

Hadih House

Community Resource/Drop in Centre
2105 Pine St Prince George BC
Phone 250 563 7976 Fax 250 563 7978



INTRODUCTION

Hadih House is in the VLA of Prince George BC. We are a drop-in resource centre, that provides support services and programs designed to assist community members of Prince George. Some of our services include breakfast Monday through Friday, lunch on Fridays, access to computers, fax and printing, laundry services, clothing room, one on one support to assist community members in removing barriers which may include computer literacy, accessing food banks, advocacy and referrals to other agencies. Our programs include Family Unity Cooking Group, Food Box Program, Wellbriety meetings and Women's Wellness, to name a few.

We hosted two Poverty Reduction Group Discussions and the dates were as follows

March 13th, 2018

March 19th 2018

Overview compiled of both groups

Community participants March 13th group - 11 Agency Participants 2

Community participants March 19th group - 18

The participants were of all ages ranging from youngest being 16 years of age to the oldest being 64 years of age. This included couples, youth, single parents, people who are homeless and seniors. The participant all stated that they were on fixed income and lived in poverty, except for the Agency participants. The two top concerns are outlined based on the group consensus, with the remainder of other issues listed below.

Question 1

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

1 Housing

Participants provided this insight

- Lack of affordable housing
- Difficulty accessing low income housing – application process difficult, lifestyle determines eligibility, waitlists too long
- Residing in unsuitable housing, below housing standards such as lack of heat, health risks such as mold or bed bugs, unsafe environment
- Segregated to high risk neighbourhoods, most affordable housing is located in areas that deem safety concerns
- Costs high, unable to pay rent, especially when a single individual is seeking independent housing
- Stigma – judged for being on a fixed income, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age
- Lack of wheel chair accessible rental units

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- Additional costs of services – electricity, gas, phone, laundry, not affordable when on a fixed income
- Without housing how is anyone able to move forward with addressing unemployment, medical conditions, quality of daily living

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

Housing

- Access to more affordable housing, both subsidized and market housing including wheelchair accessible units, that is located throughout Prince George, both market and subsidized housing
- Providing additional supports, for example Housing First, to support people who have been homeless for a significant period or who may need additional supports to learn how to manage household tasks including budgeting, landlord – tenant responsibilities, etc
- A reduced cost for utilities for people living on a fixed income
- A simpler process to apply for subsidized housing, without a criteria that refers to lifestyle choices
- Partnerships with landlords and housing programs to assist people who live in poverty and are seeking affordable housing, with the possibility of an incentive program for the landlords
- Capping rents
- Additional services at emergency shelters, ongoing support offered with less barriers
- Additional independent subsidized rentals for independent living as many of our participants stated they were unable to live alone but had no alternative but to live in shared accommodation which often was problematic due to differences
- Additional long term subsidized housing for persons who live with chronic physical or mental health diagnosis, with outreach service providers available
- Additional resources to accommodate and support persons/families in securing housing within their financial means

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

2 Fixed Income

- Income Assistance/PWD is well below the poverty line and does not offer enough to secure housing or provide adequately for food, or basic monthly expenses'
- Extended health benefits not offered
- Little to no incentive or support in back to work programs
- Lack of support when requesting assistance or navigating the processes to receive the support needed

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- Inadequate communication when addressing requirements, benefits. The participants stated that they feel they are not heard when requesting services, and often receive multiple answers to questions that they have asked or been asked, they feel as though they are getting the run around and are not supported but instead treated without any respect
- Stigma, being forced to wait in lines outside of the Ministry offices when required to pick up funding on cheque issue date, breeches confidentiality

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

- An increase in monies provided by Income Assistance or PWD that reflects the cost of rent and household expenses
- Extended benefits that included dental, eyecare and prescriptions for all living on a fixed income
- Supports that assist persons who are currently living on a fixed income, to move, to better assist in navigate the requirements of receiving financial assistance. Many of our participants reported that it was difficult when attempting to get support with questions regarding funding, programs, requirements of receiving benefits. The participants explained that some had difficulty with completing forms required, accessing computers for submitting requests or correspondence, having access to telephone to communicate with supports and some advised that they were illiterate or not computer savvy. Participants reported that there were barriers and little to no support to address these issues.
- Additional supports for out of pocket expenses, such as over the counter medication, medical supplies, travel and accommodations for medical reasons
- Incentive programs for return to work. Participants reported that when returning to work they were not supported in transportation costs, clothing required for work and where not given an opportunity to get their "feet back on the ground" and at times found it self defeating trying to move forward when with new employment. Their experiences stated that they were struggling to make ends meet with the additional costs of transportation, child care and costs associated with returning to work and suggested that and incentive be introduced to allow a transitional period of 3 to 6 months to allow them to continue to receive full financial assistance while earning a paycheck
- Additional subsidized child care would support persons returning to work
- Grants and funding for education, to allow persons to achieve trades, diplomas and training to support their goals of obtaining employment that reflects a salary that allows them to be above the poverty line wage
- Funding for families to engage their children in social activities, sports and other programs to promote wellness and growth
- Additional funding for clothing and basic needs , it was suggested additional funding be provide twice annually

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3. Other challenges discussed with regards to living in poverty, in no specific order

- Transportation costs and accessibility
- Extended health benefits unavailable or coverage is inadequate to meet people's needs, such as dental care, eye exams and eyewear, prescription coverage, over the counter medications or medical aides
- Lack of services, such as home support, community mental health, services provided at emergency shelters limited and inaccessible 24 hours a day
- Legal services unaffordable or limited when offered pro bono
- Resources are limited due to need and demand of population, long waitlists or service not available or limited to specific demographics of population
- Minimum wage too low to successfully maintain daily expenses, even when employed full time

In closing, the participants were mind like with regards to the top two issues, housing and fixed income, however did express the additional concerns mentioned above. In the report, we did incorporate them in to our top 2, as they were part of the impact of the top 2 issues discussed. Our participants were forthcoming and appreciated the opportunity to voice their concerns. Both groups were provided the links for additional feedback.

Thank you for supporting Hadih House with this opportunity, and allowing our community members to share their lived experiences.