

**Mount Waddington Community Consultation  
Port Hardy Fire Rescue Hall  
March 27, 2018**

**Summary**

The Mount Waddington Health Network, in partnership with the Mount Waddington Poverty Reduction Strategy Family Consultant, hosted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Community Consultation meeting in Port Hardy on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

We began by acknowledging that we are on the unceded territory of the Kwakiutl First Nation, and giving thanks for this beautiful land and environment all around us.

The meeting was facilitated by our Poverty Reduction Strategy MCFD Family Consultant, who thanked everyone for being there, and then provided some background on these province-wide meetings.

**40** participants came from Port Hardy as well as from several outlying communities in the Mt Waddington region. They included those with lived experience of poverty, seniors, single parents, First Nations community members, and others from all walks of life.

5 table groups, each with a recorder/facilitator, and 5-10 participants, engaged in 2 rounds of discussion, which focussed 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 this individual 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.

Flip Chart responses

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

- Lack of affordable, safe housing
  - Very low vacancy rate making prices go up in some cases, and landlords turning away others because they can
  - Many apartments full of mould, leaking, unsuitable neighbours when have children
  - Single family homes out of reach, and hard to find anyway.
  - Nothing for seniors
- No options different kinds of housing, such as Co-op, or some new creative idea

- Homelessness
- Only 12 units of subsidized housing
- Rental assistance complicated and site specific. Can't figure out, and no one to help with this or just even to point in right direction.
- Can't look after basic needs: food, shelter, heat, medications. Having to choose sometimes to not pay hydro because of needed medication/ cutting medication in half or not renewing prescription when empty
- Limited and sometimes lack of essential services such as health support, public transportation, mental health supports
- Not able to afford healthy food for self and family; can't buy fresh vegetables and fruit on a regular basis. Knowing that the food I buy is not a proper diet, especially for growing children, but can't afford otherwise.
- Single person on IA can't afford decent food either.
- Seniors on fixed incomes also unable to buy healthy food regularly. Often skip a meal or just have a piece of toast
- I know poor nutrition can lead to other problems, but have no choice.
- Food prices high, but only 1 store to buy from
- Access to internet a barrier; don't have my own computer let alone paying for internet, and then don't have the money to print out necessary forms in case there's some help somewhere
- Technological barriers especially for government services online.
- Children unable to take part in sports, extracurricular activities that would both assist in their development and provide chance to positively interact with peers
- Lack of childcare for working poor for night shifts
- Stigma of being poor
- Most employment opportunities part-time, not living wage, no benefits
- Can't afford decent clothes and haircut even if I could find a job.
- Can't afford a phone, so employers who might be interested can't call, and most won't take a chance on me because I couldn't be on call to be called in.
- Unable to access training to improve skills and find decent jobs "don't fit the program funding criteria"; can't afford the tuition or childcare, loss of wages to attend anyway
- Mental health & addictions
- Recreational/Cultural activities cost money

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

- Raising minimum wage (4 dots)
- More "work ready" programs (8)
- Community gardens (1)
- Funding Advocate/Advocacy and or Navigator program and making available to everyone, not just a certain group or demographic (i.e. Must have a family)
- Free daycare
- Affordable daycare
- Bring back northern living allowance (taxes) (2)

- Free education (3)
- Funding for short term training that leads to employment (1)
- Guaranteed annual income
- Affordable housing (4)
- Income-based housing (2)
- Tax incentives to build in rural areas
- Community Kitchens
  - With access to freezers onsite so food doesn't get stolen from home
- Community Gardens (1)
- Taking care of pregnant women and helping to support early development of her child (3)
- Paying staff to run programs rather than relying on dwindling supply of aging community volunteers for stable programs (2)
- Increasing Federal seniors pensions (9)
- Upgrade SAFER (1)
- Better medical/dental benefits for seniors; not paying out of pocket for necessary dental surgery (1)
- Increasing Welfare amounts (5)
- Changing policies around food waste to increase access to day old foods (1)
- More and quicker access to detox/treatment
- Low income bus pass program
- Easier access to ID
- BC Hydro rebate cheques (3)
- Early Childhood Education programs for FN Youth (1)
- More focus on Prevention Programs, especially after school, for Youth with addiction issues(1)
- Access to Showers/Laundry
- Free Recreation Passes, for adults, youth, children (2)
- More rental assistance programs
- More supports for families to better raise their children
  - Parents can't teach what they haven't been taught
- Make government info easier to understand what someone is eligible for; many people do not have good literacy skills. If government would pretend everyone is illiterate, the info would be much more understandable
- Stop changing rules when government change.
- Make programs/rules clear so people know where and how to find help (3)
- Improve communication skills for government workers so they can direct people to appropriate services in a manner that doesn't make people feel even more badly.
- Increase funding for public school so staff don't have to subsidize supplies out of their own pockets.
- Increase education availability and reduce costs so all can access
- Guaranteed minimum income (11)
- Increase all fixed income (OAS, CPP, social assistance) (1)
- Everyone given a place to live at a reasonable rate; sliding scale subsidies

- Housing for parents, seniors, and people with disabilities
- Easier access to Income Assistance
- Easier application to OAS, CPP
- Make information completely for subsidies, along with easier application process.
  - Often aren't aware of things they could access
- Put money in hands of the poor because they will spend it locally, which is good

### **Table Report Outs-priorities**

All tables: Housing, employment

2 Tables: Increased income assistance, living wage and/or guaranteed annual income

2 Tables: Free Education/Training for adults

2 Tables: Food Security

1 Table: Better access to Mental Health & Addictions services for all age ranges, including seniors

### **Closing Discussion**

One of the dynamics in this event was that of a shared sense of togetherness. We are a small region, with fewer than 13,000 people in total. Almost everyone knew everyone else. When participants were talking, others were listening as friends or neighbours- people who care about each other.

Much of what people discussed had to do with not having the basics, such as housing, food insecurity, lack of decent steady employment, and the barriers they face in trying to access supports and services. We are people who know how to support each other and work together to improve people's lives. There was complete agreement that anything that is designed must address more than just 1 issue. It is all inter-connected.

Further conversation, with much agreement, is that poverty looks very different in rural and remote area such as ours, and this needs to be taken into account by government and funders.

Inclosing, we wish to thank the Port Hardy Fire Rescue organization for their generosity in providing the hall to us, and to SPARC BC for providing funding which allowed us to offer a hot meal, travel and childcare subsidies.