



REPORT: Poverty Reduction Community Meeting for People with Disabilities and their Families

Meeting Date: March 10, 2018

Location: North Vancouver BC

Participants: 17

Meeting Host: North Shore Disability Resource Centre

About the Participants: Most participants were North Shore residents, but all had some connection to the North Shore through work or school etc. 13 of the 17 were people with disabilities themselves. Several were also family members of a person with a disability. A wide range of disabilities was represented – several people had acquired and age-related physical disabilities, some were born with disabilities like Cerebral Palsy or Muscular Dystrophy. Several people were on the Autism Spectrum and/or had developmental disabilities, and several identify as having disabilities affecting their mental health. 6 participants used mobility devices, both manual and power. Many participants were on PWD income assistance, some were on CPPD, and two were on CPP.

Findings:

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

Dignity and Respect:

- Dignity, self-worth is often challenged due to disability (visible and invisible), and even more eroded due to poverty.
- People with an invisible disability continually have to “prove” they have a disability and face further barriers if they are not believed/ seen to be “taking advantage”.
- Both disability and poverty are discriminated against – people are patronized, looked down upon, being treated as less capable and intelligent.
- Already dealing with able people’s lack of respect and understanding toward people with disabilities (no understanding toward invisible disabilities) – when you add poverty the respect and understanding go even further down.
- People with disabilities already have problems with isolation, poverty magnifies
- When you are already trying to deal with being a person with a disability in an able-ist society, and trying to find a way to “belong” it’s made much more difficult poverty which further disables a person.
- Embarrassment - can’t pay for self, can’t join that group of friends going out because of money, ending up isolated and alone.
- Debt – accumulation of credit card debt just to live on a most basic level

- Lack of money AND disability mean we may not get out as much, become more isolated, our ability to have experiences is sacrificed. This leads to depression.
- For those who are approaching senior-hood there is a fear that their income will be further reduced (lack of clear info)
- Living in fear - Always feeling like you could be a victim of sudden changes to programs you access, cut offs from programs etc.
- Hard to find information about services, if dealing with the Ministry can be difficult to get answers (on hold on phone, dealing with unhelpful and rude staff etc)
- Not able to go out with friends/family – not wanting to rely on others to pay.
- Poverty makes for lack of accessibility (ie cannot access the community in many ways if you don't have any money)

Health:

- Eating healthy diet is often not possible –often a choice between eating at all and other things like medication. People sometimes eat only one meal a day. For those on dietary restrictions can be very difficult.
- Health suffers directly due to poverty – not eating, not all meds, isolation, no therapies etc etc
- Lack of full dental services, medication coverage, coverage of alternative therapies all affects health.
- Medications can be too expensive to purchase if not covered or if you are a senior but not on MSO (medical services only) – unfair to have to choose between food and meds

- Equipment and assistive technology – There is overall a lack of recognition of the necessity of equipment - some equipment is extremely expensive and there should be more government programs that assist with the cost. There can also be long waits to get funding.
- Can't afford therapies like physio or massage that are recommended by doctor

Employment:

- Those who can work often end up with multiple part time or temporary jobs which is exhausting to people who's energy is already compromised.
- Problems with finding employment – lack of supports, lack of understanding, discrimination, lack of accessibility in work places, and many people simply cannot work because of their disability. People who can work are often taking any job (and not one that they had envisioned on their career path).
- Clothing – can't afford clothing, for every day and for work
- Taxes (paying \$500 on disability)

Housing:

- Housing is not affordable – rent increases too high for incomes, not enough money from PWD so that almost all of the cheque goes to housing.
- As jobs are lost and rent goes up end up in more poverty.
- Low income housing is great but only if you can get in – and then, though accessible for some, may not meet the needs of those with auditory and social disabilities.

- Everyone should have a safe and affordable home!
- Poor people are more at risk of being taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords.

Education:

- Education – not having the means to achieve goals
- Limited social and educational opportunities due to lack of funds
- Exercise and recreation: Exercise is not always accessible either physically or financially.

Part 2: Possible Solutions:

Financial supports, structures etc:

- Don't treat poor people as the enemy
- Increase all financial support programs to liveable amounts
- Increase funding to advocates (save people's lives) – needs government support (instead of volunteers). Increase for Lawyers and legal aid.
- Raise the income assistance rates yearly (tied to cost of living, inflation or taxation rates),
- Raise earnings limit to \$50,000- will give room to breathe and reduce stress.
- Raise asset limits
- Needs to be space between PWD/Income Assistance programs earnings and cut off (ie do not have the cut off point be so close to the monthly IA amounts)
- Should not have to change income support programs at 65 – ie from PWD to CPP - should be able to stay on ONE program all the way through
- End all claw backs
- Provincial and Federal tax exemptions
- Annual Social Assistance credit amount
- Separate Income Assistance (ongoing) from Welfare (temporary).
- Why do there need to be so many categories (ie PWD and PPMB)?
- Wider eligibility criteria for CLBC programs, especially employment supports

- Greater supports for those who fall through the cracks due to limited eligibility criteria

Housing Related:

- Increase safe affordable rentals
- More money for rent so that there is affordable and appropriate housing (supportive, safe community)
- Allocate suitable space for affordable housing
- More housing that suites a range of people with social aspects to their disabilities (and more knowledge of people with ASD)
- It is a solvable problem – government needs to make serious changes that are effective. Example – make liquor stress into housing.
- More subsidized housing
- Rental caps
- More housing options for people with disabilities of all ages
- More pet-friendly housing
- More market rent subsidies (that go with the person)

Health Related:

- Better access to healthcare and services
- Better assessments
- Follow examples from other European countries where people with disabilities have a better standard of living
- Home Care should not be limited to people needing personal care – other services like housekeeping should be offered

- More access to supports that maintain healthy living environment (ie housekeeping services)
- Medical coverage with flexibility toward alternative therapies etc
- Equipment – more funding/programs for quality equipment (and more recognition of the importance of medical/mobility equipment).
- Individual should be able to choose equipment and supplier.
- Automatic access to Medical Services Only (MSO)
- Medical, dental, and eye care and expenses need to be better supported, and wait times minimized

Employment Related:

- Employment – more government funding that includes training.
- People on PWD should be allowed to keep all earnings and get real pay for real jobs
- Supports for working people – getting ready for work, grooming, and supports during work as well – employers could have a “top up” contribution to required supports at work
- MORE employment opportunities
- Employers to get training for disability awareness and employment
- If the goal is to get people of IA, should be training and other programs that assist people toward their (chosen) career goals.
- The Volunteer supplement should be brought back, and should be flexible (allow for breaks, temporary employment etc)

Transit Related:

- More flexible individualized approaches to transit
- Seniors should ride the bus for free
- Transit should be more affordable and need remedy to limited number of mobility aids that can go on bus at once.
- Increase annual ICBC insurance discount
- Have a car maintenance discount

Information, Awareness related:

- Need to be able to find accurate information about government and community programs - increase clarity on websites, provide information in various ways, publicise resources (like 211 that are out there).
- Especially need clear information regarding transition from PWD to other programs like CPPD and CPP. The current move to push people to CPPD is confusing and frightening and stressful and several people felt they were being forced into a situation that was further disadvantaging.
- More training and knowledge awareness re Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Upgrade government system, assess individuals regularly (in order to respond to individual circumstances), rebalance and restructure system to make it more useful.
- Instead of throwing money at problems/people, need to restructure system to ad supports that work
- Overall public awareness and training to increase support for people with disabilities.

Ranking: It was difficult to formally rank - so the “top” recommendations:

- Raise the PWD rates yearly (tied to cost of living, inflation, or related to tax bracket)
- Raise earnings exemption (PWD)
- Pet friendly housing
- More Money for rent so that there is affordable and appropriate housing (supportive, safe community)
- Better access to health care and services
- More housing that suites a range of people with social aspects to their disabilities (and more understanding for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- Greater supports for those who fall through the cracks due to limited eligibility criteria
- Rental caps
- More housing options for people with disabilities of all ages
- More Market Rent Subsidies (that go with the person)
- More employment opportunities

Thank you for the opportunity to give input!