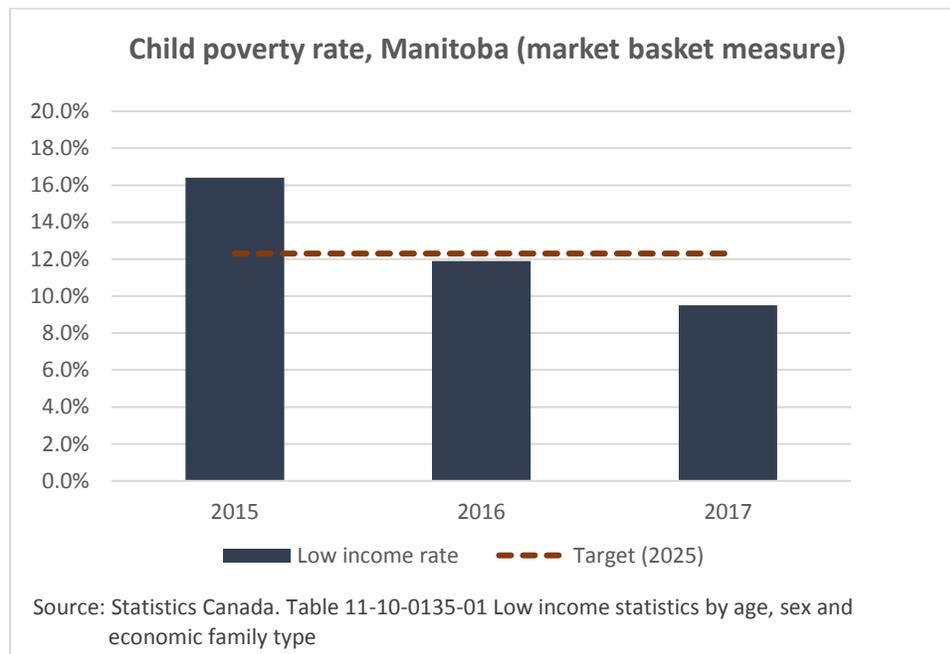


Campaign 2000 questions Manitoba’s target for child poverty reduction

Manitoba’s new target for child poverty reduction has already been met according to recently released Statistics Canada data. The target, outlined in *Pathways to a Better Future: Manitoba’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*, commits the Province to reduce child poverty by 25 percent compared to 2015 levels by 2025. Using the Province’s preferred Market Basket Measure metric child poverty stood at 16.4 per cent in 2015. In 2017, child poverty fell to 9.5 percent, well below the target government has set for itself. The same data show that Manitoba had already exceeded this target in 2016, the year the current provincial government took power. While this progress is substantial, it still leaves 26,000 children in families with incomes below the level needed to meet their basic needs. Manitoba must commit to building on what we have already achieved to fully eliminate child poverty in Manitoba.

Table 1: Child poverty rates in Manitoba compared with 2025 target



“We are puzzled to say the least at this announcement. ,” said Kate Kehler executive director with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. “While we appreciate a hard target, our provincial government needs to be much more ambitious and better use the levers it has to achieve a target that builds on the gains made through the Canada Child Benefit such has a living minimum wage or universal child care.”

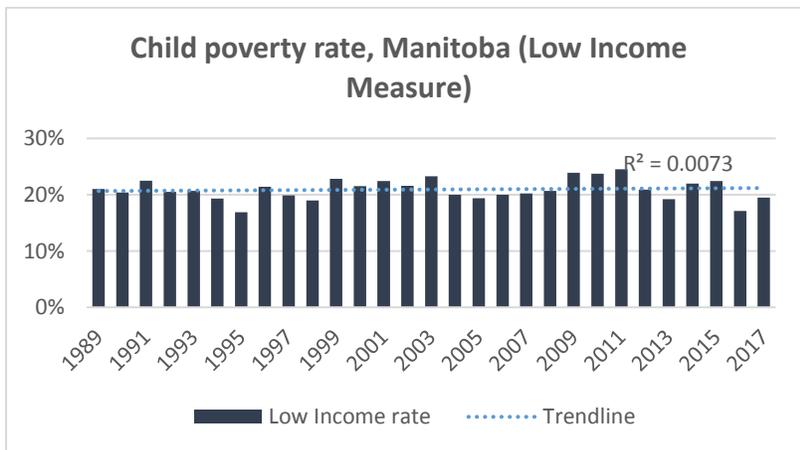
Manitoba's falling rate of child poverty mirrors a national trend that saw child poverty fall from 13.3 percent to 9 percent over the same period (MBM). Much of this reduction is due to the introduction in 2016 of the Canada Child Benefit that provides up to \$533 per month per child. Other factors likely responsible for the trend in child poverty numbers include the implementation of Rent Assist in 2015 and a positive national macro-economic environment since the recovery from the 2009 recession.

"What is important to note here is that poverty is not intractable. With investments such as the federal Canadian Child Benefit progress is possible, says Damon Johnston, President of the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, "17,000 children have been brought above the MBM poverty line."

Low income children in Manitoba did benefit from the provincial decision to not claw back the Canada Child Benefit from families receiving Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). However, changes to Rent Assist regulations in 2017 and 2018 have reduced benefits for non-EIA recipients. The deductible for Rent Assist recipients not on EIA has been increased from 25 percent to 30 percent of income.

Despite significant reductions in child poverty rates based on the MBM, other measures show child poverty holding steady or slightly increasing. Using the Low Income Measure (LIM) the same data show that child poverty actually went up in Manitoba in 2017 from 17.1 percent to 19.5 percent. Anti-poverty activists use the LIM as it is a relative measure of poverty that allows for better comparison between low-income families and those who are better off.

"The Low Income measure is a comprehensive measure of all aspects of poverty (including material deprivation, exposure to stressful environments and exclusion from social participation" says Sid Frankel of Campaign 2000's National Steering Committee. "The MBM measures only material deprivation, leaving out the most important factors that affect health and child development. Most importantly though, the MBM data does not include Indigenous communities where we know we, as a society, have allowed poverty to become more firmly entrenched."



In 1989, based on LIM, the child poverty rate in Manitoba rate stood at 21 per cent. Despite a national all-party commitment that year to end child poverty by the year 2000, there has been no discernible trend in child poverty reduction in this province over the past 27 years. Without a serious commitment to end child poverty, backed by properly funded, well-designed programs, too many thousands of children will remain in the grip of poverty.

Campaign 2000 looks forward to more clarity and commitment in today's budget.

Campaign 2000 is a non-partisan, cross-Canada network of 120 national, provincial and community partners and organizations committed to working to end child poverty in Canada. Manitoba partners include Sid Frankel, Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba, The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba, and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg.

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