



November 4, 2011

Anne Penman
Producer
CBC
Via e-mail

Dear Anne,

I am writing in support of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's request for additional programming focusing on long term solutions to hunger and poverty on CBC's Food Bank Day this December. We recognize the great work that CBC Vancouver has done over the years in supporting food banks and by extension low income people.

First Call is a coalition of over 90 provincial and regional organizations mobilizing British Columbians to work together to ensure our children and youth have the rights, opportunities and resources required to achieve their full potential. We believe all children and youth in BC should have first call on society's resources. We are a member of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and support the call for a provincial poverty reduction strategy with legislated timelines and targets to which we can hold ourselves accountable.

Food banks were intended to be a temporary solution to what was considered a temporary problem of hunger in the 1980's. The reality is that too many British Columbians continue to slide deeper into poverty.

Income assistance rates, disability-related income supports and unemployment benefits are too low and force people to seek out free food to feed themselves and their families. As evidence, 73% of BC food bank users rely on income from these three sources. BC's income assistance rates are in need of serious increases and should be indexed annually to match increases in the cost of living, along with other policy changes that would help reduce the depth of their poverty. Federal Employment Insurance benefits are also inadequate, especially if you were a low wage worker before becoming unemployed.

Many food bank users are in paid work, but are not able to earn enough to buy the food they need. Almost one in nine of BC food bank users' primary income is from employment. Low wages and/or precarious or part-time employment are the problems for these families.

We believe that a focus on charity alone is ineffective in supporting low income children and families, as it does not address the roots of poverty and inequality in our society.

We need a public discussion of why we have become a society where so many people don't have enough income to buy food. Are we not shamed that 32% of BC food bank users are children? What does this say about our understanding of the importance of healthy child development to the future of our society?

We would be thrilled to hear additional programming on CBC Vancouver addressing the roots of inequality on Food Bank Day. Thank you for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,

[original signed by]

Adrienne Montani
Provincial Coordinator

Copy: BC Poverty Reduction Coalition