

**Capital Region Community Action Plan on Poverty –
A Strategy to Improve the Health & Wellbeing of
All Residents in BC’s Capital Region**



Territorial Recognition

“We recognize and acknowledge the territory of the Coast and Straits Salish peoples and thank the Nations for the opportunity to live and work within their traditional territories.”

Vision

To achieve sustainable livelihoods for all people in the Capital Region.

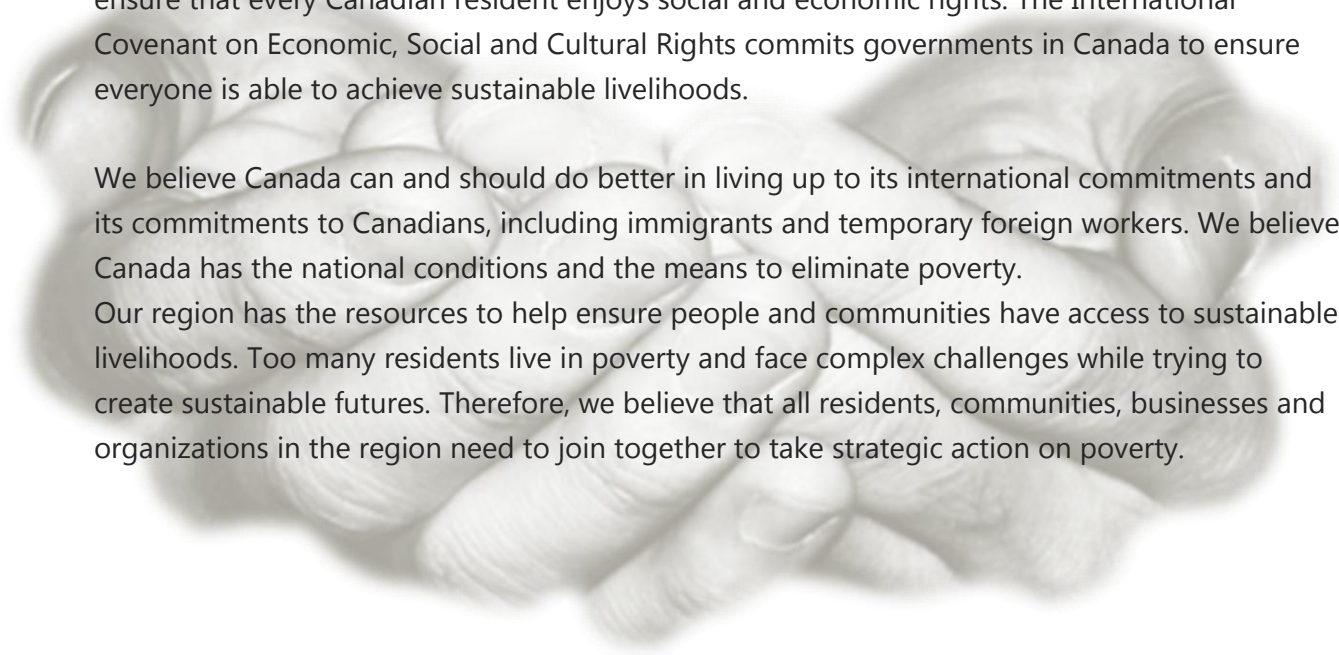
Rationale

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaimed freedom from fear and freedom from want as the highest aspiration of all peoples and affirmed the inherent dignity and equality of every human being.

Canada has ratified international human rights treaties that require all orders of government to ensure that every Canadian resident enjoys social and economic rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights commits governments in Canada to ensure everyone is able to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

We believe Canada can and should do better in living up to its international commitments and its commitments to Canadians, including immigrants and temporary foreign workers. We believe Canada has the national conditions and the means to eliminate poverty.

Our region has the resources to help ensure people and communities have access to sustainable livelihoods. Too many residents live in poverty and face complex challenges while trying to create sustainable futures. Therefore, we believe that all residents, communities, businesses and organizations in the region need to join together to take strategic action on poverty.



Key Areas

These are the key areas that support people living sustainable healthy lives.

- Access to meaningful work
- Childcare
- Strong local economy
- Access to Justice
- Education and training
- Food
- Health
- Housing
- Transportation
- Income

Actions

As citizens, we want to coordinate actions that foster a sense of community and collective purpose, with justice, respect and dignity for all. Below are specific, suggested, actions for each key area.

Access to meaningful work

Key area 1

- Ensure that employees receive fair and dignified standards of compensation and conditions of employment
- Enable cross-training and skills development
- Provide opportunities for self-employment training
- Promote the fair treatment of employees and employers

Childcare

Key area 2

- Advocate for publically funded, high quality and accessible childcare
- Encourage employer investment in high quality and accessible childcare
- Recognize and support parents who stay home to care for young children
- Publicly support employers who offer alternate work arrangements

Strong local economy

Key area 3

- Create living wage policies
- Buy from local suppliers of goods and services
- Promote community economic development and sustainable local enterprises

Access to Justice

Key area 4

- Establish a formal tenants' rights group
- Increase Legal Aid services
- Provide legal representation for workers
- Promote social justice education, awareness and action

Education and training

Key area 5

- Foster mentorship programs
- Support community-based education
- Support literacy to increase access to opportunities for meaningful work
- Support life-skills training, including financial and credit literacy
- Support access to post-secondary education

Food

Key area 5

- Create a sustainable regional food and agriculture system
- Implement a regional food security policy and strategy that would improve access to safe and healthy local food, and reduce the number of people dependent on food banks
- Strengthen food programs that distribute local top-quality fresh produce, like the Good Food Box
- Increase purchasing of local food produce by different institutions and sectors and reduce purchasing of imported produce
- Increase urban farming/gardening initiatives to create more food independence for individuals and the community as a whole

Health

Key area 7

- Increase programs focused on harm reduction strategies such as supervised consumption sites and fixed-site needle exchanges
- Advocate for a public health oriented approach to regulating all psychoactive substances
- Provide holistic and client-centered mental health and addictions services
- Increase in-home care for seniors
- Adopt holistic framework to health and wellness that includes access to dental health, eye-care and recreational opportunities as part of well-being

Housing

Key area 8

- Leverage funds for the Regional Housing Trust Fund
- Support construction of new rental and ownership housing that is adequate, accessible and affordable
- Increase the stock of rental and ownership housing that is adequate, accessible and affordable
- Create a community investment fund for affordable housing and sustainable community enterprise development for the region
- Implement an affordable housing levy to create an adequate and predictable source of funding for regional housing and homelessness initiatives

Transportation

Key area 9

- Expand the Transit Ticket Assistance Program
- Establish accessible bike and bike-education programs
- Increase appropriate public transit services for under-served parts of the region
- Advocate for an integrated affordable transportation strategy for the region

Income

Key area 10

- Advocate for reform of income assistance programs to reflect the real cost of living
- Advocate for the removal of disincentives to work and allow earnings for people on income assistance
- Work towards guaranteed minimum income policies by senior levels of government
- Support the development of community banking services that reduce financial exclusion
- Work towards reducing income inequality in the region



Principles

In working together, we have agreed that our work will hold to the following ten principles.

1. Actions will be community-driven and will promote local strategies
2. Actions will be inclusive ensuring that those affected by the issue are part of the solution
3. Actions will be culturally safe, acknowledging the impact of power imbalances in our community
4. Actions will actively challenge discriminatory practices such as racism, and facilitate participation from all sectors of the community
5. Actions will be results-oriented and measurable, focused on creating sustainable lives
6. Actions will build capacity and transfer knowledge between organizations and community members
7. Actions will be comprehensive and will recognize that sustainability has many dimensions
8. Actions will support and encourage partnerships across business, government, civil society and community organizations
9. Actions will be based on a long-term perspective for the creation of sustainable livelihoods.
10. Actions will promote civic participation and public community empowerment

Next Steps

We believe that a strategy to take action on poverty can create sustainable livelihoods for all of our residents.

To achieve this we will:

- Commit to implement prioritized actions this and each subsequent year to achieve objectives of the plan
- Engage residents and stakeholders to endorse and participate in implementing the plan
- Develop and implement a communications and engagement strategy
- Periodically evaluate progress and review action on the plan

We invite all residents and organizations in the Region, from across sectors, to join us in endorsing this Community Action Plan and find ways of becoming involved in promoting sustainable livelihoods for all.