



BC Poverty Reduction Strategy

Small Group Discussion Report

March 2018

Prepared by: Sherry Lin (Youth Settlement Counsellor)



Participant Demographics

All participants reside in the South Vancouver area (except for one participant who resides in Burnaby)

Seniors

Total seniors: 7

Age: 67-84

Cultural Background: 2 South Asian, 3 Canadian Born, 2 Filipino, 1 Chinese

Youth

Total youth: 29 (26 youth are immigrants or refugees)

Age: 13-20

Countries of Birth: Canada, Sri Lanka, India, Philippines, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Guatemala, Mexico

Findings

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

Seniors' Responses

- Gender, culture-affects knowledge and practices around food
- Food skills and knowledge
- Food insecurity
 - Access to nutritious food
- Housing
 - Lack of access to affordable housing
 - High rental rates
 - High property taxes
 - Safety-for seniors living alone
 - Cost of maintaining property
- Lack of affordable childcare
- Transportation
 - Lack of access to and affordable transportation
- Employment
 - Lack of jobs
 - Lack of secure employment
 - Deskilling
 - Low wages
 - People having to work longer because they cannot retire
 - Lack of benefits
- Health
 - Lack of healthcare coverage for dental, hearing, vision, and medicine
 - No access to physiotherapists, and other specialists (w/o extended benefits plan)
- Student poverty
 - High costs of tuition, textbook, rents
 - Student debt
 - Access to affordable nutritious food
- Elder abuse in extended families,
 - Isolated, vulnerable, no support
 - Patriarchal families

Youth Responses

*Numbers in brackets indicate number of priority stickers

- Housing: rent is too high, can't afford to stay, accumulating debt from rent, constantly moving, multiple job to pay for rent sharing room with parents, multiple people in on room, lack of privacy, unable to own house (17)
- Cant own a house (3)
- Post-secondary school : cannot afford, work before college, work afterschool rather than advancing career (10)
- Homelessness
- Budget for basic needs: furniture, appliances, relying on community (1)
- Food: expensive, adjusting to new food, food from home country is expensive, have to finish food in the house, can't have nice food, difficult seeing people waste food while children from other countries are begging for it (4)
- Transportation: hard to bring food on the bus, not every family owns a car, time consuming to use public transit, not enough money for bus
- Working on weekends: too tired to do anything after work, tired at school, not enough time to bond with family
- Family problems: financial stress, arguments between parents, physical and emotional punishment from parents, divorce (5)
- Family time: not enough time spent with family, parents are too stressed about money to interact with family, too stressed to talk to siblings, parents look tired, parents don't know what's going on with their children, most parents have more than one job, worried for parent's health, hard for single parents, parents are often away from home working early in the morning and late at night (2)
- Non-family relationships: no money to hang out with friends, can't buy things for friends and significant others
- Peers: viewed as poor rather than equals, language barriers, racism (1)
- Academics: failing in school, parents can't help due to stress, harder to focus on school work, degrees from previous country don't apply in Canada (2)
- Employment: searching for a job, earning money, overworked, lack of work experience and skills, risky jobs, poorer jobs because of language barrier, racism, low salary (5)
- Clothing: unable to afford nice clothes, hard to buy warm winter clothes or rain gear
- Drugs: influenced by peers, spending money of drugs instead of essentials (1)

- School fees: worried about parents paying for school fees, school supplies, yearbook, prom, hoodies, photos (1)
- Bills: paying for them, utilities
- Luxury goods: have to buy nice things with your own money, no money for luxury after paying for necessities
- Healthcare: medicine is too expensive, hard to pay for medical bills because they don't have a care card (5)
- Recreational activities: too expensive, can't afford proper sports equipment, can't afford entertainment
- Bad environment: bad people and community, gangs, fights, physical harm, no one helps (1)
- Crime: steal out of desperation, firearms, drugs (1)
- Debt: hard to pay back borrowed money, parent trying to get a loan (1)
- Mental health: depression (2)

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

Seniors' Responses

- Create jobs
- Policy changes-at the government level-provincial, federal
- Enhance business incentives
 - Tax credits
 - Help small businesses
- Reducing taxes-income, corporate
- Increase affordable housing
 - Accessible and appropriate
- Access to extended healthcare benefits, such as physiotherapy
- Education
 - How to access social assistance
 - Healthy foods
 - Exercise
 - How to live a healthy lifestyle overall
- Social inclusion
 - For example, funding for children living in poverty to join sports and other programs
- Affordable transportation

- Free for low income people, such as children, etc
- Annual bus pass
- Affordable childcare
- Increase social assistance-CPP, OAS, GIS-currently not enough to live off of
- Improve pensions
- Review LICO, change it so more people can qualify for assistance
- Improve healthcare coverage-dental, vision, hearing
- Eliminate bureaucracy

Youth Responses

*Numbers in brackets indicate number of priority stickers

- Social services: community centres, food banks, SVNH
- Increased wages: so people can live off their earnings (16)
- Gender equality in the workplace: easier for single moms to find jobs
- Reduce prices of prescription drugs for students and seniors
- Efficiently build houses: solar, layout, and design (1)
- Lower taxes for people on welfare (5)
- Lower transportation cost
- Free and/or additional language classes for newcomers (3)
- Financial support programs for newcomers (2)
- Bilingual teachers
- ELL translators for high schoolers (1)
- Government funded extra-curricular activities: sports equipment costs covered
- New clothes (not second-hand) for cheap (1)
- Some specialty doctors should be included in health care: dentists (5)
- More mental health and emotional support programs (2)
- Drug rehab programs
- Reduce rent
- More scholarships
- More jobs (6)
- More government houses for lower rent (8)
- More work benefits (2)
- More support and encouragement for improved education and skills (1)
- Lower house prices (1)

- Help finding jobs
- Clothing drives (1)
- Education programs about drugs
- Lower cost for recreational activities
- Family planning & counselling: how to resolve conflicts (3)
- Financial education programs
- More (cheap) tutoring programs (1)
- Respectful work : work for a long time and not get laid-off/fired
- Easier access to donations, don't know how to access food bank
- Decrease food prices
- Free work experience programs and workshops
- Better communication from government: make it easier for people to find out about programs that help them (4)
- People should be able to showcase their skills and talent
- More work for people with disabilities (1)
- Healthy and cheaper lunches at secondary and elementary schools (1)

Priority Setting

Top 3 Issues

1. Housing: rent is too high, can't afford to stay, accumulating debt from rent, constantly moving, multiple job to pay for rent sharing room with parents, multiple people in on room, lack of privacy, unable to own house
2. Post-secondary school : cannot afford, work before college, work afterschool rather than advancing career
3. Family problems: financial stress, arguments between parents, physical and emotional punishment from parents, divorce

Top 3 Solutions

1. Increased wages: so people can live off their earnings
2. More government houses for lower rent
3. Some specialty doctors should be included in health care: dentists