

IF YOUR MLA IS LIBERAL

This fact sheet is designed to assist you when you contact your local Liberal MLA.

Meeting Goals:

- to start/build a relationship with your local MLA
- to present yourself as an accessible and knowledgeable resource
- to let them know that their constituents support their commitment to tackle poverty and want the government to work together on this

Start by thanking your MLA for their recent commitment to a poverty reduction plan, including a \$100 increase to welfare rates and \$1 billion investment in childcare. BC has been the only province without a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for many years so it's exciting to have all-party support for strong and meaningful action on this issue.

Facts are great but connecting on a personal level is even better so try:

- **Telling a personal story of how poverty impacts you**, your family, your community or the people you work with – highlight the root causes of the issues: low income, lack of affordable housing and childcare, etc. *If you work with people in poverty, provide practical and other supports to have those folks come to the meeting and share their stories.*
- **Sharing what you value most about your community and your concerns**, and ask them to do the same: connect the need for a poverty reduction plan to their concerns.
 - **Worried about homelessness? Highlight that the cause is low welfare rates (\$610) so the priority action needed is increasing income assistance rates to \$1500** (in line with Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure, which includes "a nutritious diet, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, and other necessary goods and services (such as personal care items or household supplies)"¹).

If there are opportunities in the conversation, use some facts about poverty:

- **Almost 1 in 7 British Columbians live in poverty (15%), now the highest poverty rate in Canada.**
- **A poverty reduction plan makes economic sense.** Considering the costs of health care, crime, and lost economic activity, we are spending between \$8-9 billion per year to maintain the status quo of poverty. That's more than double the \$3-4 billion needed to implement a comprehensive

¹ Statistics Canada CANSIM Table 206-0093: Market Basket Measure (MBM) thresholds (2011 base) for reference family, by Market Basket Measure region and component, in current dollars and 2015 constant dollars, <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=2060093&&pattern=&stByVal=1&p1=1&p2=31&tabMode=dataTable&csid=>

poverty reduction plan. Poverty is consistently linked to poor health, lower literacy, poor school performance for children, more crime, and greater stress for family members.

- **Investing in universal childcare, such as the \$10 a day childcare plan, is vital for parents to go to work or to school, and also pays for itself.** “Relatively conservative estimates suggest that business-related gains will result in a GDP increase of around \$1.2 billion, and full-time equivalent employment growth of approximately 14,000.”²
- **Poverty in BC is primarily about the “working poor.”** Contrary to popular belief, only 3-4% of people living in poverty are on welfare, whereas the overall poverty rate is 15%. The current minimum wage of \$10.85 will not allow workers to escape poverty while \$15 an hour would bring workers above the poverty line. Mainstream economists’ opinion has shifted toward the conclusion that increases in minimum wages do not lead to loss of jobs.
- **The welfare system does not encourage transition to employment.** Welfare rates are deeply inadequate at \$610 for a single “employable” person. This doesn’t even cover basic needs such as a home (the average rent of a room in a boarding house in the Downtown Eastside is \$525) and food (a healthy diet costs, on average, \$225), let alone looking for a job. These rates have been frozen since 2007 so inflation eats away at what is already a subsistence income.

Ask them to support the government in launching a poverty reduction plan for BC.

End with a concrete action: invite them to an event or request a follow-up meeting.

Before you go, please let us know when you have a meeting scheduled with your MLA and, afterwards, let us know how it went. Email us at info@bcpovertyreduction.ca – thank you!

More information at bcpovertyreduction.ca

² SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE \$10ADAY CHILD CARE PLAN FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA:
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/10aday/pages/86/attachments/original/1486705548/66938_10aDay_C4S_E_Exec_Summary.pdf