

# Prosperity for All through a Healthy Communities Approach

Vancouver's Recommendations to the Federal Government's  
National Poverty Reduction Strategy — July 2017



CITY OF  
VANCOUVER

Healthy City  
Strategy

July 11, 2017

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Duclos:

**RE: Vancouver's Recommendations to the Federal Government's National Poverty Reduction Strategy**

On behalf of the City of Vancouver, I am pleased to provide a response to the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy consultation questions, and extend our gratitude to the Government of Canada for taking a leadership role in working to reduce poverty in Canada.

In this time of hyper-prosperity, cities around the world continue to grapple with poverty and inequity. The rapid urban growth experienced by so many cities only seems to have exacerbated the challenge. Local government can play an important role in poverty reduction but we cannot address this challenge on our own - we need the cooperation of other orders of government. Together, with our newly formed provincial government in British Columbia, we have significant opportunity to make a difference.

In October 2016, the City provided a submission to the federal government on a National Housing Strategy that calls for action to resolve increasing inequity between Canadians. The following submission can be seen as a more holistic call to action, on reducing poverty based on Vancouver's **Healthy City Strategy**. It includes recommendations inspired by input from over 70 organizations representing government, non-profits, the private sector and people with lived experience.

In summary, we ask that the federal government commit to:

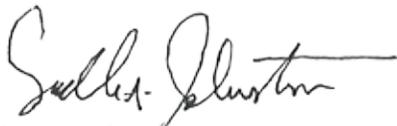
1. **Ensure that basic needs are met** by working with local, provincial and territorial partners to invest in housing, provide affordable quality childcare, and support access to affordable, healthy food.
2. **Provide adequate health and social supports**, especially for people with mental health and addictions and their families.
3. **Support people to make ends meet - and get people to and from work** - through a commitment to making affordable and sustainable transportation against Living Wage benchmarks, while **involving the private sector through partnership models to achieve objectives**.
4. **Create environments where everyone feels safe and included, with a focus on Reconciliation**, and meaningfully involve people with lived experience, non-profit agencies, and communities to be part of collective action at local, provincial and national orders of government.
5. **Inspire collaborative leadership and coordination across the country**. Specifically, create a vision for poverty reduction and legislate a national strategy to sustain a long term vision for Healthy Communities across Canada and invest in funding for research and measurement to ensure a robust, independent evaluation that holds all levels of government accountable.

We were pleased to participate in a federal round table on poverty reduction hosted recently by Member of Parliament Joyce Murray. In the coming weeks, City staff will initiate a municipal poverty reduction strategy with Vancouver communities as part of our Vancouver **Healthy City Strategy** efforts.

It is our hope to form a partnership with federal and provincial governments as we take these long overdue steps to reduce poverty across Canada, together. Lessons learned through the Vancouver Agreement express the need for different relationships and funding arrangements with orders of government and community to achieve sustainable results. We would be very pleased to have a conversation on how these lessons learned could apply to poverty reduction efforts both at local and national levels.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 604-873-7627 or [Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca](mailto:Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca).

Yours truly,



Sadhu A. Johnston  
City Manager

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4  
tel: 604.873.7627  
fax: 604.873.7641  
[sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca](mailto:sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca)

**An opportunity to rethink poverty reduction and achieve a common vision for Canada: healthy communities for all**



# 1. Introduction

As the level of government closest to the everyday lives of Canadians, municipalities are positioned to play a key role in Canada's national poverty reduction strategy. With this in mind the City of Vancouver's submission echoes many of the points articulated in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' submission, and offers ideas brought about through local community engagement leading up to its completion.

Throughout June of 2017 City staff engaged with 70 different organizations active on poverty reduction and related issues. (See Appendix C) This included the Healthy City Strategy (HCS) Leadership Table, co-chaired by City Manager Sadhu Johnston and Chief Medical Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, Dr. Patricia Daly. This table guides the implementation of the HCS.

Adopted in 2014, Vancouver's HCS is a long term plan for health and well-being that is based on social determinants of health. Consultations confirmed that the strategy provides a comprehensive and evidence based framework for poverty reduction that can be used as a platform both locally and at the national level.

Through workshops and roundtable sessions the input received has helped shape the content of this submission using the Healthy City Strategy as a model; it also helps lay the foundation for further work the City is committed to on the creation of a Vancouver based poverty reduction strategy planned for later this year.

In addition to responding to the consultation questions, our submission includes information on Vancouver's context, and provides recommendations and specific actions that both Federal and Provincial government can take with local governments to reach poverty reduction goals.

With a new Provincial government in BC committed to poverty reduction, it is our hope that this marks the beginning of a partnership with the Federal Government and our provincial and community partners.



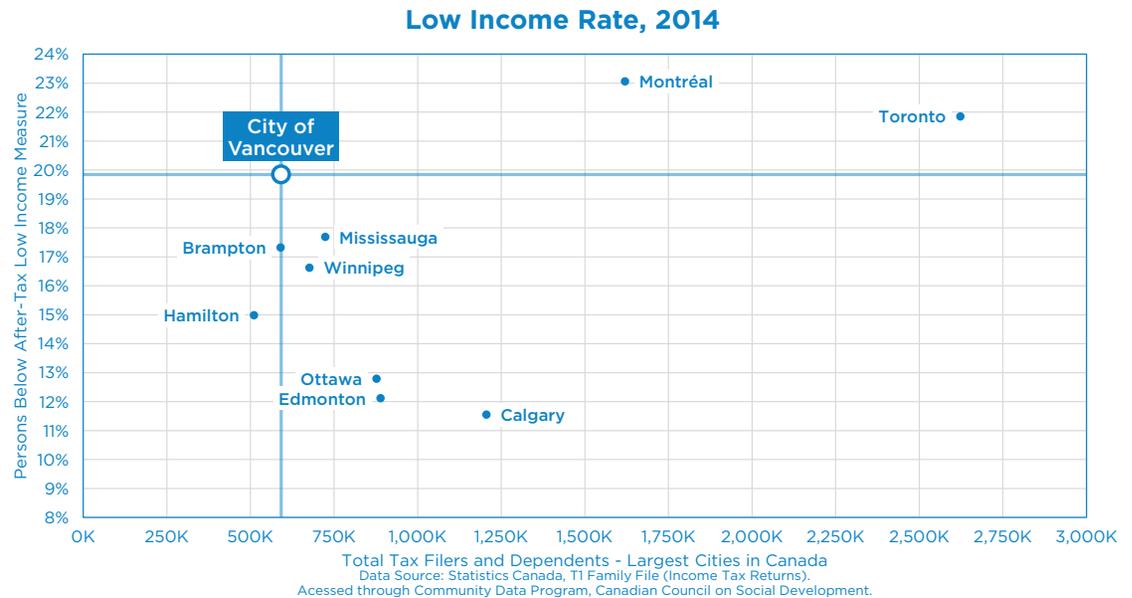
## 2. Setting the Context: Canada’s Urban Centres and Comparisons with Vancouver

**Cities are beacons of potential and opportunity.** People come to large cities to thrive—to find jobs, get a higher education, to find community, create space for self-expression and to live connected and engaged lives. But economic inequities in urban centres means that many people are over-stressed, overworked in multiple low paying jobs, or struggling with woefully inadequate social assistance rates, and are in “survival mode”.

**Canada pays a high price for poverty and inequality.** Inequality and poverty negatively affects all of us through lower economic growth and efficiency, the erosion of social cohesion and decrease trust in government institutions. The lack of opportunity that poverty creates means that people are held back from contributing their talents and developing to their full potential.<sup>1</sup> These communities are not only losing out socially and economically; economic and social exclusion means cultural exclusion as well.<sup>2</sup>

### The City of Vancouver’s poverty rate is higher than most similarly sized cities in Canada, and higher than the Metro Vancouver region.

Vancouver is the largest city in Canada’s third-largest urban region, by population.<sup>3</sup> While renowned for its natural beauty, diversity, and commitment to an environmentally sustainable future, it is also grappling with an affordability crisis, including high and persistent rates of poverty and significant population health struggles related to mental health and addictions. Overall, one in five Vancouverites experience poverty using the after-tax low income measure (LIM-AT). The low income rate in the core City of Vancouver is higher than it Metro region: Vancouver has 28% of the low income population in Metro Vancouver, compared to 25% of the overall Metro population with Urban Aboriginal people over represented across all social determinants.<sup>4</sup>



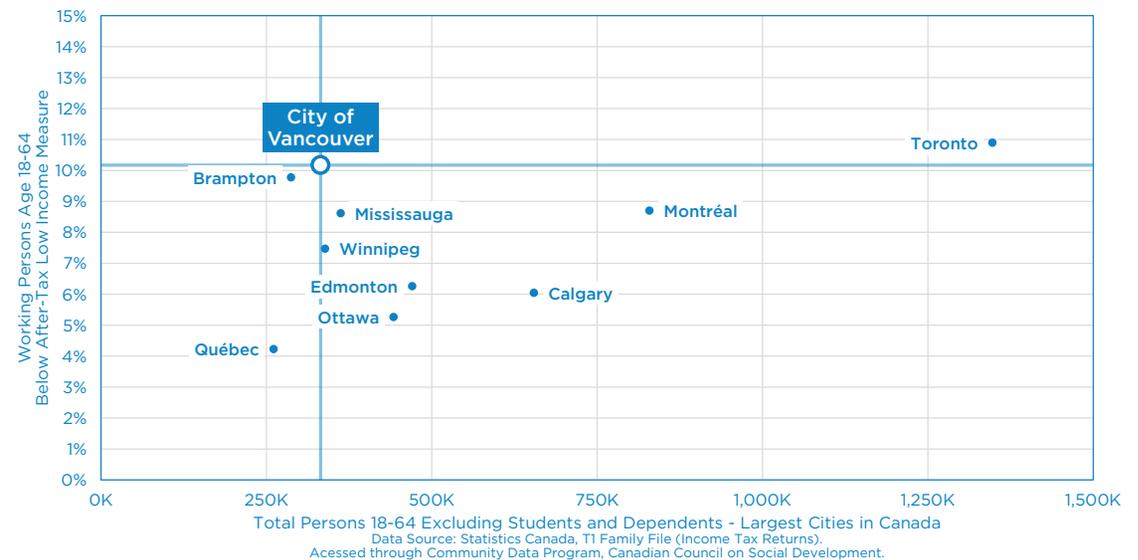
1 Stiglitz, Joseph. The Great Divide. Unequal Societies and What We can Do About Them, WW Norton and Company, 2015  
 2 Welsh Government. Culture and Poverty - Harnessing the power of the arts, culture and heritage to promote social justice in Wales, 2014. <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/140313-culture-and-poverty-en.pdf>  
 3 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population  
 4 Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, accessed through Community Data Program, Canadian Council on Social Development

**Vancouver has among the highest gap in income between rich and poor relative to other major cities in Canada**, exacerbated by increased costs of housing, groceries and services. Data from Vancouver Coastal Health and Vancouver Foundation surveys also demonstrates that Vancouverites are more stressed and feel less connected to their communities compared to other parts of Metro. Even for those working multiple jobs<sup>5</sup> and those living above low-income measures, the increasing costs of living means that people don't have time to develop social connections or pursue their own economic empowerment, cultural connectivity, or personal growth and development.<sup>6</sup>



**Poverty in Vancouver is visible in the street and sheltered homeless population, and is most often associated with the Downtown Eastside**, where there is an over concentration of people with severe mental health and addictions conditions living in poor quality housing such as Single Room Occupancy (SROs). However, poverty exists across the city. **Vancouver also has a high rate of working poor compared to other Canadian cities, many of whom are left with substandard housing as the only option.** Among the working population age 18-64, one in ten living in the City of Vancouver had income below the LIM-AT. Median personal income in Vancouver is 8 per cent lower than for Canada overall, despite its high cost of living.<sup>7</sup>

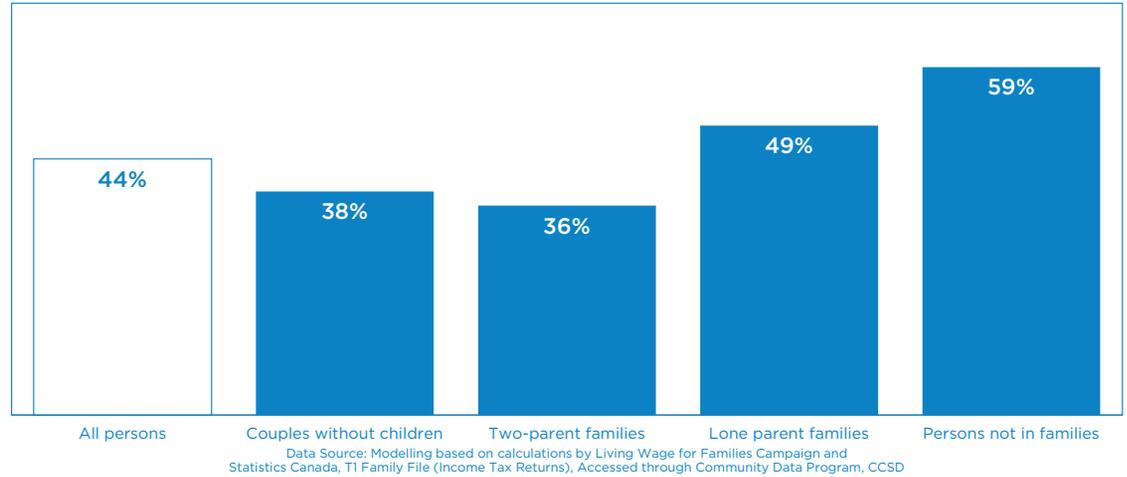
**Working Poverty Rate, 2013**



5 Ivanova, I., Working Poverty in Metro Vancouver. (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2016), [www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2016/06/CCPA\\_Working\\_poverty\\_full.pdf](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2016/06/CCPA_Working_poverty_full.pdf)  
 6 For example, the My Health My Community survey conducted by Metro Vancouver area health authorities found that people with lower incomes were less likely to report a strong sense of belonging or to have four people in their social support network: <http://www.myhealthmycommunity.org>  
 7 Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, custom tabulations accessed through Community Data Program

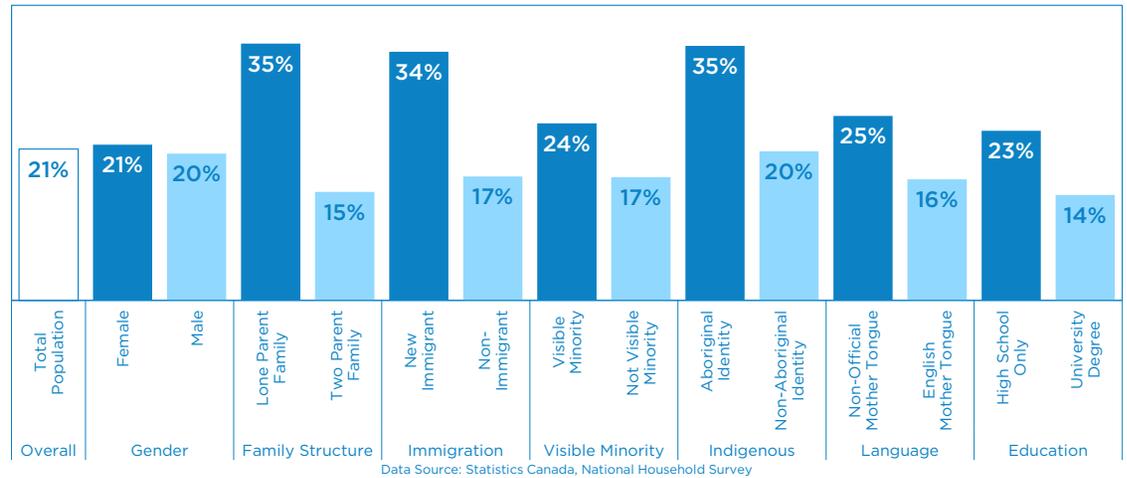
**As with other global cities, the dramatic increases in cost of living are outpacing incomes for a greater number of households.** Evidence shows that the living wage, or minimum estimated to live adequately in Vancouver, is increasing much faster than local median incomes: childcare, housing and food costs have all increased by approximately 30-40% since 2008 and incomes have not kept up.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, the Living Wage for Families Campaign estimates the minimum income required to live in Metro Vancouver<sup>9</sup> for a two-parent family of four to be \$20.62 per hour, with both parents working full time. About **44% of people in Vancouver, or more than 250,000 live in families with incomes less than the living wage.**<sup>10</sup> The graph at right estimates the percentage of families by family type not making the living wage equivalent.

**Who Does Not Make a Living Wage in Vancouver?**  
 Estimated Percentage of Persons or Families Living Below Living Wage-Equivalent Income, 2014



Based on data from the 2011 National Household Survey, there is clear evidence of **systemic inequities**. The graph at right illustrates just some of the disparities evident in Vancouver across different population groups, with lone parent families, the vast majority of which are led by women<sup>11</sup>, new immigrants and Aboriginal people having the highest low income rates.

**Low Income Rate by Population Groups, 2011**  
 Percentage of Persons Below After-Tax Low Income Measure



8 Living Wage for Families Campaign; Statistics Canada, T1 Family File, accessed through Community Data Program

9 As many costs of living are higher in the City of Vancouver than elsewhere in the region, particularly housing, it is important to note that many families will struggle in the city even if earning a living wage.

10 The analysis presented here assumes that the hourly living wage is applicable to a two-parent family with two children, to a lone parent-led family with one child, or to a single person living alone. For other family sizes, income is adjusted by the square root of the number of persons. Note that the assumption of the living wage being applicable to a lone parent family requires more robust redistributive social programs than currently exist, so this understates the share of lone parent families who may struggle to make ends meet. See Ivanova, I., "Why the Metro Vancouver living wage is not enough for single parents and how to fix it," <http://www.policynote.ca/living-wage-and-single-parents/>

11 81% of lone parents in the City of Vancouver were identified as female in the 2011 Census of Population

**Like other Canadian cities, Vancouver's population is aging: more than half of all growth in the city from 2011 to 2016 was people over 65.**<sup>12</sup>

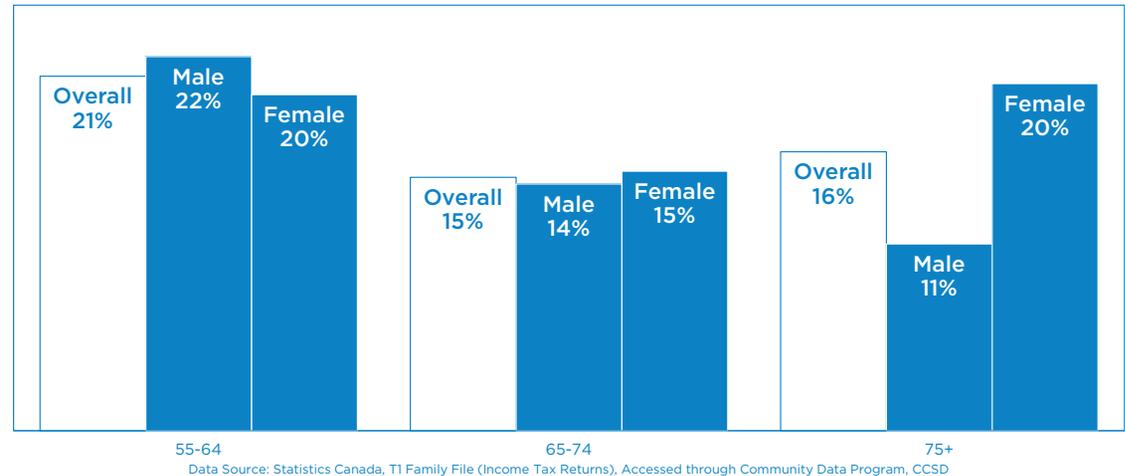
Although the overall low income rate for seniors is lower than for the general population—a success of targeted social programs over the years—there are important disparities in the economic situation of seniors by gender, family structure and wealth. Some senior couples may have some economic security through their home equity, but **many seniors living on their own, especially older women, struggle to meet basic needs.** The chart at right shows the low income rate for seniors and older adults in the City of Vancouver, showing a clear gender disparity for the oldest seniors in particular.

**Evidence suggests strong relationships between poverty, mental health and addictions, and homelessness.**

Vancouver has a higher concentration of people struggling with serious mental health and addictions than the Metro Region<sup>13</sup>, and a significant number of individuals are low income or homeless.<sup>14</sup> Vancouver is currently at the epicentre of a public health emergency declared in 2016 as a result of a severely contaminated illicit drug supply. The BC Coroner reported 967 illicit drug overdose deaths in 2016, a 87% increase from the number of deaths in 2015. Roughly half of the deaths in Vancouver in 2017 have occurred in the Downtown Eastside. While fatalities are the most visible symptom of this crisis, many drug users also struggle to live on insufficient income assistance, and experience barriers to labour market access. Together, these health and social inequities disproportionately impact those living with mental health and addictions.

**Low Income Rate by Older Adult Age and Gender, 2014**

Percentage of Persons Below After-Tax Low Income Measure



<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada, 2011 and 2016 Census of Population.

<sup>13</sup> For example, adults in the City of Vancouver were less likely to self-report good or excellent mental health and more likely to report a mood or anxiety disorder. See Vancouver Coastal Health/Fraser Health, My Health My Community survey, 2013/2014.

<sup>14</sup> 40% of respondents in the City of Vancouver's 2016 Homeless Count self-reported a mental health issue. An extensive study of people living in marginal housing (single-room occupancy hotels in the Downtown Eastside) found high rates of multiple physical, mental and substance use illnesses: Vila-Rodriguez, F. et al, "The Hotel study: multimorbidity in a community sample living in marginal housing", The American Journal of Psychiatry 2013.

**Poverty disproportionately affects certain communities in Vancouver, and is often the result of historical dispossession, systemic racism and inequality.**<sup>15</sup> Over 50% of Aboriginal people live in urban centres and Metro Vancouver has the third largest Aboriginal population in Canada.<sup>16</sup> The 2017 study, Aboriginal Health, Healing and Wellness in the DTES identified gaps in culturally appropriate prevention and wellness programs for Aboriginal peoples – which is an essential part of addressing the impacts of colonization.<sup>17</sup> The Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) 2015 report, Towards an Urban Aboriginal Housing and Wellness Strategy for Metro Vancouver (2015-2020) emphasizes the need to ‘close the inequity gap’ for Aboriginal residents. Median total household income for Aboriginal households in the City of Vancouver is almost \$15,500 less than for the overall population<sup>18</sup>, Aboriginal children in British Columbia are 12 times more likely to be in care<sup>19</sup>, and Aboriginal households in Metro Vancouver are more than 50% more likely to live in core need housing<sup>20</sup>. Though urban Aboriginal people only comprise 2% of Metro Vancouver’s total population, over 30% of homeless individuals identify as Aboriginal, significantly over-representing the homeless population.<sup>21</sup>

**Non-profits and low income serving retail are seeing an increase in the numbers of people in core need, and at the same time, face pressures to relocate outside of Vancouver due to rising rents.** Non-profit organizations foster healthy relationship building, cultural participation, and social inclusion in communities, and low income serving retailers are essential to providing access to affordable food and other basics. Non-profits and smaller businesses are burdened by increasing lease rates or displaced by redevelopment of older and more affordable building stock as commercial real estate sales have reached a five year high in Vancouver (as of March, 2017).<sup>22</sup> This is creating precarious rental stability for both non-profit and privately owned low income serving retailers to survive.<sup>23</sup> As City-led policy research has shown, in the DTES, affordable retail stores are being displaced and restricting low income residents’ access to necessities.<sup>24</sup>

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15 Canada Without Poverty, <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/>

16 Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Vancouver Report, 2010, 23.

17 Aboriginal Health, Healing, and Wellness in the DTES Study April 2017

18 Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011.

19 Representative for Children and Youth, and BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, “Growing up in BC -2015,” 43.

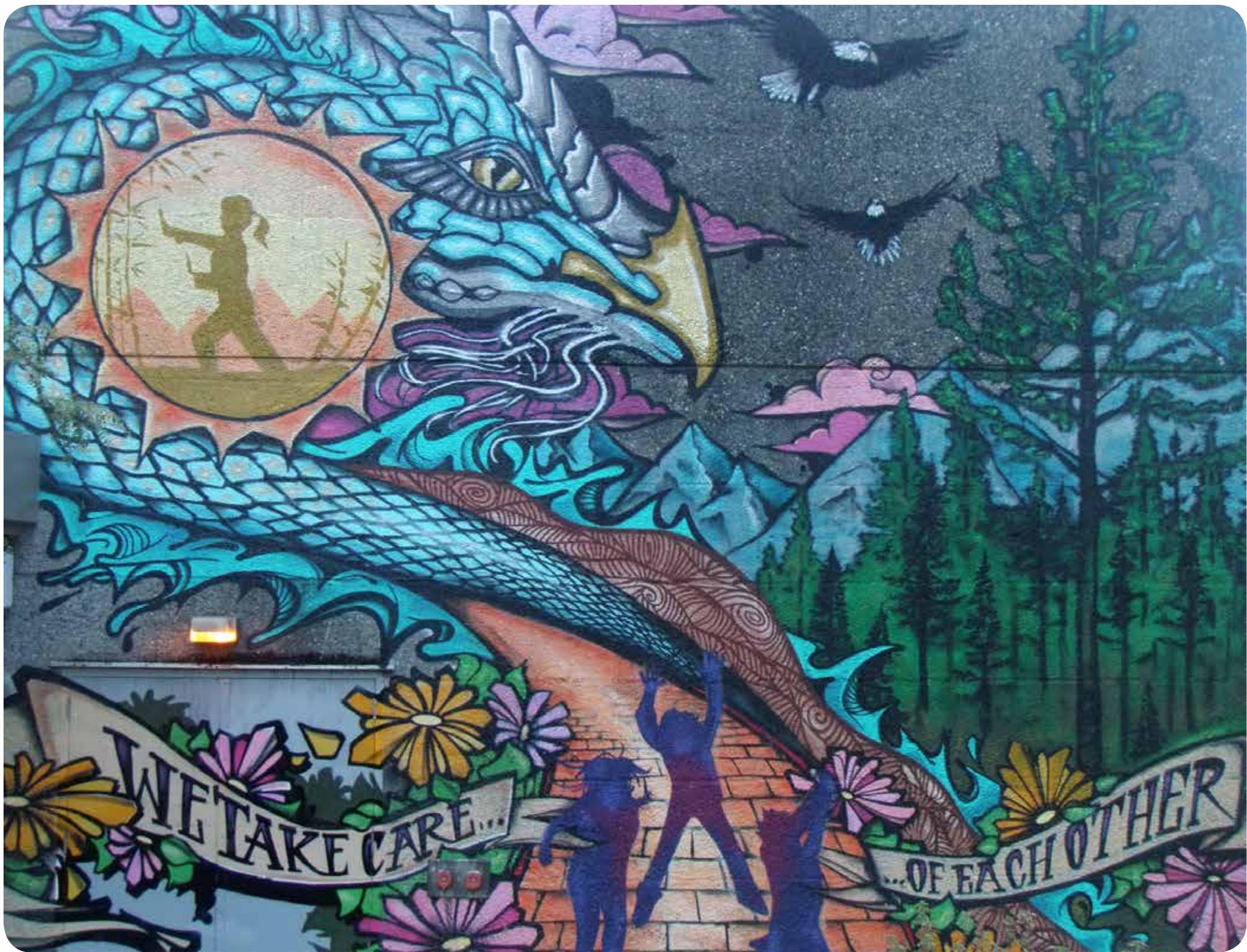
20 Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, based on Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011: [https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/data/data\\_024.cfm](https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/homain/stda/data/data_024.cfm).

21 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 2017

22 [www.centralcityfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CCF-Community-Report-\\_low-res.pdf](http://www.centralcityfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CCF-Community-Report-_low-res.pdf)

23 [www.rebgv.org/news-statistics/commercial-real-estate-sales-reach-five-year-high-lower-mainland](http://www.rebgv.org/news-statistics/commercial-real-estate-sales-reach-five-year-high-lower-mainland)

24 These include the DTES Social Impact Assessment conducted from 2011-2013, DTES Plan (2014) the Healthy City Strategy (2014) and the DTES Community Economic Development Strategy (2016)



## 3. Responses to the Federal Consultation Questions

### How should poverty be measured?

**A shared national definition of poverty is necessary to support the achievement of shared poverty reduction goals, targets and commitments.** Common definitions tend to focus on income-cost of living ratios. However, poverty is not simply about a lack of income – it is also about barrier to the richness of opportunity, experience and social well-being that people can experience in their communities. A social determinant of health focus is recommended, as it includes the resources and opportunities that provide basic needs and the quality of life needed for people to reach their potential and fully participate in all aspects of community life<sup>25</sup> as opposed to a purely economic lens. A broader, more holistic definition will also help to identify a broader range of tools and socio-economic policy drivers of poverty and inequality.

**Understanding how particular calculations are made and what they represent are important steps toward developing poverty reduction policy, strategy and action.** Improved measures can help us predict and mitigate the growing inequality of both income and wealth in Canada, and social inequities created by them both. Governments have the opportunity to evolve metrics in order to measure the success of the economy in terms of human well-being, measuring more than just jobs, productivity or GDP.

**A common definition of poverty across Canada needs to go beyond traditional measures.** For example, while the Healthy City Strategy indicators include more typical data, like the Low-Income Measure (LIM), median incomes, income distribution percentages, number of working poor, number of living wage employers and overall job quality (see Appendix A), other indicators like child school readiness, household expenditures, homelessness counts, access to the internet, sense of belonging, social support network sizes, rates of volunteerism, presence of affordable community food assets and Aboriginal wellness indicators build on conventional approaches and create comprehensive measures to poverty reduction.

Measures like the Market Basket Measure (MBM) and the Material Deprivation Index, adopted by many EU Countries and studied and tested in Canadian provinces, are also worth considering.<sup>26</sup> The Gini Coefficient, Genuine Progress Indicator, Happiness Index, the Market Basket Measure, Material Deprivation Index or ‘Raworth’s Donought’ are all more robust measures of economic performance that can be referenced in addition to baselines like the LIM or Low Income Cut-off (LICO).

### What data gaps exist?

Wealth data is a data gap that is needed to assess needs and implementation strategies. In addition, the inclusion of concepts like “Indigenomics” which applies an Indigenous lens can help evolve Canada’s thinking towards a more sustainable and inclusive framework for Aboriginal people.<sup>27</sup> Adopting a mix of measures reflective of the dimensions of what people need for a good quality of life would be socially innovative and could incentivize further socially innovative responses from the private, public and non-profit sectors.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Development Programme, International Poverty Centre, Poverty in Focus, Dec 2006. [www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCPovertyInFocus9.pdf](http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCPovertyInFocus9.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/hpcdp-pspmc/29-4/ar\\_05-eng.php#ref\\_32](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/hpcdp-pspmc/29-4/ar_05-eng.php#ref_32)

<sup>27</sup> For more on the concept of Indigenomics see the 2016 lecture from Carol Ann Hilton hosted by Simon Fraser University and the City of Vancouver at the event What if Economic Development Was an Act of Reconciliation accessed at [http://www.sfu.ca/sustainabledevelopment/professional-programs/community-economic-development/news\\_events/carol-anne-hilton-s-speech--may-5-2016.html](http://www.sfu.ca/sustainabledevelopment/professional-programs/community-economic-development/news_events/carol-anne-hilton-s-speech--may-5-2016.html)

## What will success look like in a Poverty Reduction Strategy? What dimensions of poverty should be considered?

### Success means re-thinking poverty reduction with a comprehensive healthy communities approach.

Adopting a healthy communities approach and using the **Healthy City Strategy (HCS)** as a poverty reduction model is supported by the City's consultation participants.

The HCS is comprehensive in its approach, recognizing the complexities of poverty and the need for change not only within, but across systems. The HCS describes social determinants in 13 areas, the combination of which represent the 'basket of goods' fundamental for the health and well-being of all individuals and communities: housing, food, access to health and social services, ability to make ends meet, education, safety and inclusion, connections with others, access to arts, culture, and self-expression, active living, access to nature, transportation, environments to thrive in, and effective collaborative leadership. Like a 'domino' effect, each area is interconnected and interdependent on the others—a good start in life, for example, depends on the ability of families to make ends meet, access health and education services, and participate in physical activity and cultural expression.

The HCS, as a platform, is scalable geographically, and can be applied to a neighbourhood, to an entire City, and potentially to a nation, and includes a robust, diverse set of targets and indicators to create a strong measurement framework; finally, it builds on decades of work since the Healthy Communities movement was first inspired in Ottawa in the 1980s, reflecting Canada's obligations under international United Nations conventions that promote equity and fairness.<sup>28</sup> The United Nations New Urban Agenda adopted by world leaders in Quito, Ecuador in October of 2016, commits countries to leadership in an increasingly urban world.<sup>29</sup> Like the HCS, the Agenda brings together public health, sustainable development and international justice and equity related goals. Each of these stem from international agreements like the World Health Organization's Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion signed in 1986<sup>30</sup> and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015<sup>31</sup> by the international community.



28 For example: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010); UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1970); UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007); New Urban Agenda: Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All.

29 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/newurbanagenda/>

30 <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>

31 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Participants in the City’s consultation process also stressed the importance of the following as part of a successful poverty reduction approach:

- A. **Apply human rights and universality as foundational principles.**
- B. **Keep people at the centre: consider inequity from the perspective of the Individual’s lived experience and apply an intersectional lens.**<sup>32</sup> Poverty affects Canadians of all ages, ethnicities and genders, but some more often and more deeply than others. The intersection of gender, age, marital status, education and ethnicity compounds the chances of someone being found living in poverty or facing the types of stigmatization, racism, sexism and prejudicial treatment that contribute to poverty.
- C. **Commit to a strong reconciliation focus** that recognizes the impacts of colonization, historical discrimination for Aboriginal people and recognize that trauma impacts many different communities and individuals, including women who are victims of violence, and refugees.
- D. **Prioritize universal over targeted approaches,** addressing the root causes of poverty and their systematic reinforcement through public policy and public spending.



## What target(s) should we pick to measure progress?

Vancouver’s **Healthy City Strategy** includes targets in each goal that are intended to be aspirational, meaningful, challenging, transformative, collaborative, evidence-based and measurable. Each target represents a commitment on behalf of the City to work toward achieving it—but also a recognition that collective action is needed to achieve systemic, transformative change.

The Making Ends Meet and Working Well goal includes two targets: to reduce the poverty rate by 75%, and to increase median income by at least 3% every year. This recognizes the importance of both addressing acute poverty but also enabling more equitable and inclusive economic growth that does not leave middle earners behind.

The specific target to reduce the poverty rate by 75% is based on practices in other jurisdictions and those advocated for by others. Calgary’s poverty reduction initiatives, “enough for all”, sets a target that 95% of the population live above the low income cut-off.<sup>33</sup> The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives similarly uses a 75% reduction as a ten-year target.<sup>34</sup>

### Examples of Healthy City Strategy Goals and Targets:

**Making Ends Meet and Working Well** aims to reduce poverty by 75% by 2025 and increase the City of Vancouver’s median income by at least 3% every year.

**A Good Start** aims to have at least 85% of Vancouver’s children developmentally ready for school when entering kindergarten. This goal also includes a supporting indicator of child poverty.

<sup>32</sup> Term developed in 1989 by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, describes the overlapping social identities and their relation to layers of social inequity and exclusion. Basis for leading edge policy work designed to discontinue the reproduction of exclusionary policies and practices that occur when each social category is addressed in isolation.

<sup>33</sup> Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative, Enough for All, <http://enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Enough-for-All-Strategy.pdf>. Note that Calgary’s baseline low income rate has been lower than Vancouver’s, so the 75% reduction called for in Vancouver results in a similar outcome to Calgary’s strategy.

<sup>34</sup> Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, High Stakes, Clear Choices: Alternative Federal Budget 2017, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/afb2017>.

But, as noted throughout this submission, a social determinant of health approach recognizes that poverty is connected to many other issues. Other **Healthy City** targets—reducing early childhood vulnerability, ending homelessness, increasing belonging and safety, and more—should be seen as integral to poverty reduction as well. The **Healthy City Strategy** also includes supporting indicators that provide a picture of change in the city over time—including tracking income distribution, working poverty, labour force metrics, the living wage calculation and more. Importantly, targets and indicators will be shared publicly as an engagement and accountability tool.

To summarize, targets that measure progress should be:

- Aspirational, meaningful and transformative, calling for a systemic change in how all players work together to reduce poverty;
- Drawn from a breadth of social determinants of health to recognize the multiple dimensions and connections of poverty;
- Shared openly and publicly to engage the community in taking action.

### **Which Government of Canada programs and policies do you feel are effective at reducing poverty? Are there programs and policies that can be improved? What else can we do?**

In its first year, the new federal Liberal government instituted two key poverty-reducing policy changes: a new Canada Child Benefit (CCB), estimated to reduce child poverty by 14%, and a 10% increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) top-up for poor single seniors, estimated to reduce seniors poverty by 5%.<sup>35</sup> Many other actions that will quickly lower poverty rates, such as a housing rent supplement program, could be implemented in the 2018 budget rather than wait until the end of a lengthy consultative process. While the federal discussion paper on poverty reduction highlights education, employment, health and housing, meaningful action on a much-needed affordable, quality national child care program is missing.

Recommendations below identify what else can be done and provide specific actions for the Federal Government's consideration. The City calls for the federal government to consider the following commitments in its Poverty Reduction Strategy using the HCS goals as a basis.

## 4. Recommendations to the Federal Government

### Meet Basic Needs for All by:

#### 1. Providing all children in Canada with the best chance of a good start in life

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: A Good Start*



Provision of affordable quality childcare options is recognized as a key action to reduce financial strain on working families and improve economic productivity in countries.<sup>36</sup> To bridge the affordability and access gap in Vancouver, the City has contributed \$30M towards renewal and expansion for childcare in the 2015-2018 Capital Plan. The City also provides nominal leases and modest grants, totaling approximately \$1.6m annually to non-profit operators and takes on major capital maintenance responsibilities for programs in City-owned childcare facilities to help reduce operating costs.

#### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Good Start</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$90 million per year for year for childcare expansion</li> <li>Income funding increase to Provinces to transition youth aging out of care through a guaranteed income (19-24)</li> <li>A commitment to improve Canada’s ranking in all targets included in the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card series</li> <li>Invest in a universal food program for all Canadian public sector schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match federal contributions of \$90 million</li> <li>Transfer responsibility for child care to the Ministry of Education and develop a new, coordinated policy framework for early care and learning,</li> <li>Provide adequate operating funds to reduce fees for infant and toddler spaces, and eliminate fees for low-income families (\$10/day for majority, zero cost for families with household income less than \$40,000)</li> <li>Invest in early childhood development “good start” programs in vulnerable communities</li> <li>A commitment to improve Canada’s ranking in all targets included in the UNICEF Innocenti Report Card series</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced child vulnerability</li> <li>Reduced financial pressure on families</li> <li>Improved school readiness</li> <li>Improved school learning and behaviour and improved child health outcomes</li> <li>One stop ‘drop off’ for parents reduces multiple trips, and carbon emissions</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Why Child Care Is the Economy’s ‘Invisible’ Driver, Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania (2014). <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/economic-impact-of-child-care/>

## 2. Investing in affordable housing options in partnership with provinces and local governments over the long term

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: A Home for Everyone*



The City has made significant investments in affordable housing through land contributions and grants. Recent innovations with non-profits and senior governments include the community land trust, allowing a mix of affordable housing across a portfolio of sites in Vancouver. Zoning tools such as inclusionary housing policies and density bonuses to create new affordable housing, as well as incentives and relaxations to encourage rental housing development by the private market have been profiled internationally, as well as rental protection policies, including tenant relocation policies and the replacement of existing rental housing. The Vancouver Affordable Housing Agency (VAHA) has been established to leverage City land and equity to create affordable housing options. Direct investment and focused policies to support low-income renters, such as the Rent Bank, the retention and upgrade of the low-income SRO stock, and direct investments in winter shelters have provided emergency assistance for vulnerable residents. The City has also implemented a new tax on empty homes and proposed restrictions for short-term rentals.

### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Home for Everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Develop a National Housing Strategy with dedicated and long-term infrastructure dollars</i></li> <li>Recommit the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation to supportive funding of existing and new co-operative and social housing</li> <li>Reaffirm Housing as a Human Right at a national level</li> <li><i>Immediate: \$500m Provincial/Federal partnership to create an estimated 3,500 units of affordable housing on city-owned land (20 sites)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislate increased rental protections</li> <li>Discharge planning for people with no fixed address from jails, hospitals and other acute services</li> <li>Adequate emergency services and supports for people falling into homeless (including adequate shelter, outreach and rent supplements)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social housing supply meets demand based on incomes</li> <li>Increased security for renters, especially low-income renters</li> <li>Deepened levels of affordability in new and redeveloped rental housing</li> <li>Decreased homelessness, cycles of homelessness</li> <li>Enable affordable homeownership/equity building for low, moderate to middle-income workers</li> </ul>



### 3. Improving Access to Affordable and Nutritious Foods

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Feeding Ourselves Well*



The cost of a healthy basket of food for a family of four in BC has increased 27% since 2008 and 56% since 2001. Incomes have not kept pace with the price of food, meaning that many, and especially those living in poverty, struggle to afford healthy food. Each year, the City contributes \$700,000 towards school food programs, food infrastructure including community kitchens, and neighbourhood food networks that build community and community capacity and improve healthy food access.

**Actions for senior government alignment:**

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeding Ourselves Well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a national healthy school meal program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to nutritious foods every day</li> <li>Formalize structures for inter-departmental and inter-ministerial collaboration on food policy</li> <li>Ensure the 2017 national food policy consultations are accessible and comprehensive and that special steps are taken to hear the voices of people living in food insecurity and civil society organizations</li> <li>Ensure that international trade and investment agreements do not undermine public programs and policies that enhance access to affordable, nutritious food</li> <li>Provide funding, policies and a framework for a 'basket' of healthy Canadian-grown foods for consumers on a sliding scale tied to income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include appropriate kitchen facilities for meal preparation in school funding formulas</li> <li>Investigate the use of food contracts as a community economic development opportunity (e.g. provincial institutional food service contracts)</li> <li>Provide funding, policies and a framework for a 'basket' of BC-grown foods for consumers on a sliding scale tied to income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved household and community food security</li> <li>Improved student learning and behaviour</li> <li>Secure market and improved livelihood for agricultural producers</li> <li>Reduced costs to the health care system</li> </ul>

## Ensure Equitable Access to Health and Social Services for All by:

### 4. Providing access to the right treatment, the right levels and types of supports, at the right time, for people with mental health and addictions and their families

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Healthy Human Services*



In December 2016, the City implemented a 0.5% property tax, raising \$3.5 million to respond to the overdose crisis. These resources have been directed to first responders, programs to enhance community safety, and a range of overdose prevention programs throughout Vancouver, including the development and implementation of SRO and shelter ‘in-reach’ supports that provide education, training, treatment referrals, and strategic overdose planning to at-risk residents living in public and private SROs and shelters. Investments in community organization capacity, peer-based programs and efforts to de-stigmatize drug use have also been identified as critical sites of investments to curb the overdose crisis. In 2016, the City contributed to \$1M to St. Paul’s Hospital for a mental health and addictions emergency ‘hub’, acknowledging the need for specialized and integrated care. The City of Vancouver continues to work collaboratively with all levels of government to de-stigmatize drug use and promote sensible decriminalizing drug policy. Alongside poverty reduction, mental health and addictions remains a top priority for the City moving forward. *The response to Vancouver’s, British Columbia’s, and Canada’s poverty crisis must include meaningful commitments to introduce innovative and evidence-based policy responses to the opioid crisis and to improve mental health in Canadian communities.*<sup>37</sup>

#### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Human Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Co-lead an intergovernmental Mental Health and Addictions Strategy using ‘Four Pillars Approach’</i></li> <li>• Designate authority for designation of safe injection sites and opiate substitution therapies to Province</li> <li>• Expand housing first program funding, as specialized funding program outside of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy</li> <li>• Create more progressive taxation to tax income AND wealth (i.e. increase capital gains tax, inheritance tax, increase on marginal tax rate on wealthiest 10% 5% 1%) and reinvest in public health, including Indigenous wellness programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Co-lead an intergovernmental Mental Health and Addictions Strategy using ‘Four Pillars Approach’, including anti-stigma programs</i></li> <li>• <i>Improve the addictions system of care through scale up of treatment availability, including injectable opioid agonist therapy</i></li> <li>• Eliminate Medical Service Plan (MSP) premiums</li> <li>• Allocate \$80M to fund early intervention, youth mental health initiatives, supervised consumption sites</li> <li>• Immediate/short and long-term investments in Indigenous Healing and Wellness Programs and projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced costs for care and improved access to Mental Health and Addiction supports</li> <li>• Reduction in overdose numbers and total rates of addiction</li> <li>• Improved high school graduation rates reduced youth suicide and self-harm rates</li> </ul>

<sup>37</sup> <https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/poverty-and-mental-illness/>; [www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health\\_information/a\\_z\\_mental\\_health\\_and\\_addiction\\_information/concurrent\\_disorders/a\\_family\\_guide\\_to\\_concurrent\\_disorders/introduction/Pages/relationship\\_subuse\\_mhproblems.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/concurrent_disorders/a_family_guide_to_concurrent_disorders/introduction/Pages/relationship_subuse_mhproblems.aspx)

## Create Environments Where Everyone Feels Safe, Included and Connected by:

### 5. Living up to Truth and Reconciliation Commitments and support Aboriginal people and service agencies to address impacts of colonization, including intergenerational trauma and cycles of poverty

*Multiple Healthy City Strategy goals*



Intergenerational cycles of poverty in Aboriginal communities due to colonization and trauma are especially complex, requiring cultural responses developed in partnership with affected communities.

In 2015, Vancouver became a City of Reconciliation, and in January 2016, the City responded to the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) Call to Action for urban Aboriginal housing and wellness projects with four sites, including two cultural service led projects in partnership with Aboriginal non-profits. Funding for MVAEC remains a challenge, and several key projects, such as the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) Native Youth Centre and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society (VAFCS) redevelopment projects would benefit children, youth, families, adults and elders in Vancouver and across the region.

#### Actions for senior government alignment:

The 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provide invaluable direction on targeted approaches to healing, including fostering economic reconciliation in Indigenous communities. Reconciliation and healing initiatives are required to understand the history of colonization, the impacts of residential schools, and the impacts of the child welfare system on Aboriginal peoples.<sup>38</sup> A reconciliation approach to recommendations should support an integrated approach to poverty reduction, including:

- Investment in core funding for Aboriginal-serving agencies and services, including income supports that will migrate with individuals on/off reserve, better 'whole family' supports for families
- Funding a long-term on-reserve and urban Aboriginal housing strategies, incorporating Indigenous design principles, including intergenerational family housing, homeownership, rental and social housing
- Funding for more spaces and places for Aboriginal health, healing, and wellness supports and services
- Integrating Indigenous health and wellness, as well as cultural training in all service and project delivery processes
- Improving data collection on the urban Aboriginal population



38 Aboriginal Health, Healing, and Wellness in the DTES

## 6. Meeting the care and inclusion needs of an aging population—in particular older women

### *Multiple Healthy City Strategy goals*



*Canada's population is aging and the shift is also seeing more female seniors than male, which has direct implications in terms of poverty reduction.* Recent studies indicate that poverty among seniors is poised to continue rising in Canada, with women seniors more likely to be in poverty than their male counterparts. With senior women twice as likely to be found living in poverty as senior men the Canadian Labour Congress lays out a handful of pragmatic responses. Among these are improving the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) benefits, restoring eligibility for GIS and Old Age Security (OAS) benefits to the age of 65, supporting public sector workers and their pensions and the introduction of pay equity legislation to address the gender wage gap.<sup>39</sup> Seniors' intersectional identities warrant attention—racialized seniors, LGBTQ seniors, seniors with chronic conditions, seniors with disabilities, for instance, all have unique equity needs—and a poverty reduction strategy should address them.

## 7. Linking Canada's international commitments to refugees to domestic poverty reduction efforts

### *Multiple Healthy City Strategy goals*



According to Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC), 3,810 Syrian refugees landed in BC between November 2015 and April 2017. These refugees land, often with no existing social and professional networks, and are required to repay their travel costs while receiving minimal social assistance, often while dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or other physical or mental impacts of violence and upheaval. During 2016, local agencies in Vancouver reported serving over 1,300 refugee claimants. This is almost doubled the number of clients served in previous year.

Over the past two years, the federal government has resettled a significant number of Syrian refugees in BC and the Lower Mainland. During this time, the City of Vancouver convened two public forums to address the pressing needs of refugees and how those needs can be met with the support of key stakeholders and the public. The rising costs in housing, barriers to employment, lack of appropriate health and language services, are some of the factors leading to entrenched poverty among refugees. Helping refugees or immigrants maintain their culture and participate in cultural activities in their host country are also critical; the acquisition of language and other social skills by immigrant groups is integral for participating in the work force and the life of their community.<sup>40</sup>

Vancouver has also seen a dramatic rise in the number of people seeking asylum. The number of refugee claimants has doubled last year and the demand for services has never been higher. There is also an imminent suspension of legal aid for claimants due to lack of funding. This will lead to a longer waiting period before claimants can access basic provincial social services.

To alleviate the financial burden placed on government assisted refugees, it is recommended that the Federal government apply the current policy of waiving travel loans for Syrian refugees to all other government assisted refugees coming to Canada.

It is also recommended that, as a large number of refugee claimants in BC eventually become permanent residents, that they should be able to access local settlement services upon arrival, to alleviate concerns including homelessness, unemployment and social isolation.

<sup>39</sup> Canadian Labour Congress, Did you know senior women are twice as likely to live in poverty as men? March 3rd 2015, accessed at <http://canadianlabour.ca/issues-research/did-you-know-senior-women-are-twice-likely-live-poverty-men>

<sup>40</sup> Centre for Public Policy at Northumbria University. The role of culture in preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion. 2005. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_inclusion/docs/studyculture\\_leaflet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/studyculture_leaflet_en.pdf)

## 8. Meaningfully involving and adequately resourcing people with lived experience, non-profit agencies, and communities to be part of collective action

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Being and Feeling Safe and Included*



From an equity perspective, the City promotes inclusion of people with lived experience in policy planning and implementation and supports the agencies that best serve their needs in the community. The HCS includes a commitment to meaningful involvement of people most impacted, recognizing their important contributions to policy and program development. The City is one of the only funding bodies providing core funding. Adequate core funding to support the NGO sector is required in order to build capacity of individuals and communities to fully participate.

### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being and Feeling Safe and Included</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Increase core funding to support staffing, program development in essential community service connections for Indigenous, refugee and immigrant residents, such as Neighbourhood Houses and urban Aboriginal agencies</i></li> <li>Provide funding for community scale practice of reconciliation, cultural healing, de-stigmatization and Indigenous ceremony, as health in all its forms is foundational to economic opportunity.</li> <li>Advance social procurement policies that incentivize employment for immigrants and refugees, Indigenous people, people within the LGBTQ2S continuum, majority women-owned businesses, people transitioning out of sex work, seniors and others who face barriers and stigmatization</li> <li>Align current inquiries and strategies such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Strategy Against Gender-based violence to harmonize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Match increase in Federal funding to Neighbourhood Houses and urban Aboriginal agencies</i></li> <li>Create a Social Purpose Real Estate Infrastructure Bank to finance public sector and philanthropic social purpose real estate collaborations</li> <li>Align anti-discrimination/ violence strategies for effective and sustainable outcomes</li> <li>Invest in women’s organizations, which are severely underfunded, despite BC’s growing rate of domestic violence and homicide against women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced displacement and disruption of non-profit community service providers</li> <li>Increased programming dollars to support integration of refugees and new Canadians into communities and to help build capacity and wellbeing in low-income neighbourhoods</li> <li>Reduced stigmatization and structural barriers to workplace inclusion and career/business advancement</li> <li>Decreased rates of violence/ discrimination that keep women, their children and other marginalized groups in poverty to allow for socio-economic renewal and opportunity</li> </ul>

## Ensure adequate income to cover the costs of basic necessities and access to a broad range of employment opportunities by:

### 9. Ensuring the Right to Make Ends Meet – including Getting To and From Work – by benchmarking the cost of living with incomes for people living in urban centres

*Healthy City Strategy Goals: Making Ends Meet and Working Well, Getting Around*



Vancouver is one of the first cities in Canada to formally adopt a Living Wage Policy (2017) and is currently exploring a pilot with Provincial Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation to expand allowable income for people with mental health and addictions up to living wage. Access to public transportation is another key service that requires additional income. Through community consultation, the City learned that low income families, including lone parents, were not sending children to school full-time due to transportation costs. Partners also profiled the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives 'Alternative Federal Budget 2017' as way to lift over 500,000 Canadians out of poverty.

#### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Ends Meet and Working Well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set federal policy standards for provincial income support funding to be aligned with basic needs (\$4B annual transfer to provinces to increase social assistance)</li> <li>• GST credit for low-income Canadians</li> <li>• Reinstate the Federal minimum wage and raise to \$15/hr</li> <li>• National Living Wage Policy to support employers in all sectors to adopt standards</li> <li>• Test Piloting of Guaranteed Income in select low-income communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase Income Assistance rates to \$1500 indexed to inflation</li> <li>• Restore store-front service (vs. automation of services) for income support applicants</li> <li>• Restore BC Bus Pass program for people with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased homelessness</li> <li>• Increased health outcomes</li> <li>• Reduced dependency on survival economies</li> </ul>

## 10. Expanding and diversifying income generation opportunities through a comprehensive income and livelihoods approach

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Making Ends Meet and Working Well*



The City of Vancouver co-created a Community Economic Development strategy for the Downtown Eastside neighbourhoods with dozens of stakeholder groups and implementation partners, including the concept of a ‘livelihoods continuum’ to diversify and grow opportunities for all residents (see below). As part of this work the City is continuing to develop the Social Procurement Policy Framework, the Community Benefits Agreement Policy Framework, and is repurposing City-owned real estate assets for arts and cultural production, employment based social enterprise<sup>41</sup>, non-profits and low-barrier self-employment capacity across four sites. In June 2017, the City of Vancouver and United Way of the Lower Mainland announced a Social Purpose Business Round Table to support social impact in the private sector.

### Actions for senior government alignment:

HCS Goals	Federal	Provincial	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Ends Meet and Working Well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass Private Member’s Bill C-344 “An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act” to provide the Minister with the authority to require an assessment of the benefits that a community derives from a construction, maintenance or repair project.</li> <li>• Create a national social procurement strategy to scale up the social enterprise and cooperative sector in Canadian communities and regions.</li> <li>• Create national Social Impact Investment Bond and Social Enterprise Investment Tax Credit to grow the pool of financial capital available to social purpose ventures creating employment for those with barriers and addressing social, environmental and cultural sustainability goals through their mission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommit to pre-employment training and funding of Supported Employment Programs</li> <li>• Eliminate mandatory ‘paybacks’ on earnings exemptions, allowing residents to grow incomes and exit cycles of poverty</li> <li>• Coordinate with Federal Government and Municipalities to create ‘set asides’ from infrastructure funding for Social Enterprises</li> <li>• Support capacity building in social enterprise sector through RFP bid education and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded opportunities for meaningful supported employment for those with barriers</li> <li>• Reduced dependency on survival economies</li> <li>• Increase in employment rate and labour market participation in low-income communities</li> <li>• Increase in income levels</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Nearly 80 Social Enterprises exist in the Downtown Eastside. Within a sample size of 24 social enterprises, a recent survey found: Full time workers: 92, Part time workers: 1,470, Total workers: 1,562, Gross annual revenue: \$14.92M, Total annual sales: \$12.14M. Total annual expenses: \$14.32M

## 11. Involving the Private Sector with Innovative Partnership Models

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Collaborative Leadership for a Healthy City for All*



The City of Vancouver recognizes that the private sector has an important role to play in reducing poverty. In cities across Canada the private sector has demonstrated interest in working with government and communities on improving the economic wellbeing of Canadians. The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce became the first Chamber in Canada to champion a Living Wage policy for workers.<sup>42</sup> Here in Vancouver, private sector partners engage with the City, non-profits, the Provincial Health Authority and others through the Healthy City Strategy Leadership Table. In addition to the Healthy City Leadership Table, the United Way of the Lower Mainland and City of Vancouver recently convened a unique leadership table of the city's top CEOs to explore the opportunities to grow social impact and social purpose in the private sector. Toronto and Vancouver are currently engaged in updating policies on community benefits agreements and social procurement guidelines, recognizing the tremendous potential that both have for incentivizing inclusive employment, fostering joint venture opportunities for Canada's growing social enterprise sector, and improving the economic health of communities.

As the Government of Canada continues to explore ways to support Social Finance and Social Innovation through national strategies or frameworks it is hoped that this work will support the private sector and growing social enterprise sector, to harness the potential of Canada's economy to lift Canadians out of poverty and into prosperity.

## 12. Investing in affordable and accessible public transit

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Getting Around*



Recent studies show a direct relationship between mobility and poverty, with access to transit and reduced commute times improving the economic circumstances of families and working individuals.<sup>43</sup> As the 2014 University College London study *Transport and Poverty: A review of the evidence* succinctly states: "Because transport is the main means to reach employment and educational opportunities, reducing the barriers to travel can help to address poverty".<sup>44</sup> A number of poverty advocacy organizations and Canadian municipalities alike have therefore placed mobility, and in particular access to affordable public transit at the forefront of poverty reduction efforts. Creating tools and incentives to locate affordable and rental housing within walking distance of efficient, effective transit is also important. End Poverty Edmonton for example calls for transit to be made "...reliable, accessible and affordable to Edmontonians" and to "Improve and expand transit services"<sup>45</sup> while the Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition details the impacts of transit in reducing poverty in their 2015 Fact Sheet: this is how we end poverty in Surrey (This: Transportation, Housing, Income, Support).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> New voices for living wage program, June 26, 2015, Hamilton Spectator, accessed at <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/5698330-new-voices-for-living-wage-program/>

<sup>43</sup> For example: *Mobility, Economic Opportunity and New York City Neighborhoods*, New York University Rudin Centre for Transportation (2015) accessed at <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/rudincenter/2015/11/JobAccessNov2015.pdf>; *Public transportation can be a ride out of poverty*, Dr. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Boston Globe, May 26 2015 accessed at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/05/25/public-transportation-can-ride-out-poverty/KtzBMWfo1Xpsqks7NfbYxL/story.html>; *The Impacts of Neighbourhoods on Intergenerational Mobility*, Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, Harvard University (April 2015) accessed at [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hendren/files/nbhds\\_paper.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/hendren/files/nbhds_paper.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> The full study details a number of different ways in which transportation and poverty intersect and different approaches to using transit as a key area of reducing poverty, accessed at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/transport-institute/pdfs/transport-poverty>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.endpovertyedmonton.ca/gamechanger4/>

<sup>46</sup> <http://surreyprc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2015-Transportation-Facts.pdf>

In 2016 Cities including Calgary, Ottawa and Toronto committed to the creation of low-income transit pass programs, with Calgary and Ottawa's taking effect in 2017 and Toronto's coming online in 2018.<sup>47</sup> But in order for low-income individuals and families to benefit from such initiatives in municipalities and regions transit infrastructure needs to be built and operated. Vancouver's transit needs have been communicated to the Federal government and Province of BC on an ongoing basis, in particular the importance of the Broadway rapid transit line. We reiterate the importance of this investment once again in the context of poverty reduction and mobility.

#### Actions for senior government alignment:

- Invest in a subsidy for a discounted low-income (means-tested) transit pass
- This could be similar in structure to Calgary Transit's Low Income Monthly Pass, which assigns a purchase price using a 3-tiered sliding scale based on assessed income
- The Province of British Columbia has existing infrastructure to assess income (currently utilized to determine eligibility for the BC Bus Pass program)
- Opportunity to fund the subsidy through reallocation of public transit tax credit funds eliminated effective June 2017 (Schedule 1, Federal Tax, Line 364 – Public transit amount)



### Inspire Collaborative Leadership by:

## 13. Embedding a comprehensive National Poverty Reduction Strategy in Public Policy and develop a pan Canadian monitoring and accountability mechanism

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Collaborative Leadership for a Healthy City for All*



Research on poverty reduction identifies that strategies fail because of a lack of standards and accountability. We recommend that a National Poverty Reduction Strategy be formally legislated, with ownership of goals and targets embedded in the work of multiple ministries.<sup>48</sup>

The federal government needs to resume an active policy standards role in transfer payment programs, including income, housing, childcare and employment, that are integral to ensuring all Canadians receive access to basic needs and services across the country. International initiatives such as Finland's Universal Basic Income approach should be explored for applicability in Canada.

There are opportunities to explore pilots on Guaranteed Income and \$10 Per Day Child Care in Vancouver with Provincial partners. Evaluation findings would assist in creating and enforcing national standards for income support and child care.

<sup>47</sup> Calgary Low-Income Monthly Pass <http://www.calgarytransit.com/fares-passes/passes/low-income-monthly-pass>; Ottawa OC Transpo Equipass [http://www.octranspo.com/tickets-and-passes/coming\\_this\\_spring\\_equipass](http://www.octranspo.com/tickets-and-passes/coming_this_spring_equipass); Toronto Fair Pass Program <https://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=826519fc366d2510VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=de8f727e05c79410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

<sup>48</sup> The Government of Canada may also consider other collaborative federal models, such as Australia's Council of Australian Governments, empowering intergovernmental, industry, community partnerships to support implementation, monitoring and championing of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy <https://www.coag.gov.au/about-coag>

**Actions for senior government alignment:**

The plan should prioritize:

- A comprehensive methodology and reporting system to define and measure both poverty and prosperity in Canada
- Clear targets and timelines for goals and indicators within the strategy
- A provincial partnership framework with municipalities and other key implementation partners to monitor and measure collective impact
- An effective mix of evidence-based policies and programs that draw from best practices in respectful Indigenous cultural inclusion and engagement, intersectionality, income and employment program innovation, housing, social procurement, community benefits agreements, social impact investing, community engagement, and community economic development.

## 14. Investing in research and ensuring a robust, independent evaluation that will hold all levels of government accountable, beginning with municipal pilots

*Healthy City Strategy Goal: Collaborative Leadership for a Healthy City for All*



An intergovernmental commitment to poverty reduction through a social determinant of health framework is a tremendous opportunity to deliver meaningful change through aligned, multi-sectoral action. But, it brings the risks of unfocused action, jurisdictional ambiguity and unclear accountabilities. To minimize these risks, the City of Vancouver recommends a robust evaluation process accompany the poverty reduction strategy. Furthermore, we recommend a framework that includes all levels of government and communities affected by poverty to implement and monitor the strategy.

Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy includes an evaluation component to understand and improve collaborative processes and decision-making, and to map the responsibilities that all players have in achieving health and well-being for all.

**Actions for senior government alignment:**

- Commit to funding a robust evaluation process throughout all stages of a national poverty reduction strategy
- Develop mechanisms to hold all levels of government accountable for their commitment and responsibilities to reduce poverty



## 5. Conclusion

Canada's greatest natural and renewable resource is its people. There is tremendous untapped potential in Canadian communities, where even the lowest income families and individuals show incredible resilience, determination, entrepreneurship and innovation. Poverty is a barrier to prosperity, not an alternative to it, and it has been demonstrated in other countries, cities and even other Canadian provinces that it can be reduced and possibly one day eliminated through good public policy, smart investments by government, and a willingness to incorporate the wisdom and knowledge of those with lived experience into the various programs, projects, and partnerships that support a sustained and collaborative strategy. We hope that the ideas contained in this submission complement the many other submissions you will have received and have provided a glimpse at the better world that potentially lies ahead when governments, industry, non-profits and community work in unison for the shared goal of reducing, and ending, poverty. We are hopeful for the work that lies ahead and look forward to continued engagement with the Federal Government and other key partners in the months and years ahead.





# Appendix A.

## Measuring Poverty in the Healthy City Strategy

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Canada does not have a poverty line per se, but three well-established calculations of low income, which are used as surrogate measures of poverty. Appendix A reviews these measures and some alternatives in the context of the City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy.

### Income Concepts and Calculations

Low income lines can be calculated on a multitude of income concepts: individual, household or family income; total or employment income; before- or after-tax income. In recent years, calculations have tended to favour after-tax income, to take redistributive effects into account. Statistics Canada conceptually generates its measures based on household income, based on the assumption that the household is the unit at which important basic needs (shelter, food) are met. However, different data sources offer different possibilities: income tax returns, for instance, are filed by families, not by households, and therefore calculations based on these data can only account for individual or family income.

### Low Income Cut-Off

The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) was the leading measure of low income in Canada until the mid-2000s. Its most recent formulation comes from a 1992 survey of consumer spending: the cut-offs were set at an income level at which a family was spending a share of its income 20 percentage points greater than the average family on food, clothing and shelter. The cut-offs were produced for communities of different sizes, and have subsequently been inflated using the consumer price index each year. 2016 before-tax/after-tax LICOs for metropolitan areas greater than 500 thousand people are \$24,949/20,675 for a person living alone; \$31,061/\$25,163 for a family of two; or \$46,360/39,090 for a family of four. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation uses the LICO (before tax) as its criterion for the Leisure Access Program, providing free and discounted recreation and community centre programming. The City has also used the LICO in demographic analysis up to the 2006 census.

### Low Income Measure

The Low Income Measure (LIM) is more recently the widely used calculation of low incomes in Canada. This is a relative threshold set at half of the national median income, adjusted for family or household size. The LIM is calculated nationally each year based on income surveys and the threshold income is the same in all communities in the country. LIMs across Canada for 2015 before-tax/after tax are \$25,512/22,352 for a single person; \$36,079/31,611 for a two-person household; or \$51,024/44,704 for a family of four. Effective with the 2011 National Household Survey, the LIM is now the low income calculation most commonly reported in Canada. The City of Vancouver uses the LIM for Healthy City indicators (based on annual income tax returns) and for other demographic analysis. The low income rate reported under the Healthy City Strategy is 20% of the city's population as of 2014, the most recent year available.

## Market Basket Measure

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) attempts a calculation of the actual cost of basic needs in different communities. Components include nutritious food, clothing, shelter, transportation and personal care items, and these costs are compared to a concept of disposal income; that is, the after-tax income that a family has available to make decisions about purchasing. For 2015, the MBM thresholds for Metro Vancouver are a disposable income of \$19,976 for a single person; 28,250 for a two-person family; or \$39,951 for a reference family of four. While the MBM is potentially the most useful measure for understanding local incomes, it is a complex calculation and difficult to make comparisons. The City of Vancouver has some custom data that uses the MBM, but has not widely used it for analytical purposes.

## Living Wage

Similar in concept to the MBM, the Living Wage Campaign calculates a more comprehensive set of living expenses each year for a family of four in Metro Vancouver. It attempts to calculate the cost of a number of different components: food, clothing, shelter, childcare, transportation, education, health and other household expenses, while also adjusting for tax credits and social programs. The intention is to offer a more holistic picture of what is required to meet basic needs in a community. In 2017, Living Wage in Metro Vancouver is \$20.62/hour, or an annual total income of \$75,057 for a two-earner family of four. The Living Wage is intended to be applicable to a single person (\$37,528 annual income) or two a lone parent-led family with one child (37,528 annual income with redistributive tax credits and social programs), though individual circumstances may vary. The City of Vancouver has recently committed to becoming a living wage employer, and work is underway to understand how the Living Wage calculation might be localized to the City of Vancouver and its neighbourhoods.

## Beyond Income

In recent years, some people in Vancouver have been interested in trying to measure poverty through wealth, rather than income, in response to observations of relatively high low income rates in areas of expensive, owned housing. No comprehensive data are currently available to measure this. Operationally, the Park Board's Leisure Access Program excludes people with a certain amount of investment income, even if their total income would qualify them for the subsidized pass. Transportation costs have also received some policy attention. The MBM and Living Wage calculation embed certain assumptions about transportation modes that may not apply to families in the denser city; the Living Wage calculation, for example, assumes one earner buys a transit pass but the family still owns and maintains an automobile, which adds considerable expense.

# Appendix B. Healthy City Goals, Targets and Indicators

## Healthy City Strategy Summary table of goals, targets and indicators

	2025 TARGETS	INDICATORS
<b>1. A Good Start</b> 	<p>Vancouver's children have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 85% of Vancouver's children are developmentally ready for school when they enter kindergarten</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School readiness (%)</li> <li>Child poverty (%)</li> <li>Access to licensed quality, affordable, and accessible childcare (%)</li> </ol>
<b>2. A Home for Everyone</b> 	<p>A range of affordable housing choices is available for all Vancouverites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2015: End Street Homelessness</li> <li>By 2021 enable: 2,900 new supportive housing units; 5,000 additional new social housing units (including 1,000 units of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotel replacement); and 5,000 new units of secured purpose built rental housing [Housing and Homelessness Strategy]</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households spending 30% or more of income on housing (%)</li> <li>Sheltered and unsheltered homeless (#)*</li> <li>New supportive, social, secured rental and secondary rental housing units (#)</li> </ol>
<b>3. Feeding Ourselves Well</b> 	<p>Vancouver has a healthy, just, and sustainable food system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2020: Increase city-wide and neighbourhood food assets by a minimum of 50% over 2010 levels [Greenest City Action Plan/Food Strategy/Park Board Local Food Action Plan]</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food assets (#)</li> <li>Neighbourhood Food Networks (NFNs) (#)</li> <li>Cost of Health Canada's National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) (\$)</li> </ol>
<b>4. Healthy Human Services</b> 	<p>Vancouverites have equitable access to high-quality social, community, and health services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Vancouver residents are attached to a family doctor</li> <li>Increase the % of Vancouverites who report having access to services when they need them by 25% over 2014 levels</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attachment to a family doctor or primary health care provider (%)</li> <li>Proximity to "community hubs" (library, community centre, neighbourhood house) (%)</li> <li>Access to services when needed (%)</li> <li>Park Board Leisure Access Program usage (%)</li> </ol>
<b>5. Making Ends Meet and Working Well</b> 	<p>Our residents have adequate income to cover the costs of basic necessities, and have access to a broad range of healthy employment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the city's poverty rate by 75%</li> <li>Increase median income by at least 3% every year</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low-income individuals (%)*</li> <li>Median income (\$)</li> <li>Income distribution (%)</li> <li>Working poor (%)</li> <li>Living Wage (\$)</li> <li>Job quality (%)*</li> </ol>
<b>6. Being and Feeling Safe and Included</b> 	<p>Vancouver is a safe city in which residents feel secure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase Vancouver residents' sense of belonging by 10%</li> <li>Increase Vancouver residents' sense of safety by 10%</li> <li>Make Vancouver the safest major city in Canada by reducing violent and property crime every year, including sexual assault and domestic violence</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of belonging (%)</li> <li>Sense of safety (%)</li> <li>Reported crime rates (#)</li> </ol>

\* To enhance and support Vancouver's efforts as a City of Reconciliation, these indicators will also be tracked for Aboriginal people.

	2025 TARGETS	INDICATORS
<b>7. Cultivating Connections</b> 	<p>Vancouverites are connected and engaged in the places and spaces that matter to us.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Vancouverites report that they have at least 4 people in their network they can rely on for support in times of need</li> <li>Increase municipal voter turnout to at least 60%</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social support network size (%)</li> <li>Sense of trust (%)</li> <li>Volunteerism (%)</li> <li>Municipal voter turnout (%)</li> <li>Aboriginal children in foster care (%)</li> </ol>
<b>8. Active Living and Getting Outside</b> 	<p>Vancouverites are engaged in active living and have incomparable access to nature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2020: All Vancouver residents live within a 5 minute walk of a park, greenway or other green space [Greenest City Action Plan]</li> <li>By 2025: Increase the percentage of Vancouver residents aged 18 and over who meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines by 25% over 2014 levels</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents who meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (%)</li> <li>Park Board OneCard usage (#)</li> <li>Residents living within a 5 minute walk (400m) of a park or other green space (%)</li> <li>Tree canopy cover (%)</li> </ol>
<b>9. Lifelong Learning</b> 	<p>Vancouverites have equitable access to lifelong learning and development opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase participation in lifelong learning by 25% over 2014 levels</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to the internet (%)</li> <li>Reading for general pleasure or interest (%)</li> <li>Participation in a learning event or program (#)</li> <li>High-school graduation and post-secondary education rates for Aboriginal people (%)</li> </ol>
<b>10. Expressing Ourselves</b> 	<p>Vancouver has a diverse and thriving cultural ecology that enriches the lives of all residents and visitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase public participation and community engagement in arts and culture by 25% over 2014 levels</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts and culture participation (#)</li> <li>Artists and cultural workers (%)</li> <li>Creative places and spaces (#)</li> </ol>
<b>11. Getting Around</b> 	<p>Vancouverites enjoy safe, active, and accessible ways of getting around the city.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2020: Make the majority (over 50%) of trips on foot, bike, and transit [Greenest City Action Plan/Transportation2040]</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable transportation mode share (%)</li> <li>Number of active transportation trips (#)</li> <li>Traffic-related fatalities</li> </ol>
<b>12. Environments to Thrive In</b> 	<p>Vancouverites have the right to a healthy environment and equitable access to liveable environments in which they can thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add to the Greenest City Action Plan a biodiversity target and a target related to toxins prevention.</li> <li>Every Vancouver neighbourhood has a Walk Score of at least 70 (indicating that most errands can be accomplished on foot)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighbourhood Walk Scores (#)</li> </ol>
<b>13. Collaborative Leadership for a Healthy City for All</b> 	<p>Leaders from the public, private, and civil sectors in Vancouver work in integrated and collaborative ways towards the vision of a healthy Vancouver for all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of "actions for all" to be developed in Phase II will be implemented.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in Healthy City for All Leadership Table meetings (#)</li> <li>"Actions for all" implemented (%)</li> <li>Wilder Collaboration Assessment</li> </ol>

# Appendix C.

## Groups Consulted for Input into Vancouver's Submission

### Healthy City Leadership Table Members and Guests— Poverty Reduction Session

• Sadhu Johnston (Co-Chair)	City of Vancouver
• Patty Daley (Co-Chair)	Vancouver Coastal Health
• Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas (GM Lead)	City of Vancouver
• Aart Schuuman-Hess	Food Bank
• Adrienne Montani	First Call BC
• Lesley Campbell	City of Vancouver
• Catherine Ludgate	Vancity
• Steven Johnston	LED Lab
• Colter Long	MVAEC
• Keltie Craig	City of Vancouver
• Cynthia Petrie	BCIT
• Deb Bryant	Association of Neighbourhood Houses
• Allison Dunnet	City of Vancouver
• Erica Crawford	Shift Collaborative
• Jose Fernandez-Garcia	City of Vancouver
• Claire Gram	VCH
• Heather McNeill	Public Health Agency Canada
• Dianna Hurford	City of Vancouver
• Kevin Barlow	Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
• Kevin McCort	Vancouver Foundation
• Maggie Ip	SUCCESS
• Drazen Manojlovic	City of Vancouver
• Peter Marriott	City of Vancouver
• Lindsey Richardson	UBC
• Mary Ellen Schaafsma	United Way Lower Mainland
• Michael Anhorn	Canadian Mental Health Association
• Michael McKnight	United Way Lower Mainland
• Tobin Postma	City of Vancouver
• Wes Regan	City of Vancouver
• Rob Turnbull	Streethome
• Donnie Rosa	City of Vancouver
• Seth Klein	Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
• Skye Barbic	UBC
• Trish Kelly	Food Bank
• Christopher Van Veen	City of Vancouver
• Zakary Zawaduk	City of Vancouver

### Other Consulting Organizations

- Community Economic Development Strategic Advisory Committee (CEDSAAC)
- Our Homes Can't Wait
- Vancouver Community College-Our Place
- Living Income for Equality
- Our Place-REACH Community Health Clinic
- Civic Affairs Committee Vancouver Board Of Trade
- Central City Foundation
- Open Door Group
- Urban Core
- BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
- Urban Core -Literacy Table
- First United Church
- UBC Learning Exchange
- Lookout Emergency Society
- Downtown Community Centre
- Binnars Project
- Our Place
- LED-lab
- Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
- United Way of Lower Mainland
- Vancouver Island Health
- Jewish Family Service Agency
- Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC
- BC Alliance for Mental Health & Addiction
- Eastside Family Place
- Altria Tech Co-op
- Spirit of the Children
- BC Retired Teachers Association
- Vancouver Community College
- BC Association of Social Workers
- Living Wage for Families Campaign
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- City of Richmond
- University Women's Club of Vancouver
- BC Association of Family Resource Programs
- Society for Children and Young
- Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
- University of British Columbia
- Fraser Health
- Public Health Association of BC
- Citizens for Accessible Neighbourhoods
- Peer Net BC
- ACORN Canada
- Help BC Foster Kids Now



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