



# A POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN FOR HEALTHY PEOPLE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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**BC has the highest poverty rate in Canada, but is one of the last provinces left without a poverty reduction plan.**

**The basic necessities of housing and food are out of reach to many in our province.** Over half a million British Columbians live below the poverty line and 87,000 of those are children.

**This has long-term health implications.** Lack of healthy food can lead to poor growth and development in children, poor school performance, and increased illness and susceptibility to disease for people of all ages (Cost of Eating in BC 2011).

**Most people living in poverty have a job.** The minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour does not lift workers above the poverty line.

**People on income assistance are working hard just to survive.** Welfare rates are deeply inadequate at \$610 a month for a single “employable” person and \$906 for a person with a disability. These rates have been frozen since 2007 while the cost of living continues to increase.

**The problem is not just low incomes, it’s also lack of public services.** We need more social housing, universal child care, support for training and education, and more access to preventative and community health care.

**The system isn’t helping. In BC, tax breaks that the top 1% of households received over the last 10 years have put \$41,000 per year back in their pockets. That’s more than double the yearly income of a full-time minimum wage worker.**

“It’s about insecurity... Will I be able to buy my kid new shoes? I don’t know. Will I be able to buy my medication? I don’t know... We need to absolutely rethink the system, outside our current winners and losers model.”

Sue Collard, retail worker earning just over the minimum wage

**Other places are saving lives and money by tackling poverty directly.  
It’s time BC did too.**

# A POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN FOR...

# HEALTHY PEOPLE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



## HIGHER WAGES

Most people living in poverty have a job, and almost half the poor children in BC live in families with at least one parent working full-time.

**Increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation, and encourage employers to adopt the Living Wage.**

## WELFARE

Welfare and disability benefits are far too low at \$610 for a single person and \$906 for a person with a disability.

**Significantly increase welfare and disability rates, and index them to inflation.**

## HOUSING

BC has the worst record of housing affordability in Canada and increasing numbers of homeless and under-housed people.

**Re-commit to building thousands of new social housing units per year.**

## CHILD CARE

The high cost of child care is a huge burden for many families and makes it completely inaccessible to others.

**Adopt the \$10/day child care plan.**

## HEALTH

Poverty is a fundamental determinant of health, and the health care costs of poverty add up to \$1.2 billion/year.

**Expand essential health services, like dental and optical, and enhance community health care for seniors and people with disabilities.**

## EDUCATION

Without meaningful, long-term training and education, people cannot access stable, well-paying jobs.

**Adequately fund schools and make post-secondary education and training more accessible.**

## FOCUS ON MARGINALIZED PEOPLE

Aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, single mothers and single senior women have high poverty rates.

**Focus on the structural barriers faced by each group.**

ILLUSTRATION BY SAM BRADD

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**JOIN THE CALL AT [BCPOVERTYREDUCTION.CA](http://BCPOVERTYREDUCTION.CA)**

# WE ALL PAY FOR POVERTY

## Paying for the negative effects of poverty costs much more than dealing with it directly.

Poverty is not just a hardship for those who experience it. It is costly to us all as a province. Poverty costs society \$8-9 billion per year in higher public health care costs, increased policing and crime costs, lost productivity, and foregone economic activity.

In contrast, the estimated cost of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan in BC is \$3-4 billion per year. Let's stop mopping up the floor and fix the hole in the roof.

## People want action

Over 375 organizations around the province and thousands of individuals have joined the call for a poverty reduction plan.

**A recent poll commissioned by the BC Healthy Living Alliance found that 78% of British Columbians think it is important for political leaders in BC to address poverty with a provincial poverty reduction plan with clear targets and timelines.**

### Who we are

The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition includes a diverse range of groups from around the province, which have come together to urge the government of British Columbia to commit to a bold and comprehensive poverty reduction plan including legislated targets and timelines to significantly reduce poverty and homelessness in BC. We seek to improve the health and wellbeing of all British Columbians.

“I usually get worried especially when it comes time to pay bills, that I don't have enough to cover my bills. Then after bills I'm worried about where my next meal is going to come from... sometimes I don't have enough money to go grocery shopping.”

William Elder, worked in security, now on disability benefits because of respiratory illness

“It makes me ashamed as a Canadian to see that over 500,000 people in BC live in poverty. I expect more out of this country. I expect Canada to be the leading country in the world, especially starting with how it treats its own citizens.”

Rick Erb, used to be a teacher, now on disability benefits after a stroke.

**For more stories of British Columbians struggling to make ends meet, please visit [bcshardestworking.ca](http://bcshardestworking.ca)**

We acknowledge the support of our funders:



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