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**Province of  
British Columbia**  
Legislative Assembly



John Horgan, MLA  
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April 7, 2017

Anastasia Gaisenok  
Executive Director, Check Your Head  
and  
Paul Taylor  
Executive Director, Gordon Neighbourhood House  
Co-Chairs, BC Poverty Reduction Coalition  
810 815 West Hastings Street  
Vancouver, BC V6C 1B4

Dear Anastasia Gaisenok and Paul Taylor:

Thank you for your letter of February 1, 2017, in which you request BC New Democrats' plans for reducing poverty in British Columbia.

British Columbia is the most unequal province in Canada. More than half of British Columbians live paycheck to paycheck and one in five children live in poverty, and still we remain the only province in Canada without a poverty reduction plan. What we do have is a BC Liberal government that hikes bills and fees like Hydro, MSP, and ICBC premiums, all the while giving the wealthiest two per cent of British Columbians a tax cut. It's clear that when Christy Clark talks about things being good in our province she means for her friends and donors, not for families struggling to make ends meet. The result is what we see today – high poverty and children going to bed hungry. This is simply not acceptable.

BC's New Democrats have repeatedly introduced private member's legislation to bring in a poverty reduction strategy, but each time the BC Liberals have ignored it. Government policies can either reduce poverty or increase it, and a New Democrat government would choose to reduce it. We believe it is past time to move forward on a plan that will reduce poverty and homelessness in our province, so we have committed to passing legislation that includes targets and timelines to decrease poverty and create economic inclusion in BC.



BC's New Democrats have made several other commitments that will help the thousands of British Columbians who struggle to make ends meet. We'll give a break to eligible low-income families with a discounted rate on their hydro bills and eliminate the unfair medical services tax by integrating it into the income tax system just like every other province does. We will invest in safe, affordable, universal childcare and move towards a \$10/day plan to make life more affordable for families, create jobs and grow the economy. We have also committed to increasing the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour over our first term of government.

Further, BC's New Democrats have committed to providing stronger supports for renters, an issue Christy Clark and her government have neglected for years and as a result, British Columbians are faced with a significant rental housing crisis. We'll create an Affordable Housing Fund by charging a 2 per cent tax to speculators who treat housing purely as an investment and don't pay taxes in our province. We will expand co-op housing and as federal funding for housing co-ops expire, we'll maintain funding and develop a plan to further support co-op housing. We will close Christy Clark's geographic clause and fixed-term loopholes that allows some landlords to take advantage and hike rents beyond what's allowed and legislate supports for those being evicted due to renovations. We will also help free up vacancy in the private rental market by allowing post-secondary institutions to finance their own student housing projects where rents cover the costs of borrowing.

A BC New Democrat government will give British Columbians living on disabilities their bus passes back after Christy Clark and her Liberal government clawed back this vital support. Mean spirited policies like these are why BC continues to have one of the highest poverty rates in the country.

We have also committed to adopt the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and implement the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, another step with First Nations which Christy Clark and her government refuse to take. We can carry on with the current path the BC Liberals have set of limiting, denying and ignoring the reality and opportunity of First Nations people, or we can seize those opportunities together. New Democrats believe we can grow together, prosper together and build a better province together.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to respond to these important issues with some of the commitments we have made to date. The BC New Democrat platform will be released in the coming weeks and will include more details on how we will build a fairer, more progressive province for all British Columbians.

Yours sincerely,



John Horgan, Leader  
New Democrat Official Opposition