

EDITORIAL: Renting and raving

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It's late November. It's dipping below freezing at night. The stores are blaring Christmas music. And the United Way's annual National Report Card on Child and Family Poverty has found one in five children in Canada is now living below the poverty line. For the umpteenth consecutive year, B.C. has topped the federal average.

For the social Darwinist among us who'd advise that their parents simply "get a job," it's worth noting almost 40 per cent of those children have a parent who works full time. Wages just aren't keeping up with the cost of living.

The report makes a number of sadly familiar recommendations that include increasing the minimum wage and providing access to affordable child care.

Not surprisingly, housing cost is one of the biggest factors. According to another study released this week, 45 per cent of renters are spending more than 30 per cent of their gross household income on rent. Almost a quarter now spend more than 50 per cent. The average rental rate in B.C. is \$988 but lots of luck finding anything under \$1,200 on the North Shore.

Single moms, First Nations and immigrants tend to have it the worst.

For the most part, at all three levels of government, our elected leaders have largely chosen to stand back to oohh and ahhh as rental rates for limited stock have climbed ever higher and home ownership has gone well out of reach of even decent wage earners.

The newly elected federal government has promised a national housing strategy and a return to investing in affordable housing. But even if that were to begin today, things are projected to get much worse, according to the study.

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