



RCSAC | RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL

November 20, 2000

Ms. Fran Ashton
City Clerk's Office
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond V6Y 2C1

Dear Ms. Ashton,

The Child, Youth and Family Issues Advisory Committee of the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council has just completed a report card on poverty, entitled **Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging**.

We would like to present the report to the Community Services Committee of City Council at their meeting on November 29th.

Please call me at 278-4336 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Helen Davidson
Chairperson
Child, Youth and Family Issues Advisory Committee



**RCSAC | RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

November 22, 2000

Mayor and Council
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC

Dear Mayor and Council:

Please find attached a copy of **Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging**. This report has been a project of the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee of the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council, through funding from the United Way of the Lower Mainland.

The report examines poverty in Richmond. The primary purpose of the report is to build capacity in the community in order to develop community initiatives.

The report will be presented at a community forum on November 28 from 10:00 to noon at the Lecture Hall at Richmond Cultural Centre.

The report and a summary of the community forum will be presented to the Community Services Committee on November 29th at 4:00 p.m. Lois Carson-Boyce, a member of the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee, will present the report along with Michael Goldberg of SPARC-BC, the consultant hired for the project.

The report will be released to the media at noon on Friday, November 24th. A press conference has been scheduled after the community forum on November 28th from 12:15 – 12:45.

Sincerely,

Helen Davidson
Co-Chair

Attach.

**Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (RCSAC)
Releases
Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging**

The Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (RCSAC) will be presenting **Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging** next week at a community forum. This report measures the parameters of poverty in Richmond, particularly the uniqueness of poverty in an apparently affluent community.

The forum will be held November 28, 2000 from 10:00 a.m. to noon in the Lecture Hall at the Richmond Cultural Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond. A press conference will be held after the forum from 12:15 – 12:45.

The report, funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland, will be used to build capacity in the community to develop community initiatives. The report has been prepared by the Child, Youth and Family Issues Advisory Committee of the RCSAC.

The RCSAC is an inter-agency council composed of staff and volunteers from community service agencies. The RCSAC offers its members opportunities for networking and sharing information, advises City Council on social issues and holds community forums. The Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee of the RCSAC is a forum of people committed to improving the wellbeing of children and families in Richmond.

Copies of the report will be available to the media at the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, 150 – 5890 No. 3 Road, as of noon on Friday, November 24, 2000.

Advance copies of the report have been distributed to Mayor and Council, School Board Trustees, MLA's and MP's.



RCSAC | RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Poverty in Richmond: A Sense of Belonging

A Poverty Report Card

Prepared by the

Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee

Richmond Community Services
Advisory Council

November, 2000

**Building
Community
Together**
the United Way



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
• Acknowledgments.....	2
• Executive Summary.....	3
• Introduction.....	5
• Methodology.....	7
• Population.....	9
• Income.....	10
• Shelter: Owned and Rented Dwellings.....	11
• Shelter: Non-Market Housing.....	12
• Poverty: Economic Families and Individuals Living Below the LICO.....	13
• Poverty: Children and Youth Living Below the LICO.....	16
• The Cost of Living.....	17
• Transportation.....	18
• Recreation and Leisure.....	19
• The Human Face of Poverty.....	20
• Conclusion.....	24
• Appendix A: The Richmond Poverty Report Card Committee.....	25
• Appendix B: Statistical Sources.....	26
• Useful Web Sites.....	27

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, we wish to express our gratitude to the residents of Richmond who voluntarily participated in focus groups and interviews. Their openness and candor have provided us with the human face of poverty, the most important dimension of poverty.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support we have received for this project from the Special Projects Fund of the United Way of the Lower Mainland.

We would like to express our appreciation to the following people:

- Michael Goldberg of the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., the consultant hired for the project, who provided us with realms of information and helped us develop a strategy for data collection.
- Margaret Picard, our staff liaison from the City of Richmond, who provided us with access to city statistics and helped guide us through the process of developing the Poverty Report Card.
- Judy Kilcup, the United Way planner for Richmond, who attended our meetings and offered us suggestions and support.
- A special thank-you to John Talbot and Associates, who prepared the Community Impact Profile for Surrey/White Rock. This document was of great assistance to our committee and, with their permission, we have liberally made use of their data and findings.

Finally, I would personally like to thank all the members of the Poverty Report Card Committee for their time, energy and enthusiasm. The time frame of the project stretched beyond our initial expectations and committee members remained committed to the project.

Helen Davidson
Chairperson



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Richmond is considered one of the healthiest and wealthiest communities in British Columbia. The average family income in 1995 was \$55,703 and the average value of a dwelling was \$317,703. The city has a thriving economy, low unemployment and extensive community programs.

Over the past 20 years, the Richmond Community Services Advisory Council (RCSAC) has played an active role in Richmond as an advisory committee to the City of Richmond. The RCSAC is an inter-agency council composed of staff and volunteers from community service agencies. The RCSAC offers its members an opportunity to network and share information, advises City Council on social issues, and holds community forums.

In the fall of 1999, the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee of the RCSAC was asked to identify one or two issues it would focus on for the year. The committee decided to focus on poverty.

The RCSAC applied for funding from the United Way of the Lower Mainland to prepare a Report Card on Poverty in Richmond. The main objectives of the Report Card are to provide accurate information on poverty in our community and to support and assist in the development of community initiatives. The Richmond Poverty Report Card is not meant to change the community conditions it profiles.

Highlights of the findings include:

- Richmond has poverty. In 1996, 22.9% of all families had incomes below the Low Income Cut-off, the measurement used by Statistics Canada. Over 1/5 of all Richmond families lived in poverty. Nearly 1/3 of all children lived in poverty. In that same year, Richmond had one of the highest poverty gaps in the country.
- Richmond neighbourhoods with the highest incident of poverty among economic families in 1996 were Cambie West (39%), Bridgeport (32%) and City Centre (28%).
- Richmond had a higher percentage of families living in poverty than Surrey (18.7%) and the GVRD (18.7%) and was identical to Burnaby.
- In Richmond, more children lived in poverty in two-parent families (4,385 families) than in lone parent families (1,220).

- Richmond has been impacted by an influx of immigrants, mostly from Pacific Rim countries. Research indicates that while immigrants generally earn less in the earlier years of settlement, their income level does rise to that of Canadian born residents.
- 41.6% of renter households paid more than 30% of their 1995 household income on rent. The average rent in 1996 was \$904.
- In April 1999, Richmond had 1,708 non-market housing units, but there were more than 9,000 families with incomes below the poverty line.
- Two themes emerged in interviews and focus groups held with people living in poverty. First, respondents overwhelmingly feel excluded from life in the community. Second, respondents have few choices in the decisions they make. These themes are echoed in studies across the country.
- Supportive neighbourhoods can have a huge impact on the lives of families and their children.
- Neighbourhoods with mixed income levels and a high level of cohesiveness benefit the lives of children.

A wide range of community partners needs to be involved to successfully develop and continue community initiatives. This report and its content offer an unprecedented opportunity to determine a new and realistic approach to this situation.

INTRODUCTION

Measuring Poverty In Richmond

Statistics alone cannot give a complete picture of poverty. One of the resounding themes that emerged throughout this project is that poverty is a lack of social inclusion. People are poor if they cannot maintain a standard of living, which in some sense makes them participating members of their community. The committee therefore decided to incorporate the human face of poverty into the Report Card.

How Will The Poverty Report Card Be Used?

The Richmond Poverty Report Card is not meant to change the community conditions it profiles. The Report Card hopes to become the first stepping stone to community initiatives. The three objectives of the Report Card are:

- To provide accurate information on poverty in Richmond to community agencies, all levels of government, business, and the community at large.
- To raise public awareness of changing trends, human need and community problems around the issue of poverty.
- To use the Report Card to support and assist in the development of community initiatives.

Who Needs To Be Involved?

To successfully develop and continue community initiatives, a wide range of community partners needs to be involved. While one agency or group may take the lead, it is unreasonable to expect one level of government, one department, one business, one community group or one funder to take sole responsibility. A collaborative effort that respects the legislative and resource limitations of the participating community partners, and maximizes the contributions each can realistically be expected to make, will provide the strongest community approach.

Measuring Poverty

For the purpose of this Report Card, the committee decided to use the Low Income Cut-off (LICO), the measurement used by Statistics Canada.

According to Statistics Canada, people are considered to have a low income if their total gross income from all sources (including transfers) falls below the low-income cut-off (LICO). The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) varies according to the size of households and the size of communities. The following table shows the LICO for the years 1995 and 1998. The 2000 LICO will be approximately 3% greater than the 1998 figures.

Size of Household	1995	1998
1 Person	16,874	17,571
2 People	21,092	21,962
3 People	26,232	27,315
4 People	31,753	33,063
5 People	35,494	36,958
6 People	39,236	40,855
7 or more people	42,976	44,751

Household expenditure surveys conducted by Statistics Canada show that the average family spends 36.2% of its gross income (total income from all sources before tax) on food, clothing and shelter. A family is considered to be in *straightened circumstances** if it spends 56.2% of its income on these three items.

There is much debate these days about establishing the appropriate poverty line. A number of studies have stated that present poverty lines are too low. In the Canadian Council on Social Development report Income and Child Well-being: A New Perspective on the Poverty Debate, it is demonstrated that the level of income families need to maximize their children's chances of full development goes well beyond the amount needed for the basic provision of food, clothing and shelter. They estimate that an appropriate child poverty line should be set within the range of \$30,000 and \$40,000 for a family of four. The present LICO is at the low end of this scale. This line is higher than those currently used and higher than the poverty line suggested by the general public in opinion polls. But this poverty line is well below the median income level in Canada.

People interested in this debate may want to pursue some of the sources listed in Statistical Sources.

* **straightened circumstances:** Statistics Canada considers families who fall below the LICO to be in *straightened circumstances*.

METHODOLOGY

How was the Poverty Report Card Designed and Implemented?

Formation of the Richmond Poverty Report Card Committee

The Richmond Poverty Report Card Committee was formed when funding for the project was received from the United Way of the Lower Mainland. The committee includes representation from the Child, Youth and Family Issues Committee of the RCSAC and from a variety of community groups and interests (Appendix A). This committee has taken an active role in the Report Card and has learned by doing. This learning will serve them well if the committee or its members take a lead or supportive role in the development of community initiatives.

Developing the Poverty Report Card

A request for proposals was distributed to consultants and Michael Goldberg of SPARC-BC was hired. Michael met with the committee to develop a strategy for collecting data. Information was gathered through the compilation of statistical data and through interviews and focus groups conducted with people living in poverty.

The most extensive and reliable data source was provided by the Census, which is collected and published every 5 years by Statistics Canada. The committee also assisted in identifying potential data sources and collecting information. All the information presented is from secondary data sources (i.e. meaning the information was collected by others). For the purposes of the Report Card, the committee decided there should be some comparisons. The committee chose Burnaby and Surrey because they are more comparable in income and housing costs than other suburban communities. Comparisons to the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) are also provided.

The committee felt it was also important to gather stories from people living in poverty. These stories are the focus of the Human Face of Poverty on pages 20 to 23.

Preparation of the Richmond Poverty Report Card

In discussing the format of the Report Card, the committee felt it was important to present a format that used simple English, presented clear charts and was visually appealing. The committee also decided that in order to facilitate education and learning, the format should include some interpretation of data as well as thought-provoking statements.

Based on the preferred format and the information collected, several drafts of the Report Card were shared with the committee for comments and suggestions. Based on these, the draft Report Card was revised accordingly and the final report was completed in November 2000.

What were the Limitations?

This project faced a number of limitations which needed to be considered when interpreting the data and making decisions. First, it relied entirely on secondary information for data collection. Second, much of the data is based on the 1996 Census and is several years old. Finally, the committee had to limit the scope of information. The information provided represents what the committee felt was important at the time, based on the interests that were involved and the information that was available.



POPULATION

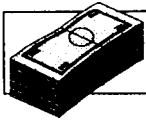
The Facts

- Richmond had a population of 155,005 in 1996.
- Richmond had 40,570 economic families* out of a population of 50,925 households.
- Of the 40,570 families, 12% were lone parent families, 82% of which were headed by women.
- Since 1991, the percentage of 2-person families had decreased slightly while the number of large families had increased slightly.
- The majority of the population was between 24-64 years old (56%); 8.1% were between 0-6; 23% were between 7-24; and, 10.9% were over 65 years of age.

How do we compare?

- Richmond (11%) had the highest percentage of families with 5 or more members in the GVRD.
- Richmond had the lowest percentage of 2-person families in the GVRD.
- Richmond (12%) had a lower percentage of lone parent families than Burnaby (14.7%), Surrey (14%) and was similar to the Greater Vancouver Regional District (11.8%).

** Economic Family: "Two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption"*



INCOME

The Facts

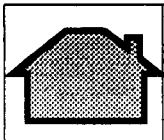
- The average family income in Richmond in 1995 was \$55,743.
- The average unattached individual income was \$24,012.
- In an analysis based on elementary school catchment areas, the Richmond school district showed that most areas had average Census Family Incomes. The major exception was William Cook Elementary School (\$42,000). The next lowest average family income was at Donald McKay Elementary School (\$51,600). The elementary schools with the highest average family incomes were Jessie Wowk (\$69,500), Maple Lane (\$68,200) and Westwind (\$67,900).

Why is this important?

There is strong evidence that higher income and social status are linked to better health and social well being. Studies across Canada consistently show that people at each step on the income scale are healthier than those on the step below.

How do we compare?

- Richmond (\$55,743) had a slightly higher family income than Burnaby (\$53,842) and Surrey (\$54,905). Richmond's average family income was significantly lower than the GVRD (\$60,438).



SHELTER OWNED AND RENTED DWELLINGS

The Facts

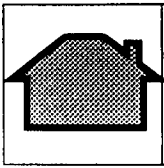
- In 1996, the average value of a Richmond dwelling was \$317,004, a 23% increase from 1991 (\$259,141).
- The average monthly mortgage was \$904.
- The average rent was \$875, a 9% decrease from 1991 (\$954).
- Of a total of 50,925 dwellings, 69.5% (35,385) were owned.
- Over 13% of owners spent more than 30% of their 1995 household income on shelter costs.
- 41.6% of renter households paid more than 30% of their 1995 household income on rent.

Why is this important?

Homeowners and renters in the Greater Vancouver Regional District face some of the highest housing costs in Canada. Those facing the most severe affordability problems are female-headed households (both single parents and elderly single women), low-income individuals who live alone and young people under age 25. For these people and others, just paying the rent often leads to stresses and difficult choices about how to use their remaining income. These stresses can have a negative impact on both health and well being.

How do we compare?

- Richmond has the fourth highest dwelling value at \$317,004. This value was lower only than West Vancouver (\$599,525), Vancouver (\$405,946) and North Vancouver (\$362,927).
- In 1996 in Richmond, 41.6% of renters paid more than 30% of their household income on rent. This rate was lower than Burnaby (44.7%), Surrey (49.5%) and the GVRD (46%).
- 30.5% of occupied private dwellings were rented in Richmond. This was a slight increase over Surrey (29.5%) and significantly lower than Burnaby (45.2%), Vancouver (58.1%) and the GVRD (40.5%).



SHELTER NON-MARKET HOUSING*

The Facts

- In April 1999, Richmond had 1,708 non-market housing units, but there were 9,290 families with incomes below the poverty line.
- There were 873 non-market housing units, but there were 4,000 seniors with low incomes.

Why is this important?

In 1992, in spite of the large percentage of renter households who experienced affordability problems, the federal government began to phase out its commitment to funding new non-market housing projects, totally withdrawing in 1994. This move resulted in a loss of two-thirds of the previous funding base. Since 1994, the Province has sought to build new non-market housing in partnership with community sponsors and municipal governments. As a result of the new funding realities, non-market housing has fallen far behind, as evidenced by the almost 8,000 households that are currently on B.C. Housing's waitlist for non-market housing in the Lower Mainland. It is also important to consider that Richmond has the highest percentage of large families. Housing options are limited for large families looking for non-market housing.

Given the impact of conversion of rental housing to market development and the slow development of affordable, social and rental accommodations, the ability of those living in poverty to make choices of where they wish to live is limited.

Richmond's policy of decentralizing affordable and social housing should be maintained and the practice of integration of all types of housing should be supported and enforced.

How do we compare?

Since 1994 (the year the federal government stopped funding new non-market housing), 166 non-profit housing units were approved in Richmond. During this same period, 978 units were approved in Burnaby and 404 units were approved in Surrey.

* **Non-Market Housing:** Housing that is not privately owned.



POVERTY

Economic Families & Individuals Living Below the Low Income Cut-Off in 1995

The Facts

- In 1996, of the 40,570 economic families in Richmond, 22.9% had incomes below the low-income cut-off (LICO).

Type of Economic Family	Total Number	No. of Families Below LICO	Incidence of Poverty
Couples without children	17,275	2,715	15.7%
Couples with children	16,875	4,385	26.0%
Lone Parents	2,625	1,220	46.5%
Other	3,795	970	25.6%
TOTAL	40,570	9,290	22.9%

- Incidence of poverty by age group.

Population Age Group	Total Number of People	Total Number of Poor	Incidence of Poverty (%)
Children under 15	27,935	8,575	30.7%
Youth 15-24	21,290	6,385	30.0%
Adults 25-34	21,995	5,365	24.4%
Adults 35-44	26,560	6,910	26.0%
Adults 45-54	22,155	4,260	19.2%
Adults 55-64	12,430	2,700	21.7%
Seniors 65-74	9,535	2,475	26.0%
Seniors 75 and older	6,165	1,785	29.0%

Note: The total population is slightly lower than actual population due to sampling and estimation by Statistics Canada.

- Richmond does not have neighbourhoods with extremely high incidence of poverty such as the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver. The neighbourhoods with the highest incidence of poverty among economic families in 1996 were Cambie West (39%), Bridgeport (32%) and City Centre (28%).
- The incidence of poverty among immigrants varies according to how long they have lived in Canada. Statistical information indicates that most new immigrants live in poverty for a limited time period. The following table shows how the incidence of poverty decreases the longer immigrants live in British Columbia.

Length of Residence of Immigrants	Incidence of Poverty
15 years or more	20%
10 - 14 years	33%
4 - 9 years	52%

- There has been some discussion that the reported income levels of immigrants in Richmond are artificially low. Evidence does not substantiate that this has a large impact on poverty statistics, and it certainly does not take away from the reality of living in poverty.
- The incidence of poverty varies greatly depending on whether the person is part of an economic family or whether he/she is an unattached individual. The incidence of poverty for seniors in economic families was 19% compared to 52% for unattached seniors. Similarly, youth economic families (headed by someone 15-24 years of age) had a much lower incidence of poverty (16%) compared to unattached youth (70%).
- There were 3,500 economic families with total incomes that were less than 50% of the poverty line. This means that some single parents with one child had annual incomes that were less than \$10,500 per year.
- Comparing the average incomes of working age families (19-64) is another way of understanding poverty. Working age families in Richmond had average incomes of \$60,600. Working age, poor families had average incomes of \$14,900 – about ¼ of the income of the overall average working age family.
- The poverty gap (also referred to as *depth of poverty*) measures how far incomes are below the LICO. The average poverty gap in Richmond for all poor non-elderly families was \$14,900, one of the highest in Canada. This means that although the LICO for a family of four in 1995 was \$31,753, the average income for a family of four was actually \$16,853.

- In 2000, 2,044 Richmond residents aged 19-64 years received basic B.C. Benefits (1.9%). This is much lower than Burnaby (4.2%) and Surrey (5.4%).
- Richmond's unemployment rate was 7.8% in 1996.

Why is this important?

Many studies have shown a strong association between income and socio-economic status and health and well being. There does not appear to be a cut-off at a particular level of income; instead there appears to be a gradient effect. The better off someone is, the healthier he or she is likely to be. One example is chronic stress, high stress decreases sharply as family income rises from \$20,000 (16%) to \$50,000 (7%).

How do we compare?

- In Richmond, 22.9% of economic families had incomes below the low-income cut-off in 1995. This was higher than Surrey (18.8%) and the GVRD (18.7%) and identical to Burnaby.
- Richmond had one of the lowest percentages of population on B.C. Benefits.
- Richmond (37.3%) had a lower percentage of unattached individuals living in poverty than the GVRD (43%) and Burnaby (43.7%).
- Richmond (7.8%) had a lower unemployment rate than Burnaby (9%), Surrey (10.4%) and the GVRD (8.6%).
- Richmond's poverty gap is one of the highest in Canada, it is slightly higher than Burnaby (\$14,400) and significantly higher than Surrey (\$12,200).



POVERTY

Children and Youth Living Below the LICO

The Facts

- 3 in 10 children in Richmond live in poverty.
- 30.7% of children 0-14 were a member of economic families living below the low-income cut-off for 1995.
- As of March 2000, 4.3% of children in Richmond were in receipt of B.C. Benefits.
- More children live in poverty in two-parent families (4,385 families) than in lone parent households (1,220 families).

Why is this important?

Poverty is recognized as the single most significant indicator of health status. The health problems of poor children begin before birth and continue to place these children at greater risk of death, disability and other health problems throughout their lives.

- Children from low-income families have twice the incidence of delayed vocabulary scores and 1/3 higher incidence of lower math scores.
- Just over 1/3 of children in low-income families live in substandard housing.
- Almost ¾ of children in low-income families rarely participate in organized sports.
- Almost 1/3 of children in low-income families have changed schools at least three times before the age of 11 resulting in lower math scores, more grade failures and higher levels of behavioural problems.

How do we compare?

In Richmond, 30.7% of children 0-14 were members of economic families living below the low-income cut-off in 1995. This was slightly lower than Burnaby (32.5%) and higher than Surrey (27.1%) and the GVRD (26.3%).



THE COST OF LIVING

The Facts

In 2000 in Richmond, a family of four (consisting of two adults, a teenager and a preschooler) needs an annual income of at least \$31,156 to meet basic expenses.

Item	Monthly Cost
Rent	1,031
Utilities	50
Food	607
Clothing	213
Household Goods	47
Personal Care	65
Monthly Cost	\$ 2,013
Annual Cost	\$24,156
Tax (EI, CPP and federal & provincial taxes)	7,000
Total Annual Cost	\$31,156

This assumes that there is one earner and that there are only the basic deductions for the family. This would not cover the various costs that all families face such as transportation, health and dental care, school supplies, leisure activities and insurance. The low-income cut-off for a family of four in 1998 was \$33,063.

Why is this important?

People with higher incomes may experience a higher degree of control in their personal and work related lives, which is also associated with health and well being.

How do we compare?

Differences in the cost of living are almost insignificant in municipalities in the GVRD. In Richmond the cost of living is slightly higher because of shelter costs. A family of four would need an annual income of \$29,080 in Surrey to meet basic expenses and in Burnaby, \$30,400.



TRANSPORTATION

The Facts

- Round trip bus fare within Richmond for an adult: \$ 3.50
- Round trip bus fare for a child (5-13 years), student or senior: \$ 2.50
- Taxi fare from Steveston to The Richmond Hospital: \$11.00
- HandyDART, for people who cannot use regular transportation, is for employment and medical appointments and is less available for social activities and very difficult for evening transportation.

Why is this important?

The cost of transportation is often identified as a barrier for getting to services and activities. For most low-income people, the cost of operating a private vehicle is prohibitive.

How do we compare?

The situation in Richmond is similar to most outer municipalities. Many people who use public transit report that it is easier to travel from Richmond to Vancouver than within Richmond. And while buses in Richmond run once every half-hour, many buses in Vancouver operate every 15 minutes. Translink is presently working with the City of Richmond to improve service.



RECREATION & LEISURE

The Facts

General adult admission to a movie at Silvercity:	\$12.25
General child admission to a movie at Silvercity:	\$6.25
Average lunch during school lunch day:	\$5.00
Admission to public skating:	
Adult:	\$3.25
Child	\$2.25
Family	\$2.00 each
Skate rental	\$2.00
Organized sports:	
Football	\$190.00
Soccer	\$100.00
Average hourly cost for a baby-sitter	\$5.00

Why is this important?

Each of these individual items may seem small, but on a limited income they are barriers to participating in the community. In most cases, there are also other costs associated with these activities.

How do we compare?

The costs of most of these activities are similar in other municipalities. The City of Richmond, like other municipalities, offers some assistance with recreation activities for families with low incomes. For some families, these programs are still prohibitive because of the cost of transportation and equipment.



THE HUMAN FACE OF POVERTY

The Richmond Poverty Report Card Committee felt it was important to hear from people living in poverty.

Respondents had the opportunity to participate in a focus group or be individually interviewed. Committee members or staff at community service agencies facilitated groups and interviews. Information was gathered on the basic demographics of respondents and the respondents' costs for basic expenses (shelter, food, transportation, clothing, personal care, recreation and leisure, and costs associated with health care). Respondents were also asked what they have to say no to and what could make life less hard for them.

Respondents included youth (20 and younger) living independently, parents with children (mostly single parents), older single women, adults with a disability and seniors. It is important to note that this is a voluntary sampling of the population living in poverty and does not necessarily represent the larger population. The stories these people shared however do mirror information gathered across Canada in other studies. There were a number of commonalties that emerged in the responses collected. However, each of the population groups was also somewhat unique in its responses.

What Are Your Spending Priorities?

Housing

All the parents and older single women indicated that rent was their first priority. They all spent over 58% of their total income on shelter costs. All these families lived in one or two bedroom units with up to 3 children.

Food, Clothing and Bus Pass

Several of the youth were clear that food, clothing and a bus pass were their first priority. Shelter cost was not an issue with them.

Comments

- Several respondents indicated that they were also paying off debts.
- Almost all respondents mentioned the constant juggling between basic expenses and emergency expenses.

To What Do You Say NO?

Socializing With Friends

Overwhelmingly, nearly all respondents stated that they had to say no to going out with friends. The two main reasons were cost and lack of transportation. Several seniors mentioned they could not afford to take their grandchildren out.

Health Services

Several seniors stated that after basic expenses were paid, there was little or no money left for health services such as dental care or eyeglasses.

Saying No to Children

The parents commented over and over that their children have to go without the things that most children take for granted. They have to say no to treats, whether it's a school lunch day or an ice cream from the ice cream man. They have to say no to going to the movies or a birthday party. They have to say no to going camping like other families.

What Would Make Life Less Hard For You?

Housing

Housing costs and inadequate housing are difficult for many of the respondents. They are constantly on the look out for cheaper, better accommodations and move frequently. Several are considering moving out of Richmond, away from their family support, in an attempt to cut housing costs.

Access to Transportation

Nearly everyone but the youth indicated that access to free or low cost transportation would improve their lives. Respondents need transportation for reasons such as getting to medical appointments, going to paid or volunteer work, socializing with friends, visiting the food bank and getting groceries. The cost is prohibitive and there are barriers for disabled, seniors and parents with a number of young children.

Increased Recreational Opportunities

The youth indicated they would like places to go beyond community centres. They suggested a coffee shop for youth or an alcohol-free dance club. Adults with disabilities would like to see more recreational programs specific to their needs.

What Did the Respondents Have in Common?

A number of commonalties were identified amongst the respondents.

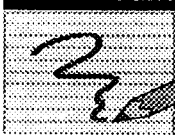
- Most had lived in Richmond at least four years. Many had lived here all their lives.
- Many had family support in the community, both emotionally and financially.
- Most were involved with community service agencies and/or volunteered in the community.

In responding to the reality of living in poverty, two themes emerged. First, the respondents overwhelmingly feel excluded from life in the community. Secondly, respondents have few choices in the decisions they make.

The poverty line is not set at a level that enables people to be socially engaged in their society. Even these respondents, with family supports and involved with community services, feel socially isolated. Parents stated that they do not get involved in their children's schools. Youth, already socially stigmatized, feel even more isolated when poor. Children in low-income families are less likely to have friendly, helpful neighbours.

Lack of choice was the other theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. One respondent mentioned how her daughter loved to shop for bargains in the local thrift store, but when the local thrift store is your only choice when shopping for clothes, the experience is not the same.

Social isolation and lack of choice for people living in poverty are not unique to Richmond. These themes are echoed in studies across the country.



CONCLUSION

Recent studies show that supportive neighbourhoods can have a huge impact on the lives of families and their children. Neighbourhoods that offer child safety, social support and access to good facilities can contribute positively to children's readiness to learn as they enter school and to their achievements in school.

Children also learn positive social skills in supportive neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods with mixed income levels and a high level of cohesiveness benefit the lives of children. Children develop well in neighbourhoods that include adults from other families, including affluent neighbours, when these adults also monitor children and serve as role models.

As a vibrant and culturally diverse community, we have the opportunity to ensure that people living in poverty are afforded opportunities and supportive environments. The literature and experience show that living in poverty is not always static. For many people poverty is cyclical. Circumstances such as unemployment, divorce and death can contribute to this cycle. With systems and supports that cycle can be changed.

The perception that money is the single solution to living in poverty is a very limited one. It is also about choice - a poverty of opportunity. Opportunities and choices to stay in Richmond, to participate in community activities and to be involved in the planning of community activities are equally as important as sufficient income.

We believe, by the public presentation of this report and its content, that we are offering the community of Richmond, its residents, community agencies, public service agencies, businesses, faith communities and all levels of government an unprecedented opportunity to determine a new and realistic approach to the situation. The community of Richmond must work in partnership and cooperation with and for each other. We must envision community that provides educational and training opportunities, housing assistance and shelter, and family friendly workplaces. Our community is the most valuable commodity we can invest in to ensure the healthy development of children and families.

Appendix A: The Richmond Poverty Report Card Committee

Catherine Andrews
Richmond Youth Service Agency

Wally Philips
President, Richmond Connections

Lois Carson Boyce
Seniors Advisory Council

Margaret Picard
Urban Development (Policy Planning)
City of Richmond

T.N. Foo
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Brenda Reynolds
Richmond Health Services

Margaret Hewlett
Richmond Food Bank

Lydia Rozental
VISAC
Family Services of Greater Vancouver

Louise Hudson
Richmond Women's Resource Centre

Chris Salgado
Richmond Health Services
Population Health

Jim Kelly
Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team

Maureen Sanderson
Richmond Family Court Committee

Judy Kilcup
United Way of the Lower Mainland

James Sullivan
Richmond Disability Resource Centre

Michael McCoy
Touchstone Family Association

Kay Wong
Richmond Health Services
Population Health

Annie McKittrick
School Board Trustee
Richmond School District No. 38

Helen Davidson (Chairperson)
Richmond Family Place Society

Michael Goldberg (Consultant)
Research Director
Social Planning and Research Council of B.C.

Appendix B: Statistical Sources

The statistical data for this report card is primarily based on the 1996 Census. The information is for 1996, except in the case of income, which is based on 1995. The census data was obtained from a variety of reports.

B.C. Stats. Information on Basic B.C. Benefits Recipients. Victoria: Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations, 2000.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Survey of Rental Housing - Greater Vancouver. Vancouver: CMHC, 1999.

City of Richmond. Demographic Hot Facts. Richmond: City of Richmond, 1999.

City of Richmond. Housing and Care: A Directory of Assisted Housing Facilities in Richmond. Richmond: City of Richmond, 1999.

Cleathero, Jennifer and Bruce Levens. Environmental Scan of the Lower Mainland Region: A Compilation of Socio-Economic Facts and Trends. Burnaby: United Way Research Services, 1998.

Goldberg, Michael. Widening the Gap: A Comparison Between the Costs of Daily Living and Income Assistance Rates (B.C. Benefits) in British Columbia. Vancouver: Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., 1997.

Lee, Kevin. Urban Poverty in Canada: A Statistical Profile. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000.

Ross, David P. and Paul Roberts. Income and Child Well-Being: A New Perspective on the Poverty Debate. Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1999.

School District No. 38 1996 Census Data

Spigelman, Martin and Research Associates. Unfulfilled Expectations, Missed Opportunities: Poverty Among Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia. Victoria: Working Group on Poverty, 1998.

Talbot, John and Associates. Community Impact Profile for Surrey/White Rock. Surrey: Surrey Social Futures, 2000.

Vancouver/Richmond Health Board. A Strategic Plan of Housing Services: A Discussion Document. Vancouver, 2000.

Useful Web Sites:

Statistics Canada - www.statcan.ca

B.C. Stats - www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

City of Richmond Demographic Facts – www.city.richmond.bc.ca/discover/facts

Canadian Council on Social Development - www.ccsd.ca