

# Imagine... Poverty Reduction Forum

Sunshine Coast, BC – 2021



This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.



# Forum Values

- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Include all
- ▶ Everyone's perspective is needed
- ▶ Listen to each other
- ▶ ...

*Imagine...*

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# A Snapshot of Poverty - *Individual Stories*

Wayne is in his late 50's and had to stop working due to chronic intestinal and respiratory illness. He was unable to recover, partly due to living in a leaky broken-down trailer, but he could not find an affordable alternative. With support from a community service, he was able to reconnect with a relative and now lives with her. His health is improving. He was fortunate to find this family member, as he had no other options.

*Imagine...*

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# A Snapshot of Poverty - *Individual Stories*

Doreen is a retired practical nurse in her 80's who lives on a government pension. She was evicted by the landlord who wanted to occupy her rental apartment. Doreen found another place but it costs significantly more per month. She is now just barely able to make ends meet and is terrified of becoming homeless.

*Imagine...*

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# A Snapshot of Poverty - *Stories from Service Providers*

## Food Security

- ▶ Kids are coming to school hungry
- ▶ In 2020 demand for family grocery vouchers in SD46 increased from 19 to 79 families (feeding over 280 people)
- ▶ 40% increase in demand for Food Bank in the last few years; added evening hours to accommodate the schedules of working people

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# A Snapshot of Poverty - *Stories from Service Providers*

## Lack of supportive & affordable housing

- ▶ Clients with mental health or addiction issues can't find housing:  
"We help them find camping equipment"
- ▶ Seniors discharged from hospital who need care have nowhere to go.  
"We have to send them to cheap motels."
- ▶ 300 people on waitlist for seniors' housing – current capacity is 150
- ▶ 100 people applied for 40 spaces in new Gibsons supported housing

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# The Big Picture - *Who is struggling with poverty?*

- ▶ About 1/5 (18%) of SC residents live in poverty
- ▶ Many of those are working adults who are not making a living wage
- ▶ Over half of single parent families, most led by women
- ▶ 1 in 5 children
- ▶ Seniors on fixed low incomes; adults on income assistance (well below poverty threshold)
- ▶ People who are struggling because of systemic inequality and exclusion – race, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, etc.

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# The Big Picture - *What is Poverty?*

Measured by income, but understood by looking at social & economic factors that contribute to it. This includes social policies, economic conditions, historical inequalities, and personal circumstances.

## ▶ Broad Social Definition:

Poverty = lacking the resources, means, choices, and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard and to participate in society.  
(Federal Government Poverty Reduction Strategy)

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# A Contributing Factor - *Lack of Childcare*

- ▶ More than 80% of families cannot find the childcare they need in licensed daycares. (SC Child Care Action Plan 2019)
- ▶ Parents who could be working to support their families are not able to, and are more at risk of poverty.
- ▶ Businesses and services cannot find staff to hire.
- ▶ Fewer young families can live here.

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# Contributing Factors

## Food insecurity

- ▶ High housing costs = less \$\$ for food
- ▶ Limited food options for those needing help

## Inadequate income supports

- ▶ Single adult under 65 years - \$935 /month

## Limited public transportation

- ▶ Less access to work, education, health care
- ▶ Adds to isolation, social exclusion

*Imagine...*

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# Contributing Factors - *Housing Affordability*

Housing affordability is *the* critical issue in our community.

- ▶ Between 2016 and 2019:
  - The average price of a detached home increased by over 50% while median incomes increased by 11%.
  - Rents nearly doubled.
- ▶ Most single income households are priced out of all ownership options
- ▶ Lone-parent families at median income can't afford ownership or rental housing without spending over half of their income

*Imagine...*

*BC Housing Needs Assessment, 2019  
BC Non-Profit Housing Association*

# Contributing Factors - *Rental Housing Unaffordable*

The Canadian Rental Housing Index rates the Sunshine Coast as Extremely Unaffordable. In 2016 ...

- ▶ 40% or more of all renter households were living in unaffordable housing
- ▶ 1,175 people were living in unacceptable conditions and could not afford a suitable alternative
- ▶ 29% of renters spend more than half their income on housing costs - "a crisis level of spending." Sechelt ranked third in Canada for residents spending that much on rent (2018)

*Sunshine Coast Housing Needs Assessment Report,  
2019 2018 Canadian Rental Housing Index*

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# Contributing Factors - *Rental Housing Unavailable*

The demand for rental housing is much higher than current supply:

- ▶ Long waiting lists for apartment rentals (Greenecourt build has a waitlist of over 360).
- ▶ Legal and illegal evictions are skyrocketing.
- ▶ Developing affordable housing is challenging due to the need for Land, Funding, Zoning, & Public Support.

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# We are at a crisis point!

- ▶ These facts affect everyone in the community.
- ▶ There are staffing shortages in every sector as fewer working people can afford to live here
- ▶ Parents cannot work due to lack of childcare
- ▶ Homelessness is on the increase - in 2020 up 40% from 2018
- ▶ Service providers are stretched to the limit to meet needs
- ▶ Service providers lack the community resources and facilities they need to respond effectively
- ▶ Now is the time to come together to TAKE ACTION!

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# Communities Taking Action in BC

- ▶ **Cowichan Valley Regional District** - coordinated regional approach
- ▶ **Kelowna** – overall Healthy City Strategy addressing 6 key issues
- ▶ **Powell River** - Social Planning Coordinator to address 4 key issues
- ▶ **Revelstoke** – 2012 Poverty Reduction Strategy. 2019 transitioned to a plan focused on “Affordability for all”
- ▶ **Williams Lake** – 2021 Poverty Reduction Framework with 5 priorities

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# Sunshine Coast - *What's already happening?*

## LOCAL ACTIONS

### Housing

#### ▶ Gibsons

- Supported housing opening April – 40 units
- Support of Affordable Housing Society – 2 projects in development
- Temporary homeless shelter

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# Sunshine Coast - *What's already happening?*

## LOCAL ACTIONS

### Housing

#### ▶ Sechelt

- Homeless shelter
- SCCSS – developing women's housing
- Hightide supportive housing

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# Sunshine Coast - *What's already happening?*

## COLLABORATIONS

### Housing

- ▶ SC Housing Needs Assessment 2020, Housing Implementation Plan 2021
- ▶ Cover the Coast – bringing together affordable housing groups
- ▶ Emergency Housing Meeting – March 1 – mayors and key housing advocates

### Childcare

- ▶ Child Care Action Plan 2019 (SCRD) – we have a good plan – let's meet our targets

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# Sunshine Coast - *What's already happening?*

## COLLABORATIONS

### Food Security

- ▶ Food Banks - increased capacity, addressed non-food needs (diapers, food delivery, new locations)
- ▶ SD46 providing food in schools, grocery vouchers, weekend food backpacks
- ▶ One Straw Society – small scale distribution of low-cost/free garden produce
- ▶ Community Gardens

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# Let's build support!

- ▶ Please share what you have learned with your family, friends and neighbours

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# Next Steps

- ▶ Final Report June 2021

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# Thank you



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