



Feeding hope. Changing lives.

February 5, 2019

Attn: The Honourable Shane Simpson, M.L.A.  
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

Dear Minister Simpson,

I am writing to offer UGM's support for the Government's *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* that was announced in October 2018.

As an organization working in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, we view this legislation as an important step in addressing the critical issues of poverty, homelessness and addiction in our communities. However, we believe more can be done. Raising income assistance rates in the upcoming February 2019 budget is a necessary next step in addressing the depths of poverty within the DTES and throughout the entire province.

Since 1940, UGM has been working to overcome poverty, homelessness and addiction, one life at a time. Quite simply, UGM changes lives. We offer effective, life changing programs to men, women, youth and children through our comprehensive continuum of care. However, with income assistance rates that remain stagnant, those participating in our programming continually face barriers to achieving stability and development. Currently, income assistance falls well below the cost of living, and if we do not act, people will continue to struggle to find appropriate and affordable housing, establish food security, and sustain long-term employment.

Following a year of poverty reduction consultations in communities throughout the province, we are pleased to see the development of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*, but want to see our Provincial Government take additional steps to address the depth of poverty by increasing income assistance rates in the upcoming budget. Raising the rates is a vital step towards developing concrete solutions for the men, women and children experiencing poverty, homelessness and addiction in our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Mollard', is written in a cursive style.

Bill Mollard  
President, Union Gospel Mission