

Introduction:

Date:	March 14, 2018
Community	Surrey, B.C. (Whalley)
# of Participants	23
# of Organizations	3

About the Participants:

The participants consisted of Surrey community members. Participant demographics included individuals from recovery homes (9), single parents (3), elders (2), individuals living in subsidize housing (3), participants of the FRAFCA’s HPP program (3) and FRAFCA’s housing staff (3). All participants had lived experiences regarding poverty.

About the Findings:

Question # 1

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

ISSUES:

- Homelessness – no available or affordable housing
- No rent control – increasing too fast
- Addictions – lack of resources to support getting clean (Detox and Treatment options)
- Long wait times for access to mental health supports and A&D counselling
- Illness/Health – stress of poverty affects physical and mental health
- Getting out of prison with nowhere to go
- Barriers to rental housing are becoming more difficult (credit checks, crim. checks, ref. checks, and roommate issues)
- Barriers to subsidized housing – long waitlists, long application process, offered options that are not viable to sustain family) *ⁱ
- Lack of education opportunities
- Hard to find a Job/Lack of opportunities
- Transportation – too expensive



- Transportation costs for children to get to school (cannot rely on school and non-profits for bus tickets – transportation should be free for school age children and parent that needs to accompany them)
- Cost of childcare is unaffordable (feel there is no point to work because all earnings will go to childcare costs)
- Minimum wage is too low (not enough to live on)
- Minimum Income Assistance rates are too low (shelters & support allowances combined are not adequate for housing rentals)
- Unable to create family connections/activities due to poverty
- Having to separate from family because of work or housing
- Food is too expensive (not enough from food bank to eat properly)
- Shelters are always full
- Lack of access to necessities for homeless – (water, toilets/showers, and laundry services)
- Not enough youth housing options in Surrey
- Not enough elder housing or resources for elders
- Hard to get ID replacement because of costs and figuring the order to get them in
- Too easy access to liquor stores (see them on almost every corner)
- Hard to access counselling services
- Going without medication - either cannot afford or have to wait for funding to get them
- Fearful of being homeless – “one pay check away” “cannot afford to get sick”

Question # 2

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

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- Increase of subsidized housing options in Surrey
- Create youth/elder subsidized housing options in Surrey
- On -Demand treatment/detox options
- Increase the access to A&D and mental health counselling
- Government change of attitude to understand people’s needs
- Increase support groups and hotlines for addictions/emergencies
- Increase the regulation of recovery homes in Surrey – need legit homes
- Increase third-stage housing options so there is a chance to move forward after homelessness and/or recovery
- Improve application process and waitlists for subsidized housing
- Increase Indigenous representation in the community of Surrey (example – hospitals, city hall or community events)
- Increase supports for the regions & Indigenous nations including land entitlements
- Increase “watchmen” for private rental market – landlords taking advantage of tenants and increase of illegal evictions



- Increase of safe environments or drop-in centres for healthy fun activities

Solutions and Actions That Can Make a Difference

a) Issues and solutions that the participants identified as most important to them

- **Issue:** Lack of affordable housing options in private market and subsidized
- **Solution:**
 - ✓ Increase subsidizing housing options for all ages
 - ✓ Create options for third stage options. Third stage that comes with options to buy the housing unit
 - ✓ Build small units that MSDPR income recipients can afford
- **Issue:** Lack of treatment, detox centres and regulated recovery homes
- **Solution:**
 - ✓ Increase the amount of licensed recovery homes
 - ✓ Have detox on-demand – remove waiting list
 - ✓ Hotline for addiction resources
- **Issue:** Hard to replace ID because of application fees and processes
- **Solution:**
 - ✓ One specialized place to get all government ID
- **Issue:** Lack of family connections. Connecting with family is important for physical and mental health
- **Solutions:**
 - ✓ Need more opportunities for safe places to engage in city life with family. For example – community events, friendly/clean drop-in centres and affordable activities for the family. The cost of transportation alone to get to the event takes all the allocated money for the event.



b) What emerged as the top 3 solutions or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority setting?

- 1) Housing/ homelessness – need affordable and safe housing, create third stage options for buying small housing units for individuals and families
- 2) Resources available for the families in poverty to have a “fun day” twice a year that includes transportation and event outing costs. For example - the PNE, Vancouver aquarium or science world. This would improve family relationships and supports as well as support physical and mental wellbeing.
- 3) One stop location to obtain all Identification. ID is needed for most transactions in life such as housing, treatment, medical needs, food supports, and income supports.

Endnote:

*1 One of the participants disclosed their experiences regarding this issue on barriers for obtaining subsidized housing. After waiting about a year, the family received a call that there was housing available for them, however, it was in Richmond. The family was living and working in Surrey. He stated that Richmond was too far to take transit back to Surrey for work and all their family supports were in Surrey for childcare. He stated he would have to find a new job just to move there and then worried about how they would make the rent payments and provide enough for his family. So, the family decided to turn down the subsidized housing. He stated he was advised that their application would be put down to the bottom of the list because they chose to turn down the subsidizing housing in Richmond. He stated he was frustrated and disappointed. He describes the barriers as unrealistic expectations because he had to turn down housing because it would not work for his family.

