

Writing to your local MLA

Writing a letter to your local MLA makes a big difference! Politicians really do listen to people, especially when the message is coming from lots of people within their own community.

You could either:

1. Email your letter – if you do this, include the text of your letter in the body of the email because politicians aren't allowed to open attachments
2. Or send a hand-written letter – emailing is good but apparently a letter like this counts for more than 500 emails!

Find your MLA by postal code at <http://www.leg.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm> and use the following letter as a template. To make it more compelling, include your own experiences and concerns with poverty and homelessness in BC, and talk about what part of a poverty reduction plan means the most to you.

Also send it to the leaders of the political parties (Christy Clark, BC Liberals and Adrian Dix, NDP) at the same address so they register your concerns too.

SAMPLE LETTER

[Date]

[Name of MLA]

Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear [Name of MLA]

I call on the Government of British Columbia to launch a comprehensive and accountable poverty reduction plan aimed at dramatically reducing homelessness and poverty in our province.

I am ashamed of the levels of poverty and homelessness in a society as wealthy as ours. We can drastically reduce poverty in British Columbia by joining hands and working together for a common goal that touches the hearts and lives of each of us. But we must act boldly.

We know that all of us pay for poverty. We pay in increased health care costs. We pay in higher crime. We pay in higher demand for community, social and charitable services. And we pay in lack of school readiness, reduced school success and in lower economic productivity. People who are poor get sick more, die sooner, and lack many opportunities that others take for granted. There is a false economy in failing to act boldly.

We know that BC is falling behind. All but 2 provinces either have poverty reduction plans or are in the process of adopting them, and the success of these plans is already clear across Canada.

I urge the provincial government to provide leadership, and to adopt and legislate poverty reduction targets and timelines.

A comprehensive approach needs to boost the incomes of those living in poverty, but also build the social infrastructure, public services and assets that are vital to providing a path out of poverty and improving quality of life.

In particular, it must include a broad range of concrete actions in relation to: raising the incomes of the non-employed and the working poor; addressing the needs of those most likely to be living in poverty, (such as Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and mental illness, recent immigrants and refugees, single mothers, and single senior women); addressing homelessness and the lack of affordable housing; providing universal publicly-funded child care; providing support for training and education; and promoting the health of all British Columbians.

There is nothing inevitable about poverty and homelessness in a society as wealthy as ours. Most other places in Canada are saving lives and money by tackling poverty head-on. If we commit to a bold plan, a dramatic reduction in poverty and homelessness within a few short years is perfectly achievable.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]