



**Submission to the Select Standing
Committee on Finance and
Government Services**

Budget Consultation 2020

Submission By:

The Canadian Union of Public Employees
British Columbia Division

**Paul Faoro, President
June 2019**

Introduction

The Canadian Union of Public Employees British Columbia (CUPE BC) appreciates the opportunity to submit its views on priorities for the 2020 budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee).

CUPE BC represents more than 97,000 workers in British Columbia employed in municipalities, and school boards, colleges and universities, and community organizations. Our members also provide transit and library services, and we represent many workers in private sector organizations. Our 97,000 members deliver public services across a wide range of sectors, and thus play an integral role in translating the provincial budget into action.

As such, they are affected by budget priorities like all British Columbians – as citizens receiving vital services, but also as employees in a way that is central to the work that they do in building strong communities. Our working conditions are directly related to healthy sustainable communities, and both are direct functions of budget prioritization.

We support the hard work that the BC government has undertaken to understand and reverse the damage to public services incurred after 16 years of a starvation diet of provincial investments in public services under the former government. The recommendations in this document contain high level budget policy recommendations and specific pressing needs identified by our members in each sector. We are hopeful that this budget will encompass sweeping changes in the way public services are funded and we welcome this opportunity to bring forth the concerns and priorities of the membership of CUPE BC.

Library Sector Workers

CUPE BC represents more than 3700 library workers in more than 50 communities across the province. Provincial government funding for libraries was cut by nearly 20 percent in 2010 and funding has not increased since then. Restoring provincial funding to public libraries is critically important to ensure that libraries can continue to provide quality services in our communities throughout BC.

Libraries provide essential and unique public services and should not be overlooked. Their existence alone is a vital public statement that all people deserve access to knowledge and information and demonstrates our society's commitment to promoting democratic values and critical thinking. Libraries provide free access to life-long learning, which has become increasingly important as tuition for post-secondary education increases. They are centres for community building and important spaces for celebrating and promoting local arts and culture.

Public libraries are the only public institutions that are truly equitable in providing services for all community members so that they may participate in, and benefit from, the social and economic development of their communities. Public libraries are also the only freely accessible public spaces for all British Columbians to connect with, learn

about, and experience the advantages of living in this province.

Libraries also play an important role in addressing the digital divide in BC through supplying free access to internet and technology. This is extremely important in our society where the internet has become central to how we communicate and share information. Furthermore, online application forms are now the primary method of accessing many government services and programs including social assistance. Library workers play an important role in supporting library patrons in developing their digital literacy, and in many cases play a supportive role in assisting patrons in applying for government services and programs. Libraries provide the main access point to internet and technology for many who cannot afford high-speed internet or a computer at home.

Libraries provide an important social safety net for vulnerable populations including the homeless, people struggling with mental health issues, seniors, and new immigrants.^v Libraries should receive funding, support, and resources to effectively respond to their role in addressing poverty on the front lines.^{vi}

We know that public libraries significantly contribute to the government's goals for making life more affordable, improving services, and building a strong, sustainable and innovative economy for all British Columbians.

Recommendation 1: *The provincial government increase funding for public libraries to \$20 million in 2020.*

Library workers provide a vital service in our communities, yet library jobs are often precarious and poorly paid. Many library workers are part-time, do not have a regular schedule, and lack access to benefits such as extended health and pension. The majority of library workers are women, and in general library workers have pay grids that are separate than other municipal workers in the same city and are paid less than other municipal workers with similar levels of responsibility and experience. Currently the average woman working full-time full-year jobs in Canada earn 74 percent of the annual earnings of the average man, and this gap has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years. This can be partially explained by the fact that that female workers are concentrated in industries and occupations where their duties parallel traditional gender roles.

In order to reduce the gender-pay-gap, the systematic undervaluation of traditionally women's work needs to be addressed. The library sector is a great sector to begin addressing pay equity in BC and ensure that the quality of the service library workers provide is recognized by providing decent compensation and benefits.

Recommendation 2: *Provide extra funding to libraries for the purposes of pay equity with other municipal workers.*

Many indigenous communities in BC have little or no access to library services. Without specific agreements in place, residents of indigenous reserve communities may not have access to nearby municipal library services. The BC government should invest the staffing, training, and infrastructure necessary to ensure that indigenous communities

on reserve have access to borrowing print materials, internet, and other digital and technological resources provided by libraries.

Recommendation 3: Specifically increase funding for Indigenous Communities to access library services and free internet.

K-12 Education workers

We have been pleased to see new initiatives aimed at restoring funding to BC's K-12 system over the last two years. Investments in K-12 support staff are investments in our children's learning environments and opportunities. Having a government that is working with our members and recognizing the invaluable work of K-12 support staff has been essential to improving our K-12 system.

CUPE's 28,000 K-12 members provide clerical and IT support, custodial, trades and maintenance work for safe, healthy learning environments, and instructional support as educational assistants working directly with children with diverse and complex needs. We also represent bus drivers and crossing guards who ensure that thousands of children get to and from school safely every day. We recognize and value the government's consultation and engagement with CUPE and our members on issues ranging from funding models to the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. We look forward to continuing to work with the government toward a K-12 system that puts students first and gives them the best possible learning conditions and opportunities.

CUPE BC believes that a strong public education system is the best way to ensure that education is inclusive, equitable, and accessible. Public education is the backbone of a democratic society. Public funding directed into the private school system, particularly into the elite and charter schools, diverts funding for the more equitable public system. Funding into the private school system, by percentage is the fastest growing area of education funding. This is unconscionable and should be immediately ceased and all funding for K-12 education should go into the public education system and not to support those who chose to use an alternate education system.

Recommendation 4: Immediately cease funding to elite and charter schools and divert those funds into the public-school system.

Recommendation 5: Phase out funding for all private schools over the next three years and divert those funds into the public-school system.

Our members continue to struggle with reduced hours of custodial and clerical workers which has eroded their services. Our custodial workers across the province have raised concerns over the limited dayshifts and daytime hours which is threatening their ability to perform the work that they know is vital to maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment for students. Understaffing and overwork in this area is a health and safety issue for our workers, all staff, and students.

We continue to have serious concerns about staffing levels and working conditions for Education Assistants (EAs). Insufficient hours remain one of the most prominent

concerns we hear from our Education Assistants. Hours that generally range from 4 to 6 hours per day (often less than 6) means that large numbers of EAs are not earning living wages.

We greatly appreciate that the government has been working on increasing EA positions. The consultation on changing the funding model for educational assistants gives us hope for a more robust EA funding model that will help us meet each and every student's needs.

This being said, we know that many districts still face significant difficulties filling already existing EA positions. Support staff continue to tell us that insufficient hours of employment, which create personal hardship for our members, has been the major contributor to the recruitment and retention problems that many districts face. Improvements in hours and wages would go a long way for achieving recruitment and retention to meet the demands in the K-12 system.

Where training and experience matter greatly to meeting the complex challenges in classrooms and educational settings, staff recruitment and retention can be a major factor in maintaining the safety of these spaces. For example, violence in the workplace is a significant and growing challenge in the K-12 sector. The results from our 2018 survey show that 41 percent of K-12 members say that they have seen an increase in the level of violence in their workplaces, and 65 percent say that they have experienced angry or abusive encounters with students. When we isolate the responses to EAs only, this number rises to a shocking 85 percent. Our members tell us that increasing staffing levels, hours of work and better training are critical components needed to address these challenges and make our schools safer.

Recommendation 6: *Ensure that sufficient funding be allocated to the K-12 budget to provide for full-time hours for support staff and to ensure adequate staffing levels so that learning and working conditions are safe for all staff and students in BC schools.*

Recommendation 7: *Ensure that adequate, stable and predictable funding be allocated to K-12 so that school districts can meet their obligations to deliver accessible, quality education.*

With Budget 2019, BC renewed its commitment to reconciliation in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. Both the TRC and the province have recognized the important role that education can play in reconciliation by integrating Indigenous content into all subjects in the new K-12 curriculum.

We greatly appreciate that the province has made it a goal to reduce inequity for indigenous students. CUPE Aboriginal Education EAs and support workers across the province will play an integral role in working with Aboriginal communities and students to achieve this goal. They provide academic support aimed at maximizing the educational experience of indigenous students and play key roles in assisting school staff and students in understanding the role of indigenous culture and heritage in the lives of students and in their educational outcomes.

Recommendation 8: *Ensure that K-12 funding is adequate in meeting the Province's commitment to reconciliation. This includes ensuring adequate staffing for implementing culturally appropriate programming in BC schools.*

Child Care Sector Workers

CUPE BC commends the province on its initiatives aimed at improving the state of early education and child care in BC. The subsidies and new licensed child care spaces announced in 2018, combined with the 2019 Childcare BC plan, an investment of \$1 billion over the next three years, are historic steps toward a universal child care program in BC.

Studies in Europe, Quebec and from the US demonstrate that quality universal child care provides life-long benefits with respect to brain development. In addition, these studies show that universal child care increases women's participation in the labour force, increases social mobility, narrows the gender pay gap and reduces poverty. Thus, providing well-paid jobs in the child care sector is a critical component to eliminating the gender pay gap - not only because most child care workers are women, but because access to affordable child care significantly increases the ability for women to participate in the workforce

Finally, it is well known that low wages have a negative impact on the ability to attract and keep qualified early educators in the sector. The government's investment in this sector to address low wages of early education workers, improve recruitment and retention in the child care sector, and provide accessible training for these workers is essential to accessible and quality child care.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC notes that the median wage for early childhood educators "is 19 percent lower than that of BC workers overall, which leads to high turnover and chronic staff shortages, and contributes to financial insecurity of educators, many of whom are women with children of their own. Recruitment and retention of early childhood educators is a major challenge across the province."

Recommendation 9: *We urge the government to continue with its effort to address low wages for those in the early education and child care sector.*

Recommendation 10: *That the government continue its initiatives aimed at strengthening BC's early education sector, with the objective of achieving affordable, universal child care in the province.*

Recommendation 11: *We believe that the Ministry of Education should play a prominent role in the development of universal child care. It is our position that child care should be viewed through the lens of 'early learning', and as such, should be housed under the Ministry of Education, including, but not limited to, the creation of child care spaces in schools.*

Social Services Sector Workers

We are pleased to see the efforts that have been made toward addressing the issue of chronically low-waged jobs in social services. These workers are essential to the care of people with developmental disabilities, they support families and youth in need, provide quality child care, assist people with substance abuse issues, support victims of violence, and offer various other critical assistance in support of the health and well-being of thousands of British Columbians.

The low-wage redress has helped close the wage gap that has persisted between these workers and others doing similar work but who work directly in the healthcare sector. The most recent elimination of contract flipping in the care sector has been a huge step forward in protecting those jobs and wages, thereby increasing worker retention, worker safety, and quality of care.

Recommendation 12: *Continue with its effort to address low wages for those doing care work and its effort to pursue wage parity amongst those doing this work across sectors.*

Recommendation 13: *Continue efforts to address retention issues in the social services sector. High rates of precarious work in the form of part-time and/or casual work must be addressed for social services and child care workers.*

In addition to being chronically low-waged, workers in this sector report facing high rates of workplace violence. In a recent survey they identified this as their second most important concern outside of monetary issues. The issue of workplace violence needs a holistic approach that combines training, protections, and retention measures for workers.

Recommendation 14: *Address the issue of work-place violence in the community social services sector, including but not limited to increased staffing and training.*

Community Health Workers

CUPE BC represents BC's more than 4000 ambulance paramedics, and so we will briefly discuss the emergency healthcare sector. Although underfunding has been a chronic issue in all health sectors significant problems unique to CUPE's paramedics have been exacerbated by the funding shortages by the previous government and a funding model that is antiquated and doesn't meet the needs of modern paramedic services in the province.

The current funding model has paramedics in rural and small communities working on on-call pay for \$2.00/hour and other paramedics staffing ambulance stations in medium communities on stand-by for less than \$13.00/hr. In total there are over 24,000 hours of paramedics paid on stand-by time each week and 1.25 million paramedic hours each year. 140 of 185 ambulance stations in British Columbia are staffed on a model of poverty wages and precarious work.

Health Minister Dix has spoken out against the current model both in opposition and as minister. It is time to change from a funding model that leaves the residents of this province without timely and effective emergency medical services. For example, a rural/remote station will have an unstaffed ambulance. Emergency calls in that region would then be redirected to the nearest available ambulance (which could be hours away) which then in turn would leave no ambulance in that region. In urban areas, the volume of calls is much greater than the staffing levels provided due to underfunding, and throughout our province, response times are still not meeting the national standard.

In addition to inadequate funding levels, paramedics across the province are carrying much of the burden of the ongoing opioid overdose crisis.

After 16 years of a government that chose confrontation over collaboration in the emergency health sector, we are pleased that funding commitments to our ambulance service have now led the sector to significant progress, including investments in job creation, vehicles and services.

Recommendation 15: *Continue to provide new funding to BCEHS to support the deployment reviews for communities and continue the transition to regular work.*

Recommendation 16: *Ensure that funding is provided to provide paramedic workers with a comprehensive benefits package to take care of their physical and mental well-being.*

CUPE BC represents more than 1,300 community health workers across multiple health authorities – Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Island Health. About 800 of our members work under the Health Sciences Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) collective agreement, and about 500 are employed under the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) contract. We represent a large variety of professions including clerical support clerks, environmental health officers, mental health workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, and many more.

We commend the government's commitment to addressing the low wages of workers in the Community Bargaining Association. The \$40 million of funding allocated to low-wage redress in the latest round of bargaining will help to address inequalities between CBA members and workers doing similar work in acute care. We hope that this funding will help to improve morale in this sector, where workers often feel undervalued, while improving recruitment and retention. As the government continues to increase health care provisions beyond traditional hospital settings, this recognition that workers in the community provide equally valuable work is key to ensuring that health care jobs remain attractive and decent.

Recommendation 17: *Continue to prioritize improvements in compensation for low-wage workers in the health sector.*

The community health sector is in urgent need of more funding for staffing, especially in-home health where workload is currently at crisis levels. Unpaid overtime is systemic throughout community health. A workload survey we conducted in the fall of 2017

demonstrated that this sector is dependent on staff working unpaid overtime to complete their duties. Eighty-four percent of HSPBA survey respondents and 73 percent of CBA survey respondents regularly work unpaid time during their breaks, and before and after work. In general, workers reported that managers are not willing or able to provide overtime when needed. As frontline workers in health, our members understand the importance of their work and find it challenging to leave work unfinished. Without adequate staffing or the availability of overtime, workers feel pressured to sacrifice their own breaks, sometimes at the cost of their own health and well-being. Furthermore, the quality of public services is suffering as a result of workload. Less than half of HSPBA members are satisfied with the level of service they can provide, and nearly 80 percent said that workload impacts quality of service.

Our Environmental Health and Licensing Officers for day care and adult care facilities reported only being able to respond to immediate demands and not having time to complete the routine checks required to ensure compliance with provincial regulations for health and safety.

The most significant burnout and workload stress is among our home health practitioners. Patients are being discharged from hospital and referred to home health without adequate consideration of staff available to provide care. This puts vulnerable patients at risk and causes moral distress for our members, who feel that this very serious issue is being overlooked. There are currently no case load limits and, as a result, practitioner caseloads are extremely unreasonable. For example, many of our Social Worker Case Managers, Occupational Therapists, and Physiotherapists have caseloads of more than 130 patients. More than 50 percent of our survey respondents in home health said they are not able to see patients within the prescribed timeframe. Furthermore, practitioners reported the frustration of only being able to respond to the immediate needs of and risks facing patients, even though they could support them in activities that would help them reach a full recovery if they had more time.

In addition to the unreasonable size of caseloads, patients are becoming more complex. More acute patients are being discharged from hospital sooner, and there has also been an increase in patients who are facing poverty, mental health, addiction and other vulnerabilities that make the provision of care more complex. In order for community health care and home care to be successful, to address significant recruitment and retention issues, and to ensure quality of care, adequate staffing needs to be provided.

Recommendation 18: *Increase funding, especially for practitioners in home health units, to increase staffing in community health, targeted towards addressing workload, and providing backfill and relief during breaks.*

Post-Secondary Education Workers

CUPE BC represents over 15,000 workers in the post-secondary sector. We represent workers in a wide range of classifications including teaching assistants, sessional instructors, facilities staff, event staff, library staff, clerical staff, maintenance workers, custodial staff, and more. While the types of jobs we represent in this sector are diverse, all work to run post-secondary campuses as holistic units, through service to either

grounds, faculty and staff, or students.

Total funding for the post-secondary sector has continued to decline since 2001. Total provincial funding for the sector in 2001-2002 was \$1.9 billion dollars. (In current dollars this would be \$2.54 billion). In 2017-2018 total government funding for the sector was just \$2.15 billion. After accounting for inflation, simply to match 2001-2002 funding levels, the government would need to spend approximately \$400 million more than it has currently allocated. University and colleges have expanded greatly over this same period. While funding in the sector has fallen behind inflation, total expenses for colleges and universities have gone up immensely – more than 80 percent since 2002. Chronic underfunding has put increasing pressure on staff as post-secondary institutions try to do more and more with less. Staff are faced with increased workloads, while their pay increases have not kept up with inflation. As a result of the pressure to cut costs, jobs in the sector are becoming more and more precarious. For non-academic workers, as full-time regular staff retire institutions are not hiring replacement full-time regular staff. Instead, post-secondary institutions are increasingly relying on part-time and casual staff that often have limited access to benefits.

Precarious work and the negative effects of contracting out in the post-secondary sector is most strongly felt by those who work in food and custodial services. Large corporations such as Compass, Sodexo, Chartwells, Best Cleaners etc. are being awarded contracts in many institutions across the province. These corporations pay low wages and use pending contract bids as an excuse not to improve poor working conditions. This has ramifications for the state of maintenance and upkeep on BC's post-secondary campuses. Post-secondary funding should include directed funding to be utilized for maintenance specifically. Safe and clean infrastructure is best for all workers and students on our post-secondary campuses and those whose jobs entail maintaining our campuses deserve fair working conditions.

Recommendation 19: *Post-secondary funding packages should include directed funding amounts to be utilized specifically for food and custodial services.*

Our academic workers also face precarity in their jobs. With tight budgets, post-secondary institutions have also been hesitant to hire tenured faculty and permanent teaching staff. Class sizes are growing, and teaching assistants, employed on temporary contracts, are being asked to play an increasingly significant role in core teaching functions and pressured to take on extremely high workloads. Post-Secondary institutions have also become over-reliant on under-paid contract sessional instructors, with limited or no job security, to expand the course offerings instead of using permanent teaching staff. These academic workers are extremely precarious, and many must face the disheartening reality that they may never be able to secure, what seem to be increasingly rare, tenured faculty positions. These are significant concerns, since post-secondary institutions have been an important source of good jobs in communities throughout BC, especially outside of the lower mainland.

Recommendation 20: *Restore post-secondary funding to 2001-2002 levels (in current dollars) and eliminate the present shortfall.*

As a result of underfunding, our post-secondary institutions are being forced to pursue private sources of funding. They are becoming more like 'education businesses' rather than public institutions serving the public good through educating our society. After 16 years under the BC Liberals, the Boards of Governors of our post-secondary institutions have been dominated by right-wing political appointments who have tried to make our post-secondary institutions more financially independent from government, with little regard for the transformative impact of the pursuit of private revenue has on the goals and aims of our public post-secondary institutions. In 1995 government funding made up 74 percent of the operating revenues of universities in BC now it is less than 48 percent. Public universities in BC are officially now less than 50 percent publicly funded.

Community colleges are slightly better, but government funding as a proportion of total revenue has still dropped significantly – from 64 percent in 2001 to less than 57 percent in 2015. The proportion of revenue that comes from fees and tuition has greatly increased since 2001. At universities in BC, in 2001-2002, total tuition made up 26 percent of operating revenues; it now makes up over 43 percent of operating revenues. At community colleges in BC, in 2001-2002 total tuition made up 22 percent of operating revenues, and now this has increased to more than 31 percent of operating revenues. When students are treated as customers rather than citizens the priorities of post-secondary institutions change. The emphasis in a 'customer' approach is to focus on what programs will be the easiest to sell, rather than a 'citizen' approach where the focus is on educating individuals who will contribute to building the society we want to live in.

Also, in a 'customer' or 'corporate' model the money spent on providing the services, in this case education, is reduced as much as possible to save costs. When the focus is on selling degrees, the quality of the education and the support services provided can be justifiably compromised in order to save costs. We have seen evidence of this through cuts to student support services such as counselling, increased class sizes, and the increasing role of contract teaching staff rather than permanent faculty. It is imperative to prevent institutions from prioritizing profit over their purpose as public institution - to provide our communities with educated workers, and innovative research aimed at the betterment of society.

Recommendation 21: *Ensure that funding levels are high enough that post-secondary institutions remain majority government funded, and therefore public institutions, over the long-term.*

We commend the government's decision to eliminate tuition fees for Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning, commitment to expanding the tuition waver program for former youth in care, and reduction of interest on student loans. These are extremely important steps in making post-secondary education more affordable and reducing barriers to those who already face the greatest obstacles. We hope that the government will continue to reduce barriers facing students pursuing a post-secondary education. Tuition and other compulsory fees have doubled since the BC Liberals came into power in 2001. In 2001-2002 the average undergraduate tuition was \$2,527; in 2015-2016 it was \$5,964. BC currently relies too heavily on student loans and should offer more non-repayable student aid to students based on financial need.

Recommendation 22: Decrease tuition and offer more non-repayable student aid.

Tuition fees are especially exorbitant for international students. Recruitment of international students is now more about profit than it is about attracting international talent, enriching our institutions through knowledge exchange, or to engaging in a global community of research and innovation. On average, in Canada, international students pay three times the tuition fees of domestic students. For example, in 2017 the tuition and fees for two semesters at SFU was about \$5,520 for domestic students, whereas for international students it was \$22,930 - more than 4 times higher. At UBC in 2017, tuition and fees for two semesters at UBC was about \$5,190 for domestic students, whereas for international students it was \$36,588— a shocking 7 times higher. This egregious disparity will only increasingly restrict access to education in BC to the global elite who can afford it, resulting in serious compromises to BC's future ability to attract talent, and to recruit students from diverse background.

In the context of chronic underfunding, as international tuition becomes a more and more important revenue stream, it could result in post-secondary institutions prioritizing international recruitment over domestic student recruitment. Furthermore, programming might become geared to what is easy to sell abroad rather than what our society needs. In a corporate-marketing governance model, recruiters are also more inclined to encourage students who are not qualified to apply, to exaggerate the quality of services offered, or to sell education on the basis that it is a stepping stone to permanent residency. The government needs to seriously reconsider the current strategy for international student recruitment to ensure that programs targeted towards international students are achieving their stated goals, and to ensure fair and just treatment of international students.

Recommendation 23: Amend the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to include the regulation of fees for international students.

We applaud legislation requiring BC post-secondary institutions to address the systemic nature of pervasive sexual violence on campus. Sexual assault is a gendered crime. Women and girls are five times more likely to experience sexual assault than men. Sexual assault victimization rates are five times higher for women under the age of 35.^{1,2} It is estimated that one in five Canadian women will experience sexual assault while attending a post-secondary institution.³ Finally, and importantly, women from marginalized backgrounds are especially at risk: Aboriginal women are three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-aboriginal women. Studies show that women with disabilities are three times more likely to be forced or threatened into unwanted sexual activity than non-disabled women. And racialized women are less likely to report incidents of sexual assault than non-racialized women.^{4 5 6} Legislation

¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14241-eng.htm#a8>

² <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>

³ <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Factsheet-SexualAssault.pdf>

⁴ Violence Against Aboriginal Women, Government of Canada, Newfoundland Labrador, 2005

⁵ Developing a Response to Sexual Violence: A Resource Guide for Ontario's Colleges and Universities.

⁶ <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Factsheet-SexualAssault.pdf>

requiring all BC post-secondary institutions to have a sexual violence policy is an important and actionable first step to addressing sexual violence and its disproportionate effects on women and we stand behind this legislation.

Recommendation 24: *Stay the course with Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act updates requiring all BC post-secondary institutions to have a sexual violence and misconduct policy; considering the disproportionate effects of sexual violence on women of marginalized backgrounds and identities.*

Skilled Trades

The BC Centre for Women in the Trades (BCCWITT) works to eliminate the barriers faced by women in the trades by building a network committed to creating a culture of equality and equal opportunity. Currently the BCCWITT is only funded for a two-year pilot project; through with it aims to increase the retention and advancement of women in the trades through targeted supports and programs. Ensuring on-going funding beyond the two-year pilot project for this important initiative will increase the retention and advancement of under-represented apprentices and journey-persons in the skilled trades.

Recommendation 25: *Provide permanent funding to the British Columbia Centre for Women in trades training.*

Municipal Workers

CUPE BC represents 30,000 municipal workers who provide the services and maintain the infrastructure that is vital to the health and well-being of British Columbians, but BC's cities and towns are facing unprecedented pressures and lack the sound financial footing to meet growing needs. Our municipalities need better revenue sources if we want them to continue to feed our success.

The property tax is a key component of the local government revenue system. While it has many positive attributes, it also has two key weaknesses – it's poor responsiveness to economic growth, and it's tendency to load a disproportionate tax share on to lower income groups.

Improvements to the municipal tax system are long overdue and should be accomplished through property tax reform and/or tax sharing arrangements, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities research document, *Strong Fiscal Futures*, sets out several principles that could guide decisions on both. Principles include those related to counteracting system weaknesses (i.e., poor economic responsiveness and regressive distribution), as well as other tax policy objectives (e.g., a better fit between who benefits and who pays; stability and predictability; practical administration; and fiscal relations in keeping with local government's role as an autonomous order of government).

Cities and towns are on the front lines of many challenges, such as climate change, the widening gap between rich and poor, and an aging population. Over the last two

decades, senior levels of government have downloaded more responsibilities to local governments, but often without the necessary funds to pay for them. Municipalities in BC still depend primarily on property taxes and user fees to pay their bills. These revenues weren't designed to support the types of services modern-day municipalities provide and aren't based on ability to pay.

Recommendation 26: Investigate progressive models for fair taxation and make new progressive models of revenue generation available to Municipalities.

Provincial Budget

To properly fund public infrastructure and services we must be unafraid to enact policies of fair taxation. Everyone and every business must pay their fair share. Almost two decades of tax cuts for the wealthiest few and big corporations has created a system that is increasing--not reducing--income inequality. This inequality is exacerbated by regressive taxation; these regressive taxes include consumption-based taxes and user fees. We should be addressing income inequality through tax reform instead of continuing to intensify income inequality by requiring those with the least ability to pay to be burdened by disproportionate costs.

Recommendation 27: Analyze the current taxation structure for the Province through a progressive lens and enact taxation changes that will focus on fairness.

British Columbia has been hit hard by a crisis of unaffordability. Although many residents of the province have continued to thrive through the crisis, many have not. A better system of progressive taxation through better wealth redistribution can help the government enact the types of social spending that will positively impact all residents of the Province, rich and poor.

Recommendation 28: Implement an additional top income tax bracket on incomes over \$200,000 and apply a tax rate of at least 22%.

In 2018, the BC Auditor General recommended more transparency around tax expenditure reporting, which totals about \$7 billion per year in BC. The Government should analyze the current structure of tax deductions to ensure that the system works to meet policy objectives and has remained relevant to the needs of British Columbia residents over the past 2 decades. There is significant opportunity to fight poverty, make life more affordable for middle income earners and meet progressive taxation goals through a redistribution of tax credits.

Recommendation 29: Review the structure of tax exemptions and credits to ensure that it meets current progressive tax policy outcomes.

ⁱ <http://bcemploymentstandardscoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/BCESC-Workers-Stories-of-Exploitation-and-Abuse-July-2017.pdf>

ⁱⁱ CUPE 2017 - Quality Jobs, Quality Education, Better Futures: REPORT What We Heard About Precarious Work In the Post-Secondary Sector https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/report_townhalls_2017_05_18.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See Brownlee reference above

^{iv} <http://cfs-fcee.ca/issues/international-students/>

^v <http://www.policynote.ca/public-libraries-are-becoming-the-new-social-safety-net/>

^{vi} <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/242/2018/04/Canadian-Union-of-Public-Employees-British-Columbia-Library-Workers.pdf>