

## Briefing Note

### UBCM Resolution B47: Poverty Reduction Strategy for BC

#### Issue

Resolution B47: *Poverty Reduction Strategy for BC* will be voted on within a block on Wednesday, September 28 at the Union of BC Municipalities in Victoria. The UBCM Resolutions Committee recommends endorsing the resolution so we anticipate that the vote will support the resolution; but in order to raise public awareness about this local government movement, **we will be hosting a press conference on Tuesday, September 27, 2016, at 12 pm outside the front entrance of the Convention Centre on Douglas Street.**

#### Current Situation

This year, 17 municipalities have passed resolutions in support of a poverty reduction strategy for BC. 7 of these brought forward resolution B47 and 3 brought forward related resolution C16:

*Poverty Reduction Plan for BC*, others did not meet the submission deadline to UBCM:

- Burnaby
- Fernie
- Keremeos
- Lake Country
- Langley Township<sup>B47</sup>
- Nelson<sup>C16</sup>
- New Westminster
- Parksville
- Powell River City<sup>B47</sup>
- Prince George<sup>B47</sup>
- Prince Rupert<sup>B47</sup>
- Richmond<sup>C16</sup>
- Rossland<sup>C16</sup>
- Terrace
- Summerland<sup>B47</sup>
- Surrey<sup>B47</sup>
- Vancouver<sup>B47</sup>

Resolution B47:

*“Therefore be it resolved that UBCM urge the Government in BC to follow the lead of all other provinces by adopting a comprehensive and accountable provincial poverty reduction strategy to reduce the number of people living in poverty in BC by setting concrete targets and timelines to reduce poverty.”*

The UBCM Resolutions Committee “notes that the UBCM membership endorsed 2015-B44 [brought forward by Terrace], which made similar requests for the provincial background to develop and implement a poverty reduction strategy.”

British Columbia has one of the highest poverty rates in Canada at just over 13% and 1 in 5 children live in poverty. **Yet BC is now the only province in Canada without a poverty reduction plan.**

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## **Background**

An additional 7 municipalities have passed resolutions in previous years (Delta, Duncan, Grand Forks, Port Alberni, Revelstoke, Victoria and White Rock). UBCM membership has consistently endorsed resolutions calling for a provincial poverty reduction strategy, including the establishment of targets and timelines, since 2009.

Officially launched in April 2012 in response to these calls, UBCM partnered with the Ministry for Children and Family Development in the *Community Poverty Reduction Strategies* initiative started in 7 pilot communities (and never effectively enlarged). According to the latest progress report, this initiative has supported less than 100 people throughout BC in accessing existing services and supports, and has made no progress in tackling the root causes identified in the report itself e.g. inadequate income, unaffordable housing and childcare, etc.

In October 2015, UBCM announced their departure from the project and one of the pilot communities, Prince George, also provided notice that they would no longer be participating. According to the official statement,

*“Moving forward, UBCM will continue to advocate for a provincial poverty plan. We feel this has the greatest potential to affect change on poverty reduction in BC, and encourage the provincial government to undertake this work.”*

Further, for 3 years running, the bi-partisan Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services report on budget consultations has included a recommendation to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, including legislated targets and timelines for the reduction of poverty and homelessness in BC.

The government’s continued response to UBCM calls is to emphasize its focus on growing the economy and creating jobs, and providing targeted supports to those who need them, but this is inadequate. Approximately half those living in poverty in BC are working but low-wage jobs are not enough to lift them out of poverty. While there has been some targeted action toward single parents on income assistance, many communities remain over-represented in poverty including indigenous people, recent immigrants and refugees, foster youth aging out of care, people with disabilities, queer and transgender people (especially youth), and single senior women.

## **Speaking Points**

- The poverty rate in British Columbia continues to be among the highest in Canada at just over 13%, and child poverty rates in BC are still 1 in 5
- Yet BC remains the only province without a poverty reduction plan
- Many impacts of poverty are experienced at the local level, and local residents pay for poverty in increased health care costs, higher crime, higher demand for community, social and charitable readiness, reduced school success, and lower economic productivity
- The current cost of poverty is \$8-9 billion per year, while a poverty reduction plan including raising incomes and addressing affordability issues through the provision of housing, childcare, health and education would cost just half that at \$3-4 billion per year
- 78% of British Columbians want the provincial government to implement a poverty reduction plan (according to a BC Federation of Labour poll undertaken earlier this year)
- This resolution is a strong collective call from local governments for provincial responsibility and action to address the root causes of poverty in BC