

# SPARC BC Small Group Discussion Report Powell River

## Introduction:

Date	March 26, 2018 ~ 5:30-8:30pm
Community	Powell River and Region
# of Participants	85
# of Organizations	17

## About the Participants:

Our meeting was well represented by people with lived experience as well as representatives from many community organizations.

Of the participants, approximately 10% were youth, 30% seniors, and 10% single parents. 30% of the participants self-identified as low income, 20% self-identified as persons with a disability, and 7% self-identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Local organizations which were represented included PREP Society, inclusion Powell River, Girl Guides, Tla'amin Nation, Faith Lutheran Church, Powell River Child, Youth & Family Services, the City of Powell River, the Powell River Regional District, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, BC Ambulance, the Coroner, United Way, Success by 6, Vancouver Island University, and CJMP radio.

## About the Findings:

To ensure we captured everyone's voice, we broke into groups of eight to ten people, each with a minimum of one facilitator and one transcriber. Each response is listed below, arranged by topic. Some responses are duplicated, having been brought forward by more than one group.

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

### Housing/Homelessness

living in van - Ministry of Social Development needs to understand what a home is. What is the definition of a home?

\*Basic right - very stressful

City of PR recently changed rules to stop low-income people living in vans at Willingdon Beach, claiming tourists need the spots

Match people with room in homes with people without homes - create community and help with safety: facebook page, monthly potluck so people can informally meet

lack of affordable & acceptable housing

speed of recent growth - why so much growth? Too much, Too fast - unsustainable currently  
need more information available, permanent and year round \*especially winter\*

Hidden homeless couch surfing, camping, trailers, etc. - recent homeless count in PR: 200

people move to other cities if they have dementia, leaving supports (family and friends) behind

Seniors need different answers than younger (55+) - intentional housing?

real estate booming; people leave big cities because rent too high

wheelchair accessible very hard to find

pad rentals for trailers are hard to find - fees going up for trailer parks, then they are sold; trailer occupants left with nowhere

uncertainty if extreme weather shelter is open - need shelter that is open all the time

One month rent at Willingdon Beach is 28 days - not 30. Can be evicted if rent 'late'.

can live on a boat as long as it isn't registered in Powell River

need affordable housing

shelter allowance (\$375) too low

Housing availability too low

Renting: either unaffordable or precarious. Tenant's rights - repairs needed

NOT ENOUGH safe affordable housing (esp. rental)

Supported housing - need more

Homelessness

availability of housing

restrictive zoning bylaws on creative, affordable housing

No mens shelter

Not enough emergency housing - individual disasters

Zero available housing: "When I moved to Powell River, there was no housing so I built a yurt."

Need more supported housing

Problem with affordable housing (rent too high)

long wait list for senior housing

physical accessible housing - not enough units, even if you have money

having safe, accessible housing and sustainable food is key to well-being as well feeling part of community - connected

can't afford homes (isolation)

isolated community - stigma of, blame for homelessness

investigation of empty/vacant buildings that could be repurposed for housing

design of housing/building not meeting needs of those using  
have to accept living with other people  
no rental board protection for people home-sharing  
problems/lack of communication with neighbours and landlords  
lack of good communication skills needed to live in community - need for interpersonal skills  
Housing stipend \$375/single will not cover any living space  
housing criteria restrictive: i.e. not working/advocates not heard/economic and social  
discrimination/racism/animal support  
Shortage of affordable housing: \$375/single, \$690/3-member family - minors with disability get no  
extra

### Income Assistance

Stigma against poverty in all (including health care) systems - poor treatment by benefit system  
Increase in people with fixed incomes  
cycle of poverty: penalized for making money when on income assistance  
change cycle of income assistance to allow people room to transcend poverty  
impossible to find housing on own when on income assistance  
childcare, burden with safety difficult when on IA  
Spousal support is taxed  
PWD rates decreased for couple  
Old age security & Canada pension  
Formula for payment for intermediate care leaves people poor - spouse especially.  
Benefits too low for regular & PWD  
No support when ill & when off work - EI too expensive when self employed  
No local supervision in PR  
Difficult job for financial workers - see all with same lens  
MSDSI staff pressured to lower costs  
Seniors  
Rate of pay (Living Wage)  
Subsidies not increasing to keep up with cost of living  
low-paid unbenefitted work + subsidized "volunteer work" - not enough money, and restrictive  
conditions  
rising price of amenities (gas, housing/rent)  
Income taken away from disability amount  
Government benefits too low  
maternity benefits restricted to higher wage earners  
PWD gas stipend doesn't cover costs, and \$4 per person per meal is not enough  
Respite care stipend available to bring someone in to help, but not available to parents doing the  
caregiving themselves - give parents the choice.  
shortages (rent, utilities) impact food budget  
Basic needs are not met (or are limited) once a person is housed inside a 'medical model' facility such  
as Willingdon Creek, e.g. no allowance for clothing or shoes.  
\$977 a month for a person with disability? REALLY?? NOT ENOUGH.  
Minimum wage too low  
Minimum wage too low

## Resources

Community Resource Centre - not enough budget for 7 days/week. Need increasing, budget decreasing.

Fetch Powell River - specific to Powell River

BC211.ca - access to info available in the community

Increased primary supports/low barrier

increased support for places such as Community Resource Centre

need access to information to support all aspects of mental health/physical health and well-being

Bureaucracy

Lack of Legal Aid

Protection if marriage conflict

Automated phone systems

Emergency networks (e.g. tenants' rights issues) need improvement to meet needs of people in precarious situations

social assistance moves too slowly in times of crisis

More support for grassroots ground-level services (e.g. Community Resource Centre)

proper support for children

lack of access to computers/wifi/internet - all needed to access government services

need resources that work, that are no longer in PR - where have they gone?

Undiagnosed FAS services - lacking

ID needed for many services

Recreation Complex - bulk buying discount = people with money get a better deal

Silos exist within various supports, not looking after the individual details.

Youth activities are either cost prohibitive or full - limited access and availability. Also no mentor/support for youth.

## Health/Medical

access to health care in all areas (e.g. dental coverage)

access to mental health resources important

physical well-being support important

lousy medical resources (income assistance)

not enough detox/rehabilitation centres in town

\* Access in town to rapid detox and treatment

Lack of medical supports, including specialists and transportation

Dental & Eyeglasses

Prescriptions

Medical - going down

Lack of doctors

hard to find good-quality affordable dental care

lack of dental coverage

lack of family doctors

deductable for prescription - Pharmacare

walk-in clinic only open 2 days (4 hours/week)

infirm

Lack of doctors

dental care - access and cost leads to poor oral health

Prescriptions and medications covered BUT medical needs/supplies not covered. Burden on parent/participant to prove necessity.

### Mental Health/Addiction

Drug use - death rate

Reducing stigma about users

Drug Education & Preventative Education curriculum

Mental Health support and education curriculum

automatically PWD

### Stress

Stigma to using social net - presumption of cheating - systemic problem

Support for people with substance abuse

Not enough supports in mental health/addictions

Lack of accessible free counselling services & mental health supports

lack of access to addiction services

mental illness services: no peer group service

poverty linked to substance abuse and mental illness

Lack of accessible/affordable counselling: low-wage earners with no benefits pay 100%

isolation (social)

Mental health criteria and supports leaving people out and unsupported, e.g. IQ < 70 has financial support but IQ ≥ 70 has no support

### Transportation

remove barriers - for work and health etc.

ends too early each day - can't get home (last bus 5:40pm)

understanding buses can be very confusing if transfer needed

questions and survey but things never seem to change

Transportation

Fuel, vehicles

hard to find work without driver's license

transportation barriers (evenings especially)

lack of transportation

accessibility to many things

BC FERRIES

isolation and difficult to get out - no money, don't drive

free rides/transportation - not enough low cost options especially without a car - a problem locally and to island/mainland (issues of access and cost)

public transportation too slow, too infrequent

small buildings (airport)

### Food Security

NEED BETTER FOOD

need access to healthy and affordable food

need resources for information and supports (e.g. food bank)

Cost of Healthy Food too high

Inadequate food - not enough fresh healthy food

Increased need for community gardens & allotment gardens AND education & support in providing for one's food

food insecurity

food sharing disappearing

lack of access to healthy food in schools/for kids in general

food sustainability - prices going up, can't afford to eat well

too many regulations for food producers/farmers

Access and available food support not enough, and not often enough (e.g. food bank once per month, SA hamper once every two months, GFB once per month)

Food costs going up

Lack of access to fresh foods

### Other

Populations at risk: women, LGBTQ, children, minorities, POC, indigenous, refugees, mental health & addiction

Stigmas in a small town: poverty, addiction, mental health isolation

Stigma

Difficulty forming community due to isolation and geographic location

lack of cultural context for services - indigenous and newcomers

immigrants may move from poverty and land back in it

Barriers to professionals

Poverty creates a class system

past history of affluence creates/contributes to prejudice

lack of "community"

### Education

Cost of education - public school & post-secondary

post-secondary education should be FREE

post-secondary cost is a barrier to getting out of poverty

lack of access to skill building

form filling skills - literacy (basic and digital)

trades certifications may not transfer across provincial lines

LITERACY - basic (adult focus), digital

undiagnosed learning disabilities

### Employment

Community encourage investment - Education/Employment opportunities

need long term employment - industry, not just survival

unemployment

no jobs

Employment challenges - not enough positions for PWD

### Utilities

Heat/Hydro/Utilities

Cell phones/internet/data plans

CRTC - affordable cell phones

ICBC rates

BC Hydro - will disconnect in winter

### Childcare

need affordable, licensed, quality, accessible childcare

Childcare

inadequate child care

Pre-school access is weak due to schedule/transport issues and cost

### Pets

Costs of pet care

## Possible Solutions: What would address these issues and help you or others out of poverty?

### Housing/Homelessness

tiny houses, zoning changes, for affordability

creating incentives to densify, create second suites

Rent to own - tiny house, others

Government housing support: building new, helping build with \$ for citizens

increase support for shelters to help with homelessness and access to other programs, including addictions/overdose

Revisit the definition of homelessness and make the process more simplified so that communities can begin to address the concerns respective to their community

Increased density per lot

Now can build carriage houses

Now can put in an extra suite

Alternative materials - natural

Tiny houses allowed

Co-op housing

Better funding for housing

Community buy lots - tenants in common

make it more appealing to developers to build & provide housing

voluntary community amenity payment

better funding for co-housing

expand rental subsidies BC Housing

training responsible landlords

no absentee landlords

Speculative real estate tax

housing options e.g. tiny house, communities, co-housing, co-operative housing, subsidized

rent based on income

housing that provides social supports

Rental incentives to owners

Land value tax - progressive tax for higher occupancy

Change the bylaws in Powell River to "make Powell River a hub for cheap, alternative housing"

Homeless shelter

Affordable housing, supported housing, more units!

start a Habitat for Humanity Chapter (local solution for housing)

regulating Air B&B - maybe return to rental market

Supportive housing

communal housing with shared kitchens/hostel or rooming house model

control foreign ownership

Absentee landlords are not part of the community

Explore other styles of housing such as carriage homes

Incentives to build own homes

Shared property for tiny home/trailer etc.

Habitat for Humanity

Employ carpentry students to build mini cabins, etc.

Remove restrictions

Mental Health, SD47, etc. together should form a Housing Authority

Shift to finding sustainable housing, rather than social services paying investors' mortgages

increase public housing stocks

help citizens move toward individual ownership

Renters Union - create a collective voice

## Resources

increase funding for social programs

allow communities the freedom to offer services which address local need (community centres, e.g. Alano Club, Source Club)

More money for local services

Provide intergenerational opportunities for connecting seniors to kids

Provide better access for information about available programs. How do seniors learn about opportunities?

Someone that can help - Ombudsperson

Community development

More communication between agencies/funding for Community Response Network

where to go for help - MLA's office

Create more support services for Veterans - Advocacy

Catalogue of resources (community skills and resources) e.g. retirees-youth mentoring, people without garden-people with green spaces

Create and support programs that help people, e.g. soup kitchens, food banks, etc. Financial literacy.

community based peer counselling group FREE & sharing knowledge between generations (mentoring)

Hub based on community health and well-being

Matching community funding (specifically directed at programs for poverty)

FUND the Community Resource Centre and spread the model through BC!

Consolidated information centre - "One-stop shop"

Government funding for consolidated information centre - current funding is precarious

Community Resource Centre needs more awareness - local media advertize it for free

Family Place should get free advertising

One umbrella organization to direct people to resources

More public/accessible spaces

Recreation Complex - affordable/subsidized rates

more free/government funded community events

Active media campaign to address stigma - compare to scale of Canada 150

more transparency at City Hall especially re: building and development - access to information - clear laws, criteria, regulations - answerable to community

"Better at Home" model expanded instead of cutbacks. Friendship Circle, enhanced connection, expand program to include free rides - not just seniors!

Meals on Wheels for everybody

more outreach workers (go to where people are)

Centralized Community Resource: break down silos, use team approach/community collective to make available resources known

More resources for PWD (access through Career Link?)

### Food Security

community gardens

tax incentives

encourage community to grow food

"grow a row" model

schools are getting funding

food sales - driveway/farm gate (raise awareness)

great for mental health/community

food waste - getting food to food banks, the needy

more support for community gardens (space for a community garden in every neighbourhood)

garden sharing - provide funding for network

Community kitchens: small businesses support with commercial kitchens

Kitchens for commercial food prep/preservation - "pickled beet day", stone soup community kitchen

Free breakfast and lunch in schools, stigma free

free tools to start gardens

gardening in other yards

expanding food security initiatives

power imbalance between landowners and those who need access

tax breaks for land owners/developers who develop community gardens

look at reducing "waste" food from restaurants to feed hungry people

increase awareness of food programs

More community gardens/edible landscaping

City donate land, public donate excess garden stock

Neighbourhood community allotments

People who own land allow others to garden on it - database to keep track

More businesses (grocers & restaurants) donating to food bank

quality control of perishable food supplies

### Income Assistance

raise rates or minimum living allowance to allow citizens to climb out of poverty

housing allowance is very unrealistic

re-evaluate basic living expenses

allow people on fixed income to earn more without being penalized

revisit the criteria for 'homes' which qualify for government funding, i.e. tiny homes, vans, boats, trailers, etc.

Do not penalize those making efforts to lift themselves from poverty, i.e. reduce allowance for rent when sacrifices are made with quality of housing (choose to live in tent to support academic goals)

Increase support to seniors to sustain/obtain a decent quality of life (home support/med costs, etc.)

Provincial Universal Basic Income (guaranteed income supplement)

Incentives for working your way out of poverty.

Raise rates for benefits: PWD/Benefits, old age pension, CPP

Stop taxing spousal support

financial supports for people based on past history

Minimum wage isn't sufficient

make retirement possible: pensions, housing for seniors - makes jobs available

Increase living allowances to realistic levels. Make it fair! (e.g. 20¢/km for PWD, 53¢/km for provincial employee)

Living wage, living expense based upon local housing/consumer market

Living wage/Universal income

Living wage needs to increase with cost of living increase

### Mental Health/Addiction

Mental Health/Addiction

increase staff - counselling

counselling wait times

detox - long wait times

increased awareness for mental health in schools - inclusive curriculum, counselling, in class supports

safe injection site

fuller coverage for addiction services

detox & treatment facility

fund a shelter

Provide better access to 1:1 (individualized) approach to support those with challenges

Supports for bridging programs to support client based on their individual need.

Bring more addiction services/counsellors to Powell River

Free and adequate counselling

safe injection site

Detox bed(s) in OUR hospital

More health and mental health supports for the homeless

more incentives to open child care centres

### Transportation

More bicycle/walking lanes

Ride sharing - use technology

public transit system - subsidize

subsidies for e-bikes, e-scooters

Taxi Saver added to HandyDART system

Increased public transportation

Make BC Ferries part of highway system

Free/reduced ferries for locals, charge for visitors

Safe alternate transport: bike lanes, bike rentals, sidewalks

free rides

taxi savers (reduced fares)

## Utilities

Freeze utility rates

CRTC enforce an affordable phone

Bring back PowerSmart program (BCHydro)

Competitive insurance/hydro markets

donating phone program

affordable phone plans

## Education

Rights education in public schools

Educate our community - making people aware of poverty in our community and how they can help

Free education

More opportunities for youth: apprenticeships, money management skills, basic work skills  
change attitudes from "survival of the fittest" to "survival of the community" - education in schools (add to curriculum)

## Employment

community procurement in place - needs to be promoted - minimum amount of local employment for those in need

Support communities in revitalizing industry/increasing employment opportunities to help lift people from poverty

More rewarding job opportunities

Grants available to hire students - should have same opportunity for older workers

## Childcare

Early Childhood Educators paid a living wage

More affordable childcare

Free childcare

## Health/Medical

Full time walk-in medical clinic

Create ability to self-refer for medical conditions: dental, specialists, mental health support

MSP should cover dental, optometry, counselling, addiction services

## Pets

Create a sliding fee scale for pet owners with local vets

## Solutions and Actions That Can Make a Difference

(a) Each participant received three (3) sticky dots to put on the solutions to signify importance (occasionally these dots were placed on issues rather than solutions; these are included here too). Here are the most important ideas, arranged from the most dots to only one dot:

### Dots Issue/Solution

- |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 | Stigma against poverty in all (including health care) systems - poor treatment by benefit system                                                                                                         |
| 9  | Communal housing with shared kitchens/hostel or rooming house model                                                                                                                                      |
| 9  | Raise rates for benefits: PWD/Benefits, old age pension, CPP                                                                                                                                             |
| 6  | Living wage, living expense based upon local housing/consumer market                                                                                                                                     |
| 5  | Educate our community - making people aware of poverty in our community and how they can help                                                                                                            |
| 5  | Raise rates or minimum living allowance to allow citizens to climb out of poverty                                                                                                                        |
| 5  | Increase living allowances to realistic levels. Make it fair! (e.g. 20¢/km for PWD, 53¢/km for provincial employee, and \$375 is not enough for shelter)                                                 |
| 5  | Hub based on community health and well-being                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4  | tax breaks for land owners/developers who develop community gardens                                                                                                                                      |
| 4  | Government housing support: building new, helping build with \$ for citizens                                                                                                                             |
| 4  | Do not penalize those making efforts to lift themselves from poverty, e.g. reduce allowance for rent when sacrifices are made with quality of housing (choose to live in tent to support academic goals) |
| 4  | Living wage needs to increase with cost of living increase                                                                                                                                               |
| 3  | Tax incentives to support food security                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 3  | Encourage community to grow food                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3  | More community gardens/edible landscaping                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3  | Make it more appealing to developers to build & provide housing                                                                                                                                          |
| 3  | Housing options e.g. tiny house, communities, co-housing, co-operative housing, subsidized                                                                                                               |
| 3  | Start a Habitat for Humanity Chapter (local solution for housing)                                                                                                                                        |
| 3  | Increase public housing stocks                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3  | Provincial Universal Basic Income (guaranteed income supplement)                                                                                                                                         |
| 3  | Mental Health/Addiction                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 3  | Active media campaign to address stigma - compare to scale of Canada 150                                                                                                                                 |
| 3  | "Better at Home" model expanded instead of cutbacks. Friendship Circle, enhanced connection, expand program to include free rides - not just seniors!                                                    |
| 3  | Centralized Community Resource: break down silos, use team approach/community collective to make available resources known                                                                               |
| 2  | Living in a van - Ministry of Social Development needs to understand what a home is. What is the definition of a home?                                                                                   |
| 2  | Revisit the definition of homelessness and make the process more simplified to that communities can begin to address the concerns respective to their community                                          |
| 2  | Tiny houses allowed                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 2  | Better funding for housing                                                                                                                                                                               |

- 2 Better funding for co-housing
- 2 Control foreign ownership
- 2 Incentives for working your way out of poverty.
- 2 Stop taxing spousal support
- 2 Increased awareness for mental health in schools - inclusive curriculum, counselling, in class supports
- 2 Supports for bridging programs to support client based on their individual need.
- 2 Create a sliding fee scale for pet owners with local vets
- 2 Create and support programs that help people, e.g. soup kitchens, food banks, etc. Financial literacy.
- 2 Matching community funding (specifically directed at programs for poverty)
- 2 Community Resource Centre needs more awareness - local media advertise it for free
- 2 More outreach workers (go to where people are)
- 2 Taxi Saver added to HandyDART system
- 2 Affordable phone plans
- 1 More affordable childcare
- 1 Free childcare
- 1 Change attitudes from "survival of the fittest" to "survival of the community" - education in schools (add to curriculum)
- 1 More rewarding job opportunities
- 1 NEED BETTER FOOD
- 1 Community kitchens: small businesses support with commercial kitchens
- 1 Rent to own - tiny house, others
- 1 \*Housing is Basic right - very stressful
- 1 City of PR recently changed rules to stop low-income people living in vans at Willingdon Beach, claiming tourists need the spots
- 1 Match people with room in homes with people without homes - create community and help with safety: facebook page, monthly potluck so people can informally meet
- 1 Increase support for shelters to help with homelessness and access to other programs, including addictions/overdose
- 1 Increased density per lot
- 1 Expand rental subsidies BC Housing
- 1 Land value tax - progressive tax for higher occupancy
- 1 Change the bylaws in Powell River to "make Powell River a hub for cheap, alternative housing"
- 1 Homeless shelter
- 1 Affordable housing, supported housing, more units!
- 1 Regulating Air B&B - maybe return to rental market
- 1 Absentee landlords are not part of the community
- 1 Explore other styles of housing such as carriage homes
- 1 Incentives to build own homes
- 1 Shared property for tiny home/trailer etc.
- 1 More transparency at City Hall especially re: building and development - access to information - clear laws, criteria, regulations - answerable to community
- 1 More health and mental health supports for the homeless
- 1 Financial supports for people based on past history

- 1 More money for local services
- 1 Provide intergenerational opportunities for connecting seniors to kids
- 1 Taxi Savers (reduced fares)
- 1 Consolidated information centre - "One-stop shop"
- 1 Government funding for consolidated information centre - current funding is precarious
- 1 Safe alternate transport: bike lanes, bike rentals, sidewalks
- 1 Meals on Wheels for everybody
- 1 More bicycle/walking lanes
- 1 Subsidies for e-bikes, e-scooters
- 1 Make BC Ferries part of highway system
- 1 Free/reduced ferries for locals, charge for visitors
- 1 Community Resource Centre - not enough budget for 7 days/week. Need is increasing, budget is decreasing.
- 1 FUND the Community Resource Centre and spread the model through BC!

(b) At the end of the evening, each group presented its top three solutions or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority settings. Many of these were reiterated by other groups. Housing emerged as the top solution, followed by a basic minimum income, with food security and health/medical solutions tying for third.

1. Increase government and municipal support to create and promote affordable, sustainable, and adequate housing that includes social and lifestyle support. Incorporate creative solutions such as tiny homes, communal and shared kitchens, and hostel models. Ensure that emergency housing and a permanent homeless shelter are included.
2. Guarantee a basic minimum income for all, with living allowances indexed to the present cost of living to address the growing gap between a living wage and pension/income assistance. Do not penalize those making efforts to lift themselves out of poverty.
3. a. Ensure food security for all by making more fresh food available more often through the use of community gardens, encouraging the community to grow and share food, and provide tax breaks for developers/land owners that develop community gardens.  
b. Fund a hub based on community health and well-being, increase mental health and addiction supports, and guarantee access to timely health services with a full time medical clinic.