

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of Richmond City Council held on Tuesday, February 2, 2015.

**Presentation in Support of
RCSAC Report on Municipal Responses to Child/Youth Poverty**

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February 2, 2016

I'm Trish Garner, Community Organizer with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition, of which the Richmond Poverty Response Committee is an active member. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this critical report. It speaks to the Council's commitment that they commissioned the report, and I want to recognize the comprehensive work of the Richmond Poverty Response Committee in reviewing existing programs and providing strong recommendations.

Canada, and by implication, all jurisdictions within it, has signed on to the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, which promise "an adequate standard of living for all, including adequate food, clothing and shelter."

Last year, I was running a workshop in Richmond and met Clay Tang with Chimo. He told me about taking a teenager to the food bank for the first time, and that the boy had been most excited about taking back to his Mom, not food, but toilet paper.

Clearly, we're not fulfilling our human rights commitments, but this path outlined here continues the journey in the right direction. A human rights perspective to anti-poverty work is critical because it puts the dignity of all people at the heart.

I wholeheartedly support the recommendations within this report. First, I have an overall comment and then some more targeted notes. The significant feature of these recommendations is that they have two areas of focus: what the City can do; and the role of the City in advocating to senior levels of government. The second is critical given that, while the issues are felt within the community, the higher levels of government have the real means to make systemic change in tackling root causes; and this is highlighted within the report.

In relation to targeted comments, I will focus on transit because, as you read within the report, no other Metro Vancouver municipality has any programs in relation to transit so there is a leadership role for Richmond to play in providing a low income transit program. Cranbrook is the only city in BC to provide such a program but there are examples in Seattle and Calgary.

A low income transit program could also be connected to existing leisure access services so that there are less barriers for low-income people in accessing these programs. Calgary has taken this approach to provide one point of access for all their low-income services and programs. (In relation to the Councillor's earlier question about involving the School Board, there is also an opportunity here to connect these programs to a school activity fee waiver program. These fees impact low-income families and, despite saying on forms that families can opt out if they disclose their low-income status, we know that families often don't because of shame.)

In conclusion, there are human rights arguments for this approach, moral arguments that this is the right thing to do, but also very strong economic arguments that this saves money in the long run.

Thank you.