

January 16, 2019

Honourable Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
PO Box 9058 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

RE: BC Poverty Reduction Strategy

Dear Minister Simpson:

Dietitians of Canada (DC) commends the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) for tabling and receiving Royal Assent on Bill 39, the BC Poverty Reduction Strategy Act. We also acknowledge the government's commitment to develop a comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy that includes the perspectives heard through extensive community and stakeholder consultations. DC actively participated in the public consultation process through a written submission, [DC \(BC\) Response to BC Government Consultation on Poverty Reduction March 2018](#), and attended the Townhall meeting with Minister Simpson and Parliamentary Secretary, Mable Elmore, following the release of the *What We Heard (WWH) report*.

BC dietitians have a particular interest in poverty's impact on access to healthy food. With respect to household food insecurity, it is [DC's position](#) that all households in Canada must have sufficient income for secure access to nutritious food after paying for other basic necessities. From this perspective, DC offers the following comments on the *WWH report*.

The findings in the *WWH report* clearly reflect the complexity of poverty and the need for a comprehensive strategy to address the issue. We were pleased to see the following:

- The Social Determinants of Health and root causes of ill health were prominent in the report, including housing, income, race, colonialism, child care, education and food insecurity,
- There was extensive consultation with Indigenous Peoples and acknowledgement of the importance of removing barriers to hunting, fishing and cultivating traditional foods, the need for increased income to access store-bought foods and the importance of including Indigenous ways of knowing; and
- The report included a discussion on affordability and the need for income and financial security to afford life's necessities such as housing, child care and food.

As we reviewed the *WWH report*, we noticed a focus on food-based programs (e.g., community gardens, school meal programs, cooking programs, coupon programs and diversion of food waste). We recognize the *WWH report* is based on community consultations, reflects discussions with various stakeholders and identifies solutions from those experiencing poverty who tend to focus on improving their immediate need.

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Unfortunately, food-based programs do not improve household food insecurity. The root cause of household food insecurity is lack of income. While food-based programs do indeed provide many benefits such as community connections, sustainability and increased fruit and vegetable consumption for the program duration, they do not substantially provide amounts of food to all food-insecure households to the degree that they truly alleviate poverty.

At the Townhall meeting, DC was pleased to hear Minister Simpson confirm household food insecurity as an indicator in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. DC was also pleased to hear Minister Simpson make the connection between income-based solutions and income related problems such as household food insecurity. These messages align with Canadian research and DC's position that income-based solutions are needed to address household food insecurity and ongoing monitoring is required.

In moving forward with the development of BC's Poverty Reduction Strategy, DC recommends considering the following with regards to household food insecurity:

- Frame household food insecurity as an income-based problem where solutions are tied to actions around financial security and income supports,
- Establish annual monitoring of marginal, moderate and severe household food insecurity in BC as an indicator for poverty reduction,
- Include a representative from DC on the advisory committee specified in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Act,
- Consider the findings in the newly released [Food Costing in BC 2017 Report](#) and [infographic](#) as further evidence regarding the affordability of health eating in BC; and
- Refer to DC's additional recommendations included in [DC \(BC\) Response to BC Government Consultation on Poverty Reduction March 2018](#).

DC looks forward to our continued collaboration with MSDPR. As the voice of the profession, DC strives for excellence in advancing health through food and nutrition. Dietitians have the education and training to understand the complexities related to British Columbians' health and social needs. DC is committed to a strong working relationship with MSDPR and is pleased to be an ongoing source of expertise related to food, nutrition and household food insecurity. We eagerly anticipate the successful launch of BC's first Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Best Regards,



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