



## **Mission**

*Strengthening the Oaklands community by providing programs, services and resources for its residents, businesses and visitors.*

## Report to Spark BC

From: Oaklands Community Association

Date: March 26, 2018

Where: Oaklands Neighbourhood, Victoria BC

Who: 7 seniors

### **Summary:**

- Our group was made up of 6 retired senior low income women and one homeless 82 year old man.
- All participants rent with the exception of one individual who owns a home in Oaklands and the other is homeless.
- All participants are on CPP and OAS.
- Only one of the seven considers the pension adequate but only because she lives in subsidized housing.
- All the participants are single.
- All suffer poverty related struggles.

### **The issues of living in poverty determined by the group:**

#### **1. LACK OF INFORMATION.**

- a. It is a significant challenge for seniors to find out what all the various services, subsidies and supports there are in their communities.
  - b. There is no central source where one can talk to a person.
  - c. The Internet is confusing.
  - d. The phone has too many phone trees and no people.
  - e. There are no up to date accurate directories.
  - f. You have to hunt for information, but often might not know what is out there to hunt for.
- **SOLUTIONS:**
    - 1. Senior's poverty advocates who work individually with people to find the services that will assist the person in need and not be restricted to particular domains of service, i.e. housing, or dementia, or transportation, but the advocates focus would be on the individual.
    - 2. More well trained Social Workers to be available in hospitals (with well trained volunteer assistance?). Seniors suffering in hospitals with debilitating

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Oaklands Community Association is a registered charity | BN 882929946RR0001

Oaklands Community Centre  
2827 Belmont Ave #1, Victoria BC V8R 4B2

Oaklands Neighbourhood House  
2629 Victor Street, Victoria BC V8R 4E3

illness need help in preparing for their future. When they have no family there is little support.

- 3. Community Associations can hold meetings around information and services
  - Coffee group – seniors get together for communication exchange
  - Invite appropriate advocates
- Comprehensive guide to provincial/municipal level services available in community centres, recreation centres, clinics, library.
- A package detailing services for seniors comes from the Province when you retire or if you need any assistance
- Setting a standard for written material to have at least 14pt font to increase visible accessibility for brochures.

## **2. LACK OF TRULY USEFUL MEDICAL SUPPORTS.**

- a. There are no programs to assist low income seniors with hearing aids, dental work or eye glasses. These are three critical medical needs that MSP does not help.
- b. For low income non-disability seniors these items are for the most part too expensive to purchase and so they make do or go without, while people on disabilities, income assistance or private insurance can get the items they need.

### **• SOLUTIONS:**

- More medical coverage for people living in poverty
- Help community centres be a centre for providing info on programs for seniors
- Medical advocates – real person/office... not a phone tree or internet service

## **3. HOUSING.**

- a. Housing for low income people is a crisis in Victoria.
- b. Rents are out of reach and home ownership is beyond possible.
- c. There are not enough subsidized units for low income people and the waiting lists are long.
- d. The artificial commodification of the housing supply to turn homes into speculation businesses has significantly hurt the poorest of our citizens.

### **• SOLUTIONS:**

- Subsidized COOP rental/ownership program for people to share individual homes with government assistance in helping groups purchase appropriate homes and having a dispute resolution program.
- SAFER subsidy needs to be higher in Victoria to reflect the cost of living.
- Laneway homes promotion and tax breaks (other incentives) to landowners who could rent out the space. Progressive design ie: front porches, small self-contained units
- The development of tiny homes Pocket Neighbourhoods
- *More subsidized housing for seniors, families and those with disabilities*

- Open homesteading in northern BC and encourage young people to secure homesteading land to free up accommodation in the cities.

#### **4. ISOLATION.**

- a. People living in poverty tend to isolate themselves.
- b. Seniors with significant illness live in fear

#### **• SOLUTIONS:**

- Community Centres to bridge between young families and seniors
- More support for community centres to open programming for seniors

#### **5. PENSION INCOMES NOT ADEQUATE.**

- a. Given the terrible housing situation in Victoria and the lack of medical coverage the CPP and OAS do not meet the basic needs of any of our participants.
- b. None of the participants have private pension plans.

#### **• SOLUTIONS:**

- Increase CPP and OAS to meet current reality.
- Open CPP to personal contributions to increase possible pension benefits at retirement.

#### **6. SENSE OF COMMUNITY.**

- a. The lack of a sense of community in urban centres where people work together and support each other is lacking.

#### **• SOLUTIONS:**

- organize seniors for political action

### **THE TOP THREE**

#### Issues:

- 1. Lack of Information.**
- 2. Lack of truly useful medical benefit supports.**
- 3. Housing.**

#### Solutions:

- 1. Senior's poverty advocates**
- 2. More subsidized housing for seniors, families and those with disabilities**
- 3. More medical coverage for people living in poverty**