

The BG Greens believe that poverty is a systemic failure of government.

Poverty is a political choice. The decisions that we have made in British Columbia have created systemic, entrenched poverty. We need only look around to see that there are too many of us without housing, without enough food, with bills unpaid at the end of the month. Homelessness, once rare or even non-existent in British Columbia, has been normalised. This is just one, highly visible, symptom of a social support foundation that is no longer capable of underpinning a strong and resilient province.

One in 16 people in British Columbia is currently living in deep poverty - assessed as living on less than 75 percent of the poverty line¹. 50,000 of those are children, whose early experiences of deep poverty will shape their future; poverty has been shown to impair the cognitive development of children, affecting their mental growth and future potential². This includes people receiving social assistance and disability supports, a form of legislated poverty; a single person receiving disability assistance currently receives \$1,483.50 per month, \$997 below the poverty line of \$2,480 per month³.

Indigenous poverty is particularly prevalent and particularly cruel in British Columbia. Canada's Indigenous peoples are nearly twice as likely to be living in poverty as non-Indigenous Canadians⁴. 33 percent of First Nations children living on reserve are living in poverty⁵.

57.8 percent of homeless youth in Canada have been involved with the child welfare system, and a young person leaving youth protection is nearly 200 times more likely to experience homelessness than a young person who did not use these services⁶. Investing in this particularly vulnerable group of young people is one of the most impactful investments that the province can make.

Poverty is hard for the people experiencing it, and expensive for the province. The failure to address poverty and the social determinants of health shows up in the provincial finances every year - in health spending, in the child welfare system, and in the carceral system especially. The

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<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/prs-2024-annual-report.pdf>

2 <https://oacas.libguides.com/c.php?g=702168&p=4990142>

3 <https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/en/take-action/cdb-poverty-line>

4 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/260429/dq260429a-eng.htm>

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https://firstcallbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/First_Call_Report_Card_2025_revised_Feb_28_2026.pdf

6 <https://homelesshub.ca/collection/population-groups/youth/>

cost of poverty to the provincial government is estimated at 3.4 to 4.7 percent of GDP, equating to \$15.9 billion to \$22 billion in 2026⁷.

The BC Greens will:

- Raise social assistance rates to the market-basket measure of poverty and index to inflation.
- Raise disability assistance rates to the market-basket measure of poverty and index to inflation.
- Remove clawbacks to ensure people receive the full support that they need
- Create low-barrier access to assistance, eliminating intrusive checks that discourage individuals from seeking help, and making the paperwork accessible to individuals with disabilities
- Develop a poverty elimination plan tailored to Indigenous individuals, families, and First Nations, addressing the systemic impacts of colonisation and dispossession
- Fund Indigenous-specific services in social service areas, including reintegration programs for Indigenous women, addiction support and childcare
- Implement a new targeted basic income benefit for all youth formerly in care, equal to the market basket measure poverty line, until age 25
- Reduce bureaucratic barriers for non-profit service providers, ensuring they can effectively support vulnerable populations

Detailed proposal for social assistance and disability supports^{8,9}

Group	Current level of support	Proposed level of support (MBM threshold, Vancouver)	Number of households	Additional total cost
Social Assistance				
Single person	\$1,060	\$2,681	48,497	$=(2681-1060)*48497$ = \$78,613,637
Two adults, no children	\$1,650	\$3,741	1,144	$=(3741-1650)*1144$ = \$2,392,104
Single adult with one or more children	\$1,405	\$3,741	14,239	$=(3741-1405)*14239$ = \$33,262,304
Two adults and one or more children	\$1,845	\$4,535	2,683	$=(4535-1845)*2683$ = \$7,217,270
Disability assistance				
Single person	\$1,483.50	\$2,681	109,312	$=(2681-1483)*109312$ = \$130,901,120
Two adults, no children	\$2,548.50	\$3,741	6,830	$=(3741-2548.5)*6830$ = \$8,144,775
Single adult with one child	\$1,828.50	\$3,741	24,347	$=(3741-1828.5)*24347$ = \$46,563,638
Two adults and one child	\$2,268.50	\$4,535	12,169	$=(4535-2268.5)*12169$ = \$27,581,039

Total additional costs:

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<https://maytree.com/changing-systems/data-measuring/welfare-in-canada/british-columbia/#adequacy-of-welfare-incomes>

⁹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110010401>

\$334,675,887 per month. \$4,016,110,644 per year.

Note: this is an estimate based on publicly available information. It has not been independently verified. It does not take into account behaviour change, including more people accessing these funds.

Youth in care

According to the B.C. government, as of March 2025, there were 4,795 children and youth in care, and of that number, 3,260 were Indigenous, making up more than 68 % of children and youth in care¹⁰.

Youth in care are able to access the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys to Empowerment (SAJE) until age 27 which includes partial fulfilment of the targeted income through an Unconditional Income for youth leaving care, though it is only a partial fulfilment of the recommendation. This is a cash transfer of \$1,250 per month until their 20th birthday. This transitions into Conditional Income support of \$1,250/mo from 20-27 based on enrollment in an education program. This program also includes access to guides and navigators, however SAJE Navigators and Guides have caseloads that are unmanageable, leading to youth not being supported properly. These guides are crucial for many youth aging out of government care due to the complicated nature of income and wrap-around supports offered through MCFD, and as many do not have the familial and relational support that other youth have to support them in life planning and skill building.

The BC Green Caucus in 2017 made a study of basic income a requirement of entering the Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA). The report was led by David Green, Professor at the University of British Columbia (Chair), Jonathan Rhys Kesselman, Professor Emeritus at the School of Public Policy at Simon Fraser University and Lindsay Tedds, Associate Professor at the University of Calgary. The report is based on over 40 research studies commissioned by the panel and written by “some of the best public policy economists in Canada.” The panel consulted with British Columbia residents through a web-based public engagement process and over 450 submissions were received from individuals and community organizations. In-person consultations were held with stakeholders in May 2019, and the report incorporates findings from an online survey in 2020 that was conducted using a sample of approximately 2000 British Columbians. The Committee’s report is available here: <https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/>

The panel found that youth aging out of care are less likely to have graduated high school, are more likely to have used income assistance, and are more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. Collectively, these costs, and tax revenue foregone due to underemployment, have a net present value per individual of \$320,000 at age 19. They also found that the mortality rates of youth aging out of care are much higher than the rest of the population - 15% of the people aged 19 to 33 who died in 2015 were former children in care.

“Numerous researchers and investigators argue that these poor outcomes arise from a background of instability. Anyone taken out of their family home has, by definition, experienced a traumatic event and for many, it is simply one of many traumatic events”.¹¹

¹⁰ Government of British Columbia, “Children and Youth in Care (CYIC),” *MCFD Reporting Portal*, last modified May 19, 2026, <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/child-protection/permanency-for-children-and-youth/performance-indicators/children-in-care>

¹¹ https://bcbasicincomepanel.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Final_Report_BC_Basic_Income_Panel.pdf
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Accordingly, the Basic Income panel recommended a targeted basic income for former youth in case, equal to the market basket measure poverty line. The package of supports for youth aging out of care was estimated to cost \$120 to \$190 million per annum in 2020; we have costed this at \$250 million per annum to account for inflation over the past 6 years.