



**Report to SPARC BC  
on the  
BC Poverty Reduction Strategy Small Group Discussion**

**Introduction:**

Date	Tuesday, March 27, 2018
Community	Vancouver – Cedar Cottage
# of Participants	10
# of Organizations	1

**About the Participants:**

Tell us a bit about your group (i.e. general social and demographic profile – i.e. seniors, youth, single mothers, people who are homeless etc.)

Our participants were all Indigenous peoples with the exception of one participant who was the step-parent of Indigenous children. All of the participants were parents, single parents, parents of adult children with special needs/mental health issues, or foster parents with the exception of one participant who was a person with disability. Age ranges were approximately 30 years to 60 years. There was a mix of gender and sexual identities. All of the participants were accessing government supports in the form of welfare or employment programming. None of the participants were homeless but many live close to the line.

**About the Findings:**

Tell us about the types of insights and feedback received to the following questions:

1. What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?
2. What would address these issues and help you or others out of poverty?

**Issues:**

[Provide the results of your discussion of the issues – it should be transcribed from your flip chart notes]

- High rental rates
- Poor housing conditions
- Lack of housing options
- Before and after school care waitlists are too long
- Lack of before and after school care
- Lack of employment that meets the needs of parents' hours and income needed for child care
- Transit rates are too high
- Need to receive transit passes, not tickets
- Government employment programs need to offer child care supports so parents may participate without barriers
- Sensitivity training for staff running government programs
- Lack of empathy

- Policies and processes don't reflect the needs of participants (i.e. WorkBC mandates participation in programs that don't always work with the participants' life schedule or income)
  - 2 year welfare break from requirements
- Cost of living increases but welfare rates don't increase at the same rate
- An increase in child tax means a decrease in welfare
- Lack of social housing
  - Why does the government have a monopoly on social housing?
  - Why doesn't a portion of BC housing taxes go into social housing?
- Need to have daycare available where people live
  - Many people commute to Vancouver from the suburbs and use Vancouver child care spaces rather than spaces closer to their homes
- School lunch programs are not accessible for everyone at approximately \$100/month per student
- Lack of accessible no-barrier or low-barrier mental health supports for Indigenous people
- Lack of support for moms/parents during the transition of their child entering the school system at age four years and the mom/parent needing to find employment
- Lack of access to education and to exploring educational options
- Minimum wage is too low to live on
- Lack of health benefits
- Not being able to make healthy food choices due to lack of income (i.e. daily meals consist of rice and chicken broth made from boiled chicken feet)
- Not enough income to ever make a better life – stuck in the same place
- Having to work multiple jobs to support self and family
  - Results in lack of sleep, lack of time alone, lack of time with family/friends, increased stress levels, mental health issues
  - Lack of raises in many part-time or casual positions
- Sharing home with multiple people in order to afford the rent
- Having to provide regular reports on employment/income and dealing with lack of trust by workers
- “Nobody should have to be homeless to get help!”
- The stigma of poverty negatively impacts everyone
  - People make assumptions
  - Children are unsupported in school
- Seniors social housing is very limited
- Seniors and people with disabilities health benefits are impacted by income received
  - No cost of living increase for those on LTD
- Lack of supports for youth aging out of foster care system
- Foster care support should be available until youth reach 25 years old

### Possible Solutions

[Provide the results of your discussion of possible solutions– it should be transcribed from your flip chart notes]

- More social housing, housing rental caps and housing subsidies
- NO PIPELINE! All of the billions of dollars the government has put into the pipelines could have gone into reducing poverty and homelessness. It's not too late to make the change!
- Increase the minimum wage
- Guaranteed livable income program that meets the needs of participants

- What is taken away if BC moves to a guaranteed livable income (i.e. would other programs/initiatives be cut or reduced to compensate?)?
- What are the risks if BC moves to a guaranteed livable income?
- All supports are left in place
- Adequate welfare rates that are dignified
- Be able to save money to stay healthy
- Increased support for youth aging out of foster care system, including having foster care support available until youth reach 25 years old
- Increase to disability rates
- Put a cap on gas prices
- Transit affordability and transit passes for people on welfare or return-to-work programs
- Long term transit planning with an increase in the population
- Regular access to medical and family doctor
- Regular access to dental, pharmacare, optical
- Increased number of child care spaces that are affordable and accessible, including child care options for parents working evenings or shift work
- \$10 a day child care program
- Increase education supports and grants, especially for people with special needs
- Aboriginal medical funding
- Municipality-run daycares are not prioritized! Need to focus on communities in need.
- Better licensing checks and balances in child care – public and private – especially when it comes to following up on complaints
- Subsidy opt-out is not allowed!
- Better responses to the opioid crisis, including trauma supports
- Educating government workers on the issues between parenting and poverty
- Need more workers with lived experience (i.e. social workers who are parents, employment workers who have been unemployed or marginalized, housing workers who have been homeless, etc.)
- Investing in Indigenous children learning their own cultures and history
- Need to address power imbalance that creates fears of child removal from parents/home (i.e. lack of affordable housing is not a reason to remove a child from their parent/home)
- Employment programs need better oversight on abuse of power by workers (i.e. workers forcing participants into programs that don't fit their schedules or child care needs resulting in participants not succeeding and then being labelled as difficult or uncooperative, etc.)

### Solutions and Actions That Can Make a Difference

- a) Looking at the list of issues and solutions generated, what types of solutions did the individuals who participated in your meeting identify as most important to them? [Each participant should receive four (4) sticky dots to put on the solutions that from their perspective are most important]. Your summary report should include any of the solutions that received a dot from those that received the most dots to those receiving only one dot.
- Increase the minimum wage and create a guaranteed livable income program that meets the needs of participants
  - More social housing, housing rental caps and housing subsidies
  - Need more workers with lived experience (i.e. social workers who are parents, employment workers who have been unemployed or marginalized, housing workers who have been homeless, etc.)
  - Transit affordability and transit passes for people on welfare or return-to-work programs

- Increased number of child care spaces that are affordable and accessible, including child care options for parents working evenings and shift work
- Employment programs need better oversight on abuse of power by workers (i.e. workers forcing participants into programs that don't fit their schedules or child care needs resulting in participants not succeeding and then being labelled as difficult or uncooperative, etc.)
- Need to address power imbalances that create fears of child removal from parents/home (i.e. lack of affordable housing is not a reason to remove a child from their parent/home)
- NO PIPELINE! All of the billions of dollars the government has put into the pipelines could have gone into reducing poverty and homelessness. It's not too late to make the change!
- Increase education supports and grants, especially for people with special needs
- Increased support for youth aging out of foster care system, including having foster care support available until youth reach 25 years old
- Increase to disability rates

b) What emerged as the top 3 priorities or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority setting?

1. Increase the minimum wage and create a guaranteed livable income program that meets the needs of participants
2. More social housing, housing rental caps and housing subsidies
3. Need more workers with lived experience (i.e. VACFSS social workers who are parents, WorkBC employment workers who have been unemployed or marginalized, housing workers who have been homeless, etc.)