

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



## Income Support What are we hearing?



MAY 2020

### People's experiences

- Income supports are not enough to live off.
- Survivors benefits plus a supplement are not enough to cover basic bills.
- Income support programs like Alberta Works are punitive.
- Some have volunteered in order to get paid in groceries. Getting paid in cash, means that the amount of income support is reduced, making it difficult to earn enough money to improve one's situation.
- Rent jumped \$531 in one month because someone was bumped to a different category for income support.
- The change of date for AISH payments is now causing rent to be late every month.
- Disability benefits are less than a living wage, so 100% of money received goes to basic needs.
- Moving from AISH to a pension is not a smooth process, there are too many gaps and a pension doesn't cover prescriptions.
- The emotional and psychological costs of living on income support are too high and the community is struggling.

### Challenges and opportunities with COVID-19

- Normally working part-time would mean that applying for CERB was a viable option. Even if you do qualify, income support is clawed back.
- Feelings of depression have increased because of uncertainty created by COVID.
- Internet is not considered a basic need. Due to COVID, options for internet plans with high enough speeds have increased costs.
- Necessary food supports that were not accessible due to COVID means that there is limited money for food, which often means eating unhealthy food.

### What's needed

- Seniors benefits must have a co-pay for prescriptions.
- In addition to AISH support, individuals still require a subsidy for rent.
- A basic income would improve lives.
- Breaking-down stigma - people on income support aren't lazy and more money does not mean less productivity.

### Enough for All Lever of Change - Income Support

Adequate income support programs (e.g. Employment Insurance, Social Assistance, Guaranteed Income Supplement) are a critical part of the community's social safety net. They complement and fill the gaps when well-paying employment is currently unavailable or for people unable to work full-time hours (or at all).

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