



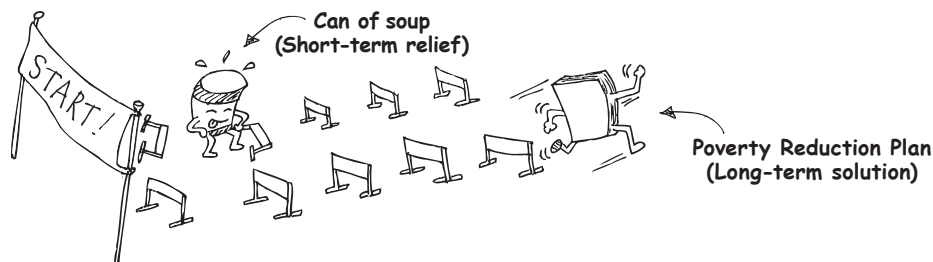
## SHARE THE WEIGHT:

An upstream alternative (or supplement) to your Food Bank Drive

**We are very generous.** We give to food banks, donate to charities, volunteer at soup kitchens and collect clothing for families in need. In fact, BC is one of the most generous provinces in Canada in terms of how much we give to charity. We give our time and money because we care about those less fortunate than ourselves.

**And yet, BC has had one of the highest poverty rates in Canada for the last 13 years.** 1 in 5 children in BC are living in poverty - that's 169,420, enough to fill the Canucks' stadium over nine times (First Call's 2014 Child Poverty Report Card - see toolkit for full report). It's time for a different approach.

**Food banks are necessary** to address the immediate needs of people living with hunger and malnutrition. However, these services can only provide short-term relief for the **downstream** symptoms of poverty and we need long-term solutions that go **upstream** to fix the root causes. Food Banks Canada itself recommend strong, comprehensive government policies to address poverty and hunger, and "significantly reduce the need for food banks" (Hunger Count 2014 - see toolkit for full report).



**BC is now the last province in Canada to commit to having a poverty reduction plan.** While other places in Canada are already saving lives and money by addressing poverty, BC is being left behind. We need a comprehensive poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines to make a real difference for families, communities and our province.

**Poverty is a heavy issue and we need everyone to share the weight.** Giving to charity is the community's way of stepping up - now we need to ask government and business to share the weight with us.

We are teaching our students to be **charitable givers**, and fostering **social responsibility** and **social service**. Let's also teach them to be **democratic citizens** and think about **social justice** by engaging with their government representatives.



On October 22, 2014, the government of Saskatchewan announced that it would commit to develop a poverty reduction strategy, making British Columbia the very last province in Canada without a plan to tackle poverty. And we still have one of the highest poverty rates in the country!



For full toolkit, visit [rethinkgiving.ca](http://rethinkgiving.ca)  
Thanks to Melanie Ewan, Ira Heidemann, Erin Kastner and the rest of the team at the **Poverty Reduction Action Committee (PRAC)** for their work in improving this fact sheet.  
Take action at [bcpovertyreduction.ca](http://bcpovertyreduction.ca)



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# SHARE THE WEIGHT WITH US

This holiday season get your students involved in the *Share the Weight* initiative. This activity is a great stand-alone exercise, or can easily be added to an existing food bank drive that your school may have.

Here is an example activity guide:

### Supplies needed:

- 📄 Empty clean cans (any size)
- 📄 Cardboard boxes or construction paper
- 📄 Share the Weight can sheet for each student
- ✂️ Scissors, tape or glue

### 1. Introduce some information about poverty in BC to students at a level they will understand (refer to toolkit for additional resources). For example:

- 📄 Ask them to think about the root causes of poverty.
- 📄 Describe the government as the group that makes the big rules or “policies” that could really help families and children in poverty, and ask what rules they would add or change?

### 2. Help students construct and decorate a large cardboard can or container from old cardboard boxes or construction paper and place it at the front entrance.

- 📄 To make it effective, ideas for decoration include:
  - 📄 Using the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition poster to wrap around the can (download it from [rethinkgiving.ca](http://rethinkgiving.ca)).
  - 📄 Adding information in large text or images on the can lid.
  - 📄 Making a banner to go with it.

### 3. Have students draw or write on the Share the Weight can sheets provided, and cut and tape to an empty can, or cut and glue them into paper cans using the template provided.

- 📄 You can ask students to tell government representatives about their concerns for children living in poverty and going hungry, and why they think we need a poverty reduction plan.

### 4. Fill the big can with all of these can messages from your students.

- 📄 Encourage other students to participate by pasting the rethinkgiving poster around your school (you can download it from [rethinkgiving.ca](http://rethinkgiving.ca)).

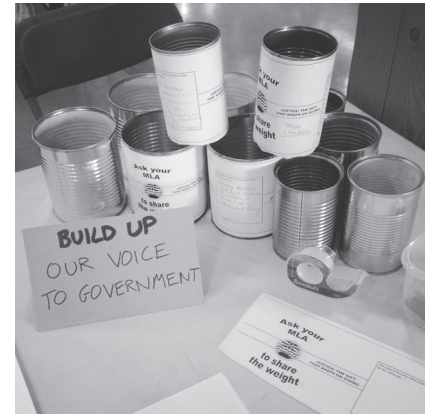
### 5. For older students, arrange a meeting with your local MLA: have your students present the big can to them and ask the government to share the weight with us.

- 📄 Prepare some students to talk about some of their concerns and why they think we need a long-term plan to tackle poverty.

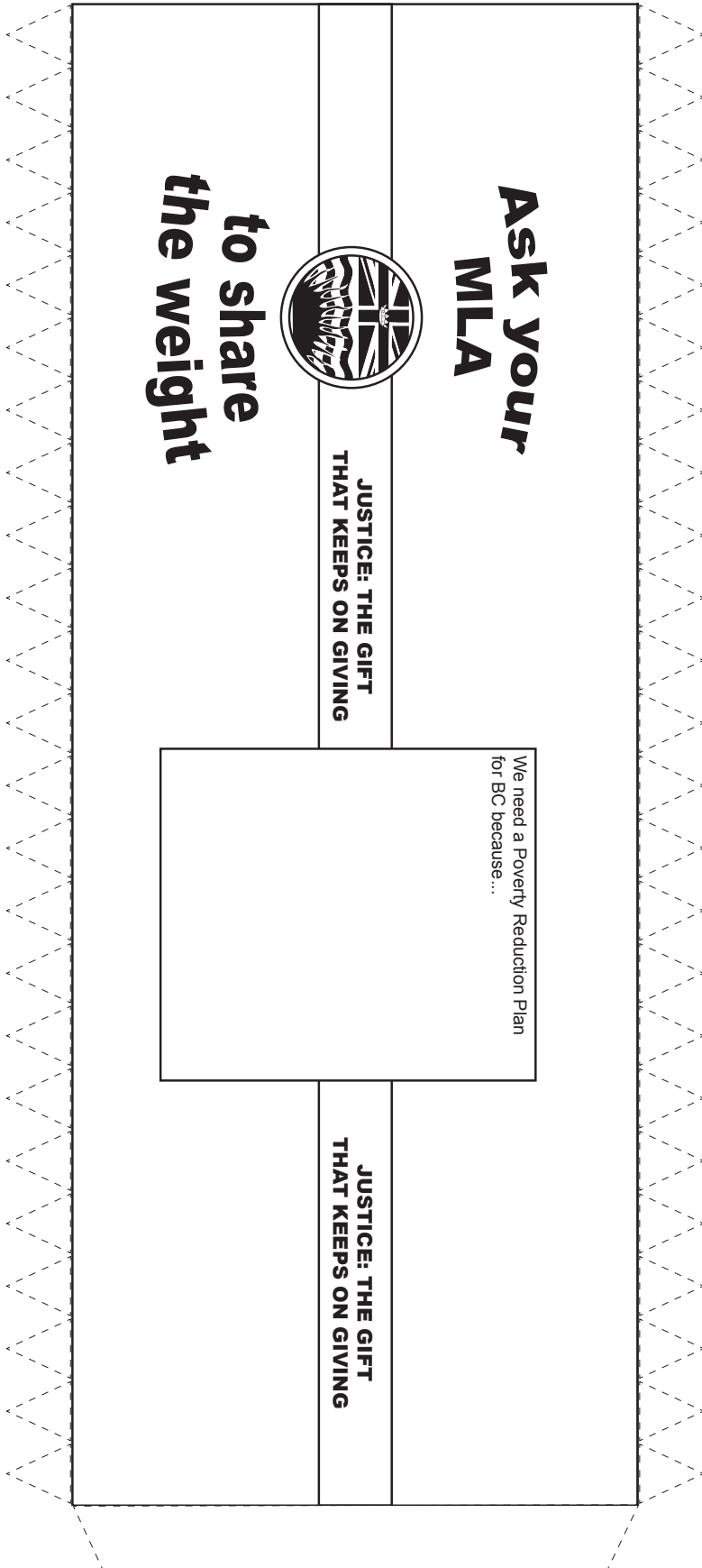
**Or a simpler plan:** You and your students can take a couple of pictures of the cans, then send them by email, Twitter or Facebook to your MLA, together with a letter and compilation of the different messages on the cans.

- 📄 Some students may volunteer to type out these messages into a more formal letter.

In addition to this activity, you can also acknowledge families’ contributions to the food bank by giving students the thank you cards provided in the toolkit to take home. These cards have a secondary postcard, which students can ask their parents to mail to the government to ask them to share the weight as well.




# SHARE THE WEIGHT CAN SHEET



**Poverty is a heavy issue and we need everyone to share the weight.** Giving to food banks is a way for the community to step up – now we are asking the government to share the weight with us.

**1. Draw or write a message below to your government.** Tell them about your concerns about children living in poverty and going hungry, and why you think we need a poverty reduction plan for BC.

**2. Cut out the shape, glue or tape it into a can and put it in the big can your class has made.**

 For experts only: You can try making an all-paper can by cutting the dashed lines!

