

Atlantic Canada's First Street Newspaper
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Mission Statement:

To provide a voice for the poor and needy,
 to educate and develop a critical conscience,
 to develop a community based solution
 to poverty and to generate income
 for those in need.

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An open Letter

Hello Readers,

As most of you already know, my name is Kendall Worth, and I am a vendor and editorial contributor to this newspaper. After reading page 7 of Vol12, Iss 2, of Street Feat, (the article talking about the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Stagey) and after reading about the fact that we have a poverty reduction working group here in Nova Scotia, I just want to say that I had actually tried to get a hold for the past couple of months and ended up being sent on a wild goose chase. I have sent an E-mail to the provided E-mail address and they have never responded. I went to the head office of Community Services on Spring Garden, and main reception had given me a phone number, which turned out to be the wrong number. I was given two more phone numbers, which also turned out to be wrong numbers, so I finally gave up. I write this article hoping that someone from the poverty reduction group will see this article.



**by Kendall Worth
 Vendor and Editorial
 Contributor**

I have read some recent issues of the Metro News paper articles talking about poverty, and then after these public hearings I had attended about Let's Make Poverty History, I have decided in this issue to write an open letter talking about what I think of the fact of "let's make poverty history". After-all Street Feat is the Newspaper that raises awareness issues on poverty, so what better paper to publish my open letter in. Another one of my reasons for writing this letter is because as I had talked about above I had been trying to find out how I could get a hold of the poverty reduction working group, because I am interested in wanting to talk to them.

I want to let the general public know that I think that eliminating poverty is a good idea. Street Feat is a real good way to let people know that there is poverty in our own backyard as well as in places such as Africa. I was talking to someone not too long ago who had told me that it would be a good idea to package up a bunch of different copies of different issues of Street Feat and send them to Prime Minister Steven Harper. I love this idea! After-all government has got to pitch in as well to make this happen.

Part of the reason as to why I decided to do what I can to help keep Street Feat going, and I really want to see nothing happen to this news paper. I know we are doing great work in the community as in raising the issues, and getting the word out there to the general public. However it is going to take alot more than what we at Street Feat are doing to make this happen. People who live in poverty situations could be anyone from those who are on fixed incomes, through to the working poor, women who have been abused by their male partners, and of course the homeless. A lot of these people are persons with disabilities, and mental health consumers. Sometimes I wonder how much of an understanding do governments have about actual facts such as the facts that a lot of these people who are on fixed incomes have difficulty working in the regular job market. With the cost of rents plus other expenses increasing, it gets harder and harder for those on fixed

incomes to survive. Maybe if the government had a better understanding of those issues then maybe they would agree to raise allowances for those who are on fixed incomes, and you may see less people on the streets doing activities such as panhandling. I have a friend who is on Social Assistance as her living income. When her rent went up recently, she had to fight to keep her apartment, because of what her rent got increased to. This is an example of something that should not have had to have happened. Hopefully someday down the road Community Services will understand that the cost of apartment rentals keep increasing, (the sooner they come to that understanding, the better) hopefully then they will raise the amount they allow for rent so people on Social Assistance can start being able to afford the cost of living. A person on any type of fixed income being able to afford the cost of living is the first thing that has to happen to eliminate poverty.

I have also a couple of days ago read in the Metro newspaper an article about someone who is on a disability government income. The article talked about how this person has to collect bottles and cans to bring in extra income, or else he would be homeless. This is an example of something else that is not right. This article made me wonder if it is possible that his check is just enough to pay his rent and the money which he earns from his bottles and cans has to pay his other living expenses. This is just one example of someone who can't just live on his fixed government income alone.

Of course, that is not all that has to happen in order to achieve this goal. The second thing that has to happen is that the governments on all levels have to have an understanding of different disabilities, and mental health issues. I also think that our mental health system could use some improvements which I know this from personally knowing different people I know who use our mental health system resources.

The third thing which needs to happen is that some type of housing program to house homeless needs to be in place. You regular readers of Street Feat may remember reading my article which I had written in Vol. 11, Issue 3, titled "General Thoughts on poverty and ideas for situation improvements". As part of this article I had talked about my idea for a housing program I have for the homeless. This idea was to have a building where on the first floor, they are in a program where they get cleaned up and have an address so they can get on Social Assistance. The next part of the plan is to upgrade them to an apartment on one of the upper floor apartments. This would be an ideal program, if someone could actually get it going.

Everything I had just talked about happening may not do everything that needs to be done to eliminate poverty; however these ideas would be a good way to start things off in that direction. Improving education is a good idea, however because some people who live in poverty situation had learning disabilities, going back to school may not be the answer for every person who lives in a low income situation. So Nova Scotia Poverty reduction group, if you're out there, my suggestion to you is, there are lots of local organizations who are trying to eliminate poverty. Have a representative from each of these organizations sitting in on your group meetings. Anyway this is all I have to say for now.

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