



Memo to Council

Date: January 14, 2025
Subject: Strengthening the BC Poverty Reduction Strategy – Motion Served by Councillor Amy Lubik and Councillor Samantha Agtarap

Motion Served

Notice of the following motion was provided at the November 26, 2024, Regular Council meeting:

THAT the following resolution regarding “Strengthening Poverty Reduction Strategy” in BC be endorsed by the City of Port Moody Council and that staff be directed to forward copies to the Premier of British Columbia, the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and the Lower Mainland Local Government Association (LMLGA), and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Annual Conventions as recommended by the report dated January 14, 2025 from Councillors Amy Lubik and Samantha Agtarap:

WHEREAS in BC the rate of child poverty and the number of seniors at risk of, and experiencing, homelessness are increasing, and the number of residents who rely on food banks is also surging;

AND WHEREAS poverty-reduction grants for local governments have ceased

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Province of BC reinvigorate the provincial poverty reduction strategies and accompanying mental health strategy, including recommendations from the BC Human Rights Commissioner and evidence-informed best practices including, but not limited to;

- A timeline and actions for raising social assistance and disability assistance rates to at least 75% of the poverty line;
- Examining and eliminating barriers to income such as clawbacks and restrictions;
- Timelines and targets for reducing deep poverty;
- Indigenous-specific co-created poverty reduction strategies
- Food security and sovereignty strategies to support healthy people and local food economies;
- Specific programs to support seniors in staying in their homes, reducing the risk of homelessness and poverty, and prioritizing development of housing for unhoused seniors;

AND THAT BC include a Basic Income Pilot in the Poverty Reduction Strategy

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Province of BC reinstate poverty reduction grants for local governments, including but not limited to, funding to create, enact, and/or strengthen and support established poverty reduction-related plans.

AND THAT the above resolution also be forward to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for inclusion in the 2025 conference, the MP for Port Moody and Federal Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development requesting that the Federal government review the progress of the Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy and incorporate actions to strengthen and support, Indigenous, Provincial, and Municipal poverty reduction programs, including reducing Federal Tax rules that disproportionately impact people living in poverty, those who live with disabilities, and the unhoused.

Background

Since 2019, BC has had a poverty reduction strategy. Since then several welcome changes have been achieved, including:

- Reforms to welfare rules that delayed/ denied access assistance;
- The introduction of free post-secondary education for former foster care children;
- The Get On Board program, which provides free transit to kids 12 and under
- Substantial investments in child care affordability
- Increases to the minimum wage, and;
- Increases in the BC Family Benefit and the BC Climate Action Tax credit for single individuals.

In March 2024, the Provincial government announced new targets to reduce poverty by 60%, child poverty by 75% and a new target to reduce seniors' poverty by 50% by 2034.

These successes and targets are laudable; however, the 2024 BC Poverty Reduction Strategy update lacks concrete plans to reach these goals. It does not include a strategy for ensuring that all residents in BC have income support of up to a minimum of 75% of the poverty line, or to target the reduction of deep poverty, which impacts 50% of people living in poverty.¹

Further, as stated by the BC Centre for Policy Alternatives:

The rates for social assistance ..., remain well below the poverty line and will continue to keep people there. People on assistance still have to navigate clawbacks and complex income restrictions that make exiting poverty nearly impossible...[also] until the disability rates are raised, most people with disabilities in BC will continue to experience deep levels of poverty. The existing clawbacks on Persons also impede opportunities to earn a living wage.

What is also missing is specific targets and programs for Indigenous Nations, which is critical to reconciliation, and understanding that the over-representation of Indigenous people in poverty is a direct result of past and ongoing colonial practices. Food security issues also continue to

¹ <https://www.policynote.ca/poverty-reportcard/>

plague Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents alike, with escalating food prices and decreasing access leading to unprecedented use of food banks².

While the inclusion of reducing the number of seniors living in poverty is welcome, there needs to be specific ways to ensure the growing number of seniors ending up on the street³ is quelled, and the number who have become unhoused regain roofs over their heads..

One of the ways to quickly address many of these issues would be to look into a basic income for BC. This has been shown to reduce food insecurity⁴, and has been shown to reduce deep poverty.^{5,6}

Finally, support for municipal poverty reduction strategies is absent. Poverty is different in every community, and solutions need to be flexible so that all local governments can take part. This is a recommendation of FCM⁷, and recipients of the previous BC Poverty Reduction grants have seen a benefit from their programs, including subsidized transit in Victoria, Community Hub organizing in Nelson⁸, and Food Security coordination work in the Tri-Cities.

As noted by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition: “We must go beyond the goal of merely ‘lifting people out of poverty’ to achieving stable, durable economic security for all”⁹.

Requested Timeline

<u>Level</u>	<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Staff Turnaround Time</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urgent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulatory or interjurisdictional requirements Major and immediate risk and/or financial impact 	< 3 months
<input type="checkbox"/> Time-sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant impact to the community Significant financial impact 	3-6 months
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-urgent	All other work	< 12 months
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

Council Strategic Plan Alignment

This motion aligns with the following Council Strategic Plan Goal(s):

² <https://vancouversun.com/news/bc-food-bank-use-soars-report>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/homelessness-b-c-seniors-1.7068381>

⁴ <https://theindependent.ca/news/basic-income-the-answer-to-food-insecurity/>

⁵ <https://beyond.ubc.ca/a-guaranteed-basic-income-could-end-poverty-so-why-isnt-it-happening/>

⁶ <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/a-basic-income-for-ending-poverty>

⁷ <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/ending-poverty-starts-locally>

⁸ <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/nelson-at-its-best-drives-successful-poverty-reduction-strategy-implementation>

⁹ <https://www.bcpovertyreduction.ca/campaigns-bcprc>

- Climate Change Preparedness
- Community Health
- Reducing Inequities
- Courage to lead

Council Options

The following responses are available for Council consideration:

1. Receive for information.
2. Refer to staff to bring back a report (staff will determine if the nature of the work warrants a project proposal or a staff report, and will include considerations with respect to feasibility, resources, timeline, strategic plan alignment, and legislative analysis).
3. Other.