

December 11, 2008

Poverty Reduction Plan

British Columbians want action

Not only are the policy measures needed to reduce poverty known, the public appetite for action is also strong. British Columbians (and Canadians generally) want leadership and action to reduce poverty, and believe government can do much to combat poverty.

A recent Environics poll (commissioned by the CCPA)* found that:

- Over 90 per cent of British Columbians believe that, if other countries can reduce poverty, so can Canada.
- 87 per cent of British Columbians believe now is the time for strong political leadership to reduce the number of poor people in Canada and our province.
- 87 per cent said both the prime minister and the premier should set concrete targets and timelines to reduce poverty.
- 91 per cent said they would feel proud if our premier took leadership on poverty reduction.
- When told what the poverty rate currently is in BC, 83 per cent of British Columbians support the goal of reducing poverty by 25 per cent within five years.
- British Columbians believe an economic recession is exactly the time when governments need to act on poverty reduction. When asked whether, in the face of a recession, governments will have to focus on other priorities or whether an economic downturn makes it more important than ever to make helping the poor a priority, 77 per cent chose the latter.
- And, a result that should give pause to all politicians: 74 per cent of British Columbians say they would be more likely to support a provincial political party that pledged to make poverty reduction a high priority and propose clear policies, targets and timelines aimed at reducing the number of poor people.

British Columbians also strongly support many of the specific policy measures recommended in this paper: 86 per cent support raising the minimum wage so that full-time work lifts people above the poverty line; 91 per cent support improving income support programs to help poor families with the cost of raising children; 85 per cent support creating more low-cost child care spaces; 93 per cent support creating more affordable housing; 83 per cent support annual increases to welfare to keep up with the rising cost of living; and 96 per cent support investing in more job and skills training for people who are between jobs.

* The poll was conducted in the fall of 2008 (in the midst of the growing economic/financial crisis). For more on the poll results, see *Ready for Leadership: Canadians' Perceptions of Poverty*, by Trish Hennessy and Armine Yalnizyan. 2008. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Available at www.policyalternatives.ca.