

Terms of Reference British Columbia Poverty Reduction Coalition

(Passed June 2009, updated Sept. 2012, June 2013, May 2015, January 2016, Nov. 2016)

Vision

A British Columbia where no one lives in poverty.

Purpose

To advocate for the reduction of poverty, homelessness, and inequality in British Columbia.

Background: We have come together around a campaign aimed at seeing the introduction of a bold and comprehensive poverty reduction plan from the government of British Columbia that would include legislated targets and timelines to significantly reduce poverty and homelessness. We seek to improve the health and wellbeing of all British Columbians.

Mission

Working strategically and collaboratively, provide leadership and advocacy to secure effective public policy to reduce poverty and inequality in British Columbia.

Goals

The Coalition will advocate for the following targets and timelines:

- Using Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure (MBM) reduce BC's poverty rate by 30% in four years and by 75% in ten years. (See Acronym list in Member Resources for full description of MBM).
- Likewise, reduce the poverty rate (using the MBM) for children, lone-mother households, single senior women, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, and recent immigrants by 30 per cent in four years, and by 75 per cent in ten years, in recognition that poverty is concentrated in these populations.
- Within two years, ensure that every British Columbian has an income that reaches at least 75 per cent of the poverty line (using the MBM).
- Within two years, ensure no one has to sleep outside, and end all homelessness within eight years (ensuring all homeless people have good quality, appropriate housing).

Policy Action Areas

The Coalition has identified 7 policy areas for which to advocate for action (see Policy Actions in Member Resources for more detail). These include:

1. Provide adequate and accessible income support for the non-employed.
2. Improve the earnings and working conditions of those in the low-wage workforce.
3. Address the needs of those most likely to be living in poverty.

4. End homelessness and adopt a comprehensive affordable housing and supportive housing plan.
5. Provide universal publicly-funded child care.
6. Enhanced support for training and education for low-income people.
7. Enhance community mental health and home support services, and expand integrated approaches to prevention and health promotion services

Membership and Structure

The Coalition will be open to organizations that support our purpose, mission and goals, and who have signed on to the BC Poverty Reduction Open Letter. We will operate via the following terms:

Selection of Coalition Members

Those who attend coalition meetings are representing their organizations. Alternates are welcome to attend all meetings of the Coalition, but each organization shall only have one vote at meetings. A consensus based decision-making model shall attempt to be used at coalition meetings, with votes taken when necessary.

We will strive to ensure that people with lived experience of poverty are at our Coalition table, and that we invite organizations to join the Coalition from those communities where poverty is most acute. We will also seek to recruit business organizations and other allies from a variety of different organizational backgrounds and perspectives. We will undertake outreach to ensure that we have a diverse Coalition.

With the agreement of Coalition members, when desirable, participation at coalition meetings can be opened to individuals without an organizational affiliation/endorsement, but these participants will be non-voting members.

The Coalition will build, maintain, communicate with, and seek to mobilize a broader list of organizational endorsers and individual signatories (e.g. those organizations and individuals who have signed the BC Poverty Reduction Open Letter). These organizations are considered endorsers of our campaign, but not members of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition.

Term and Selection of the Coalition Co-Chairs

The Coalition will select two Co-Chairs (starting in June 2009). The Chairs shall serve a one-year term (changed from two-year term in October 2011 in order to promote more diverse leadership engagement). The Chairs will alternate chairing the coalition meetings, will serve among the spokespeople for the Coalition, and will lead efforts to recruit new Coalition members.

Other Spokespeople

Other Coalition members with strong knowledge of poverty/homelessness issues can also be asked to serve as spokespeople for the Coalition (at events, for media interviews, or when meetings with government officials and politicians). Wherever possible, we will have people with direct lived experience of poverty serve as

spokespeople (and we will strive to provide training for our spokespeople). These spokespeople should all be listed on the Coalition website.

Executive Committee (added in May 2015)

Operating as an accountability mechanism for the work of the Coalition and its staff, the executive committee will be responsible for:

- Providing oversight on employment conditions
- Hiring and performance review of the Organizer
- Monitoring financial activities and passing an annual budget
- Advice on Coalition activities and Coalition meetings
- Review and oversight of development and fundraising

Membership of the Executive Committee will always include the two co-chairs, Executive Director of the Secretariat, and the Organizer, as well as others drawn from Coalition members, up to a maximum of 13. Membership will be subject to the following rules:

- Requests for membership of the Executive Committee will be taken to the co-chairs, and reviewed and ratified by Coalition members at the bi-monthly meetings.
- Selection criteria will include: breadth of representation; skill sets and contributions; and attendance and active participation.
- If a member of the Executive Committee has an unexplained absence from three consecutive meetings, they may be evicted from the group.
- Members of the Executive Committee will commit to 2 or 3 year renewable terms timed with the fiscal year up to a maximum of six consecutive years.

Term and Selection of the Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Coalition is the shared responsibility of the member organizations. The Secretariat will be selected by the Coalition. This should be reviewed annually.

The Secretariat will be responsible for:

- Providing administrative and book-keeping support
- Providing office space and equipment for staff (with charge if necessary)

Funding permitting, the Coalition will also seek to financially support the work of various Coalition member organizations when they are doing campaign work, particularly groups that are smaller and not well resourced.

Meetings of the Coalition

The Coalition meets in-person at least six times a year, with teleconferencing for those members outside the Lower Mainland.

Working Principles

At Coalition meetings, we will strive to treat one another with respect. We understand that the resources/capacity of member organizations vary greatly. We also understand that, beyond the work of the Coalition/campaign, the member organizations employ a range of strategies — some work closely with government, while others seek to push for policy change from outside government — and we appreciate that our strength comes from this “inside/outside” diversity (the only exception being that the Coalition will only support actions and groups that are non-violent). We respect the various and different

parameters, mandates, capacities and resources of the member groups. The Coalition will remain non-partisan and constructive.

Decision-Making Process for the Coalition (updated Sept. 2012)

A consensus decision-making model shall be used for decisions pertaining to the work of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, with votes taken only when necessary.

- The need for upcoming decisions will be circulated in the agenda one week prior to the meeting at which the decision will be made. These decisions shall not be re-opened at future meetings. However, members may ask for clarification of the decisions.
- Decisions made at meetings on topics that are added to the agenda after the circulation of the agenda may be re-opened for further discussion and/or decision.
- On rare occasions when it is deemed necessary, decisions can be sought via email to the Coalition members. The timeline of the decision shall be highlighted within the email, allowing at least 2 working days for adequate consideration. In order to replicate the open discussion of a meeting as far as possible, members should reply to all in their email. A majority vote shall determine a decision.

Process of endorsement

It is anticipated that the Coalition will, from time to time, be asked to endorse/support various public forums, events, marches and open letters/statements. When these events pertain closely to the purpose/goals of the Coalition (above), or when the call is largely in-line with our goals and working principles, we will entertain such requests, including offering to help spread the word about these activities to our signatories (provided there is not some other legitimate reason for not doing so).

If there is close alignment between the endorsement request and the Coalition's work, the Organizer will make the decision. If in doubt, the Organizer will bring the request to the Executive Committee, which may choose to bring it to the membership either by email or at a Coalition meeting.

In this case, the process of endorsement follows the decision-making guidelines outlined above except the voting process in the last point. In relation to endorsement of matters outside the direct work of the Coalition, the general protocol is to privilege the unity of the Coalition above all else so every member has veto power. Silence is taken as assent (and this shall be highlighted in each email endorsement request).