



British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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Teachers renew call for child poverty reduction plan in 2012

Now that the holiday season of giving is over, BC children and families living in poverty once again find themselves in deplorable situations as they struggle to take care of their basic necessities.

“Now more than ever we need to address child poverty in BC,” said BCTF President Susan Lambert. “Sadly, BC continues to lag behind others as one of the last provinces to act. BC has had the highest child poverty rate in Canada for eight years in a row. It is a truly alarming situation with poverty rates for Aboriginal families and recent immigrants ranging from 36 to 49%. The time for action is now!”

Classroom teachers are front-line witnesses to the devastating impact of poverty on children in their communities. Amy Dash, a Home Economics teacher at Lakes District Secondary in Burns Lake, notes that after the holiday season’s charitable efforts are over, bare cupboards are once again the shocking reality in many children’s homes.

“Campaigns like The Empty Stocking Fund, Adopt-a-School, and food bank donations—while well-intentioned—are band-aid measures that just mask the symptoms of child poverty. On their own, they cannot eliminate it. Children living in poverty need systemic transformational programs, not seasonal charity,” Dash said.

“Each semester my Foods and Nutrition classes have high enrolment numbers as the students know they will get to cook and eat at least twice a week. For some, it may be the only nutritious meal they have that day,” Dash added.

Sue Spalding, an English teacher at Skeena Junior Secondary School in Terrace, says that in the northern parts of the province, Aboriginal students and others are disproportionately affected by poverty. “As an Aboriginal teacher, I find this extremely discouraging,” Spalding said. “When will politicians of all parties take concrete action? How much longer will families in our communities have to wait?”

Dash and Spalding are both members of the BCTF’s Antipoverty Action Group. Working with other educators they have just produced a new poster for schools titled *Kids can’t wait for solutions to child poverty*. It includes information and resources

for teachers on how to advocate for children living in poverty. A key component is the continued call upon the BC government to implement a poverty reduction plan with comprehensive targets and timelines.

This call is echoed in *Better Schools for BC*, the teachers' plan which envisions adequately funded programs in schools where child poverty is significantly reduced or eliminated. Most provinces and territories are making progress in addressing child poverty with comprehensive poverty reduction plans.

Click [here](#) to see the new antipoverty poster, and [here](#) to read *Better Schools for BC*.

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