



Background:

The purpose of the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction is to make recommendations, for Council’s consideration, on the City’s role in implementing the Province’s *TogetherBC* Poverty Reduction Strategy. Using both the *TogetherBC* Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Poverty Profile-Prince George, committee members prioritized poverty “themes” for the focus of subsequent meetings (meeting of November 20th, 2019).

Themes:

Agreed upon themes for discussion during Select Committee meetings are as follows:

2019-2020 Meeting Schedule and Poverty Focus Areas for Discussion/Recommendation Development	
December 10 th , 2019	Stigma & Discrimination
January 14 th 2020	Housing (affordability, suitability)
February 11 th 2020	Access to Services & Supports (i.e. childcare)
March 10 th 2020	Education & Training/ Employment & Jobs
July 14 th 2020 (date adjusted- COVID-19)	Food Security
August 11 th 2020 (date adjusted- COVID-19)	Transportation
Oct 13, 2020(date adjusted- COVID-19)	Review of Preliminary Recommendations to Council

Lenses:

There was agreement when reviewing and discussing all of the themes that a variety of lenses would be applied. The lenses are:

- Age group: 0-17 (children/youth)
- Single parent families
- Seniors
- Reconciliation
- Neighborhoods highlighted in the Poverty Profile: (McIntyre Crescent, 20th Ave and Victoria & 5th Ave and Highway 97)
- Mental health and substance use
- Working poor and those in absolute poverty

Additionally, there was agreement to consider the role of local government and areas of influence when engaged in discussion, decision making and formulating potential recommendations. Finally, it was highlighted that consideration be given to the recommendations related to poverty reduction from the [Select Committee for a Healthy City Framework Social Development Strategy 2018](#).

Process:

Using the lenses and municipal roles, committee members are asked to identify ideas, actions, strategies related to enabling access to services and supports for those living in poverty. Administration synthesizes the information and prepares a summary of the discussion along with potential recommendations for review and endorsement by the Committee.

Proposed Recommendations from Theme Areas (see above)

- **Note:** (December 7th 2020). The recommendations below have been revised to reflect plain language (courtesy of: Melinda Worfolk, Instructor Academic Upgrading (ACDU), College of New Caledonia). **Plain language** (also called plain writing or plain English) is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Plain language helps get the information across in the shortest time possible, more people are able to understand the message and respond, and there is less chance that the information will be misunderstood. The original intent of each recommendation, and the municipal action have not been altered in the revision. Presenting the recommendations in plain language will be beneficial for the community engagement activities (such as the survey) and ensure that a diverse selection of individuals are included, can fully participate and share their feedback.

Stigma & Discrimination

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
1	Encourage changes to public attitudes around poverty, by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spreading the message on the City's communication platforms (for example, social media) • funding more projects that reduce poverty stigma and discrimination (for example, by changing myPG community grant criteria) educating the public ahead of time about the reasons behind projects like supportive housing, in order to reduce opposition.
2	Increase and improve services in specific areas to build social connections and get more people involved. Targets include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low income neighbourhoods • groups like seniors, single parent families, children and youth.
3	When the City is collecting information on social well being priorities, ask for input from people who have experience living in poverty.

Housing (affordability, suitability)

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
4	Advocate for Provincial and Federal government programs that help people buy an affordable first home.
5	Continue to advocate for Provincial and Federal government support to develop affordable housing and housing services. Advocate for long term, consistent approaches (for example, homeowner incentive grants).
6	Continue to advocate for Prince George to be included in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Annual Rental Market Survey. This would require CMHC to conduct an annual rental housing survey in Prince George.
7	<p>Complete a Housing Needs and Demand Study for Prince George in 2022. Include recommendations for many different types of housing, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency shelter and housing for the homeless • transitional supportive and assistive living • independent social housing • rent assistance • private market rentals • home ownership. <p>Note: The report will be prepared at the same time as the City's Official Community Plan (OCP) review and will use 2021 census data.</p>
8	Develop Revitalization Tax Exemption (RTE) programs that provide incentives for developing new rental housing and repairing existing rentals in low income neighbourhoods.

Access to Services & Supports

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
9	Create more childcare spaces for infants, toddlers, and school-aged children.
10	<p>Create a baseline inventory of current community services and programs. Identify gaps and recommend improvements.</p> <p>Encourage agencies to contribute to the local BC 211 service (a community and social services directory).</p>

<p>11</p>	<p>Make it easier for people to access the City’s Leisure Access Program by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing or reducing financial requirements <p>bundling services (for example, the UPass Program which bundles a transit pass with access to City pools).</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Support development of a Navigation Hub. This is a “one-stop shop” model where people can get</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transit passes • food services • education, training, and employment support • coordinated access* for housing • other services. <p>A person will be available on-site to help people access these services (this is the “navigator”).</p> <p>*A Coordinated Access System is part of the federally funded Reaching Home strategy. In this system, trained workers assess people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to evaluate their level of need, assign priority level, and match them with appropriate housing services.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Respond to income insecurity and low wage poverty by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocating for a guaranteed annual income (similar to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit–CERB) • using tax incentives to encourage small business owners to pay their employees a living wage • advocating for competitive wages for workers, particularly Early Childhood Educators (ECE).

Education/training and Employment Services

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
14	Advocate to keep adult basic education and English language learning courses free.
15	Advocate for ways to support people who want to improve their education or access employment opportunities. For example, advocate for wage subsidies for ECE workers and assistance programs for post-secondary students.

Food Security/Insecurity

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
16	Develop a Food Policy Council (and Food Charter) that will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include a variety of voices • support issues around community food security and insecurity • include participants who have experience living in poverty • focus on local solutions
17	Support opportunities for sustainable food sources including community gardening, food kitchens and programming focused on food supply and education. *recommendation included in the Social Development Strategy Recommendations 2018
18	Use City tools (policy, grants, zoning, etc.) to support further development of community gardens and access to healthy food. *recommendation included in the Social Development Strategy Recommendations 2018
19	Use food access mapping* to inform City's decisions around development and projects around the City (i.e. provide incentives to develop projects close to food sources) *A food access map would show the locations in Prince George where it is easier to get food.

Transportation

Recommendation #	Recommendation/Action
20	<p>Ensure transit is affordable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider making it free to ride the bus on statutory holidays. • Work with BC Transit to make fares affordable for those who need it. Advocate for BC Transit to make future fare systems affordable and accessible. • Work to improve the Transit Assistance Program (managed by the United Way). <p>Consider joining the All on Board Campaign, which advocates for affordable and accessible transit all across British Columbia.</p>
21	<p>Ensure transit use is accessible and safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate adding more locations where people can buy bus passes, such as the PG Public Library and the Council of Seniors. • Encourage active transportation options by improving safety. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ well-maintained and accessible bike lanes ○ sidewalks ○ increased street lighting in bus area routes ○ additional safe indoor waiting areas ○ expansion of transit night service. <p>Advocate for expanding the handyDART services to include statutory holidays and a larger service area.</p>
22	<p>Increase transit education and information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education sessions with an incentive such as a free transit day pass. Topics could be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how to ride the bus ○ what transit services are available ○ how to navigate the system.* <p>*Increase signage at bus stops and improve information provided for bus schedules (for example, make them easy and simple to understand, make print copies of the schedule more readily available).</p>