



Transcript: Community Meeting on Poverty Reduction

Abbotsford, BC
March 28, 2018

Introduction and Event Summary

On March 28, 2018 the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction hosted a community meeting in Abbotsford, BC to discuss poverty and poverty reduction with local residents. The event brought together approximately 85 to 95 participants including people with lived experience of poverty; poverty reduction front line workers and advocates; people from the non-profit and business sectors; and other community members from all walks of life.

The event began with a welcome from Elder Lester Ned, followed by opening remarks from Mable Elmore (Parliamentary Secretary on Poverty Reduction).

Participants then engaged in round table discussions in groups of 8 to 10 people per table. Each table had a dedicated facilitator from a local community group or from SPARC BC who helped to guide the conversations. Each table also had a dedicated note taker who helped to record the discussion.

There were two rounds of discussion which focused 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 the individual priority setting exercise, 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.

The Parliamentary Secretary shared some closing remarks.

Document Organization

This document contains the transcripts from the flip chart notes from those in attendance. The flip chart notes have been transcribed verbatim, correcting only for spelling and grammar as needed. The notes are organized according to the feedback received to the two questions beginning with:

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?

Question 1: What are the issues facing you and people in poverty right now?

- Housing
 - o Housing is important
 - o The cost of rent is high
 - o There are no rent controls –leaves people vulnerable (1 dot)
 - o If housing subsidies increase then the landlord increases the rent (with short notice - 10 days)
 - o People living in long-term rentals are being given notices of rent increases
 - o People are spending the majority of their income on the cost of housing
 - o Rents are continuing to increase
 - o In Abbotsford, the cost of rent went from \$650 to \$850 all at once (5 dots)
- Access to Ministry Services
 - o You have to know the system to use it and no one knows how to use it
 - o The system is complicated and can play you
 - o Computer only services are challenging (i.e. income assistance access, taxes)
 - o The Service Canada website sucks!
 - o Calling the Ministry 1-866 # is also difficult
 - o In many cases the staff on the phone will refer you back to the bad website for answers!
- Childcare
 - o Child care costs \$1,500 month for 2 days per week/ or for 4 hours of childcare (1 dot)
 - o Even households with two incomes do not have enough to afford child care
 - o There are not enough child care spaces in public facilities
 - o People are forced to rely on private facilities (unlicensed)
 - o The private facilities also have higher costs – they can charge whatever they want
 - o The cost for childcare is actually higher than the cost of rent
 - o Often you have to ask family members to commute to help with the childcare
 - o Some families don't have family support systems and this can make it even harder
 - o Neighbours can help in an emergency but this is only in an emergency
- Government Services
 - o Finding ways to have your taxes done can be difficult
 - o Free services are stretched way too thin and you often need to make an appointment
 - o If people do not do their taxes they might not get the credits that they are entitled to
 - o The Ministry will help cover the cost of getting your taxes done (i.e. pay \$40 to \$70/return)
 - o Taxes need to be taken care of but the cost is ridiculous
- Employment
 - o There are high rates of unemployment
 - o It can be difficult for people to find work
- Seniors
 - o Many seniors are struggling
 - o The elderly are easily evicted – they don't know what to do
- Housing
 - o There should be tax breaks or incentives for families living together in the same house

- The rental market is so tight
- Landlords are setting up bidding wars between tenants
- The rental unit will go to the household that makes the highest bid
- Landlords are taking cash from people to help get the housing
- People do not get a receipt and sometimes it is hard to get your “deposit” back if you are not successful - the landlord will frequently take cash from multiple applicants for the same rental unit
- The demand for housing is pushing up the price
- People are being forced to move
- Discrimination/Stigma
 - People being evicted for miniscule issues/discrimination
 - Landlords practice a lot of different types of discriminatory practices
 - Landlords are refusing to rent to people on income assistance
 - People reported they were denied housing once the landlord found out their source of income
 - Many of the questions that tenants are being asked are personal:
 - “What’s your income”;
 - “Do you do drugs?”
 - “Do you have a criminal background?”
 - “Have you had any evictions?”
- Housing
 - One person reported that they have been looking for a suite to rent since July
 - They finally found a place in December (after 5 months of looking) but they have already received an eviction notice because the landlord said they caused damage - the landlord is evicting them and keeping the damage deposit
 - When welfare rates increased it led to landlords raising rents
 - Some landlords are doing illegal searches
 - Some organizations vouch for clients as a way of securing housing
 - People are receiving eviction notices (renovictions notices) and are being forced to move to other places
 - When people are forced to move they lose their damage deposit
 - There is not enough low income housing (3 dots)
 - People are facing unfair evictions (1 dot)
 - The evictions mean that people becoming homeless (again)
 - Renovictions and wrongful evictions are a real problem and low income tenants usually lose at arbitration because landlords know how to position themselves to win
 - One individual told a story where they were renting a 3 bedroom house but the landlord started to rent out the other rooms to strangers - at the same time the landlord told the individual that they were responsible for all of the rent
 - If you complain you are at risk losing your housing
 - People who have pets face real challenges in finding housing
 - If a landlord withholds their reference it will be difficult to get another unit
 - Landlords know that they hold all the cards so they won’t return the security deposits

- Landlords will say anything to keep the security deposit even if they are making a false damage claim – there was some discussion about whether having the Province hold the security deposits could help
- One individual report that they lost \$900 because when the washer/dryer was moved by movers the linoleum was torn. They were told that they owed the landlord \$900 for this damage
- It's tough to keep the current roof over your head - you are worried because you will need the landlord's reference for the next place you try to rent
- Some landlords are unethical "scammers"
- Transportation
 - People with low income need access to reduced transit fares
 - 5 years ago there was a pilot project to get reduced transit fares but it failed "no buy in"
 - There are issues in terms of stops (not enough) and the amount of time between buses
 - In some cases, buses come every 20 minutes and in some are cases they come every hour
 - Transit "sucks" because it does not operate enough hours
 - Transit does not go late enough
 - There should be low income "uber" incentive
 - Youth can't afford cars but they try to get cars because of safety concerns on public transit
- Homelessness
 - From midnight to 6:00 a.m. some homeless people on the street feel very vulnerable
 - One individual told the story of how teenagers came up in their cars and surrounded him and his dog - he was worried they were going to hurt his dog
 - He described how he went through his cart and started to pull out everything that he could use to protect himself (i.e. rakes, shovels, frying pan) - he said that they youth "terrorized" him for more than six (6) hours from midnight to 6:00 a.m.
- Health Care
 - People talked about access to health care and medical coverage and the fact that different items that are not covered – i.e. some medications/dental
 - Individual noted that the \$80 cost for their "aero chamber" is not covered
- Pets
 - People talked about the importance of pets
 - Veterinarian coverage for pets is not covered – when you are homeless, pets are like family - people need pets for therapy and company
 - A lot of people end up spending all of their monthly assistance on food for their pets
- Access to Ministry Services
 - Processing times can be long
 - Sometimes people have to call back a couple of times
 - There are different crisis grants but people don't always know how to access the funding
 - There was discussion that the food crisis grant is \$20/person but that people can only access this once every six (6) months
 - There is also a grant for clothing - \$100/year but not everyone knows about this grant or how they can get it
 - Challenge to line up at the Ministry office for service and the smaller offices close for lunch

- In the Abbotsford office just as you get to the front of the line (after waiting 2 hours) the office closes for lunch – it means you lose your place in line or wait another hour
- Are there changes that the Ministry can make to their service delivery model?
- Is there a way to set up different windows/areas for different services?
- One woman was waiting in line with her child for 2 hours
- One of the participants talked about a pregnant women who requested a crisis grant for shelter- however they were denied because the Ministry staff told them that they should have expected to be short on funds and therefore it was not a crisis
- People talked about the fact that the increase in the income assistance rates did not make much of a difference and that other rents go up when assistance goes up
- There needs to be an “across the board” increase in funds (1 dot)
- Housing
 - People noted that Housing First approach has been having success in other jurisdictions
 - Saskatchewan was identified as a successful model
 - One individual spoke about New Westminster and the fact that it took a long time to move into their housing and to feel like it was their place - they had waited more than 18 month for housing
- Homelessness
 - It is difficult for single people to survive on income assistance
 - It is often difficult to live with other people, so you choose to live in a tent instead
 - People told stories of how the police took their stuff when they left to get something to eat
 - “The City kicks us out, takes all our bottles (income) - they take our ID and throw it in the garbage”
 - Clothes are thrown out too the City took my propane stove, propane and \$500 worth of stuff are gone!”
 - “I got frostbite in Chilliwack last year – I couldn’t find shelter from the weather and I couldn’t leave my dog”
 - “We are constantly being kicked out of doorways – security threatens to call police”
 - People are told “If I have to come in there I’m gonna smash you real hard”
 - One individual reported that the Salvation Army threw all of his belongings into the garbage bin and called the police when he went into the bin to retrieve them. He got a 10 day ban from Salvation Army
 - The Salvation Army also called the SPCA to take his dog away
- Youth
 - People talked about the vulnerability of youth
 - Current measures to help kids to get out of poverty are not working
 - Youth need financial supports including help to make the transition to their own place
 - Youth have different types and different levels of readiness
 - Youth need subsidies or access to co-op housing as a way to gain references and to learn how to live on their own
 - Prevention should start at a younger age

- Education
 - o People need help to navigate the education system
 - o How do you go to college or university?
 - o How do you pay tuition?
 - o Where do you find grants?
 - o Are there ways to up-grade your education?
 - o Is there free education that can help you to get ready for university?
 - o Is there someone that can help to provide advice and help to navigate the system?
- Skills Training
 - o People lack access to opportunities for skills training
 - o People talked about the need for support - programs to encourage people into the trades
 - o Life skills training to help you to build your confidence and follow dreams/achieve potential
- Transportation
 - o Abbotsford has an awful transportation system!
 - o The community has grown a lot – there is a lot of sprawl
 - o The schedule is too short and the buses are not aligned with people’s work schedules (1 dot)
- Public Awareness/Support
 - o Need public education about the causes of poverty
 - o Need to find ways to destigmatize and demystify poverty
 - o Need to acknowledge the history and trauma in peoples’ lives
 - o Need to change the way we speak about each other, represent each other
 - o It’s important to get the media on board
 - o The narrative starts here and change must start here too – culture shift (4 dots)
 - o Need to tell the stories – show that these are real people with real voices
- Attitudes
 - o Canada is a caring society but differently from the U.S.
 - o Canadians have different policies and different contexts – I have a fear that our attitude is moving towards those of the U.S.
- Access to Services and Supports
 - o There are not enough opportunities
 - o Too much/extensive/unrealistic expectation
 - o Too many hoops to jump through
 - o Inaccessibility of resources
 - o Lack of access to treatment
 - o Lack of access to health care and mental health supports
 - o The cost of rent is too high as well as other living costs
 - o People do not have the resources they need to maintain and operate a vehicle
 - o Childcare is too expensive
- Employment
 - o People need training for life skills
 - o Need help to identify job opportunities
 - o There are not enough entry level jobs and most of the jobs that are available are low wage

- Discrimination and Stigma
 - o People face racism and ableism (1 dot)
 - o There is stigma if you are poor
 - o There are long wait lists and rules around qualifying for services
 - o There is a form of gatekeeping
 - o People aren't made aware of and afforded their rights
 - o Decisions are punitive rather than restorative justice
 - o Ageism – youth and elder (1 dot)
 - o Homophobia/transphobia
 - o Discrimination/judgement
 - o People hate “poor” people (even if they are poor themselves)
 - o There is discrimination and dehumanization
 - o Downward socialization/violence
- Access to Ministry Services
 - o How you access the services are unclear
 - o Services can be difficult to access
 - o The grievance process is difficult
 - o People do not have access to an advocate
- Food Security
 - o Access to nutritious food is expensive
 - o Cheaper food is unhealthy
- Children and Youth
 - o The whole foster care system has issues
 - o Young people need support
 - o Kids get labeled early in life
 - o There are lots of plans but not a lot of action
- Realities of Poverty
 - o Institutions exist to perpetuate themselves
 - o There is social stratification in society
 - o There is a lot of crime
 - o The drug war (1 dot)
 - o There is criminalization of the sex trade and drug use
 - o Fish netting – breaches, etc., leading to criminalization (1 dot)
 - o Can't meet basic needs--how can one succeed?
 - o People are unable to access food, shelter, rest
- Services and Supports
 - o All of the resources should be in one building
 - o Medical support for youth needed
- Employment
 - o Need employment opportunities for people with disabilities
 - o Need opportunities for people with poor mental health
 - o Lack of funding for training for people to develop the skills they need

- Transportation
 - o The bus system is not reliable so it is hard to get to work
 - o People are unable to get to bus stops
 - o It is very difficult for people with disabilities to access transit
 - o There are gaps in this system
 - o If you are in a wheel chair public transit is difficult to access
- Income Assistance
 - o The shelter allowance is out of line with the cost (too low)
 - o People get less as a couple than two (2) individuals so people do not stay together
- Housing
 - o People have to rent together
 - o People can get victimized as they are not sure who else is living in their home
 - o Landlords are asking for too much information – it is an invasion of privacy
 - o People give the information in the hopes of securing a residence
 - o BC Housings waitlist too long
- Immigrants
 - o Immigrant and refugees are very vulnerable
 - o It is difficult for immigrants to find housing
 - o There is stigma attached and often language barriers
- Children and Youth
 - o There is lack of housing for youth aging out of care
 - o Need to intervene/solve the problems sooner for youth to help break the cycle of poverty
 - o It is difficult for youth to find employment that is suitable
- Addictions and Mental Health
 - o There are not enough care facilities
 - o The waiting lists are too long
 - o The local rehab centre waitlist is very long and the support that is available for these folks is limited
 - o There are not enough supportive recovery homes
 - o There are not enough harm reduction sites
- Access to Ministry Services
 - o Need more government office
 - o It is hard to access information online
 - o Not everyone has computer or access one
- Stigma/ Judgement
 - o People with disabilities face discrimination
 - o There is so much stigma related to poverty
 - o People who can't fend for themselves get picked on and their stuff taken
- Youth
 - o Provide more attention to youth
 - o Earlier programs/services/interventions can make a difference

- More real life stories should be shared with kids - kids need to learn more about real life situations/they need to see it through the eyes of other youth
- Community Services
 - Community gardens can be very therapeutic
 - People should be able to grow pot in the community gardens
 - People should be allowed to do community work instead of court for petty crimes
- Housing
 - Housing is your own hearthstone – people need a permanent place to call home
 - Modular housing- 3-5 years then what?
 - 2 year time frames not long enough – people need permanent housing with supports close by – wrap around supports
 - Rent subsidies not adequate
 - There is the need to tie housing in with employability
 - Return to 70s/80s when government provided housing
 - Decisions like shutting down Riverview led to the problems we see today
 - Rent subsidies only benefit landlords
 - As assistance levels go up landlords increase the rents
 - The demand for private rental housing is increasing - this results in bidding wars
 - There can be a waiting list of 30 people to view an apartment
 - Rents are moving close to what people would pay for a mortgage
 - There needs to be legislation on the amount that rents can be increased
 - More supply will help to keep rents down
 - Our taxes should be put towards housing standards - housing based on income
 - Scandinavian countries are good examples
 - More social housing is the end goal (1 dot)
 - Not enough rent subsidies
 - Seniors without subsidies face high rents
 - More seniors are finding it difficult to support themselves
 - People are forced to live in deplorable and unsafe conditions
 - Small units can be dehumanizing
 - More housing is needed
 - There is high demand for housing from foreign students and we need policies to address this
- Immigration
 - We need to look at our immigration policies
- Income
 - We need a guaranteed annual income
 - Should have a guaranteed minimum or annual funds for all
 - Ontario and PEI pay \$1400 per month
 - Shelters cost \$60 per day, so why not give the money to the individual to meet their needs although it might be the case that some individuals may not know how to use the money to improve their circumstances

- Dignity Village Model
 - o Dignity Village is a good example of what can be done
 - o A group in the community made the decision to reduce rules and regulations (1 dot)
 - o They adopted a policy of no judgement and a code of conduct
 - o People get a warning twice before they are evicted
 - o This is an example of how people who get a hand up want to give back
- Mental Health and Addictions
 - o Many different individuals have mental health and addiction issues
 - o When you are a single parent and you have a mental illness, it can be a complex situation
 - o Require assessments and multiple tools
 - o Need to provide supports for victims of abuse
 - o Need to provide support for people dealing with a history of trauma/stigma
- Food Security
 - o Food is one of the services that people need
 - o Working poor sacrifice \$10 to keep a roof over their family but then it means that people need help accessing food
 - o Food costs are high
 - o Salvation Army (food bank) provides carrots – this means that you “Can’t send carrots to school in the lunch for your kids or they think you’re poor”
 - o The Salvation Army is too far away from town but the city won’t let them move because of concerns from the downtown business association – you can’t complain for fear of retribution
- Employment
 - o Changing markets and automation has made it harder for people to find jobs
 - o You need a license and tickets for trade jobs certificates
 - o It is impossible to work yourself out of poverty
 - o Employment opportunities are not possible without proper supplies, i.e. you need to purchase steel toe boots to work on a construction site
 - o Some jobs aren’t flexible - I was trained to be flagger but once you can’t do 16 hours per day you are let go
 - o Workplace injuries mean you can’t do the same job that you did before you were injured – need more flexible jobs, especially physical labour (1 dot)
 - o There should be a designation that lets people work from home
- Access to Ministry Services
 - o Service from Ministry staff can be demanding
 - o Work slips are needed too frequently, plus bail sign in
 - o Sometimes it can take as many as 6 trips
 - o People are forced to walk to office which is not always possible and this creates poverty cycle
 - o The application for PWD is too complex – There is too much paperwork
- Seniors
 - o Many seniors struggle depending on their family situations
 - o Family members often try to support seniors
 - o There is a lack of service for seniors

- Many seniors cannot afford existing services
- Social Isolation
 - Integrated services to reduce social isolation
 - There is so much loneliness and so much social isolation
 - Unable to go out with social groups/no money
 - Marginalized groups that need support – this includes immigrants, First Nations, and LGBTQ+
 - Poverty should be seen as a community problem—no isolation
- Childcare
 - The cost of childcare is high
 - There is the need for more affordable daycare
- Transportation
 - It is expensive to own a vehicle
 - People need to cover the cost of insurance, gas and upkeep
 - Jobs are inaccessible by transit and it is not walkable
- Employment
 - There is a lack of understanding - people don't fit perfectly into a service (tick box)
 - There are costs associated with finding work – people need funding for personal care - wardrobe, haircuts, shaving
 - There is a need for a higher earnings exemption
 - More transition supports to work (3 dots)
- Mental Health and Addiction
 - Mental health and addiction, behaviours get blended
 - Many people are forced to live in desperate situations – this can cause depression and mental health issues
 - There are no holistic solutions
 - Service bouncing can become a police issue
- Health Care
 - There are not enough health care services
 - There is the need for more access to resources
 - There is not enough focus on prevention
- Income
 - There should be a basic income -people should be given one year of funding to help with the transition to employment
 - Minimum wage needs to be raised
 - I have no income and can't pay my basic utilities because I am sick
- Food security (4 dots)
 - There are kids going to school hungry
 - It is expensive to purchase good food
 - There is no nutritional value in inexpensive food
 - There is the need for more community programs like community gardens
 - Lower nutrition when in poverty (3 dots)
 - Many of the food hampers/food bank donations don't have appropriate food

- Education
 - o People need financial literacy training
 - o People have different learning styles so the training has to take this into consideration
 - o There are many students living in poverty who are trying to get an education
 - o People need help with interpersonal skills, life skills training, budgeting and taxes
- Services and Supports
 - o More and better services (4 dots)
 - o There is need to look at more service hubs like the Foundry
 - o There is the need for more multi-Ministry work
 - o There is the need for all levels of government to work together - federals, province, municipal
 - o Jobs/Skills training needed
 - o Appropriate clothing – i.e. suits
 - o Need to “clean up” pre-employment
 - o Same day type coaching
 - o Services in the same location—a “One Stop Shop”
 - o Wrap around services (1 dot)
- Community Programs
 - o The community needs more service hubs like the Foundry
 - o Greater community involvement
 - o Food donations
 - o Cultural change
 - o Community gardens
 - o Staffed by community people
 - o Grants, non-profits
- Pets
 - o Should have vet coverage or insurance
 - o Pets are family
 - o People with animals face particular challenges
 - o Many places don’t allow pets
 - o People’s animals are family
 - o Sometimes people become homeless just to keep their pets
- Housing
 - o High cost of housing (rental)
 - o Rental assistance program are not available to people receiving income assistance
 - o Extend SAFER and RAP to income assistance clients
 - o People unable to move because of the high cost of housing
 - o So much judgement and discrimination from landlords for individuals receiving income assistance
 - o People might have a “roof” but sometimes it is not adequate housing
 - o Renovictions
 - o Had to stay in shelter not suitable for many children
 - o Always pressured to “move on”

- The property was sold and I was given 3 months to vacate
- Nowhere to go
- Monthly rental charges were \$1200 and up
- Limited community resources are available for housing
- Health Care
 - People can't afford prescriptions/medications
 - People plan for good mental health start with supports
 - If in depression and you are unable to meet requirements/can't cope you are pushed backwards
 - Just to set up is a challenge
 - Sometimes you can't even go out to try to access services
 - Need advocate to help get resources (2 dots)
 - When we try to champion for ourselves we are pushed backward
 - Back into poverty cycle
- Education
 - Student loans are a struggle
 - Lack of education/inability to earn a good living leaves people in poverty (1 dot)
 - Retraining when one loses their job can become a barrier
- Access to Services
 - People who don't or can't reach out to resources/advocates (1 dot)
 - People are made to jump through too many hoops
 - Applying for help online can be overwhelming
 - A lot of people don't know what resources are available
 - Outreach needed
 - People need more help getting connected to services
 - No computer
 - No advocate to help
 - No money for phone calls, etc.
 - Need more staff
 - Create easier access to services
- Mental Health
 - Need a mental health advocate
 - There are some resources but not enough
 - Need more advocacy help
- Children
 - The cycle of poverty will continue unless kids and parents are supported in the community
 - Fighting for years for child's autism assessment to be completed
 - Can only be worn down so much
 - School assessments have long waiting times
 - If everyone is healthy or has the right supports, the outcomes are better
- Youth
 - Access to mental health programs for youth
 - Not enough TAs – kids struggle in schools

- Provide assistance to people struggling to pay back student loans
- Had to declare bankruptcy on student loan
- Even though receiving disability through income assistance, not given forgiveness
- Receive constant calls from student loans
- School on opposite side of town from where they live
- Income Assistance
 - Need to request crisis grant from income assistance because rents are too high
 - People receiving income assistance and don't qualify for rental subsidy
- Services and Supports
 - Need more access to programs
 - Unable to get to library
 - Need banking services as there is a charge to cash cheque if no bank account
 - This preys on people in poverty
 - Have outreach activities to support community HUB
 - More resources or free services to help with income tax filing
- Housing
 - Assist with building more rental housing/basement and garden suites
 - Offer property tax breaks incentives
 - Create support for people to deal with landlords
 - Need for rent control, because it works
 - Too much power in favor of the landlord – reduce their power
 - Need for advocates to help people find rentals
 - Need advocates that work with landlords to prevent overcharging and illegal activities (rental connect)
 - Reference checks should be removed
 - People who don't have good reference checks or who can't provide the reference checks lose out on the housing/rental opportunities
 - Need more assurances that rents won't be increased so that people won't be evicted
 - Need for greater security of tenure in rental contracts
- Discrimination and Stigma
 - Zero tolerance policies
 - Listen, explore and discuss
 - Use curiosity over judgement
 - No discrimination/ no stigma
 - People are “surviving but not thriving”
- Youth
 - Need assistance in getting out of poverty
 - Need assistance navigating the system/navigating life
 - Savings account for youth in poverty
 - Youth in care should get assistance in going to university
 - Similar supports should be available for youth who grew up in poverty not necessarily care (1 dot)

- Housing for youth aging out of care – specifically (3 dots)
- Education and Training
 - More trade programs needed
 - The cost of tuition and all costs including school fees, books, should be covered for youth exiting care as well as those receiving other government funding support
 - Accessible education
- Housing
 - Affordable housing and housing in general (2 dots)
 - Create housing for everyone
 - Easy-access
 - Security of person
 - Reasonable expectations
- Transportation
 - Improve public transit system
 - Alternative transit options for safe rides outside of transit hours/ longer routes like Mission, Hope, Chilliwack etc.
 - Blue bus should come more often (service that is specific to Abbotsford)
- Community Awareness and Discrimination
 - Create support systems
 - Caring, connected relationships
 - Opportunities to participate and contribute
 - Listen to people living in poverty
 - Recognize they have solutions, here and in other communities
 - Stop and listen
 - Solutions are in the community
 - Work to make the access to services consistent across BC (1 dot)
 - Learn from each other, educate each other
 - Public education about causes of poverty
 - Work to destigmatize and demystify poverty
 - Dispel the myths about poverty
 - Have media play a part in changing their narrative about poverty
 - Push acceptance of everyone
 - Have more inclusion
 - Create a movement
 - Acknowledge and share power
 - Increase awareness
- Homelessness
 - Homeless to housed transition can be isolating, programs that help create new community in housing (2 dots)
 - Increase shelter space
 - Create storage areas for belongings

- Children and Youth
 - o More prevention services for kids
 - o Services should be available before age 12
 - o Have more support groups for kids
 - o Children require food assistance in the morning
- Addictions and Mental Health
 - o More opportunities can lead to higher expectations of what you can do and be
 - o Create more facilities and recovery homes
 - o Provide more alternatives, not just AA and NA – other therapies needed (1 dot)
 - o More harm reduction – clean needles, safe disposal
- Food security
 - o Create food security policies
 - o More access to food banks
 - o Some people are restricted to accessing food once a month
 - o Groceries cards
 - o There needs to be specialized food for diabetic, celiac
 - o Create vegan food bank
 - o Food prices are high
 - o Consider food stamps
 - o Food bank demand is high
 - o More staff needed for food crisis lines
- Community Services
 - o Create maps that show where people can access information and services
 - o Have more phones available for those who don't have one
 - o Create more hygiene kits
- Child Care
 - o Create more affordable childcare
 - o Increase availability of hours to childcare
 - o Recognize that not all jobs are 9 to 5
 - o Single parents can't work every day because day care is too expensive
 - o Wages are not enough to cover the cost of day care
- Employment
 - o Create employment opportunities for people with disabilities
 - o Create opportunities for people with poor mental health
- Health Care
 - o Getting more doctors to diagnose and treat
 - o Need more coverage for basic medical that is not covered
 - o Doctors needed
- Seniors
 - o Continue to build more facilities for seniors
 - o Communities are unable to keep up with current demand

- Education
 - o More support for vocational training
 - o More support for GED completion, trades
- Housing
 - o Lower rent
 - o Set minimum and maximum rent limits (1 dot)
 - o Set standards for rents
 - o Limit the amount of rent that can be raised (1 dot)
 - o Provide tax breaks for landlords
 - o Give incentives to property owners to keep rents lower
 - o Eliminate pet deposits – people need their pets
 - o More supportive housing (3 dots)
- Mental Health and Addictions
 - o Create more access to harm reduction
 - o More readily available beds for rehabilitation
 - o When people are ready they need to go, not wait weeks/days (3 dots)
- Transportation
 - o More buses
 - o Extra routes for transit
 - o Car to go
 - o Bike to go
- Income Assistance
 - o Raise income assistance to stay in line with the cost of living
 - o Income assistance should be increased annually at least once every year (3 dots)
- Housing
 - o More subsidized housing
 - o More rent supplements to help provide increased housing stability (2 dots)
 - o Maintenance funds re-established for BC Housing stock
 - o Fast track the development of replacement housing – i.e. Little Mountain
 - o Provide programs vetted-strictly enforced through process
 - o Funding for capital costs to add new supply
 - o Enforce standards of maintenance
 - o Safeguards in place when approving contracts (1 dot)
- Homelessness
 - o More shelter beds (2 dots)
 - o Provide laundry tokens and bus tickets (1 dot)
 - o There should be places for people to camp in every community (2 dots)
 - o Ministries working together
 - o Mentors needed
 - o “Lived experience” should have value
 - o Decent clothing is important to overall well being
 - o Basic needs must be met to address homeless challenges

- Addictions
 - o Homeless can't be available for call from detox
 - o It's demeaning to have to keep asking for help
 - o Affordable housing should be one of the top 3 priorities
 - o Only "surviving not thriving"
- Food Security
 - o People need access to nutritional foods
 - o Provide coupons with farms marked
 - o Lack of access to healthy food
 - o Food bank food – get expired food sometimes
- Services and Supports
 - o Change Ministry rules to allow funding for clothing
 - o Access/knowledge of services
 - o Create a service hub
 - o Access to advocacy, outreach for mental health support/navigate through the system
- Housing
 - o BC Housing and subsidized/social housing and co-ops
 - o Low rental vacancy rates
 - o Illegal rent increases
 - o A landlord sells their home and new landlord raises rent or evicts
 - o Poor quality housing - I have no power and water in my rental home
 - o Fear to say anything about the quality of housing, because it will be condemned and then I won't have a place to live
- PWD
 - o People receiving PWD need to work part time to survive
 - o To qualify for PWD first they need to receive welfare
 - o They don't qualify for welfare due to assets
 - o On PWD you get \$900 - \$1000 and you are able to earn \$9600 per year
 - o It is wonderful and quite viable
 - o Unfortunately to qualify for PWD there are a lot of barriers
 - o I was still found ineligible for disability because I had a property worth \$10,000 more than the limit
- Access to Government Services
 - o People who are illiterate can't access the forms or even figure out where to go to navigate the system successfully
 - o Self service model is a big barrier
 - o There need to be terminals at the office
 - o They need staff ready and willing to help people to apply online
 - o The application process is staggering – it's a huge process, especially if you are in crisis
 - o Need individuals to assist for benefits
 - o The process of applying for basic welfare or disability is challenging
 - o People can feel overwhelmed
 - o People have the feeling that they are disrespected
 - o While many of the rules are in place to prevent fraud and abuse, the rules, however, can be very cumbersome and prevent people that really need help from getting help
 - o When I went through welfare application process I had to pay \$140 to my doctor to get forms filled out

- I am computer savvy and still had problems with the system
- I was helping my Dad with his finances (he was illiterate)
- I was informed that I could not have a joint account
- I am already exhausted from my illness that I just gave up
- Employment
 - Jobs are not available
 - I have put out 300 resumes in the past 3 months
 - I have been unable to get a job (hospitality industry)
 - I put out about 100 resumes for the service industry
 - I did not receive a single call back
 - Physical limitations make work more difficult
 - Discrimination is keeping us from finding employment
 - I can't work enough to cover everything
- IA Rules
 - They need to remove the requirement to qualify for welfare to qualify for disability
 - Need to be able to get out and work
 - Need to be able to come back on the system easily if circumstances require it (for example, physical handicap)
 - Story: I took a young adult in to keep her from being homeless
 - Because she pays a little bit to help with expenses and I claim it honestly, I am disqualified for assistance
 - I was instructed to have the roommate just pay the utility bill directly but I won't do that because it is dishonest and illegal
- Income
 - Some wages don't cover enough to make ends meet
 - Create more job opportunities that pay a living wage
 - There is a supplement that is available for one year but when that runs out, you are back to where you started
- Income Assistance
 - To qualify for income assistance, you need your ID
 - Many people don't have their ID and do not have the funds to apply to obtain new ID
 - There is no motivation for people who are on the system to get off
 - What they do with people with disability allowing them to earn so much is really helpful so they should do the same with regular income assistance.
- BC Hydro (Story)
 - Serious problem with BC Hydro
 - My hydro went from \$35 to \$38 and then it jumped up to \$253
 - When I tried to communicate with BC hydro I had no success
 - Now they have cut my power off
 - They would not help
 - To reinstate, they want a deposit and a reconnection fee
 - Then they want the bill paid in advance
 - I have not had heat or electricity for 22 months
 - Last bill \$458.00 for Hydro
 - The last 2 bills jumped \$200 the last 2 months
 - Billing time periods were changed
 - Hydro removed the ability to compare the costs from the year before

- Hydro dilly dally and won't come out
- Hydro is not willing to assist
- People don't have the resources or ability to fight with Hydro to get resolution
- BC Hydro is not responsive
- They don't have social responsibility
- BC Hydro needs to work with people, especially low income people
- BC Hydro needs to create a program that helps people with upgrades
- In some older buildings 6 suites are all on the same meter
- I requested BC Hydro to split the metre up to each unit and they have been told they can't
- Housing
 - Loss of OLDER AFFORDABLE HOUSING
 - Knocking down old housing
 - Putting up newer buildings with less accommodations and way too expensive
- Impact of Poverty
 - The cycle of poverty is endless
 - You get one step up and then fall back
 - If you are ever disqualified from income assistance you could be worse off than when you started
 - There are no incentives
 - There are no bridges to earn money and crawl out of poverty
- Mental Health
 - People with lived experience maybe seen as "riskier" for employer to hire because someone has a disability or mental illness it shouldn't stop them from working
 - Mental health or disability defines how people see you
 - You start to see yourself that way too -- it can be harmful
 - People develop higher levels of anxiety with long wait times
 - Mental health issues' complexity and circles
 - Psychiatrists say need to see neurologist; neurologist says they can't do anything until psych assessment
 - If you have a mental illness, you may not be able to get help till you're in hospital with crisis
- Addictions
 - You can't access treatment when you need it because of the longer waiting lists
 - There are long waiting times for people who want to get into recovery
 - Recovery facilities needed
 - More counselling, treatment, mental health professionals
 - Need more harm reduction approach
- Stigma
 - There are a lot of assumptions and stigma around poverty, homelessness and it follows you to job application process
 - People see what they want to see
- Access to Government Services
 - Applying for Ministry assistance online only without advocates, navigators
 - Other places, like Nova Scotia have health navigators
 - You tell your story once and they help you access the right services
 - Even accessing services, sometimes need partner to sign papers
 - There can be many barriers and anxiety can kick in
 - People need to step up to make systems better for people in poverty

- Advocating for yourself is exhausting
 - Ministry benefits process is difficult
- Services and Support
 - Some places offer services, clothes but not often enough
 - Assessments (kids especially)
 - Shower, clothing needed
 - Toothbrushes and basic toiletries a challenge
- Youth (A profile)
 - Moving homes for foster children
 - Change social worker, adds trauma
 - Feeling that no one wants you
 - Foster kids alone in hotels while looking for more stable housing
 - It can feel so isolating
 - At age 19 years old – Kids age out of care nowhere to go, no supports
 - Drug use common in this condition
 - Youth in care are isolated
 - Drama, trauma, feel alone
 - Need people around you not be depressed
 - Anxious, alone with own thoughts
 - 18-19 gap for people in care
 - MCFD and social assistance
 - End up couch surfing/in unsafe situations
 - No housing
 - No residence/address
 - More vulnerable
 - Can't access benefits
 - Can't get a job even
- Homelessness
 - Homeless youth and homeless adults have different issues
 - Homelessness is the issue that is common to both
 - Homeless person with cats observed that people were more willing to help the cats
 - Many homeless people with foot rot and foot problems
 - Somehow we look past the humanity because of stigma
- Food Security
 - Meals on Wheels for seniors
 - Great for food and to prevent social isolation
 - Other populations would benefit from this, too
- Pets and Housing
 - No pets in housing allowed
 - People homeless for months because they don't want to give up their dog
 - A person's Mom eventually gave dog up
 - Like a family member
- Youth
 - Calgary had youth centre access with fun things
 - There were games, things to do, movie night
 - It was some fun with some structure

- Hang out at bus loop until 9 pm
- Some sleep at bus loop
- Same issue for homeless adults
- Youth homelessness is huge in Abbotsford
- Kids not having spaces to go
- Homeless youth are seen as “troublemakers”
- Some youth may need a push if they only ever know one lifestyle
- People need to keep asking and take services to them
- Kids witness parents’ trauma
- Services and Support
 - Need HUB of services like the Foundry Motel--nothing like that here
 - Ministry, MCFD, Health need to coordinate
 - People have to keep going to different places for services – it is hard work to access services
- Food Security
 - Nutrition issues
 - How can you eat well or make good food when exhausted from process
 - “Full time job or being poor and getting services”
- Homelessness
 - Without a home you don’t get subsidy part
 - Finding a washroom, shower, laundry difficult
 - It is hard to even just to wash face, brush teeth, keep dignity
 - Use payphone
 - Calling ambulances (took someone going to 5 places before someone called)
 - People can’t change in private
 - Dehumanizing to do in public
 - Bullies on the street with no phone to call for help
 - Loss of confidence and self-esteem
 - Loss of self-worth from the build-up of these experiences
 - U.S. model of mobile showers for people who are homeless – solves a symptom but still need to solve the root causes (e.g. lack of housing)
 - Some people do hair for homeless people
 - This is a great temporary solution that helps people to regain dignity
 - People outside in cold get sick
 - There is nowhere to go to hang out
 - City spends tons of money enforcing bylaws, getting rid of camps, throwing things in landfill. People would benefit it more if the money was put towards actual change (shelters, housing, services)
- Dignity
 - VAT assessments – vulnerability assessment tools ask people to give extremely personal information
 - Sometimes triggering questions
 - Process of accessing services already vulnerable
 - This makes you feel even worse without supports to be ok after appointment
 - Each government and agency and ministry don’t talk to each other (Mental Health/Healthcare, MCFD/CNMH)
 - People have to jump through hoops to get clothing, shoes

- Safety
 - o Some public parks not great for kids
 - o Parks have become unsafe – needles all around. There are not enough resources to clean it
 - o Jubilee Park is place where some people use
 - o Everyone who uses the park is painted with same brush
- Stigma/Judgement
 - o Resources without stigma are desperately needed
 - o Stigma passed down from adults to kids/youth
 - o Keeps stigma cycle going
 - o Homeless person can feel when adults are pulling their kids away because of the stigma – the sense that the homeless person can harm the child
 - o If people with lived experience were valued beyond being stats for people/agencies to collect, then voices would be heard
 - o We are forgetting to listen to each other as a society
- Access to Services
 - o People need support to self-advocate effectively
 - o There are so many systems to know
 - o Person can move across BC and not access same services
 - o Should be the same services everywhere
 - o Agencies should be sharing information otherwise you start over
 - o Breakdown of service access
 - o It can be traumatizing for people trying to access services
 - o People learn not to go because it's so difficult to get services
 - o If moving provinces, changes of ID can be complex, pricy
 - o Not changing ID over has barriers
 - o Without ID people can't get bank account, housing
 - o ID related issues generally huge challenge
 - o Need all sorts of documents and information
 - o Need to keep telling your story
- Services and Support
 - o Instead of proactive approach, always dealing with crisis after crisis
 - o Clients and agencies want collaboration but structures aren't conducive to this
 - o In some cases there can be a duplication of services
 - o There is the need to come together and maximize resources
 - o Need to have one clear message
 - o Need housing AND resources to be able to address underlying issues, trauma, etc. in place

Question 2: What would address these issues and help you and people out of poverty?

- Housing
 - o Modular housing is not ideal but it is a step
 - o Modular housing linked to community based services can help to make a difference
 - o SROs are not a way to live
 - o Have to look at how we build communities

- Hub model
 - o Create a hub/co-op model
 - o This will require some energy but it also creates community
 - o Local government/local zoning decisions should help to cluster services and resources
 - o The vision should include service hubs (1 building or one block)
 - o We need integrated housing and supports across communities
 - o Communities that have a hub where the housing is linked to services are doing better (3 dots)
 - o Central hubs of services (3 dots)
 - o Need for maps of existing services
 - o Need to have an inventory of one stop shop for information services
 - o The service hubs or information hubs should be in libraries and other public places
 - o There should be phones that are available for use in these hubs
- Services and Supports
 - o We need to teach people how to find work
 - o Need to look at the types of supports/services that are needed (4 dots)
 - o People are paying too much lip service to the problem but not taking action (1 dot)
 - o We need to make sure that government is accountable
 - o We have to stop wasting resources and money (1 dot)
 - o People drive around offering help - bringing services to people
 - o Need to find a way to break down the different silos
 - o Need to build a model that works for everyone - all generations not just 12 years and older
 - o We should be looking at what can make a difference for everyone – this should include everyone from “8 years old to 100 years old”
- Housing
 - o We should make our goal to provide a home for everyone (4 dots)
 - o Take the land that is not being used and start building low income housing
 - o We should be taking action so everyone has a home
 - o Radical action and imagination will help end the homeless crisis
 - o Just give everyone a home (5 dots)
 - o Adopt bylaws that include a requirement for low income housing – i.e. adopt bylaws that say “for x amount of condos/must build x amount of low-income housing” (1 dot)
 - o People shouldn’t have to sign away their dignity and rights in order to be housed
- Discrimination/Stigma
 - o Should adopt the values of dignity/privacy/respect/equality
 - o Why do we get treated like dogs?
 - o We need to focus on culture change
 - o We need to stop treating kids in care differently at school (i.e. they end up in different classes)
 - o Kids in care are more likely to face stereotyping when compared to self-paced classes
 - o Need to build safe, stigma – free schools - not “outing” kids in care or making them feel different
 - o Get rid of labels “addict, homeless”
 - o We have to stop placing labels on ourselves, and placing labels on others (1 dot)

- We have to recognize that all people are individuals
- We need to learn more about how to enjoy ourselves -have fun again!
- Joy is lacking in all our lives and we all need more
- It is important to meet people where they are at, with dignity
- Food Security
 - Need to implement food security policies
 - Need to ensure that people have access to healthy food
 - Need to find ways to support grocery store that are willing to donate/re-direct excess food
 - Have bins at grocery store for excess food
 - Maybe there should even be a microwave at grocery stores
- Transportation
 - Need to look at issues around public transportation
 - Gas/insurance auto costs are often too high for people living in poverty
 - A safe, reliable transit system is critical
- Services and Supports
 - Need hygiene kits with water
 - People need to have a way to brush their teeth and take care of themselves
 - Better phone access (1 dot)
 - Give out phones
 - More public phone access
- Health Care
 - People need more access to doctors, mental health professionals
 - Legalize and decriminalize drugs (2 dots)
- Children and Youth
 - Have counsellors in school to help connect youth who are facing similar challenges
 - Need more supports for youth in care
- Housing
 - People have a lack of credibility (2 dots)
 - Landlord training/screening
 - Conversation with and among friends (1 dot)
 - Housing costs are too high
 - Landlord abuse of tenants is too common
- Discrimination/Stigma
 - Lack of insight, understanding, experience, and empathy
 - Need for Inclusion
 - Less policy and more ethics (1 dot)
 - Drop the morality
 - Less talking and more action
 - Acknowledge and share power
 - There is too much inequality and uneven access to power and resources in society
- Health Care
 - Need cultural-based health care

- There are barriers to healthcare
- We need to strengthen the current system of care (2 dots)
- Access to Ministry Services
 - Must have an appeals process/grievance policy
 - Must ensure advocates are available
 - Must ensure equitable access to opportunities, services, housing
- Mental Health and Addictions
 - People have disability and mental health issues
 - The system needs to respond to these problems
 - We don't build on the strengths of the current system (2 dots)
 - There is a lot of substance abuse as a means of coping
 - People face barriers to treatment
 - Mental Health setbacks can cause huge trauma for people
- Stigma/ Judgement
 - There is a lot of intergenerational trauma
 - There is a devaluing of people and a lack of compassion
 - There is stigma attached in the health care system– people form opinions on patients
 - People can feel judged by the system
 - There is a lot of prejudice in our community
 - People suffer status frustration and the sense of not measuring up
- Services and Supports
 - We need to address poverty, homelessness and marginalization
 - Multiculturalism has not been adequately applied (1 dot)
 - There is a lot of lateral violence/lack of understanding of what it is
 - There are too many non-trauma – informed services and too many hurt people
 - Religiosity can be a barrier
- Housing
 - Homelessness is an issue
 - There is a lack of affordable housing (5 dots)
 - Need accessible housing for seniors
- Childcare
 - Need access to affordable childcare so people to go out and work
 - By the time you pay for childcare you are not making any money
- Income
 - Raise minimum wage (inadequate income) (5 dots)
- Health Care
 - There is a lack of medical facilities and lack of doctors
 - Clinics have a limited number of people they will see
 - There is crowding in emergency departments
 - Services oversubscribed
 - Not able to work and need services
 - Poverty contributes to hospital congestion

- There are not enough supports--a lack of comprehensive healthcare and resources to support people (5 dots)
- Working poor do not have adequate benefits- how do they get the supplies they need or have their issues addressed
- People lack dental coverage
- Even when you are in pain you can't afford to go to dentist and can't go to work
- Food Security
 - There is limited access to food – Abbotsford is a “food dessert”
 - There are no easy place to walk to get food
 - There is a lot of hunger in schools
 - Kids are going to school hungry
 - There is a lot of food insecurity (4 dots)
 - The hunger in schools is getting out of control
 - Kids get fed in school, but what about when school is not in?
 - People being singled out in the “star fish program” – it can be hard for kids to feel they are different
- Homelessness
 - There should be access to pay telephones, clean water and washrooms
 - There is no place to shower
 - There are no laundry services
 - There are not enough shelter spaces
 - There is lack of clarity around the criteria that is used to determine when shelters are open
 - The shelters kick people out in the morning
 - There are not enough shelter spaces in the community for youth on the street
- Childcare
 - There is the need for more childcare space
 - There is the need to reduce the cost of child care and provide more incentives (2 dots)
- Services
 - 24x7 resource centre for street use (Laundry, resources, shower, meals)
 - Shelter and income assistance rates should be brought up to the poverty line (4 dots)
 - There should also be better access to services
 - People stay in relationships because they have no choice
- Health Care
 - better health care is needed
 - Need access to universal pharmacare
 - Need universal access to all health services
 - People should be able to get help with medical equipment and dental
- Housing
 - There is the need for more low barrier housing
 - There is the need for more low cost housing (3 dots)
- Children and Youth
 - There is the need for more help from youth aging out of foster care

- There is the need to increase the age at which youth age out of care
- There is the need to ensure that youth have life skills supports in place
- We need to give support to youth
- Transportation
 - Transit is inadequate
 - Buses do not run late enough (1 dot)
- Discrimination/Stigma
 - Discrimination and stigma need to be addressed
 - There is the need for advocates to help people to deal with landlords, IA workers, doctors (2 dots)
 - We need to treat all people as humans, the homeless are stigmatized (2 dots)
- Mental Health and Addictions
 - Loopholes in mental health and addictions
 - Mental health stigma prevents people from getting access to services (1 dot)
 - There is the need for more mental health liaisons and better access to child
- Homelessness
 - They needs to be better communication during cold weather events (3 dots)
 - People don't know when shelters are open – maybe they could put in red light/green light system on top of a tower so people can see from anywhere. This way people would not have to come all the way only to find that the shelter is not open
 - Provide storage for belongings, like family mementos, personal items and photos
- Youth
 - Youth poverty growing (1 dot)
 - Some youth are on the street as young as age 13
 - We need a warming centre for youth - a boys n' girls club
 - We need places for youth to go to drop-in, play cards and socialize
 - Social inclusion means a place to go and feel comfortable (1 dot)
- Violence and Crime
 - Need alternative court solutions (i.e. Drug court) (2 dots)
 - Minor crimes/pay your debt to society
 - Too much has to go through the court system
- Addictions
 - People should get access to treatment
 - If you are receiving income assistance you might get some help but if you are low income you can't afford to go to treatment
 - If you get "pushed" into treatment it doesn't work
- Employment
 - There is lack of job security
 - People need supports for employment beyond work clothes
 - If someone is unemployed for a long time they need more supports to get back into the workforce
 - There is age discrimination – employers are looking for younger people

- Services and Supports
 - o We need more people with lived experience working in services supporting people who are homeless or with addictions
 - o People who just have “book learning” don’t have the same understanding or ability to make the same connections
 - o City Council needs to be here – there needs to be resolution and support at the community level (1 dot)
 - o Big corporations need to contribute to the communities they are in (1 dot)
 - o It is hard to find work or housing when you have no phone and no place for messages
- Education
 - o There is need for education and training to get past minimum wage jobs
 - o People need work experience
 - o Not having money is a barrier to education
 - o Having credible training is beneficial to employers (1 dot)
 - o We need to look at individual capabilities and help to determine what is the individual capable of doing - job readiness
 - o Volunteering means work experience - it tells the individual they are valuable and creates networking, opportunities, benefits, social engagement, inclusion
- Personal Agency
 - o Individuals must be given a sense of agency
 - o The government must include clients in decision affecting their lives
 - o Policies should be developed at the grass roots
- Transportation
 - o Transportation to employment is essential – that included both adequacy and reliability
 - o The cost of transportation is high especially for people with physical disabilities but people are worth the investment
 - o There is the need to look at issues of cost and efficiency
 - o If there are only 2 people on a bus they may need to look at smaller buses there is the need to have flexibility to add more routes
- Child Care
 - o More affordable daycare is needed (1 dot)
 - o Families need better options - options that fit family’s work schedule
- Crime and Violence
 - o There is the need for more safety for those in poverty
 - o People face theft, assaults
 - o Vulnerable people need to be able to have support from the police
 - o Some shelters have adopted stricter rules to try to improve safety
 - o Need for community supports
 - o Street people have a sense of community and protect each other
- Health Care
 - o People need better access to health care and GPs
 - o Walk in clinics do not provide history

- Mental Health and Addictions
 - o More detox beds are required (2 dots)
 - o People need supports and resources once they are out of detox
 - o The community is on the doorsteps of a crisis
- ID
 - o A lot of people don't have access to ID
 - o People can't get employment, housing , or healthcare without ID
 - o There needs to be a change in policy in providing replacement ID
 - o People face a stigma with no ID
- Education and Training
 - o We should learn from other countries - what have been their successes? For example, in Finland individuals do not pay for post-secondary education
 - o People need more access to education and training opportunities
 - o People need help accessing education
 - o There needs to be more volunteer training based on interest and ability
 - o People need to find ways to match opportunities and skills
 - o People need help building their confidence
- Services and Supports
 - o People need support and understanding to help prevent failure
 - o People need to work together at all levels
 - o There is the need to minimize duplication
 - o It is important to recognize that we are not competing for funding – we actually share the same end goal same
 - o There should be opportunities to share information on best practice – community, international, provincial, federal
 - o Education may not be a goal -- what other supports can lead to success/survival
 - o We need to ensure Ministry clients have an opportunity to provide feedback (1 dot)
- Mental Health and Addictions
 - o This is a health care emergency - we need to recognize it as it is and work to remove the stigma
 - o There is the need for an increase in the number of detox beds
 - o There is the need for increased services/supports for addiction/ mental health services (1 dot)
 - o Expanded beyond 1 year for minimal stay
- MCFD
 - o There is the need to extend support beyond 18 years
 - o As people age out of care, we need to understand what happens to them
- Income Assistance
 - o IA and pensions should go up with cost of living (1 dot)
 - o The \$100 increase is still too low
 - o People can't live on \$250/month (7 dots)
- Housing
 - o Pay \$700 a month for rent is too high
 - o \$250 provided for one couple – too low (1 dot)

- People can't find shelter for such low rates – it means that they have to share with 2 other people
- One bedroom in Abbotsford rents for \$750 month (minimum)
- People forced to compromise the housing and living standards it means that people are living in illegal suites, basement suites with no laundry facilities
- Landlords may not turn on the heat, even when utilities are included
- The choices are difficult choices – you have to ask friends for rides to do laundry or take a cab
- It costs you \$7-10 for each time that you do laundry
- Sometimes you spend as much as \$20 per month on laundry
- Employment
 - When you have a gap in your employment record it is a problem
 - “You can't be homeless and get a job”
 - You need a vehicle and driver's license to get a job
 - There is the need to support job development including supported employment – with training provided
- Addictions and Substance Use
 - Government is contributing to the addictions issues - enforcement shifts the curve backwards
 - There is the need for more regulation and harm reduction
 - If you focus on enforcement it doesn't work
 - The focus should be on prevention
 - The need for a long term strategy
 - There is the need to do outreach in the schools – you have to start to build awareness and understanding from a young age
 - People have nowhere to go – there is the need to provide drop-in centres and services
 - Places are getting shut down
- Equity and Government Policy
 - The changing economy is contributing to poverty
 - There is the need for a redistribution of wealth
 - Government's role is changing (1 dot) - “Poverty is the consequence of the problem”- There is the need for a longer term fix not just band-aid solutions
- Income Assistance
 - Basic necessities are not covered through income assistance rates
 - “I get \$732/month and my rent is \$635 per month”
 - There is the need to increase income and disability assistance rates - the rates should be double this amount – right now they are half of what it costs for rent (5 dots)
 - The Ministry needs to review and adjust the appeals process – this includes re-vamp the system so it doesn't cost so much to complain (1 dot)
 - Income assistance rental amounts need to be higher
 - Increase welfare rates (5 dots)
 - Increase pensions so they are at a livable level for seniors
- Employment
 - People collect empties to survive – “I have to collect \$15-20/day in bottles out of necessity”

- There are barriers to jobs due to certification/tickets required
- People looking for work are not taken as credible by employers
- There are differences between federal and provincial requirements/ restrictions related to employment
- How can people work when at least one government entity mislabels your employment status?
- If you can't afford a phone, so how are you able to get a job?
- Work BC Jobs focus on helping people with gaps in employment – this includes people who do not have enough credits or provable work experience and who lack a driver's licences (1 dot)
- Transportation
 - Everyone should have a free bus pass
 - The Ministry should negotiate reduced transit fares (2 dots)
- Housing
 - There is the need for more affordable housing and more rental housing (1 dot)
 - There is the need to disallow foreign ownership
 - There is the need to enforce Residential Tenancy Act for landlords who increase rents illegally and ensure that there are restrictions on how much rents can be increases
 - The Ministry should establish rental caps
 - There needs to be more investigations of instances where landlords are breaking the rules
 - There is the need for more affordable housing (2 dots)
 - There is the need to put a limit on the number of unrelated people who can live together
 - There is the need for more regulation around room rentals
- Ministry Services
 - Too many people can't access services
 - Reduce the bureaucracy around access to welfare
 - People are forced to stay in the system
 - People can't afford to move, or get off welfare, "I feel trapped"
 - There are no payphones around the city anymore
 - People need access to a phone but smart phones are not affordable
 - Bring back payphones at Ministry offices
 - Change telecoms to public utilities (3 dots)
 - The Ministry's retroactive payments causes more stress on households – I have to pay \$20 to the Ministry off each cheque every month
- Stigma
 - We need to remove the stigma of poverty
 - Reduce the stigma of poverty
 - People make assumptions about you even if you are self-employed
 - Treat all people as equal citizens (4 dots)
 - Ministry staff need to show compassion and respect -lack of respect creates a crisis in confidence
 - Deal with trauma of being aboriginal, being an immigrant
- Utilities
 - Change payments from 12 months to 5 months. Divide equally into 365 days (7 dots)

- Only 5 bills per year instead of 12 would help people meet their obligations better
- Housing
 - There needs to be more affordable housing (4 dots)
 - Subsidies aren't sustainable
 - Time in transitional housing needs to be longer
 - There is a lack of a continuum of housing choice – everything is short-term
- Employment
 - Access to skills training
 - Gradual work entry programs
 - More places like Triage and WorkBC
 - There is a lack of understanding - people don't fit perfectly into a service (tick box)
 - There are costs associated with finding work – people need funding for personal care - wardrobe, haircuts, shaving
 - More transition supports to work (3 dots)
 - Limited access, affordability and accessibility to educate
 - Help people to get skills training to get off the system and stay off the system
 - Change the welfare system
 - Improve the employer placements that are funded
 - Develop a way to ensure employability once the contract was over (1 dot)
 - Give people opportunities to volunteer
 - Work with people while they are receiving assistance so they can gain other skills
 - Employable and gain self-worth (1 dot)
- Education and Training
 - There are many students living in poverty who are trying to get an education
 - People need help with interpersonal skills, life skills training, budgeting and taxes
- Mental Health and Addiction
 - Mental health and addiction, behaviours get blended
 - There are no holistic solutions
 - Rapid access to treatment options and recovery (1 dot)
 - Have specific services to meet the needs of those in addictions, with mental health or homeless
 - Increase the availability and access to psychological counselling
 - Service bouncing can become a police issue
- Health Care
 - There are not enough health care services
 - There is the need for more access to resources
 - There is not enough focus on prevention
- Income
 - There should be a basic income -people should be given one year of funding to help with the transition to employment
 - There is the need for a guaranteed income (3 dots)
- Food security (4 dots)
 - There are kids going to school hungry
 - It is expensive to purchase good food

- There is no nutritional value in inexpensive food
- There is the need for more community programs like community gardens
- More food donations from community members
- Lower nutrition when in poverty (3 dots)
- Many of the food hampers/food bank donations don't have appropriate food
- Education
 - People need financial literacy training
 - People have different learning styles so the training has to take this into consideration
 - Help students graduating with high debt levels
 - Living supplement of student loan puts people in debt
- Community Programs and Services
 - More community services (4 dots)
 - There is need to look at more service hubs like the Foundry
 - There is the need for more multi-Ministry work
 - There is the need for all levels of government to work together - feds, province, municipal
 - The community needs more service hubs like the Foundry
 - Greater community involvement
 - Cultural change
 - Community gardens
 - Staffed by community people
 - Grants, non-profits
- Housing
 - High cost of housing (rental)
 - Rental assistance program are not available to people receiving income assistance
 - Extend SAFER and RAP to income assistance clients
 - People unable to move because of the high cost of housing
 - So much judgement and discrimination from landlords for individuals receiving income assistance
 - People might have a "roof" but sometimes it is not adequate housing
 - Renovictions
 - Had to stay in shelter not suitable for many children
 - Always pressured to "move on"
 - The property was sold and I was given 3 months to vacate
 - Nowhere to go
 - Monthly rental charges were \$1200 and up
 - Limited community resources are available for housing
- Health Care
 - Regular Income Assistance, PWD and PPMB should all have access medical/dental (1 dot)
 - People can't afford prescriptions/medications
 - People plan for good mental health start with supports
 - If in depression and you are unable to meet requirements/can't cope you are pushed backwards
 - Just to set up is a challenge

- Education
 - o Student loans are a struggle
 - o Lack of education/inability to earn a good living leaves people in poverty (1 dot)
 - o Retraining when one loses their job can become a barrier
 - o More technology focused education and training
- Access to Services
 - o People who don't or can't reach out to resources/advocates (1 dot)
 - o People are made to jump through too many hoops
 - o Applying for help online can be overwhelming
 - o Sometimes you can't even go out to try to access services
 - o Need advocate to help get resources (2 dots)
 - o When we try to champion for ourselves we are pushed back into poverty cycle
- Community Supports
 - o "walk beside" for people transitioning from one thing to another (2 dots)
 - o Ask: "what is happening to this person?", rather than "What's wrong with this person?"
 - o Be adaptable and supportive of another life style
- Housing
 - o Cap on rental rates
 - o Housing access – reduce criteria for applicants (3 dots)
 - o Affordable housing (6 dots)
- Children and Youth
 - o Fix Foster Care
 - o The foster care system is failing
 - o More supports for children
- Health Care
 - o Access to health benefits – for Canada Pension Plan
 - o Access to health benefits for seniors or working poor (1 dot)
 - o Lack of access to dental care and vision (glasses) (4 dots)
 - o Poor health limits from some elderly going back into the work force to supplement their incomes
- Homelessness
 - o More people 50+ are in the shelter system
 - o Need more shelter spaces for people 50+
- Transportation
 - o More bus routes
 - o More frequent services
- Income Assistance
 - o There is a need for a higher earnings exemption
 - o More support for people who are new to income assistance
 - o Ensure people know that they can get the earnings exemption, diet allowance
 - o People should be able to continue to receive income assistance while they pursue post-secondary education
 - o For seniors receiving income assistance make CPP exempt
 - o Don't force people to take CPP at age 60 if they are receiving income assistance

