

Community Poverty Reduction Committee

12:00 to 1:30 p.m.
February 28, 2024
Meeting Rooms G and H
511 Royal Avenue

Meeting Minutes

1. First Nations Greeting

We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. We acknowledge that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. As a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

John explained the importance of the words in relation to the [Year of Truth for Reconciliation](#) work that the City has embarked on.

2. Introductions

Please see the attendance list that follows.

3. Why Are We Here? Why Do We Need To Act?

John provided a brief introduction to the issue of poverty and the importance in addressing it.

To illustrate the importance of this work and to facilitate a dialogue, the following was shown [Don't Fight the Poor, Fight Poverty Video](#) from Kamloops.

Some discussion points included:

- That it was good that there was a focus on children (i.e., one in five live in poverty).
- That it is important that they pointed out that one can be employed and still be living in poverty.
- That the reality is that some people will never exit poverty but some just need a helping hand. This speaks to the need for a basic income.
- That stigma/judgment can have detrimental impacts on one's feelings of self-worth, mental health and willingness to access services. That one can know within the first five minutes of meeting someone how they will be treated.
- That there is the assumption that people made a choice to be poor.
- That some have unrealistic expectations of those who are poor – i.e., telling someone on assistance that they need to learn how to budget better.

4. 2016 Poverty Reduction Strategy Update

John provided background on the process that led to the development of the first [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

- That the work started with staff from the Ministry of Children and Families being assigned to support families living in poverty and developing a strategy to help them exit it.
- That the strategy was initially focused on families with younger children.
- That a representative working group was established and developed a five-year strategy that included 70 actions.

- That the strategy was paused during COVID-19 in order to enable staff to focus their attention on assisting vulnerable population during the pandemic.

For the new strategy:

- That it can build on recent strategies and promising practices.
- That it can expand beyond families.
- That it can engage people with lived or living experience of poverty.

Tristan noted that he has updated the poverty profile (as of January 2024) and will continue to revise the profile based on other data available and feedback from the Community Poverty Reduction Committee.

5. Current Poverty Situation In New Westminster

Tristan provided an overview of poverty related data and shared sections of the Poverty Profile that are in progress.

[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Important to note:

- That the data is from 2021 taxfiler information when there was still some CERB funding being accessed. It is expected that the next year of poverty related data will be much worse.
- That poverty remains a challenge for all age groups.
- That the housing situation is getting worse, with longer wait times for households on the BC Housing Registry Waitlist
- That the food security data is more recent but only represents 40% of the food support in the community. The data was specifically related to the three Don't Go Hungry Food Program sites and the St. Barnabas-Shiloh Firth Avenue Food Program.
- That the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society has seen a significant increase in new members, including more people who are employed.

[New Westminister Child Poverty Profile and Frequently Asked Questions \(Jan 12, 2024\)](#)

Feedback can be provided related to the profile prior to the end of March 2024.

New Poverty Reduction Needs Assessment – Possible Indicators to Track

Discussion related to indicators that should be included in the profile include:

- Income Assistance/Disability
- Mental Health
- Ministry of Children and Families
- Seniors
- Youth

6. What Can We Learn From Others?

To facilitate a discussion regarding promising practices, the following was shown [Langley Poverty Reduction Task Force](#).

Discussion:

- That it was acknowledged that the content was good; however, it was noted that we are never going to address poverty until we address the issue of lack of income.
- That there is a need to put income into people's hands or reduce costs.
- That there be advocacy related to a universal basic income
- That it is important to look at what can be achieved at the local level so we are not just concentrating on advocacy efforts that needs others to make things happen.
- That the plan was developed for and by the community and includes a combination of locally achievable actions and advocacy.

7. **New Poverty Reduction Strategy**

- That the City will be dedicating resources towards the development of a new strategy.
- That meeting will be bi-monthly.
- That there will be emphasis on engaging people with lived or living experience.

Working Group Membership Discussion - who needs to be at the table, who is missing?

- Corrections – Parole, West Coast Genesis Society, etc.
- Decision-makers, included elected officials and senior management
- Indigenous representation
- Lived or living experience of poverty
- Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction – Community Integration Specialists
- Seniors – Century House, Seniors Services Society, etc.
- Settlement organizations and newcomers – e.g., Welcome Centre, Immigrant Services Society, Mosaic, Success
- Youth – Aunt Leah's

Tristan provided an overview of the case study research and promising practices completed in preparation for this meeting. He looked at communities of comparable sizes who have undertaken the work since 2021.

[PowerPoint Presentation](#) - please note the notes under the slides

[BC - Local Poverty Reduction Strategies 2021 Onwards - promising Practices and Actions](#)

Common Threads:

- Articulating a Role for Different Organizations
- Categorization of Actions and Advocacy
- Engagement of Those with Lived or Living Experience
- Framing the Issue
- Stories
- Timelines for Action

Engagement Strategies – Possible Poverty Reduction Roundtable

- That a community engagement strategy be developed to support this work.
- That a poverty roundtable be held in late-November or January, which would be an opportunity to highlight the issue of poverty, raise awareness and gain support for actions.
- That grant opportunities in support of a poverty roundtable be explored, especially with regard to engaging people with lived or living experience of poverty.

Next Steps/Meeting and Timeframe

- Future meetings will be held between 12:00 and 1:30 p.m. and include lunch.
- The next scheduled meeting will be in mid-April.

8. Partner Updates

- Time will be allocated at future meetings for partner updates.

In attendance (in person unless otherwise noted)	
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Name	Organization
Murray Baker	Family Services of Greater Vancouver
Rick Bloudell	New Westminster School District
Cynthia Boulter	Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society
Dave Brown	Lookout Housing and Health Society
Dawn Embree	Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Lynda Fletcher-Gordon	Lower Mainland Purpose Society
Tristan Johnson	City of New Westminster
Natalie Johnston	Fraser Health Authority
Leonard Levy	Lookout Housing and Health Society
Brendyn McKillop	Union Gospel Mission
Erica Mark	City of New Westminster
Bonnie Moriarty	Elizabeth Fry Society
Lisa Paterson (virtually)	Ministry of Children and Families
Tanushre Pillau	BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
Elliot Rossiter	Douglas College
John Stark	City of New Westminster
Betina Wheeler	Homelessness Coalition Society

Regrets	
Bruce Foster	New Westminster Rent Bank Society
Janet Goosney	WINS Local Immigration Partnership