



January 25, 2018

VIA EMAIL: carole.james.MLA@leg.bc.ca

The Honourable Carole James, M.L.A.
Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier
Room 153 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Minister,

Re Priorities for the upcoming B.C. Budget 2018/2019

Thank you for the opportunity to share our members' observations and priorities in the lead-up to *B.C. Budget 2018/19*.

British Columbia is emerging from 16 years of fiscal austerity under the former B.C. Liberal government, where the wishes of business have been consistently prioritized over the needs of people and the environment.

As we entered into 2017, our province was left with one of the highest poverty rates in the country. Inequality was on the rise. We are living with a serious housing affordability crisis. Thousands of our citizens die each year from overdoses. Our prisons are overcrowded and increasingly violent. Few seniors have access to professional home support services. And action on climate change had been weakened after years of inaction.

Now, with new NDP government leadership, we are seeing signs that another way forward is possible. The *Budget 2017 Update* took important first steps to renew leadership in government. The update showed that investments in public services can be made without sacrificing fiscal responsibility.

The pending *B.C. Budget 2018/19* marks an important moment, when our province can take the next steps toward a fiscal plan that truly puts families and communities first. We support the government's readiness to renew the tradition of progressive public leadership, and urge you to focus on rebuilding the social services on which the health of our society depends.

We offer you these practical suggestions for strengthening the vital public programs and services that British Columbians rely on to improve their lives every day:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive, affordable housing strategy.
2. Begin implementation of universal, affordable, \$10 a Day Child Care.



3. Invest in community-based health services and the workers who serve our communities.
4. Restore funding to our justice system, especially for court services, corrections and legal aid services.
5. Make a significant re-investment in sustainable natural resource management, environmental protection and climate action.
6. Restore funding for post-secondary education.
7. Begin to restore balance in our workplaces by investing in the proactive enforcement of employment standards and a fairer, more effective Labour Relations Board.
8. Fully implement the recommendations of the Plecas Report, including increased staff resources in the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

To support these priorities, the BCGEU also recommends that the B.C. Government explore the following options to access additional revenue and restore fairness to B.C.'s tax and revenue system:

1. Further increase personal income tax rates for society's top earners.
2. Restore B.C.'s corporate income tax rate to 13.5 per cent permanently.
3. Implement new housing-related tax measures as part of an affordable housing strategy.
4. Eliminate costly and inefficient oil and gas subsidies.
5. Strengthen revenue opportunities for the Liquor Distribution Branch.
6. Build tourism revenue by restoring operational funding for BC Parks to 2001 levels.

We believe that immediate action to expand government revenues, invest in vital public services and to promote equality, sustainability and diversification will ensure the long-term vision for good jobs, healthy families, strong communities and a robust economy for British Columbia.

The BCGEU supports this government's efforts to implement changes to the current tax structure that will enhance revenue and improve fairness. We also challenge the government to consider additional improvements to restore equity and fairness to our economy and to protect our environment and natural resources for future generations.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Smith
President