



HOLLYBURN

Family Services Society

Empowering Growth, Inspiring Change

BC POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY REPORT

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Overview

Hollyburn Family Services Society is a North Shore not for profit organization that provides unique solutions to children, youth, seniors and families who are facing social issues in our community. We provide a continuum of services for marginalized youth that moves them from at-risk to resilient members of our community. We offer a range of emergency, transitional and permanent housing for youth, seniors and families at housing-risk and we offer comprehensive support to women, men and children who have experienced violence. We are an active partner in the North Shore Domestic Violence Unit.

To ensure we had feedback from the cross sector of those we support, we hosted several small group discussions. Every participant has lived experience. Collectively we interviewed over 40 individuals representing the following demographic:

- Seniors at housing risk
- Current homeless seniors
- Former homeless seniors
- Indigenous people
- Women

The Issues	The Solutions
<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminine hygiene products too expensive • Cost of childcare and lack of quality care available • Gas prices-Insurance • CPP and Income Assistance (IA) rates too low • Earning exemptions for Person with Disability Benefits and Income Assistance too low • Disparity between IA on reserve and off. On reserve they don't get a rental portion, but sometimes are required to pay some rent if they are living with a friend or relative in exigent circumstances • Those living on reserve also don't have as much medical coverage as people off reserve on IA • It's hard to make ends meet when transition between income assistance and a job because sometimes the first pay-cheque is delayed due to processing times and without the IA payments in effect It's tough to pay for food and basic expenses • People who have houses and expensive cars are now collecting bottles making it more difficult for those who are actually living in poverty to find and collect bottles to make ends meet • Taxes!!!! Where is the money going? • People are unable to meet their basic needs-get stuck in a cycle • Incomes are not rising the same as the cost of living • Living in poverty is a full time job. Navigating services, food banks, shelter takes up the day. • Clothing, eye care, health care, medications –all expensive • Everything is too expensive • Too hard to catch up – never mind getting ahead 	<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No taxes on feminine hygiene products and baby products • Affordable and quality child care • Reduce the taxes on pet food (currently charged luxury tax) • Liveable wages • Financial Literacy – Provide education on how to stretch a dollar • Have a transitional month where people have support in their transition from IA to employment • Provide more incentives for the “haves” to help the “have nots” • Remove the barriers for people on IA or PWD to move to less expensive communities • Fixed incomes need to go up • Raise rates IA/PWD/ CPP • Increase earning exemptions for IA/PWD • More government control over the increased cost of living (rental increases, food costs, medical costs, real estate, land speculation, rental increases)
<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have criminal record employment opportunities through WorkBC are limited • Minimum wage too low • Difficult for seniors to find work • Negative or unhelpful experiences with WorkBC • Clothes too expensive – needed for employment and interviews 	<p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives to work for people on IA/PWD • Improve and diversify WorkBC programs • Invest in employment opportunities • Monitor labour standards – job security, prevent discrimination • Increase earning exemptions for IA/PWD •

Housing

- Lack of availability and affordability
- Even more expensive and scarce if you have a pet
- Some people renting a single room for \$1,500
- Need more affordable housing
- Cost of utilities gas, Wi-Fi – not considered essential
- Limit rent increases
- Long wait lists for subsidized housing
- Discrimination against low-income in the rental market
- Strict rules for over housing is a barrier
- Rental increases disproportionately higher than income/wage increases.
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Housing

- Tenants need to be given more time in the event of an eviction
- Allow secondary suites again – they offer affordable rent and additional income to the homeowner
- Immigration – not a “no” but rather a “whoa” until more housing is developed
- Affordable and safe housing would address almost all poverty related issues
- All new housing needs to have low income housing
- Affordable housing like co-ops should have income limits – if you can afford to pay market then you should be
- Prioritize affordable housing for those on fixed and low incomes
- More housing options on all points on the housing spectrum so folks are safely and appropriately housed
- BC Housing needs to provide more information and transparency around their waitlists They need to provide personal case workers and face to face services
- Support and encourage innovative housing solutions (container housing, allow secondary units, etc.)
- Cover storage costs for under-housed or homeless folks
- Address the antagonistic and stigmatization of homeless people
- SAFER needs to reflect current rental market costs

Nutrition

- Cost of food
- Cost of healthy food options
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Nutrition

- Affordable food options
- More “Quest” like options
- Food banks that offer more choice – like a grocery store
- Encourage supermarkets to provide incentives for donations to food banks
- Make healthy food choices accessible – poor nutrition increases health care costs
- More investment in co-op grocery programs

<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of medicine and prescriptions when you don't have extended benefits or medical • Not enough Doctors • Addiction services require people to go cold turkey but many people don't want to stop using drugs/alcohol completely but rather manage their use in a healthy way • Lack of a harm reduction approach is a barrier to many people accessing services • Eye health costs 	<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal health care – all prescriptions covered • More Doctors • Medical offices that are kind, comprehensive and have continuity of care • Free dental and eye care • More comprehensive Fair Pharmacare and lower annual deductions • More GPs for continuity in healthcare rather than walk-ins • Faster and free service to specialists
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's hard getting access to educational institutions off reserve • Need more people who can connect individuals to training who want it • Post-secondary costs too high 	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more navigators to assist people to enroll in training and education • Tuition costs are prohibitive
<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to navigate services • Hard to access information on available resources • Wait times on government phone lines too long • BC Seniors Directory is useless • Very difficult to figure out where you need to go for services –especially if you are a couple • The lack of flexibility in service delivery is a barrier • Waitlists for everything are too long • Information on resources not accessible, difficult to find • Everyone gets lumped into one system (IA, same shelters, same services) • Systems are convoluted and too many hoops to go through 	<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have navigators available to help people identify where to go for what • More information on services is needed • Government needs to invest more in social programs • More diversified services • Improve and diversify WorkBC programs • Hire more supportive government workers. They need to be more respectful and understanding. Hire workers with lived experience and give them the training • Fund more non-profit supports and services • Lack of training in mental health systems • More government investment in services • Ensure employees are adequately trained (trauma, mental health, addictions, concurrent disorders, intergenerational trauma) • Continuing care from service providers • Invest in services to support people to return to school, work- provide small business start-up funding
<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness and isolation – too expensive to go out • Hard to find a place that offers a sense of belonging • Social Isolation 	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create community spaces to facilitate connections and belonging • Encourage and incentivize corporate social responsibility

<p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When working around metro Vancouver if you don't have a car it's almost impossible to get to job sites because work in construction starts at 7am and transit doesn't start early enough to get there • Accessing services or finding housing without a car is difficult 	<p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more transit service in the early morning
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Solutions and Actions

Housing Invest in safe and affordable housing. Manage evictions and rent increases. Look at innovative housing options i.e. container housing, Hollyburn Family Service Society's Senior Roommate Registry concept, etc.

Financial PWD, IA needs to catch up to the cost of living. Don't penalize people from working by taking their income earnings away dollar for dollar. Increase earning exemptions to a living wage. Government needs to control the rising cost of living.

Services Defragment service delivery. Service navigation needs to improve. Too many barriers and hoops, services need to offer a continuum of support. People living in poverty face discrimination and rudeness when dealing with government workers. Government workers should be mandated to take trauma informed training.