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Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

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POVERTY REDUCTION AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACT, 2014

Ms. Michelle Mungall

Explanatory Note

This Act will increase equality and economic inclusion in British Columbia by requiring the development and implementation of a strategy that includes specific and legislated targets and timelines in order to reduce the breadth and depth of poverty. A lead minister will be appointed to coordinate all aspects of the development and implementation of the strategy, in collaboration with a designated cabinet committee that will be co-chaired by the minister and the Premier. The Act also requires broad consultation in the development of the plan. An Advisory Committee will be created and will provide advice, monitor the implementation of the strategy and comment publicly on progress in the Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly.

POVERTY REDUCTION AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION ACT, 2014

HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia, enacts as follows:

Definitions

1 In this Act:

"advisory committee" means members of Advisory Committee appointed under section 9 of this Act;

"annual report" means the report to the legislature by the minister on progress in meeting the targets and timelines and other requirements set out in this Act;

"minister" means the lead cabinet minister responsible for coordinating all aspects of the development and implementation of the strategy;

"person" means a natural person;

"poverty" means the condition of a person who does not have access to the resources, means, choices and power necessary to:

(a) acquire and maintain economic self-reliance, and

(b) facilitate integration into and participation in society;

"strategy" means the poverty reduction strategy developed in accordance with Part 1 of this Act.

Purpose

2 The purpose of this Act is to increase equality and economic inclusion in British Columbia by requiring the development and implementation of a strategy that

includes specific and legislated targets and timelines in order to reduce the breadth and depth of poverty.

PART 1 — POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PROCESS AND TIMELINES

- 3** (1) A lead minister will be appointed to coordinate all aspects of the development and implementation of the strategy, in collaboration with a designated cabinet committee that will be co-chaired by the minister and the Premier.
- (2) The minister must develop a strategy to reduce poverty in British Columbia after undertaking public consultation in accordance with section 7.
- (3) The minister must provide the strategy to the Legislative Assembly in accordance with section 8 no later than 1 year after the coming into force of this Act.

Considerations

4 In preparing the strategy the minister must consider:

- (1) the government's goals including:
- (a) preserving and protecting human rights;
 - (b) fostering the participation of residents, communities, non-profit organizations, businesses, and all levels of government in developing and implementing policy;
 - (c) conducting open consultations and listening to stakeholders including giving special attention to the views of those living in poverty;
 - (d) addressing the social and economic costs that poverty imposes on communities, and all residents of British Columbia; and
 - (e) addressing the multiple barriers to employment and economic inclusion that exist for people living in poverty
 - (f) addressing the social determinants of health as they relate to poverty.
- (2) the diverse needs of the residents of British Columbia including:
- (a) the different realities of women and men;
 - (b) the needs of urban, rural and remote communities;
 - (c) the needs of First Nations communities, including those aboriginal and First Nations people who live in urban areas;
 - (d) the needs of immigrants and refugees;

- (e) the needs of people living with disabilities.
- (3) factors that may act as barriers to employment and economic inclusion:
- (a) discrimination and racism;
 - (b) child-rearing and single parenthood;
 - (c) low-wage employment;
 - (d) precarious employment;
 - (e) lack of education;
 - (f) lack of recognition of skills and credentials;
 - (g) occupational injuries;
 - (h) prolonged illness and disability;
 - (i) lack of affordable and accessible early childhood care and education; and
 - (j) lack of stable, accessible and affordable housing.
- (4) research provided by:
- (a) the academic sector;
 - (b) policy research groups;
 - (c) organizations that work with persons living in poverty; and
 - (d) other Canadian jurisdictions which have implemented similar plans.

Contents

5 The strategy must contain:

- (1) measures to determine:
- (a) the breadth and depth of poverty in British Columbia;
 - (b) groups experiencing higher rates of poverty;
 - (c) factors leading to poverty;
 - (d) factors preventing groups from leaving poverty;
 - (e) the lengths of time groups spend in poverty.
- (2) specific and legislated poverty reduction timelines and targets and a plan to achieve them, including:
- (a) actions to be taken by the Government;
 - (b) the terms and schedule of implementation for Government actions; and

- (c) the organizations responsible for implementation of Government actions.
- (3) a mechanism for periodic review and revision of the strategy, including the continuation of the strategy after the initial timeline has lapsed.
- (4) an annual report to the Legislative Assembly by the minister on progress in meeting the targets, including independent comments from the Advisory Committee.

Reporting

6 The minister must publish an annual report detailing:

- (1) the state of poverty in British Columbia;
- (2) the progress toward implementing the strategy;
- (3) the attainment of the goals and the specific objectives and performance measures of the strategy;
- (4) recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the strategy; and
- (5) independent comment from the Advisory Committee.

Consultation

7 The minister must consult with the following in the development of the plan, including the specific targets and timelines;

- (a) First Nations;
- (b) the Government of Canada;
- (c) local governments;
- (e) non-profit organizations, charities, and societies dedicated to reducing poverty in British Columbia;
- (f) the business community;
- (g) the trade union community;
- (h) the academic community; and
- (i) residents of British Columbia living in poverty.

Submission

- 8** The minister must provide the strategy to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who must immediately cause the report and legislation to be laid before the Legislative Assembly.

PART 2 — ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 9** (1) The minister will create an Advisory Committee of 17 members appointed by the government on recommendation of the Minister after consulting the groups listed in Section 7.
- (2) The Advisory Committee membership will be:
- (a) five persons from non-profit organizations directly involved in reducing the effects of poverty
 - (b) two persons presently living in poverty
 - (c) five persons from business, organized labour, local governments, and academia
 - (d) three representatives from First Nations
 - (e) two ex officio members from the public service who will not be entitled to vote.
- (3) The appointments will be made so as to achieve as equitably as possible a representation of women and men and the regions of British Columbia and reflect the demographic composition of the population of British Columbia.
- (4) The Advisory Committee will provide advice, monitor the implementation of the strategy and comment publicly on progress in the Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly.

PART 3 — MISCELLANEOUS

Offence

- 10** Section 5 of the *Offence Act* does not apply to this Act.

Regulations

11 The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations referred to in section 41 of the *Interpretation Act*.

Commencement

12 This Act comes into force by regulation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.