

Dear Minister Simpson,

Over the past several years our board, and the communities we serve have been discussing and working on strategies to reduce the impact of poverty on the students of School District 8 (Kootenay Lake). We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the planning of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for British Columbia.

On January 23, 2018 our Education Committee of the whole met to presentment ideas to be included in the plan consultation. The committee, whose membership is made up of Trustees, Senior Administration, Parents, Teachers, Support Staff, and School Principals were joined by community members working on poverty reduction and students. The committee and guests compiled and prioritized the following responses to the questions posed.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE IN A BC POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY?

A successful poverty reduction strategy for BC should remove barriers to accessing education and create opportunities for lifelong learning. All citizens should have access to appropriate housing and nutrition, and social structures should be in place to protect the most vulnerable. A community without poverty is one where all citizens have strong social connections, feel valued and are able to participate and contribute.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BEST WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY IN BC?

- Maintain and improve an accessible, innovative public education system
- Remove barriers to accessing education and create opportunities for lifelong learning for all citizens
- Develop a Universal Childcare Program
- Understand poverty as a systematic issue rather than an individual issue
- Revise the tax system to create a more equal distribution of wealth
- Raise minimum wage
- Introduce a universal minimum income level
- Encourage policies that support human rights and gender equity

WHAT CAN WE DO AS A PROVINCE, A COMMUNITY OR AS INDIVIDUALS TO REDUCE POVERTY AND CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION?

- Create and adopt policies that create a more even distribution of wealth
- Stop viewing poverty as a “moral” issue
- Education – community based, inclusionary, mental health, financial literacy
- Increase community connectedness and engagement with a focus on youth

Respectfully,

The School District 8 (Kootenay Lake) Board of Education