



Ref: 196860

November 2, 2018

Dear friends:

I wanted to write to update you on the work that we are engaged in around the poverty reduction initiative in British Columbia. I know that you and your organization have been active proponents of poverty reduction and inequality issues.

I was pleased to introduce the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act this fall in the legislature. This legislation mandates a comprehensive process to ensure transparency and accountability. The legislation identifies key communities of people who struggle with poverty and cornerstone issues that need to be addressed. Most importantly, the foundation of the legislation is that it commits the government to reducing poverty by 25 percent for all persons living in poverty and 50 percent for children by 2024. The targets are based on the 2016 Market Basket Measure, which was recently adopted by the federal government as Canada's official poverty line. The result of achieving these targets (based on 2016 numbers) will be 140,000 fewer people living in poverty, including 50,000 kids.

The legislation also commits the government to developing and implementing the poverty reduction plan by March 31, 2019. The plan will outline a comprehensive cross-government approach to poverty reduction, an approach that draws in a wide range of ministries. I also anticipate being able to reach past the provincial government to other levels of government, Indigenous communities, business, labour and community organizations to build on the strategy.

This plan is the first in BC history. We will no longer be the only province without a poverty reduction strategy. To inform the development of this plan, we conducted a comprehensive consultation process that included 28 facilitated meetings across the province, 100 self-directed meetings, 27 meetings hosted by Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 7 meetings convened by the Métis Nation, funding for discussions in 40 rural and remote Indigenous communities, and an active online engagement process. Many of you participated in this consultation and were a great support in encouraging broad participation in your communities. I am pleased that I was able to attend the majority of facilitated sessions, and along with Parliamentary Secretary Mable Elmore, we got to all but one of the 28 facilitated meetings.

...2

The result of that consultation was engaging over 8,500 people, the majority of whom are living in poverty. Our work now is being guided by those consultations. I would urge you to review the What We Heard Report that documents this consultation. You can view the report online at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/bcpovertyreduction/read-public-and-stakeholder-input/>.

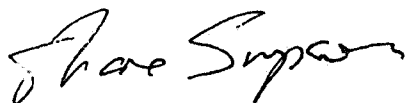
In addition, I appointed the 27-member Minister's Poverty Reduction Advisory Forum last October. This body's main role was acting as a sounding board and advising on the legislation, the What We Heard Report, and the strategy. Through their expertise, Forum members have provided valuable insights at each step along the way. The Forum is finalizing their work over the next couple of months, including helping to prioritize the long list of recommendations we heard throughout the consultation.

The plan will be built on the guiding principles of affordability, opportunity, social inclusion and reconciliation. It will seek to improve people's lives by addressing both the breadth and depth of poverty and will have a major focus on breaking the cycle of poverty in addition to meeting the legislated targets.

I anticipate that when the plan is released, it will be a living document. It will be adjusted and adapted moving forward to maximize its impact on poverty reduction. I look forward to being able to engage directly with organizations such as yours as the plan evolves. We are all aware that there is not a single answer to poverty reduction or a one-size-fits-all approach that will succeed. Communities and regions are distinct as are people and their circumstances.

I am excited about the opportunity in front of us. Together we have an opportunity to make a difference and I look forward to working with you to ensure our common cause is successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shane Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shane Simpson  
Minister