

CONFRONTING POVERTY

Welfare recipients make good employees

Re: "Churches stepping up when no one else will," letter, Aug. 27.

While I welcome the open discussion regarding welfare rates, I can't allow the writer's opinion to go unchallenged by the facts.

Saying few welfare recipients are being sought by employers does a disservice to the clients of the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, our employment program service providers and B.C. taxpayers who are investing \$70 million annually in employment and training programs.

Local chambers of commerce and council of tourism affiliates have been very supportive of our employment and investment programs for income-assistance clients.

They welcome our clients into jobs that pay, on average, two to three times more than what these individuals would receive on income assistance.

In fact, since 2001, working with our contracted agencies, we have placed 48,000 people in good jobs — in the retail, construction, tourism and service sectors.

This success continues.

This government is proud of its new B.C. Employment Program, launched earlier this summer, that is designed to build on our success, giving clients the supports and training they need to find and keep good jobs in our vibrant economy.

Opinions like the writer's continue to stereotype welfare clients and hold back

individuals who have much to offer their workplace, local communities and the B.C. economy.

Claude Richmond,
Minister of Employment and
Income Assistance.