Introduction: Poverty Dialogue Report – Peace of the Circle & Jewish Seniors Alliance

Date March 14, 2018

Community Vancouver Service Providers

# of Participants 16

# of Organizations 11

About the Participants:

We conducted a community dialogue with non-profit and public agency frontline workers serving adults living in poverty. Community participants comprised paid, frontline staff who provide direct service to clients and/or supporting a volunteer workforce who may themselves be living in poverty.

About the Findings:

Tell us about the types of insights and feedback received to 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 or others out of poverty?

Group 1 - ISSUES:

• Language barriers which prevents an individual from accessing proper resources

• A persons need to prioritize where your income is going due to inadequate income

• Invisible poverty.

• High cost of medical essentials such as prescriptions, hearing aids, eye glasses, dentures and non-medical but essentials which are not covered such as depends etc.

• Isolation due to mobility issues, increased isolation stemming from mental and physical disabilities

• Lack of proper nutrition

• A lack of proper education and training involving awareness involving poverty. A need for more recognition of the whole person

• Proper access to information and resources

• Stigma which surrounds poverty thus preventing people to seek help

• Lack of support groups which could be very helpful with people experiencing addiction and trauma

• Being new to the city, this could be from another country or even from another Province, lack of readily available information, leading to self-isolation

- Inadequate resources for care givers leading to elder abuse

- Lack of affordable housing

- Market rent being very expensive

- Unplanned circumstance leading a person to drain any financial savings

- Distrust between the levels of government and the person seeking help or assistance

- Lack of resource bridging leaving fragmented bits and pieces of information and the person grasping to find more

- Lack of proper training in sensitivity from government employees who are there to help, people are then left with a feeling of being dehumanized and with a loss to their dignity and self-esteem. Lack of sensitivity and awareness sometimes coming across as ageist, racist etc.

- Lack of culturally and age appropriate services

- A gap for a continuum of services especially for youth who are starting to transition out of foster care

- Lack of skilled people who could help support people with mental health challenges to live in a more supportive and full community

- Housing discrimination within mixed income buildings

- Lack of nurturing relationships in many supportive housing buildings

Group 2 - ISSUES:

- Seeing the same poverty problems as always

- Huge turnover in service staff

- Burnout

- Secondary trauma

- Lack of benefits/job security (small non-profits)

- Needless waste (food, clothing, medical supplies, electronics can't be repaired)

- Unpaid labour (women with 0 CPP contributions)

- Lack of school training/curriculum re: food, finances, etc.

- Social skills taught in grade 12

- Family planning (affordable diapers – story of a woman who gave daughter away when she couldn't afford diapers "no support services")

- Inequity of resources in schools

- Lack of early intervention/diagnosis of special needs/disabilities

- "Bandaid" poverty programs (temporary "fix")

- No long-term poverty reduction strategy

- Extreme weather shelters cost more money vs funding solutions

- Lack of mental health & addiction support

- Homeless count LOW

- Under-housed not represented (couch surfing)

- Homeless often undiagnosed and untreated for new or developing conditions

- Intergenerational trauma

- Will never be enough resources (opp to model other systems)

- Tax loopholes and policy choices favour rich and corporations

- SENIOR POVERTY prevalence

- Systemic issues

- Changes in process needed

- Reoccurring issues

- Generational poverty

- Lack of first language services

- Poverty is a 'syndrome', intersectional, all connected

- High cost of social activities

- Quality of life as a human right

- Immigrants and refugees disadvantaged (education not recognized)

- Declining rate of unionization

- Immigrant forced poverty

- Adapt models from other countries

- Gratitude for having access to mental health resources

- Bias against mental health and addictions

- Lack of housing

- Lack of affordable housing

- Hunger

- Lack of purpose built housing

- Living wages are not living wages

- Precarious employment for non-profit workers (grant funded)

- Access to education (cost prohibitive)

- All challenges are correlated

- Lack of affordable childcare and service provision

- Disabled employment under-valued/compensated

- Inadequate benefits (CPPD, GIS, etc.)

- Lack of support to break cycle of poverty

- Food costs continuing to increase

- Unequal distribution of wealth leading to inequality

- Cultural genocide and discrimination

- Intersectionality of oppression and discrimination

- Depersonalized in social support

- No human contact

- Poverty and age are barriers to information re: social services

- Transportation

- Impact on ability of family to care for elders

- Marginalization of those with mental health who are employed

- Living on disability and paying market rent

- Insecure rental housing (sale of rental units)

- Housing viewed as a commodity rather than a basic human right

- Government stopped treating social justice as a priority (i.e. social housing)

Possible Solutions

[Provide the results of your discussion of possible solutions– it should be transcribed from

your flip chart notes]

- Tax incentives for citizens to help by neighbourhood
- More openness and education on support services
- Support services, housing, education for reintegration of individuals exiting institutions (prison, etc.)

- Accessible mental health and addiction services and supports
- Partner students with seniors, intergenerational (i.e. Scandinavia programs)
- More mental health support (i.e. support groups, visiting healthcare workers, employment training) without lumping 'vulnerable' demographics together (i.e. hard to house & seniors)
- Financial support to access health support
- Outreach to 'big money' institutions for support (i.e. Safeway) including social bonds, partnerships between faith groups, businesses and non-profits
- Take back caregiving at community level through campaigns (i.e. abundant communities project), community centres, strength-based asset mapping
- Progressive taxation models (i.e. Finland speeding ticket fines are based on income, more respectful of the poor)
- $10/day childcare
- Work hours geared to single parents' availability
- Provide affordable dental, glasses, hearing aids, Depends (geared to income)
- Take the time to speak with marginalized people with dignity and respect
- More education in schools re: dignity, respect, compassion (i.e. humanizing foodbank experience)
- Education funding for language and culturally safe programs (i.e. workshops, printed materials, dialogue circles to break down stereotypes) to build humanizing connections
- Work initiatives and training for marginalized people (pre-teen & youth, pre-emptive)
- Ban plastics (i.e. bottled water)
- Time-based discounts (i.e. lower grocery prices after 6pm)
- Access to fresh food stores in poor communities
- Fruit trees and vegetables planted in public spaces (free for people)
- Guaranteed annual income
- Pilot project for a living wage based on Finland model
- Reduce precarious employment (government to create policy)
- Require employers to lower threshold to gain benefits
- Working people need better benefits
- National pharmacare program
- Public transit free for low income people/free for all people
- Build more affordable and accessible housing
- Remove rent from disability income (rent covered separately), individualize each person (see Ontario Roadmap Model)
- Policy around housing speculation (i.e. San Francisco and Quebec speculation models)
- Policy around housing (i.e. Vienna) onsite support
- Establish more co-ops and better governance
- Empty house – give other options and incentives to rent out home
- Development should meet community needs and demographics especially families
- Decrease the need of food banks – respecting and dignifying the individuals' experiences
- Food security to be seen as a human right
- Grocery store costs geared to income – implement compass-type card, smaller packages at lower prices

- All food to be recycled/recovered
- Ban Monsanto

Solutions and Actions That Can Make a Difference

(a) Looking at the list of issues and solutions generated, what types of solutions did the individuals who participated in your meeting identify as most important to them? [Each participant should receive four (4) sticky dots to put on the solutions that from their perspective are most important]. Your summary report should include any of the solutions that received a dot from those that received the most dots to those receiving only one dot.

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- Food security to be seen as a human right

- Decrease the need of food banks – respecting and dignifying the individuals' experiences

- National pharmacare program

- Reduce precarious employment (government to create policy)

- Establish more co-ops and better governance

- Policy around housing (i.e. Vienna) onsite support

- Build more affordable and accessible housing

- Guaranteed annual income

- Work initiatives and training for marginalized people (pre-teen & youth, pre-emptive)

- Progressive taxation models (i.e. Finland speeding ticket fines are based on income, more respectful of the poor)

- $10/day childcare

- Work hours geared to single parents' availability

- Provide affordable dental, glasses, hearing aids, Depends (geared to income)

- Take the time to speak with marginalized people with dignity and respect

- Support services, housing, education for reintegration of individuals exiting institutions (prison, etc.)

- Accessible mental health and addiction services and supports

- Tax incentives for citizens to help by neighbourhood

- Financial support to access health support

- Outreach to 'big money' institutions for support (i.e. Safeway) including social bonds, partnerships between faith groups, businesses and non-profits

(b) What emerged as the top 3 solutions or ideas based on the conversations and the individual priority setting?

1. National Pharmacare program (income tested)

2. Progressive taxation models (i.e. Finland speeding ticket fines are based on income, more respectful of the poor rather than increasing barriers for the poor to continue working, accessing resources, etc.)

3. Outreach to 'big money' institutions for support (i.e. Safeway) including social bonds, partnerships between faith groups, businesses and non-profits (pricing geared to income as subsidy – could be ID or swipe card controlled)