

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON POVERTY REDUCTION

Imagine...

... a caring
community
on the Lower
Sunshine Coast
where everyone
belongs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2020, the District of Sechelt, acting on behalf of the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Town of Gibsons and the District of Sechelt, contracted the Sunshine Coast Resource Centre to prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Lower Sunshine Coast.

PHASE 1

From October to December 2020, Phase 1 activities of the Poverty Reduction Strategy project included:

- establishing an Advisory Committee and management team for the project
- interviewing nine people experiencing poverty and 32 local service providers regarding the poverty issues they encounter
- conducting a review of research and reports from various government levels and non-government organizations that measure poverty and identify factors that contribute to it
- developing a picture of poverty on the Lower Sunshine Coast, which identified key issues:
 - a crisis in housing across the entire spectrum of affordable housing needs
 - a lack of licensed child care for a majority of families
 - rising food insecurity
 - minimal public transportation
 - inadequate and inconsistent income supports
 - uneven access to supports and services due to fragmentation and silos in service provision
 - a low level of local awareness of the extent of poverty and its impact on the whole community
 - negative stereotypes about poverty that keep it hidden and interfere with our ability as a community to address it

It will take the whole community to address these issues. We invite everyone to be part of the conversation and engage in meaningful solutions.

PHASE **2**

Phase 2, from January to June, 2021, included the following:

- three public forums to present a picture of poverty on the Lower Sunshine Coast and increase awareness in the community, in partnership with Cover the Coast
- creation of a Poverty Lens to guide further policy and program development
- discussions with leaders of service organizations regarding feasible actions to address the issues identified in Phase 1
- sharing with community leaders a draft report of our findings and emerging recommendations
- establishing a strategic framework to address the most urgent areas for action.

The top four priority recommendations in that framework are:

1. Create a collaborative Social Planning Council to address duplication, gaps and fragmentation in action plans and service provision related to poverty reduction
2. Support a Housing Planning Table to plan, advocate for and secure funding for the delivery of more housing solutions (working with the Social Planning Council)
3. Implement the recommendations and target goals of the Sunshine Coast Child Care Action Plan of 2020
4. Implement a communications strategy to increase awareness of poverty and build support for action.

Poverty is the lack of the resources, means, choices, and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard and to participate in society.

WHO STRUGGLES WITH POVERTY ON THE LOWER SUNSHINE COAST?

18%

of residents live in poverty, many of them working at low paid jobs.

**Over
1/2**

of single parent households live in poverty.

1 in 4

children live in poverty; many go to school hungry.

**Almost
80%**

of parents can't find licensed child care for their kids, limiting their ability to earn a living.

40%

This is how much homelessness increased from 2018 to 2020.

**19
to
79**

How much demand for grocery vouchers for families with children in school went up between March and September 2020.

300

seniors are on the waitlist for 150 senior housing units.

100

applications were received for the 40 new units of supportive housing that opened in Gibsons in 2021.

Poverty is higher among those who experience discrimination, whether Indigenous, racialized, female, immigrant, disabled, or LGBTQ2.