



The Fulcrum Project
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www.thefulcrumproject.org

April 29th, 2005

On April 2, 2005, over 50 organizations met to discuss the provincial policies that are contributing to poverty in BC. We have identified the most critical ones here.

We ask you to commit to work towards ending legislated provincial policies which are directly responsible for the increase in the numbers of people living in poverty and the depth of poverty in which they live. We ask you to replace them permanently with provincial policies that will contribute to their well-being and ultimately, in ending poverty in BC.

These provincial policies are creating barriers to people in need of accessing welfare. Profound changes and cuts to welfare have increased the number of homeless and the number of people accessing food banks.

- Homelessness has doubled in past three years.
- In 2004, 75% of the homeless were not on welfare. In 2001, 15% of the homeless were not on welfare.
- There has been over 40% increase in food bank usage by families in past three years.

Changes in provincially legislated policies that have the ability to alleviate these problems immediately are:

REMOVING these unreasonable barriers to accessing welfare:

- 3 week waiting period
- time limits
- 2-year independence test
- mandatory training
- forced employment for women with children over 3
- lengthy process of “proof” for those with a disability in relation to MHR social assistance funding

RESTORING:

- earnings and maintenance exemptions
- asset levels
- the ability to attend school while on welfare

- rent ceilings
- funding for community law offices and poverty law services
- delisted medical services to the full range of medical services covered by BC Medical
- restoring the provincial top-up to low-income seniors and those 50 – 63

DEVELOPING POLICIES that:

- provide a welfare living allowance based on the geographical area
- provide a living/shelter allowance to be indexed automatically annually
- provide welfare rates which are sufficient to provide adequate housing, nutritious food, and medical care
- eliminate the 500 hour, \$6 training wage
- provide a living wage of at least \$10. per hour
- provide social supported housing for those with special needs
- commit the Province to supporting the development of low cost housing in partnership with municipal and federal governments
- provide access to education and training programs for low-income students
- ensure reasonable access to mental health services and addictions services for those in need

Additional areas, which would benefit the communities, are:

- Implementing an ongoing Seniors Advisory Committee to consult with during any proposed changes to services affecting seniors.
- Producing 5000 public long-term care beds to address the needs of over 8,000 seniors on the waiting list.
- Increase funding for Legal Aid by using the PST collected on legal fees

Most important, is restoring the idea that welfare is a **“human right”** and should be processed and handled in a respectful way to those in need. We must let go of the personal judgements of the “deserving” poor and “undeserving” poor and provide services to those in need.

I look forward to hearing your commitment to these changes to existing provincial policies directly legislating poverty in BC and request your response in writing to the address above at your earliest convenience. Members of The Fulcrum Project can be reached at **604-986-9208** or info@thefulcrumproject.org for additional clarification.

In peace,

joy Fai
Founding Member

Alan James
Founding Member

On behalf of :

The Fulcrum Project

Lynn Morrison, **Chemainus Harvest House Food Bank**

Dawn Courage, **Down Town East Education Centre**

End Legislated Poverty

Alan James, **Handshake Communicators**

Dafne Blanco, **Headlines Theatre**

Kaien Island Community Networking Society

Multifaith Social Justice Coalition

Robyn Newton, **North Shore Community Housing Action Committee**

Tony Rainbow, **Over the Rainbow~ Story Telling**

Ali LaVigne, **P.A.C.E.**

Amanda Bonella, SEPP (Sexual Exploitation Prevention Projects) at the John Howard Society of the Lower Mainland of BC.

Stepping Stone Vision

Alice West, **Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT)**

Alison Sawyer

Anne Beesack

Anne Miles

Bernie Boyd

Ginger Richards

Jean Swanson

Karen Pledger

Kari Hewett

Lorelei Hawkins

Mac Fish

Patricia Renard

Sandy Galletti-Viscount

Stacy Whomes

Suzanne Jackson

Tracey Cullis