relief-of-food-banks/>

Morey, L. (2023). "It's staggering": Food bank demand spikes. Sherwood Park News. <https://www.sherwoodparknews.com/news/local-news/its-staggering-food-bank-demand-spikes>

The Muttart Foundation (2023). The workforce investments required for early learning and child care system building in Alberta: What early childhood educators have to say. <https://muttart.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MTF-ECE-Focus-Groups-Report-1.pdf>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, November 20, 1989. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

Zhang, S., Garner, R., Heidinger, L., & Findlay, L. (2021). Parents' use of child care services and differences in use by mothers' employment status. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00007-eng.htm>

Office of the High Commission of Human Rights. (1990). United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/assembly>

professionalinterest/px

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (2023). Annual Report 2022-23. <https://www.ocyca.alberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2022-2023-OCYA-Annual-Report.pdf>

Pinard, D., & Page, F. (2018). Low Income Measure: Comparison of Two Data Sources, T1 Family File and 2016 Census of Population. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2018002-eng.htm>

PROOF (2023). New data on household food insecurity in 2022. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/2023/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2022/>

rdnewsNOW Staff (2023). Red Deer Food Bank sees 81 per cent increase in demand compared to pre-pandemic. RD News Now. <https://rdnewsnow.com/2023/10/26/red-deer-food-bank-sees-81-per-cent-increase-in-demand-compared-to-pre-pandemic/>

Sarangi, L. (2019). Report card on child and family poverty in Canada. Campaign 2000. <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/campaign-2000-report-setting-the-stage-for-apoverty-free-canada-updated-august-2020.pdf>

Sheloff, S. (2023). Edmonton's living wage report 2023. Edmonton Social Planning Council. <https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/2023/11/08/edmonton-living-wage-2023/>

Sheloff, S., Lambert, B., & Lafortune, B. (2023). Alberta child poverty report 2023. Edmonton Social Planning Council and Public Interest Alberta. <https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/2023/05/16/alberta-child-poverty-report-2022/>

Statistics Canada (2021). Core housing need of private household. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DEC&Id=1230313>

Statistics Canada (2022). Housing Indicators, 2021 census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-nd/housing-logement/index-en.cfm>

Statistics Canada (2023a). After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition (Table 11-10-0018-01) [Data set]. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110001801-eng>

Statistics Canada (2023b). Labour Force Characteristics, annual (Table 14-10-0393-01) [Data Set]. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410039301-eng>

Statistics Canada (2023c). After-tax low income status of census families based on Census Family Low Income People (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family composition (Table 11-10-0020-01) [Data Set]. <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110002001-eng>

Statistics Canada. (2023d). T1 family file, final estimates, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/72-212-X2023001>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2009). The Right to Adequate Housing, Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev. 1. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf

Youth Without Shelter [n.d.]. Youth Homelessness. <https://yws.on.ca/who-we-are/youth-homelessness/>

