



**Transcript:
Community Meeting
on Poverty Reduction**

**Williams Lake, BC
February 2, 2018**

Introduction and Event Summary

On February 2, 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction hosted a community meeting in Williams Lake, BC to discuss poverty and poverty reduction with local residents. The event brought together approximately 80 to 90 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 territory acknowledgment of the Northern Secwepemc First Nations, followed by opening remarks from Mable Elmore (Parliamentary Secretary for 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.

Mable Elmore, the Parliamentary Secretary for Poverty Reduction then 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 living in poverty right now?

- Mental health
 - o Services and access to them
- Education
 - o Access to training to support build skills
- Affordable housing
 - o Average housing cost for a single person is approx. \$600 per month
 - o People can't afford it
- Treatment
 - o There is only methadone and suboxone treatment available
 - o Support for alcohol withdrawal is minimal (some support at Gateway)
 - o Most people have to transition out to other communities for treatment
 - o The need is greater than what is available in comparison to numbers
 - o Williams Lake is a hub, services are needed but most people have to go to Prince George or Kamloops. Some people come from as far away as Bella Coola
 - o Multi-faceted approach is needed for complex issues like alcohol and drugs (opioids) – training, counselling
- Employment
 - o There is a lack of jobs and loss of DL's
 - o People lack access to education and training
 - o Anaheim – important to try to take the training to them
 - o Walmart is a big employer in the service sector
- Youth
 - o Youth services end at 19
 - o More supports are needed as youth transition out of care - mentoring?
 - o Many young people are lacking skills for independence
 - o Youth go from having access to 24/7 supports to having to make it completely on their own
 - o More skills training is needed for youth in care
 - o More skills training is needed for youth in high school
 - o Interviewing and listening skills
- Addressing alcoholism
 - o There is a lot of public drunkenness
 - o People are put in holding cells
 - o The jail is acting as a sobering centre
 - o This can lead to more drug use
 - o There needs to be more sobering services after cells
- First Nations
 - o There are no supports for First Nations people once they leave the reserve

- There is the perception that there is double-dipping –not everyone understands that the supports are not available if people do not live on reserve
- Crime
 - Williams Lake has a high crime rate
 - Many of the crimes are crimes of opportunity/thefts/hangouts
 - There are more than 1000 calls per year to the RCMP
 - There are about 85 calls per month for drunkenness
 - There is nowhere for intoxicated people to go other than a cell
 - Gangs, drugs, stealing, selling for money, violent crime
 - People transition to rehab once they get out of jail but it doesn't stop – they just repeat the cycle of crimes, alcohol and drugs
 - Rehab in jail needs to be defined and be more “comprehensive” – there are a number of individuals who are repeat offenders
 - Repeat offenders get to know each other in jail
 - We need to look at the history of individuals in jail – many have a history of childhood/trauma- people need 24/7 support when they are out of jail – not just 9 to 5
- Geography
 - Rural communities do not receive the same level of services and supports as the Lower Mainland
- Transportation
 - There is bus service in Williams Lake but the distance between stops is quite far – sometime it can take 20 minutes walks to a stop
 - Lack of access to transit creates issues for youth
 - It can also make it difficult for people to get to work
- Meeting basic needs
 - Basic needs are not being met for people in poverty
 - There is a new Housing First agency that is focused on meeting people where they are at
 - Food access is an issue - prices are comparable to other areas but people can't afford it
 - There are good food programs in Williams Lake including community gardens
 - Programs like the good food box lost funding – it used to be provided through the Women's Contact Society – it worked well for \$11 people had access to nutritious food
- Emergency supports
 - Probation to not drink fails due to lack of treatment for withdrawal
 - Section 28 clients threatening suicide – doctor decides
 - Police time is several hours
 - Check for risks and weapons
 - Hospital triages – client/patients walk away
- Unemployment/underemployment
- Poor health: physical and mental
- Affordable housing
- Income assistance: low rates
- High costs of heating, food, housing, transportation

- Transportation
 - o Many rural communities do not have good access to transit
- Stigma/Judgement
 - o There is stigma associated with poverty
 - o People living in poverty face a lot of prejudice
- Health Supports
 - o People have medical needs that are not being met
 - o When you live in a rural community you don't have full access to treatments
 - o People don't have access to affordable treatment – this includes medication as well as services including physiotherapy, chiropractic services and counselling
- Barriers
 - o Some people face language barriers
 - o Some people face challenges with budgeting – financial literacy
- Range of Needs
 - o Access to healthy food (1 vote)
 - o Access to affordable childcare
 - o Access to education (post-secondary, essential skills); life skills (1 vote)
 - o People need support with reading, writing, numeracy, computer use, working with others, document use, thinking skills, continuous learning, oral communication
- Social Isolation
 - o People live in social isolation because of lack of money
 - o Many people do not have access to social supports (e.g., support groups) for specific challenges
 - o Poverty results in low self-esteem, a low sense of self-worth
 - o People start to feel like they are not contributing members of society
 - o Not knowing how to support someone who is facing or living in poverty
 - o Just money itself is not the answer: need access to services/supports
 - o How do we provide services/supports to someone who is homeless/couch surfing?
- Employment
 - o Many people are underemployed
 - o Low education may result in entry-level or low paying jobs
 - o Not having access to a good paying job can perpetuate the cycle of poverty
- Skills Training and Development
 - o Some people have learning difficulties
 - o Changes in the world are too fast
 - o Computers and technology change so fast
 - o Many older individuals may not be able to retain information (1 vote)
- Funding/Supports
 - o Funding is always a challenge
 - o Funding for programs (especially on reserve) is capped
 - o There may be more funding available “in town”

- There is the potential for violence (victim of abuse or abuser) because of the stress associated with living in poverty but people may not have access to the supports they need - eligibility requirements may limit who can access services
- People may need a service but they are not eligible for it – this can include school, training (3 votes)
- Many people living in poverty have a deep sense of loneliness and they do not get enough 1 to1 support (1 vote)
- Not every has access to a family doctor and the other types of health supports that they need
- Education and Training
 - Foreign credentials not recognized to work in Canada
 - Many people graduate with a high level of debt
- Geographic considerations
 - Rural communities often have limited access to services (health, mental health, education, transportation, housing) (1 vote)
 - High debt load means the person is always behind financially
- The effects of poverty
 - Poverty is the worst form of violence
 - People living in poverty face so many barriers that they need to overcome
 - Mental health issues (1 vote)
- Affordable housing
 - Many people face housing challenges (3 votes)
 - People have to choose between paying rent and paying for their housing
 - The quality of housing can be an issue – it is hard to find a good place to live
- Addiction and Mental Health Support
 - There is the need for additional support and mental health support (1 vote)
- Financial support
 - People need financial support (1 vote)
- Transportation
 - There is the need for more transportation support (2 votes)
- Health Supports
 - People need access to health support -physical health
 - There are a number of people with disabilities in the community
 - People need access to mental health support (1 vote)
- Food Security
 - Nutrition
 - Access to services (1 vote)
 - Legal ID
- Education, training and skills development
 - People need support to build self-confidence and self esteem
 - People need support with goal setting
 - People need access to training and education to develop their skills (1 vote)

- Employment
 - o Limited/lack of employment
- Address discrimination and racism
 - o Discrimination (1 vote)
- Services and supports
 - o Lack of standardized services (1 vote)
 - o More support between bands and communities (1 vote)
 - o Better access to addiction and recovery services
 - o Personal goals and directions
 - o Legal issues and aid
 - o Lack of assistance after jail or rehab
 - o Support for grief and loss (1 vote)
 - o Immigration services and support
 - o Access to income assistance
- Housing and supports
 - o Broader range of housing options -lack of appropriate housing
 - o More housing and supports for people with mental health challenges
- Geographical location
 - o Recognize regional and local differences
- Compassion and understanding
 - o People have unreasonable expectations
 - o Suicide and violence
- Low cost housing
 - o Not enough units
 - o Existing housing not well built, old, unsafe
 - o Expensive, rent and utilities, 1 bedroom is \$800
 - o Carson and Sunset manor – private
 - o Rent – how do people do it?
- Violence – stimulated by poverty
 - o Lower mainland, social housing for professionals
- First Nation
 - o People live off reserve because they are looking for opportunities
 - o People living off reserve receive less assistance
- Kids living in poverty
 - o Williams Lake has a high proportion of children living in poverty
 - o There is a high proportion across the school districts
 - o There are also many health issues, issues of inequality, other social issues
- Schools
 - o Williams Lake has an extensive school bus system
 - o Because of the school bus system families can choose the school that they want
 - o People can avoid certain schools that are perceived to have social issues
 - o This approach perpetuates divisions within the community

- Highest crime rates in Canada
 - o Violence, drugs, car theft
 - o Aboriginal youth gangs
- Residential school survivors
 - o Robbed entire families
- Income assistance
 - o People can't get off of income assistance
 - o The system traps people on
 - o There is not enough funding for training and education
 - o There are not enough supports
 - o People try to upgrade their training through the schools – not enough supports
- Youth in Care
 - o Many kids face a significant level of violence and neglect
 - o There are lots of children in care
 - o Aboriginal kids are disproportionately represented
- Child supports
 - o Responsibility of fathers
 - o Providing supports to mothers
- Meal Programs
 - o There should be meal programs in schools
 - o Schools should find ways to support children cooking and eating together -a people's kitchen
- Housing affordability
 - o Cheques are going to rent only
 - o Means that people are going hungry
 - o People can not cover the cost of food and housing both
 - o The cost of a 2-bedroom unit is approximately \$900 per month
 - o A 3-bedroom rent is approximately \$1100 per month
 - o One participant paid \$850 per month for their rent for a 3 bedroom house - there was an issues in terms of the quality of the housing including heating – they have asked their landlord for help but the landlord will not help until the tenant covers other damages (broken windows). It has left the tenant heating their unit with their oven.
 - o Many of the more affordable housing options are “scary,” dirt wall, holes in floor
- Racism
 - o Participants noted that they face discrimination/racism when looking for housing and employment – as noted –it is hard to get help/work
 - o Kids feel judged at the schools –one parent noted that they have difficulty being able to affording warm clothes, boots in winter and that they get pressure from teachers to have nicer clothes – we do our best but can't afford a winter jacket
- Health Supports
 - o People with disabilities living in Williams Lake cannot find doctors for support

- This can exacerbate some of the challenges –for example people observed that they have had an inaccurate diagnosis
- Others noted that many kids suffer due to disability and that it is difficult to get the proper assessment without travelling out of town but this can be costly
- Disability (PWD)
 - Difficult to apply
 - Takes work and Doctors are not trained to get through the application
 - All or nothing, but every case is different – don't discourage application!
 - Complexity of system
 - Should break into different categories, different criteria for different disability
- Fetal effect (FASD)
 - Hard to get proof of disability past youth
 - Youth need to get assessed in Vancouver (not everyone can go down)
 - Abuse of people with FASD, effects
 - Doctors do not want to cooperate, inadequately filling out forms
- Lack of family support
 - No medical during working years
 - Doctors tests are not adequate
 - Overwhelming process, that's why people give up
 - Band does not support if you're off reserve
- Transportation
 - A lot of people live outside of town
 - Transportation options are not good- people have to hitchhike
 - We are resourceful – I have learned many new skills repairing my vehicles
- People have skills they could share
 - Want to help train others, volunteering
- Post-secondary education
 - First year in Williams Lake
 - Have to travel to Quesnel or Kamloops to get more education/training
- Support for youth aging out of care
 - Kids age out of care at 19
 - Places too much stress on youth
 - Support should continue to age of 24
 - Foster families are left to support youth with no further support
 - Youth need more support to successfully transition into adulthood
- Support for families
 - Government should be doing more to support families
 - If someone has a child with a disability the government will pay a home share provider \$55,000 but families don't have access to similar funds

- Landlords
 - o There are many “slum landlords” in town – they are landlords which make no investment in maintenance, no upgrades, leave tenants insecure in their housing –i.e. no tenancy agreements, and no rent receipts
 - o There are many safety concerns in terms of the quality of the housing
 - o They ask for ½ of the first month’s rent as a damage deposit and ask for it in cash
 - o The renters assume it will be ok without these documents but the landlords take advantage of the situation.
- Police
 - o The RCMP have been more responsive
 - o One participant noted that they police will bring her alcoholic partner home rather than locking him up at the police station
- Attitudes/Perceptions
 - o People in town do not understand the First Nation situation
 - o When people are living off-reserve they do not get financial support
- Poor quality housing
 - o One landlord in town has multiple units
 - o People often share a room
 - o The housing quality is not good –“slum lord”
- Advocacy and Legal Aid
 - o Legal Aid was cut a number of years ago
 - o Family law (court house)
 - o Non family, non criminal (law foundation)
 - o Family matters should be outside of court
- Services
 - o People need better access to dental care
 - o Distance from town makes it difficult to see a dentist
 - o People do not have coverage for dental care
- Utility Costs
 - o Excessive hydro bills and natural gas bills
 - o There should be payment plans for utilities that help people to stay on top of bills
 - o They should be reviewed and adjusted regularly
- Access to Income Assistance
 - o A lot of people can’t access income assistance
 - o There is not enough social assistance funding
 - o The Ministry wants an email address and phone number –people don’t always have access to email or a phone
- Housing
 - o There should be more rent control and tenant protection
 - o People need access to safe and affordable housing
 - o Racism involving landlords
 - o Access to housing – slumlords

- Childcare
 - o There is the need for more childcare, especially for very young children
 - o There should be a lower rate for single parents
 - o People need longer hours for child care –open later
- Income Assistance
 - o Rules are challenging –i.e. 2 years of independence to qualify
 - o People have literacy problems – lower level education for many adults – it is hard to fill out the forms
- Employment and Training
 - o Not enough post-secondary support out of alternate schools
 - o Easier access to trades
- Access to employment insurance
 - o Have to lower the requirements – X number of weeks on EI
- Food
 - o People need more money for groceries
 - o So much of the money goes to rent
 - o My husband kept going to the doctor for tests – they thought he was sick because he was losing so much weight – it was just that he couldn't afford to eat – all of his money was going to rent – “he was starving to death” –I let him move back in with me
- Transportation
 - o Hours of transportation are limited
 - o Public transit goes from 7:45am to 9:30pm
- Cost of Living
 - o The cost of living has not kept up with wages
 - o The poverty level is too high
 - o People need access to employment, equipment and supplies
- Financial literacy
 - o Financial literacy can be a challenge
 - o A lot of people only have high school level education
 - o There is a lot of financial abuse of Elders
- People with FAS
 - o People have undiagnosed FAS
 - o It is difficult to get the tests that are needed and the supports
 - o Have to catch it early
- People New to the Community
 - o I moved to Williams Lake and it went from bad to worse
 - o It takes weeks to see someone for assistance
 - o Assistance program for mental health ended
 - o The problem is all of the programs are full
 - o There is not enough housing to go around – huge problem
 - o There is a lot of homelessness-couch-surfing
 - o Housing first model needed

- Transportation
 - o Need city bus
 - o Rural transit is a problem
 - o Doesn't go far enough
- Mental health/drugs
 - o Lack of supports
 - o There is nowhere to go after treatment
 - o Also there is limited intake
 - o Income Assistance
 - o Some people can't read and write
 - o Computer is needed for most programs
 - o It is embarrassing to not be able to apply
 - o People can't apply for employment if they are illiterate
- Discrimination and stigma
 - o There is real discrimination and stigma
 - o People face barriers – some can get medication with no questions and others are denied
 - o Some people can't get help
- Income Assistance
 - o Claw backs are a problem
 - o People fall behind especially if they need childcare
 - o Clawbacks are counter-productive they keep people in poverty
- PWD Assistance
 - o People are not allowed to volunteer (or work)
 - o If they do, they are at risk of losing their disability assistance
 - o The Ministry's policies keep people in poverty
- Payday loans
 - o Payday loans are predators
 - o Quebec has regulations that limit the amount of interest they can charge
 - o People lack financial literacy, they are desperate and fall victim
 - o Collection agencies are cruel, very misleading
 - o Lead to a downward spiral
 - o Need legislation on the loan shark industry
- Racism and Discrimination
 - o A native man was hired twice for work but when he showed up for work he was told that it was a mistake that there were no openings
 - o Another person reported that they had also experienced this
 - o Doors are closed on native people
- Lack of services
 - o There are fewer services in Williams Lake compared to other areas – there needs to be more equality in terms of access to services (i.e. the Okanagan) (1 vote)
 - o Access to services are limited
 - o There is a lack of personalized care

- Housing Costs
 - o Housing costs are high if you are receiving income assistance
 - o A rent for a bachelor unit is \$500 but a single person only gets \$350
- Education
 - o College is inaccessible for most
 - o The body can't take physical toll of a lot of the work that is available but opportunities are limited – it costs \$3,000 for retraining but that might as well be \$3 million
 - o Assumption that natives get free education is a misconception
 - o There is a “cap” on number of indigenous people who get free education/band (1 vote)
- Housing
 - o The housing that is available is poor quality
 - o There is no running water, use buckets
 - o “they know no one will help them”
 - o Leads to depression, drug use – vicious cycle
 - o 3 landlords own 90% of rental stock
 - o If you complain, you are evicted
 - o Units are left to fall apart
 - o There are no services to deal with housing issues
 - o No access to legal aid or other help
 - o Landlords will “railroad” you out of your place
 - o 12 uncontested foreclosures on one morning with a half hour of each other
 - o People have no idea of the process
 - o Laws are there but there is not equal access to the legal system
- Food Security
 - o Food costs are high –over-priced
 - o There are only mostly canned or processed food available through the food bank
 - o Mobility and transportation affects the food choices that are available
 - o There also issue around quality and quantity (food security)
- Medication
 - o Access to prescriptions is a problem
 - o People need more information about the health coverage that is available
 - o Getting to Walmart on transit for medication is hard – there are only limited hours
 - o Doctors discriminate –in some cases they refuse to provide medication –believe that the client is after pills for addiction – discrimination
 - o Methadone harms teeth, bones (cracked ribs) – it is a big cost to people
 - o People cannot afford the cost of basic medication and prescriptions – including dentures and hearing aids
- Income security
 - o There are lots of groups struggling in Williams Lake
 - o Working poor – even with two jobs/two incomes it is hard
 - o Many seniors are struggling
 - o There is a lot of intergenerational poverty

- Housing
 - o There is the need for hundreds of quality affordable accessible safe units
 - o Utility costs are high and make shelter unaffordable
 - o Many seniors need housing with supports but can't afford it
- Kids in Poverty
 - o Children growing up in poverty have multiple barriers to success – more than 25% of children in Williams Lake live in poverty
- Access to education
 - o People need access to a basic adult education to get a job
 - o Government should work with employers to provide opportunities
 - o People need training in technology and access to jobs
 - o There are fewer opportunities for labour jobs or less skilled jobs that don't require training
 - o Need life skills support and training
 - o Need basic job skills – how to find a job; how to keep a job, how to take instruction – people require intensive support to help them to build these skills
- Dealing with emergencies
 - o When you live so close to the poverty line, one emergency or a missed paycheque has a domino effect and often results in a small issue causing a huge crisis
- Cost of Pets
 - o Vet bills and costs of care for companion animals can be a challenge
 - o Pets as companions play a critical role in helping to reduce isolation
 - o People are on the waiting list to have a registered companion animals
- Ministry Rules
 - o 2 year independence rule is a huge barrier
 - o Not being able to access assistance can lead to homelessness, crimes of desperation, victimization
 - o There are different costs that are not covered but that are needed – the cost for cell phones, computer
 - o You need a phone to be able to find work
 - o You need a computer to access income assistance and other services
 - o People need flexibility and support i.e. modified work or adjusted hours
 - o The Ministry needs to look at the asset limits (i.e., people need a car to get to work/to help with their training and job search)
 - o At the same time having a car can disqualify you for assistance
 - o Dignity/shame is parallel to pride
- Stigma
 - o Parents often have to pay for school activities but they don't always have the money
 - o It is about more than just money – it is about participating in community life
 - o Hard for seniors who have been self sufficient their whole life to ask for help
 - o It is hard for parents to deny their children the chance to participate
 - o Low income assistance rates can lead to crime

- Income assistance doesn't cover so many things food, shelter, personal items
- Makes people feel shut out of society, embarrassed, depressed, discriminated against
- The local park is a gathering place for people who have nowhere to go but people get labelled – everyone sees them as “people on social assistance”
- Made to feel like beggars like the help is underserved
- Building Awareness/Understanding
 - Solutions have to be proactive vs. reactive
 - Income assistance workers need better education/communication skills, i.e., “trigger words”
 - Need to address the struggles associated with technology
 - Need to address the hurt and pain that is underpinning alcoholism, drug addictions = it is all part of self-medication
- Income Assistance Rules
 - There are negative consequence when PWD assistance is clawed back by government
 - If ever in “excess” – the government takes it back
 - People are unable to own assets that exceed \$100,000
 - People are forced to work under the table, sometimes criminalized
 - Monthly reporting requirements can be a burden for people on PWD
 - Creates depression and anxiety
 - It is hard to access education resources when receiving social assistance
 - There are not enough Ministry support staff – all of the social work staff who used to help people have become “administrators” just pushing paper – there are not enough staff there to help people
- User Fees
 - The hospital takes \$800 of \$1000 benefits given by INAC when staying in the hospital
 - Many First Nations communities surrounding Williams Lake are impoverished
 - There is a myth around universal healthcare – it is not universal, accessible OR free
 - Travel costs can add up
 - Not everyone can afford to transport themselves to larger centres for healthcare
- Accessibility
 - Accessibility can also be an issue in Williams Lake
 - There is no support for families with children who have disabilities
 - It is difficult to access the types of therapies that are needed
- Racism
 - Racism is a reality in Williams Lake
 - An Elder went missing during the fires but there was no acknowledgment
- Housing
 - Housing is a struggle, especially finding affordable units
 - Income assistance forces people to stay short term - keeps them from getting ahead
- Food Security
 - Eating healthy is difficult – too much \$

- Health Care Professionals
 - o Recruitment of professional services/supports is lacking
 - o i.e. First Nations Liaison worker at the hospital
 - o Makes it difficult to access services when they are needed
- Community Cohesion
 - o There is a lack of community strength
 - o People are unable to turn to their neighbour for help
 - o There is nowhere for elders/seniors to go
 - o There is a sense of loss/real loss of relationships
 - o There has been an increase in mental health concerns since the fires
 - o There is a lack of knowledge of the community resources/supports that are available
 - o There is the historical trauma and current challenges of a colonial system
 - o There is the need for real healing
- Impact of colonialism/racism
 - o It becomes a cycle of poverty and abuse
 - o “Revolving door” for crime
 - o Patterns of overrepresentation, i.e., incarceration, child welfare
 - o Vulnerability a huge factor but there are no advocates or support!
- Inequality
 - o Marginalizes the poor, can't just focus on middle/upper class
 - o Need to build awareness
 - o Does not leave enough money for critical services – schools, education, health
 - o Rich get richer
 - o Social services are stretched
 - o There is no real access to legal aid
 - o Educate and recognize the real impacts of crime, understand why there is crime

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

- Expanding eligibility for service
 - o If you need it, you should qualify for it
 - o Increase access to mental health services
 - o More programs, supports
 - o More options during a crisis
 - o More health promotion/disease management
- Investigate restorative justice and wraparound services
- Services and supports for people with addictions
 - o Need to look at medical approach to addiction, alcohol and drugs – root causes, impacts on crime, courts, jail, police, and cells
 - o Need more services to address the root causes of addiction (6 votes)

- More family treatment centres for First Nations and non-First Nations (1 vote)
 - Early childhood trauma and impulse control (1 vote)
- Access to education
 - Education for First Nations to upgrade education and training (2 votes)
 - Start early K-12 and high school (3 votes)
 - Provide Life skills training in K-12 – structure, snacks/naps, health
 - Informal and university/trades
 - Find a way without such high tuition costs
 - Provide more services and support in the community for First Nations to transition off reserve (1 vote)
 - Provide access to early childhood education
- Addictions treatment
 - 6-bed treatment centre is coming
- More supports
 - Provide prevention programs for moms and high risk families (2 votes)
 - Prenatal and postnatal services (1 vote)
 - Reduce stress levels on moms, including food, education, training,
 - More staff for evening and night services
 - Expanded childcare hours – beyond the 9-5
 - More funds for car 67 “integrated teams” of police, mental health, ambulance
 - Create a youth centre that is open until 10p.m.
 - Provide a youth shelter (3 votes)
- Income and Employment
 - Provide day labour program
 - Build connection for people who can do day labour with people who need help (5 votes)
 - Create a guaranteed income program (2 votes)
- Housing
 - Provide rent subsidies/supplements (5 votes)
- Income Assistance
 - Raise asset limits for income assistance recipients (1 vote)
 - Increase earnings exemptions for income assistance recipients (5 votes)
- Child Care
 - Provide affordable childcare and daycare for shift workers (1 vote)
- Youth Aging Out of Care (11 votes)
 - Provide life skills training and supports for youth aging out of care
 - Support those 18-21 including providing financial literacy training topics and options
 - Provide financial support
 - Rent controlled environment
 - Ability to attend driving school (make it mandatory)
 - Affordable daycare
 - Counselling
 - Cooking and shopping skills training

- Transit
 - o Make transit affordable or free
 - o Ensure that it is accessible
 - o Expanded the hours of operation (2 votes)
 - o Ensure that low income people have access to bus passes at a reduce cost
- Moving and Storage
 - o Make sure that there is affordable storage for people to store their belongings when people need to move (1 vote)
 - o Provide people help with moving (1 vote)
- Food Security
 - o Support community gardens – more (2 votes)
- Address cost of basic living (7 votes)
 - o Housing
 - o Utilities
 - o Car insurance
 - o Food costs
- Eviction prevention program
- Access to basic education/ABE
- Housing – affordable (4 votes)
- Affordable daycare (5 votes)
- Transportation (2 votes)
- Wages (6 votes)
- Training and Development
 - o Engage local university re: essential skills program development (1 vote)
 - o Increase communication around services and resources in the community
 - o Ensure that services are available to all community members (1 vote)
 - o Ensure that you are able to connect with the people you are trying to reach?
- Reduce stigma around poverty (3 votes)
 - o Work to build awareness around people living in poverty
 - o “this is the face of poverty”
 - o It is important for people to know that there are single parents working multiple jobs, that for many seniors OAS/GIS is not keeping pace
- Increase health promotion and disease prevention (1 vote)
- Adopt a universal childcare strategy (1 vote)
 - o Not enough spaces
 - o Affordability
 - o Living wage for childcare staff
- Legislation
 - o Need legislation around equal wages, benefits; still with incentives to perform at a higher level (2 votes)

- Difficult to have affordable rentals if one group or business has a monopoly on the market and can set rates at whatever price; affordable housing should be for all ages and demographics
- Recognize the interconnectedness and inter-relationships between all of the issues no one solution will solve the problem
- Access to mental health services (5 votes)
 - More support programs
 - People should not have to choose to forego their medication if they cannot pay for it
 - Better communication between doctors and mental health division – some doctors say that mental health has a big waitlist when that may not be the case
 - There should be more options in time of crisis: instead of emergency or RCMP (under MH Act)
 - Look at more health promotion and disease prevention and taking proactive approach instead of being reactive – increase funding
 - Provide mental health services and supports for rural communities (e.g., on reserve) in a way that works for them (may not be telehealth or online)
- Build essential life skills
 - Build essential skills – could be program-based or embed in other training
 - Build skill building activities into other curriculum
 - Expand eligibility for programs and services so anyone can access the services or resources they need (5 votes)
 - Increase funding and extend contracts: year to year contracts don't work
 - Central agency that provides health support for kids
 - Talking about it – don't ignore at political levels
 - Work to build family cohesiveness
 - Start at early age to provide skills (2 votes)
- Awareness about our own communities (1 vote)
 - Victim blaming
 - People don't understand the advantages they have compared to those who don't
- Address inequality of income at global level
- What little things can we do as a community?
 - Remind MLAs about needs (e.g., reinstate Legal Aid)
- Introduce programs and policies to close gap (1 vote):
 - Educational funding
 - Keeping kids at home
 - Investing in preventative measures in families, e.g., social workers as agents of change, family-based interventions
 - Destigmatize childhood support to encourage engagement (people do not go to MCFD because they are afraid their kids will be taken away)
 - More social workers are needed in Williams Lake (2 votes)
 - Family outreach worker – only one in Williams Lake (2 votes)
 - Enters home daily, MCFD funded

- Need voluntary program
 - Start earlier, provide new mothers early support prior to going home
- Youth
 - Build a youth shelter – who do we not have one?
 - More support for youth outreach workers
- Sharing and Learning
 - Provide more opportunities for people to share experiences
 - Let people share their knowledge of lived experiences
- Create a service hub
 - Have a central agency (like ACCESS) to connect people with resources
 - Work through natural networks
 - Establish an information hub
 - Reinstate legal aid
- Focus on people
 - Reduce administrative tasks and increase “people” time
 - Hire admin staff to support social workers (1 vote)
 - Better education of social workers on local communities, standards and norms
 - Family interactions, valuing cohesive family systems
- Increased collaboration across all levels of government
 - Collaborate between federal and provincial support systems (3 votes)
 - Funding, funding, funding (5 votes)
- Address the affordable housing crisis
- More support from senior levels of government (5 votes)
- More mental health support
 - Assessment (1 vote)
 - Counsellors (3 votes)
 - Support workers
 - Diverse and faster services
- Rehab centres in ‘at risk’ communities with follow-up in place
- Support workers for: (2 votes)
 - Groceries
 - Rides
 - Appointments
 - Reading/writing/computer
- Provide people with training in financial management/budgeting
- Create opportunities where people can come together
 - Share their talents – i.e. amateur talent night
 - Poetry-readings, singing song writing
 - People have a lot to offer – it is a way to build community
 - The Salvation Army has a space where people can play guitar – it is great watching some of the older guys, teach some of the younger guys – it helps to build community and a sense of belonging plus many people here really have talent

- Create mentoring programs (1 vote)
- Food Security
 - Provide people with access to healthy food
 - Teach them how to prepare it
- Mobile workers
- Vouching system for ID if low income
- Supported programs for training, educating (1 vote)
- Develop standardized services
- Get rid of lending institutes that charge 40% rates, rules and legislation on short term loans
- Accessible long term detox and treatment
- Youth treatment centre
- Sobering centre
- Affordable local products
- Free garden box – lessons
- Feel comfortable to speak up about issues
- Elder support workers
- Provincial cap on rents or affordability based on square footage
- Review of utilities on a quarterly basis to adjust equal payments
- Let's talk about and acknowledge racism
- Provide free daycare for people looking for work, people who are working, and people who are going to school to upgrade their education – give them some time to get stable
- Establish a “no blame” model of addictions in Portugal
- Must address all issues together
- Ministries need to coordinate
- Help people out if they fall into poverty
- Government needs to sell the strategy
 - Make the case
 - Not just another taxpayer cost
 - Real benefits are happening
 - Need the will
- Housing First model (2 votes)
 - Police see how much it helps
 - Very good cost savings
 - No judgment
 - Wraparound supports
 - Jubilee Housing is a good model in Williams Lake
- Eliminate “claw back” for people who are working
- Focus on prevention - proactive, not reactive (1 vote)
 - Prevent – e.g., drugs and alcohol, housing
- Hold landlords accountable (2 votes)
 - Establish a housing ombudsman
 - Power to prevent retaliation against tenant who complains about issue

- Employment and Income
 - o Introduce a living wage (2 votes)
- Invest more money in transportation
 - o Transportation costs are high/not affordable
 - o Cabs are expensive
 - o Improve transportation to outskirts of Williams Lake
- Improve Ministry services
 - o More and better communication between Ministries
 - o More and better communication between the Ministry and clients (1 vote)
 - o Recognize all the issues are interconnected
 - o Need to find ways to address all of them, an integrated and holistic strategy (5 votes)
 - o Need to rethink entire system of addressing poverty (3 votes)
 - o Need to address issues of stigma (1 vote)
 - o Need to increase earning exemption even further (1 vote)
 - o Look at asset limits -permit PWD recipients to own certain types of assets (e.g. homes, cars, etc) greater than \$100,000 (3 votes)
- Other services and supports
 - o More mental health/addictions services and outreach (2 votes)
 - o Money for personal advocates (1 vote)
 - o More community events, gatherings that include First Nations people (1 vote)
 - o Introduce community services into schools
 - o Raise awareness of healthy eating (i.e., free workshops) (1 vote)
 - o More accessible spaces
 - o Revamp medical services/supports for people needing services
 - o Expand MSP services to include other types of services- i.e. chiropractic services- 10 visits per year as well as other more holistic services (1 vote)
 - o Need more services to address the root causes of addiction
 - o Housing, employment, education
- Shelter for youth
 - o It's not just about housing
 - o Appropriate supports
 - o Employment
 - o Addiction and mental health
 - o Trauma informed care, treatment, and support
- Political support
 - o Build better alignment (Federal, Provincial, Local)
 - o Create shared priorities
 - o Are there opportunities to align with the Federal poverty reduction strategy?
 - o Housing is another potential area for building synergies
- Services
 - o Need more social workers, more family outreach – preventative
 - o Let social workers work with people as opposed to do admin work

- Shorter wait times for income assistance
- Create opportunities for people to build skills –computer literacy, reading, writing, practice speaking and learning English
- More help with mental health issues outreach;
- One on one support
- Address issues of drug and alcohol use
- Provide affordable housing
- Local bylaws
 - Stop slumlords from taking advantage of people
- Income assistance
 - Help sooner
 - Fewer barriers
 - Don't wait until people are destitute
- Address affordability
 - Improve income support
 - Provide a guaranteed income
 - Provide rent supplement support
 - Improve access to transportation
 - Provide affordable child care
- Access to Employment
 - Day labour program
 - Employment training and support
 - Explore alternative employment models
- Focus on reconciliation and decolonization! (3 votes)