



# Transcript: Community Meeting on Poverty Reduction

North Vancouver, BC  
March 3, 2018

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## Introduction and Event Summary

On March 3, 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction hosted a community meeting in North Vancouver, BC to discuss poverty and poverty reduction with local residents. The event brought together approximately 45 to 50 participants including people with lived experience of poverty; poverty reduction front line workers and advocates; people from the non-profit and business sectors; and other community members from all walks of life.

The event began with a welcome from Elder Sam George, from Squamish Nation, followed by opening remarks from Mable Elmore (Parliamentary Secretary on Poverty Reduction).

Participants then engaged in round table discussions in groups of 8 to 10 people per table. Each table had a dedicated facilitator from a local community group or from SPARC BC who helped to guide the conversations. Each table also had a dedicated note taker who helped to record the discussion.

There were two rounds of discussion which focused on 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 and others out of poverty?

Following the discussions, participants were invited to put a sticky dot beside the strategies or solutions that were most important to them. Each participant received four (4) sticky dots. Following the individual priority setting exercise, participants were asked to determine as a table the top three (3) priorities from the evening and to report these priorities back to the room.

The Parliamentary Secretary shared some closing remarks.

## Document Organization

This document contains the transcripts from the flip chart notes from those in attendance. The flip chart notes have been transcribed verbatim, correcting only for spelling and grammar as needed. The notes are organized according to the feedback received to the two questions beginning with:

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

## Question 1: What are the issues facing you and people in poverty right now?

- First Nations
  - o We are family and related we need to help each other
  - o Honesty is important
  - o There needs to be more education about how First Nations people are treated
  - o People have to help get others out of their isolation
  - o If we offer people food (i.e. a soup kitchen) it helps to get people out of their houses – we know that it is not the whole solution but it is part of the solution
- Housing
  - o People need safe, accessible, affordable housing
  - o Families have to live together (share) to afford the cost of their housing
  - o There is a risk for children and women around poverty
  - o More safe affordable housing is needed
  - o Many of the subsidized housing facilities are getting older and are no longer safe
  - o Much of the older housing stock is below par, it needs to be torn down
  - o The market rent is around \$1,100 for a 1 bedroom apartment in North Vancouver
  - o If you have a disability you receive \$1,132 per month – if the rent is \$1,100 per month you do not have enough money to cover the cost of your housing and other living expenses – you have to rely on the food bank to survive
  - o Some of the rental units have mice and bugs - the housing is not safe and pest control is having to come all the time
  - o The average cost of rent is \$1,500 to \$2,000 per month and that will only get you 800 square feet.
  - o Families with children find it hard to find suitable and appropriate housing – as well, some people don't want to rent to people with children
- Childcare
  - o Some single parent families have to leave their children alone while they are working – there are a lot of parents who are holding down 2 or 3 jobs just to manage
  - o Kids want more time with their parents but their parents do not have the time to give.
  - o When you are working 2 to 3 jobs it is not sustainable
  - o People were having to put children in day camps but it can cost as much as \$4,000 a month for three (3) kids to be in a day camp
  - o Childcare costs alone are a barrier and that is if you can even find a childcare space
  - o Childcare is only part of the problem- there are a number of families who are struggling to meet bills for a whole range of reasons
- Employment
  - o There are so many employers who don't want to hire full time staff because they have to pay benefits

- Housing
  - o Many seniors need housing but they might have to leave the community to find housing that they can afford
  - o You have to pay your bills but there is nothing left over to enjoy life
  - o If I had to leave my community that I have known for 55 years because I could no longer afford the housing I don't know what I would do, especially to be in another more affordable housing development but with no supports
  - o It is important to provide people with access to supports and affordable housing
  - o Even in more affordable communities the rent is still high
  - o Many other communities also have transportation issues and childcare issues
- Income
  - o Even raising minimum wage won't address all of the multiple challenges that people face - i.e. without rent control even raising minimum wage won't help
  - o There are so many employers who don't want to hire full time staff because then they would have to pay benefits
  - o Income assistance rates are too low – people do not receive enough to cover their actual costs - even the \$6.00 deposit for compass card to use transit can be a barrier if you don't have any money but you must have the card or you can't use transit
- Food
  - o Access to food is an issue – the cost of food is high and sometimes the quality of the food is not good - years of poor quality food can lead to health problems
  - o Children need access to quality food
  - o Food banks help but they can only provide three (3) days of food for each family and much of the food that is donated is poorer quality – it is harder to get access to fresh food
  - o The price of groceries keep going up and there are more larger chains that are pushing out the smaller, more affordable grocery stores – to shop at Walmart for a family of four (3 children) it cost of about \$1,000 per month
  - o The average cost of food for a family of 4 is \$1,200 per month
  - o As well the cost of food in BC is expected to increase by 4% with the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables expected to go up by 6 to 8 per cent
  - o The cost of transportation is also having an impact on the cost of food – locally and globally and this is expected to increase
- Affordability
  - o The large majority of citizens cannot continue to afford the increasing costs for food, housing, transportation, and health care. As a result, people are forced to shop at companies that are unethical
- Disability Assistance
  - o If you had disability assistance of \$1,132 per month and you only had to pay \$375 per month for your housing you would feel wealthy - I practice minimalism to be practical but there is no way that I can do it. If I had more income I could manage better my clothing/food/transportation

- Housing
  - o Every suite available should be subsidized
  - o I have been on the waiting list for five (5) years for a BC Housing unit
  - o The cost of below market rental housing is still too high to meet all other expenses
  - o People in my situation (i.e. living on PWD assistance) are being pushed out of the market – it is very possible we will become homeless
  - o I know a retired nurse who had to provide live-in care because she could no longer meet all of her expenses with the cost of housing being one of the larger ones
- Income
  - o Even the mainstream middle class is feeling the impact of rising costs
  - o If you don't have access to investment income you will be affected –someone would need an annual income of at least \$20,000 per year to stay out of poverty
  - o There are so many women and seniors who are impacted and living in poverty including female-led single parent families
- Health Care
  - o Many over the counter medical needs are not covered by MSP
  - o Medications not covered by MSP are too expensive to afford
  - o Eye care/dental care are not covered
  - o Access to healthcare is restricted
  - o Families are having to go to the emergency room to get help
- Services and Supports
  - o Children with disabilities need support
  - o Many parents can't work when they are dealing with their child's disability.
  - o Families with children with extreme disabilities (i.e. autism) are struggling even more
  - o People don't always have access to the services and supports that they need
  - o People don't have access to mental health services
  - o Access to legal assistance is also needed
- Ministry Service
  - o The 1-866-# is hard to work through
  - o The waiting times can be long sometimes the waiting times can be 50 minutes or longer
  - o If I can't get through on the 1-866-# I walk to the office to try to see someone in person
  - o Staff can be rude and disrespectful when people drop in to the office and ask for help – the supervisor indicated that if we continue to walk in, they are going to review our status and may choose not to help
  - o The Ministry has moved away from face-to-face services which makes it harder for someone with anxiety and learning challenges
  - o It is often difficult to get the support that you need to understand the system
  - o Sometime people are treated badly – I saw a mom walk out of the office crying
  - o Staff continue to tell me not to come in person and that I have to call the 1-866-#
  - o Same people come in because they keep hitting a recurring problem but instead you are told to keep calling instead of working together finding solutions - the current phone system is not helping clients

- The Ministry should also recognize that by going to the computerized system it has given staff the ability to ignore clients - many staff in the North Vancouver office do not even say “hi” to clients when they come into the office
- The computer system is more for Ministry staff than it is for the clients as a lot of people have difficulty accessing information on the computer and not everyone is computer literate.
- The system can be especially difficult for people with mental health issues who have difficulty understanding all of the requirements
- The use of the phone service is the same – it creates a barrier to access
- Income
  - When the Ministry raised the rates the income situation for a lot of people improved but there are so many other issues like how to help someone to be employment ready.
  - Income assistance is only part of the solution –how do you get a job when other issues aren’t resolved like housing, disability, mental health or addictions
  - It is not called income assistance because people stay at home and watch TV
- The Impact of Poverty
  - Alcoholism is a result of childhood trauma
  - People can end up on the street because of their inability to deal with issues that happened in their past
  - The police took an individual to the welfare office to help them to register because they did not know where to turn – they begged to be sent to treatment. This connection helped to start the road to recovery. They still had to wait for their birth certificate to complete the paperwork but contact with the mental health association helped to get the right supports into place including access to PWD assistance
  - Getting into AA plus help with getting a cheque each month meant that “I am here to participate and that I have started the long road to healing and recovery”.
- Dental Care
  - Dental costs can be high - \$1,000 a year
  - Dental costs are not covered through income assistance
  - Sometimes you have to get dental service from someone (not a dentist) who works for the Ministry (Blue Cross)
  - “My gums are receding and my dental plan will not cover the treatment that I need” – income assistance and PWD assistance does not cover the costs –
  - Even if some of the costs are covered (i.e. 40%) you still have to cover the rest yourself - this is serious money
- Housing
  - The cost of housing is an issue - rents keep increasing
  - Seniors are concerned because the quality of their housing is deteriorating –building conditions have not improved and landlords keep putting through rent increases
  - One participant just received a 3.68% rent increase but their income did not change -for many people on a limited income housing now takes most of their budget

- People at Risk of Poverty
  - o There are different groups/people at risk of poverty:
    - People on income assistance
    - People receiving PWD assistance
    - Working poor families
    - Seniors
    - Single women
    - First Nations
    - Minorities
- Health Care
  - o Seniors and single parents need help with health care costs
  - o MSP premiums in Ontario pay a portion of the dispensing fee for medications – in Ontario the dispensing fee is applied in increments (5 to 10 mg) charged \$10. In BC the dispensing fee doubles (8mg 5+3x 1mg)
- Seniors
  - o I worry about seniors – so many can no longer afford the cost of their medication
  - o Government assistance does not apply to seniors so many of them are really struggling
  - o Some have to move and to get the support that they need – when you have lived in a community for 30 years it is hard to have to move. All of the services that you rely on are within reach. This should be a city that offers equal opportunity to all
- Housing
  - o There is no affordable housing but the City continues to build more condos
  - o People have to move out of the community because they can no longer afford the rent
  - o Rents are extremely high – a rent is \$1,800 to \$2,000 per month for a 1 bedroom
  - o People work hard, but the housing is expensive- it is such that you can no longer afford your community –even two income families are struggling
  - o People are renovating older houses and selling them for extraordinary prices –often this housing is being sold overseas – it does not seem right that the average Canadian cannot afford the mortgage
  - o Even a basic condo unit rents for more than \$2,000 per month- If we can't address the housing affordability issues the community is going to suffer
- Government services
  - o Many of the government departments operate in silos
  - o There is a relationship between the cost of food, housing and poverty
  - o People are told to go to this program and go to that program for help
  - o We need a cohesive “one stop shop” for community services
  - o If you are receiving PWD it means that you are limited in what you are able to do
  - o Employment programs also have reduced services – before you would go in and get on-going help. Now you go in every two weeks
  - o If you do not have no access to a phone or computer then it is not possible to access services -the changes in the service delivery made it easier for government but not the individual – both the access and the time that it takes to get services is too long

- Transportation
  - o Public transportation does not suit everyone
  - o Many people have mobility issues and rely on HandyDART
  - o However, over the bridge trips are not always possible especially when the traffic is bad
  - o People have to walk everywhere (it takes 30 minutes to go from Edgemont to Lonsdale)
  - o Commuting times are longer due to congestion and the cost of transportation is high
  - o A bus pass is covered for someone receiving PWD assistance but it is not covered for someone receiving basic assistance - “getting PWD saved my life”
- Seniors
  - o Many seniors are living on fixed incomes
  - o Lonsdale has a lot of high end stores
  - o Seniors have to pay for their medication and transportation (bus)
  - o Many seniors need expensive drugs to stay alive (\$1,200 a month) but other than the help of family members they do not get any help with covering these costs
- Mental Health
  - o Poverty affects your mental health – it creates stress
  - o If you have worked your whole life the impact of losing your job is stressful- it can lead to low self esteem
  - o WorkBC/EI do not help with that - you get depressed with no job and you end up talking yourself further down- many people are doing their best just trying to survive
- Volunteering
  - o Volunteering provides a good way to connect- I have been volunteering at church for 4 years - volunteering can be a stepping stone toward working
  - o The Ministry doesn’t encourage volunteering but they should –it might be a way to help people to leave income assistance
  - o When you go to apply for a job and you do not know how to use a computer –what do you say? How do I get a job when I do not know how? When it asks you about your recent experience what do you say – none?
  - o If people are volunteering it can lead to a paid position - at the same time under the Ministry’s rules people are discouraged from volunteering
  - o Volunteering led me to a job, which made me happy-people see you and your good attitude and give you a job
  - o Volunteering should be seen as a “job”-right now volunteering is not valued and that’s a shame. One of the things that I do as a volunteer is take furniture to people coming out of shelter – I volunteer my truck to help out
- Housing
  - o More affordable housing is needed
  - o Many of the older buildings need repair (i.e. pipes are leaking)
  - o Government should put more money into housing
  - o Metro Vancouver has a high cost of living – it is expensive to live here and is out of reach for most people



- Income
  - o There is the need for a living wage
  - o Welfare rate and PWD rates are too low
  - o There are too many user fees on everything
  - o Manitoba had a universal basic income – if that was adopted here it would be important to make sure that whatever the income amount is set at, that the amount is liveable
  - o Minimum wage is too low
  - o The cost of food will keep increasing-if you are working and earning minimum wage you should be able to live
  - o Most people won't get out of poverty by working normal jobs in the service industry
  - o There is the need to connect with employers
  - o There is the need to set tax levels to help those with the greatest need (tax benefits)
- Services and Supports
  - o Many people who are living in poverty are older
  - o Seniors are ending up in the shelter system
  - o There is the need to look at different services and supports for different groups
  - o Employment won't work for some people but for others they need this service
  - o Many people are being forced to put their kids in child care because they have to work
  - o We need to try to understand all of the reasons why people use drugs
- The Impact of Poverty
  - o There is a lack of understanding (and sometimes empathy) from the general population
  - o You can't tell who is in poverty - many people are one paycheque away from poverty
  - o The North Shore struggles with poverty but many people don't see it
  - o Welfare has a negative stigma – we have to work to change this
  - o People lack understanding about how to share their story or ask for help
  - o There is a lot of stigma and judgement of people in poverty
  - o We need to build awareness to bring the issues to the front of peoples' minds
  - o People are busy so they don't always see – we have to work at being more caring
  - o Behind the bully and the anger often there is someone who is hurt
  - o Poverty is not as visible on North Shore so we don't think about it
  - o People see local organizations (that aren't supported well by the government) and they assume that people are getting the help that they need - we have to build our awareness and work to become more sensitive to the issues
- Affordability
  - o People can't keep up with expenses
  - o People can't afford to pay hydro costs, child care costs and housing costs
  - o Poverty has a feminine face because of the weaknesses in the childcare system
  - o When children grow up – women will then take care of their poverty
  - o There is precarious employment for many women that means low wages
- The Impact of Poverty
  - o We have to recognize the inter-generational effects of poverty
  - o It is hard to get the politicians involved because it is a slow process

- To a large extent the ability to escape poverty is based on the education and income of your parents or where you were born
- Breaking down these determinants takes place over a longer period of time – one that is beyond the traditional election cycle
- Trauma has a role to play in poverty
- Education is needed to help kids out of poverty- we need to find ways to measure the inter-generational effect of poverty and different outcomes to see if policies are working
- User fees
  - There are so many different user fees - recreation/transportation/MSP/education
  - User fees represent an unequal tax- with user fees everyone pays that same amount regardless of income or ability to pay- there is the need to equalize the playing field
  - Need to look at ways to redistribute wealth through the tax system
  - Parents often cannot afford all of the extra costs in school
- Health Care
  - Health care is often the first thing that people cut
  - Pharmacare needs to be well managed and well-funded
  - We need to look at how to fund other areas that are not funded
  - There is not enough funding for mental health supports
  - There is not enough funding for some medications that people need
  - Many costs are not covered like physical therapy, wellness, counselling, vitamins
- Education and Training
  - Life skills training is needed
  - People need support at high school to help them to choose their path
  - Treat people with respect and each person has a contribution (students and teachers )
  - Make university education more affordable – people face huge stress trying to find a job and pay back their student debt
  - Put funding toward the most disadvantaged, and rural areas
  - Consider targeted investments – i.e. public money should be invested in public schools - put public money into the schools with the worst outcomes
- Dental Care
  - Dentists used to put a lot of sweat equity as they built their practice – this was a valuable service to the community - there should be a day for low income people to access these types of services
  - Many dentists used to offer these kinds of services but now they graduate with lots of debt and they can't give back in the same way
- Judgement/Stigma
  - Recognize the economic cost of poverty and the impact that this has on society
  - Develop a Human Capital Strategy - where does poverty fit in the terms of the BC Government's priorities? Make a clear statement- we don't want to blame the victims but we know that poverty has huge economic and social costs
  - Work to reduce income inequality
  - Start to "re-frame" the conversation

- Transition from seeing it as income to thinking about the whole community
- People who are hostile and complain need to get on-board
- We have to stop blaming people because they are poor
- We need a public education campaign that shows that it costs more money to have people on streets than it does to house them
- Learn from others – look at what are other provinces are doing
- Recognize that people living in poverty face a high degree of social isolation
- Housing
  - Housing prices are too high
  - There is not enough social housing or housing for people with disabilities
  - SAFER and RAP are considered income under other Provincial funding programs -it means that a lot of people who need this support can't access it
  - SAFER and RAP need to be made available to all families and seniors
  - There has not been any new social housing on the North Shore in 10 years
  - The North Shore faces high rents and there is the need for more affordable housing
  - More people are living in over-crowded conditions
  - There are too many people who have to share one residence in order to be able to afford their housing
  - There is a lack of flexibility in criteria for “residence”
- Income
  - Income assistance is not keeping up with the high cost of living
  - The Province should increase the earnings exemption limit
  - The Province should also make SAFER and RAP available to people on income assistance
  - There is the need for a Living Wage in BC – one that is at least \$21 per hour
- Child Care
  - There are not enough affordable childcare especially for low income earners
  - There are not enough afterschool programs in schools - limited by age
  - There should be a parental salary for parents who stay at home
  - Too often children are removed from their family and sent to foster care instead of helping the parents
- Ministry Services
  - There should be more universal access to programs
  - Ministry processes (computers, etc.) take much longer
  - Sometimes the system goes down and the Ministry cannot help you
  - There is reliance on the use of community resources to help clients navigate the system
  - There is no reliable way to message the Ministry that you are having a problem
  - People with mental health challenges face specific barriers when trying to access Ministry services –it can take as long as 2 hours to reach Ministry staff
  - The call back system does not work – everyone is working on different schedules
  - There should be more funding for outreach services

- Stigma and Judgement
  - o There is misinformation and discrimination due to lack of understanding of poverty
  - o There is an intolerance of people who are living in poverty
  - o There is a lack of tolerance, empathy and understanding
  - o Many people who are living in poverty are frustrated with the fact that no matter where they go, they can't get help -people living in poverty feel invisible
- Housing
  - o Housing is not secure for many families
  - o The cost and availability of housing is also an issue
  - o Condo developments are contributing to homelessness because people are being displaced and there is no subsidized housing
  - o People can no longer afford to live in North Vancouver – this includes middle income earners like nurses and first responders who grew up here
  - o There is no social housing available
- Homelessness
  - o West Vancouver Police and North Vancouver RCMP are dropping homeless people off on the North Shore but there are not enough shelter spaces
  - o There is a lot of insecure housing and couch surfing
  - o There are no family shelters on the North Shore
  - o “We have to resort to looking for funding for tents” because we can no longer offer people housing
- The Impact of Poverty
  - o Poverty kills – there are many people living in poverty who lack access to the two most important necessities - food and sleep
  - o Over the past few years, there have been too many barriers created for someone trying to survive in poverty - it has become increasingly difficult to manoeuvre through the policies and legislation
  - o It is hard to access services through the Ministry and through BC Housing
  - o Single mothers live in poverty because the welfare rates are too low
  - o There is a growing number of homeless people on the North Shore
  - o Seniors are getting evicted because they cannot afford the rent
  - o The Downtown Eastside has seen these types of problems for years but we are seeing the same types of problems on the North Shore
  - o Youth cannot find places to live and their parents have to continue to support them which affects what parents can save for retirement
  - o Poverty affects everyone and is generational
  - o Poverty affects the level of social cohesion across some communities
  - o Having poverty does not fit with our Canadian values – Canadians care - how do we keep the values that are Canadian- How do we build support across all levels of government – Federal, Provincial, local

- Children and Youth
  - o There are more youth services needed
  - o Schools have lost a lot of their funding
  - o Our Youth Safe House which was actively working but it lost its funding for 15 beds – this means more youth are going to be homeless
  - o There is more alcoholism and substance abuse among youth - they don't know that there is help out there- many youth don't have the experience that they need so they have to survive one day at a time
- The Impact of Poverty
  - o People are not listening and politicians are not hearing
  - o We need the honesty to start and to ensure that basic needs like food, water, housing are being met
  - o The past has had an impact on how we are doing -there are many hurdles to overcome and lots of issues that need to be addressed
  - o First Nations children are being taken away from their families instead of giving the families the help that they need – the children are being taken away due to their poverty
  - o Poverty affects your state of mind - I applied for 50 jobs in one month and was not able to find anything – it can really affect your mental health/state of mind
  - o The Harvest Project helps to address issues of food security - there are 4 employees and 130 volunteers. The Harvest Project is based on the values of compassion, respect, dignity and accountability - people there listen, they take you in and feed you for a day, week, month, year -I planned to die but the Harvest Project made me want to live
  - o As an immigrant I landed here in Canada 50 years ago - people all had a shelter over their heads - there were no people on the street - what is happening today?
  - o Poverty is a national problem - we, as a country, shouldn't be where we are today - we are a wealthy country – we need a holistic approach that includes access to housing, education, and supports
  - o Economic prosperity is part of the solution – most people agree that if young families are given support the supports that they need it results in better outcomes and lower costs later

## Question 2: What would address these issues and help you and people out of poverty?

- Children and Youth.
  - o We need \$10 a day childcare
  - o Kids getting breakfast and lunch at school
  - o Transit passes for all children to get to school
  - o A safe environment for healing
  - o A supportive system for children in school

- Government Services
  - o We need accountability at all levels
  - o We need to break down silos so that all Ministries talk to each other -adopt a more integrated approach
  - o There is the need for integrated wrap around services that include a focus on health and community support
  - o We need to promote education and learning
- Community Supports
  - o The North Shore does not have a high number of youth who are affected.
  - o If we continue what we are doing we will be able to keep our numbers down
  - o Youth who overdose are able to access treatment
  - o We need to treat the bullies- provide healing for the inner child to be well
  - o Recognize that behind the bullies there is someone who is hurt
  - o Promote social and emotional learning/restorative justice
  - o Work to create a vibrant economy – one that helps to build inclusive communities
  - o Focus on food security, housing and other supports
  - o Recognize the needs of people who are injured at work and the challenges that they face - provide support for health care workers as well as single parents
  - o Work to prevent violence in the workplace
  - o Ensure that organizations have the resources that they need - so many people are working with reduced staffing - service cut backs and reduced funding have created pressure in the system- pressures that now seem “normal”
  - o Non-profit organizations, health care professionals and others are no longer able to provide the types of services or care they want
- Children and Youth
  - o There is the need for more supports in schools
  - o Children and youth should be identified as vulnerable
  - o Kids need support to flourish
  - o There is the need early intervention when it comes to mental health services and supports in schools (2 dots)
  - o C.A.R.T. gets them ready
  - o There should be emergency response systems in place to help support (intense high risk students) including mobile mental health teams and ready access to treatment
  - o There should also be a prevention focus
- Possible solutions/priorities
  - o Food security
  - o Housing (4 dots)
  - o Education
  - o Childcare (8 dots)
  - o Discrimination ( 1 dot)
  - o Restorative justice ( 2 dots)
  - o Safety (in the workplace, at home, in schools) (6 dots)

- Change attitudes/public Education ( 1 dot)
- Force accountability across all levels of governments
- Services and Supports
  - Consider creating local community service centres (LCSC) evolved in Quebec –*for a description* see [centreconnexions.org](http://centreconnexions.org)
  - There is the need for more “one stop shopping”
  - There is the need for education of the mind but without education of the heart there is no education at all – respect that there are lots of spokes to the wheel
  - BC needs a Legislated Poverty Reduction Plan (6 dots) that includes targets and timelines
  - If you say you are going to build subsidized housing in 10 years – we still need to look at how we will work to prevent homeless in the next 2 years
  - “The next rent increase and I’m on the streets. I can’t hold on”
  - Whatever strategy that is developed also needs to address the missing piece of gender isolation and who is carrying the burden? (3 dots)
  - Government should hire a gender analyst and look at policies through a gender lens – for example women are the primary educators of children and we need to allow them the time to do that
  - Any strategy that is developed should look at:
    - What do we need to invest now?
    - How we will bring all of the different levels of government together,
    - How do we work across agencies and across Ministries?
    - How do we take an upstream approach -focus on prevention
    - How do we address immediate needs while still plan for where we need to go over the next 10-20 years ( 2 dots)
- Public Education
  - Educate all society to be more aware of issues
  - Poverty is not just a Downtown Eastside problem
  - Recognize that poverty is a spiritual problem that it requires a spiritual solution not just money ( 2 dots)
  - Society needs to look after all of society – we need to look after each other ( 1 dot)
- Housing
  - Freeze rents
  - Put rent control on the suite not the tenant ( 2 dots)
  - Provide more affordable and safe housing on the North Shore (1 dot)
  - Address issues of quality in the current housing (rats, mice, bugs)
- Transportation
  - Provide more transportation subsidies
  - Provide a broader range of transit options
  - Transportation (in the market) (2 dots)
  - Need to have more accessible and progressive transit (for low income people, who pay a higher % of income on basic services)

- First Nations
  - o Address Indigenous poverty (1 dot)
  - o Increase supports and integration of reconciliation across Ministries
  - o Recognize that First Nations are suffering (3 dots)
- Services and Supports
  - o My higher power is my group (i.e. support network) not god
  - o My strength comes from my support group/network
  - o There should be a national Health program (2 dots)
  - o There should be universal access and standardized access to care for the entire country
- Ministry Services
  - o Increase income assistance including the support provided through PWD (4 dots)
  - o Increase the childcare subsidy threshold to above \$19,000
  - o Reinstate access to legal aid
  - o Increase access to mental health supports without hospitalization (2 dots)
  - o Provide medical support to people receiving PWD support
  - o Continue to provide medical support despite increases in income – for example, if you earn \$4,000 per year they may kick you off PWD
  - o The Ministry recalibrate PWD earnings cap and consider the client’s actual situation when setting the cap
  - o Include greater flexibility in the design of the program
  - o Provide people with access to a person (face-to-face) instead of a phone line
- Addictions and Substance Use
  - o People need immediate access to treatment – currently the waiting list is too long-some people have to wait 2 to 3 months
  - o More longer term treatment centres are needed
  - o Ensure that supportive housing is available after treatment
  - o There should be a crisis line with information and consultations available at all hours
  - o Treatment should be open and available to all depending on income
  - o Drug recovery prescriptions create barriers and stigma
- Income
  - o Wages have not kept pace with inflation while the cost of everything is going up
  - o Salaries have gone up by 3% while rent and utilities have gone up by 30%
  - o People continue to work because they are afraid to retire
  - o We need to increase the living wage (2 dots)
- Housing
  - o We need rent control (2 dots)
  - o We need protection for people who are renting already
  - o A studio is \$1,700 per month in a 40 year old building – it is impossible to afford
  - o Renting for a single-people is not viable – we need a policy that supports single people who are renting (i.e. maybe they receive a tax break)
  - o There needs to be more control on rent speculation and a housing policy that is about housing people



- Ministry Services
  - o There need to be systemic changes within the Ministry – i.e. reduce the reliance on technology and computer usage. Add humanity back into the services
  - o Address systemic barriers i.e. access to ID
  - o Reduce the layers of bureaucracy that make it difficult to access (i.e. the name on the birth certificate and passport did not match so service was denied)
  - o Need to streamline and bring services together- i.e. all services related to life skills should be centralized
  - o We need to look at ways to reduce user fees
  - o Increase access to non-prescription drug coverage
  - o Look at other health care costs that are not included in Pharmacare
- Investment (3 dots)
  - o There should be a social marketing campaign developed to address the negative attitudes/stigma related to poverty
  - o It should include community engagement and strategy outreach
  - o People don't see what the costs of poverty are
  - o Need to reduce user fees
  - o Need to provide funding for caregivers (e.g. LTC/Kids/Mental Health)
- Income
  - o There should be a Guaranteed Income tied to the cost of living
  - o Manitoba developed an Action Plan that was adopted - prioritized and monetized
  - o There should be a living wage linked to the cost of living – a basic income for everyone through the tax system
  - o There is the need to create more employment opportunities as well as build more capacity for training
- Housing
  - o There is the need for more affordable housing – there should be a benchmark -X amount for x people
  - o \$1,750 is defined as affordable housing by City of Vancouver
  - o Make investments in affordable housing
  - o The biggest worry is where I will live
- Community Capacity
  - o There are more basic social services needed
  - o The government should invest more in the most entrenched communities, communities which are struggling
  - o Use broader mechanisms to move conversation from individual issues to community issues and to involve people in the solutions
  - o Need to build increased public awareness and support for actions that help families and individuals out of poverty
  - o Demonstrate the benefits of supporting low income and people in poverty
  - o Need cross government support

- Need to get business onboard to increase the wage of workers - how it will benefit business (3 dots)
- Adjust Government's procurement policy –i.e. allow government contracts to only go to businesses who are paying a living wage
- Implement a Progressive tax system (3 dots) – people who have higher incomes pay more
- Shift attitudes/culture –instead of focusing on “career choice” maybe focus on ideas like how do we become more of a collective society?
- People need to find their voices and become more politically active
- Government and communities must work together as partners
- Remove barriers
  - There needs to be more access to funding for housing and more flexibility (8 dots)
  - There are too many barriers to access programs/funding/services
  - There are not enough resources – there is the need for more resources for advocates and for outreach (6 dots)
  - We need to remove barriers to service – move toward a more client centred approach
- Income
  - Adopt a Guaranteed Annual Income
  - Look for creative ways to pay for services if we are guaranteed an income
- Youth and families
  - Provide more support for children and youth– early intervention (3 dots)
  - Ensure that people have access to reliable childcare and education
  - Provide more supports to families including access to safe, affordable housing
- Systemic Change
  - Address issues of racism and discrimination
  - Address issues around income insecurity
  - Provide access to education and life skills training
  - Break the cycle of “wealth”
  - Look at best practices across Canada and internationally
  - Identify ways to make the bureaucracy more accessible-meet people where they are at
- Mental health and addiction
  - Promote better integration of services –i.e. mental health/ health care services
  - Support community-based detox services including rehab and resources on the North Shore (5 dots)
  - Work to provide more supportive services –i.e promote facilitated access to services
  - Work to create a more integrated model of service provision