

BC Poverty Reduction Strategy Small Group Discussion Report

Introduction:

Date	Tuesday March 19, 2018
Community	Langley Community Services Society
# of Participants	39
# of Organizations	1

About the Participants:

Those gathered for this discussion group included Arabic (Syrian and Iraqi), Karen and Russian speaking clients who represent a cross-section of refugees and newcomers to the community of Langley with low level of English. Some were recent arrivals, while others have been in the community for several years. The group included many seniors, youth clients, single mothers and families.

Clients had worked in different professional sectors before coming to Canada. This includes those who have worked in the medical sector, sales & retail; teaching; homemaking; trades etc. Many of the participants have struggled with the high cost of living in British Columbia and the challenges of trying to settle their families into the community.

About the Findings:

1. What are the issues facing you and people living in poverty right now?

- Rent is very expensive; hydro; gas. Trying to buy a house is too expensive.
- Hard to find adequate size housing for large families.
- Landlords also have the right to increase rents which makes it very difficult when you are on a limited income.
- Gas/all transportation/cost of a car insurance very expensive.
- Car insurance; only one provider of services in the Province. No competitive market.
- Taxes on purchases/income taxes create significant financial strain.
- High cost of living.
- Groceries are very expensive especially if families want to make healthy choices.
- Clothing and shoes very expensive.
- School expenses very high; i.e. Books, school materials.
- Medication very costly – eye exams; dental fees.
- Family recreation also brings added expense to family budget.
- No extra money or limited budget for recreation, afterschool and sport activities.
- Education/preschool/childcare/university very expensive

- Difficult to find adequate and cost-effective childcare for working parents
- Insufficient interpretations for newcomers when needing to attend specialist appointments. Often relatives or friends must take a day off work without pay to help with the interpretation.
- Language barriers impact ability to get work.
- Language barriers; difficult for parents to support their children in school.
- Insufficient support for the elderly; finances; practical aid to get to appointments etc.

Possible Solutions:

2. What would address these issues and help you or others out of poverty?

- Increase minimum wages
- Lower taxes
- No food taxes
- No tax on used items; i.e. Thrift Stores/Value Village
- Increase child tax benefit
- Increased supports/grants/tax breaks for parents with children who have disabilities
- Decrease costs for housing/rent; create a ceiling for rents in BC.
- Locking rental prices so landlords cannot increase rents.
- Subsidy for medications; free medication for children and seniors.
- Lower the price of childcare
- Access to interpreters at hospitals.
- No cost of MSP (healthcare)
- Free transportation for children and seniors
- No parking fees at the hospital.
- Flexible parking fees.
- Increase supports for senior's care.
- Cap the cost of gas and insurance.
- More information at pre-arrival for refugees and newcomers re: the cost of living in BC and the expenses that will need to be managed once settled.
- Accept overseas credentials to allow immigrants to work in the field they worked prior to coming to Canada.
- Government to help farmers so they produce cheap food and continue to grow food; use green space to feed people versus building more houses.
- Free recreation for children and seniors.
- Free healthy school lunches

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.

- Lower taxes
- No tax on used items; i.e. Thrift Stores/Value Village
- Increased supports/grants/tax breaks for parents with children who have disabilities and seniors
- Decrease costs for housing/rent.
- Locking rental prices so landlords cannot increase rents.
- Subsidy for medications; free medication for children and seniors.
- Lower the price of childcare
- Access to interpreters for specialist appointments and GPs
- No cost of MSP (healthcare)
- Free transportation for children and seniors
- No parking fees at the hospital.
- Increase supports for senior's care.
- More information at pre-arrival for refugees and newcomers re: the cost of living in BC and the expenses that will need to be managed once settled.
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- b) Top 3 Solutions:

- Access to interpreters for specialist appointments and GPs
- Decrease costs for housing/rent.
- Free transportation for children and seniors