

**DTES  
Neighbourhood  
House**

# ZINE



**OUR RIGHT TO FOOD**



Nutritional Solidarity  
Dignified Local  
Abundant Available  
Fresh Neighbourhood  
Downtown Eastside Food  
Food Economy Nutritious  
Food



*Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House  
Right to Food Philosophy Since 2005*

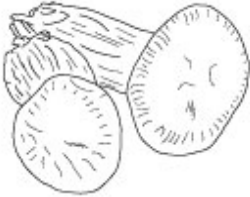
*The Downtown Eastside Right to Food Philosophy upholds the Human Rights of Downtown Eastside Residents to abundant, local, fresh and nutritious food that is available across the neighbourhood and delivered in a dignified manner. Food is a key determinant of individual and community health -physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.*

*We take every modest opportunity to remind DTES Residents of our Right to quality food. We use the offering of food to reflect back upon our neighbours their inherent dignity, deservedness and welcome within the DTESNH. We strive to do our part in raising nutritional standards in the DTES, where far too many good people remain nutritionally vulnerable.*

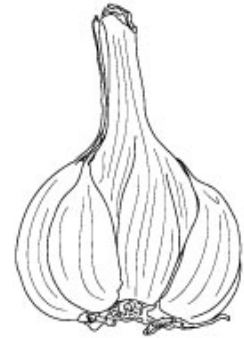
*Food allergens, Diabetes, Hepatitis C, Heart and Stroke health and HIV/AIDS are considered in our menu planning and food ingredients are posted for all to know. We avoid refined sugars, processed foods, gluten, non-stick cookware, silicone, aluminum foil/pots/pans/plastic for prepping/cooking/serving/storing foods and Eurocentric menus.*

*Our Right to Food includes our Human Right for fresh, clean and publicly accessible water.*

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## Kitchen Stories: DTES NH Meeting with Jagrup Bar

by Stan Shaffer

About a dozen people gathered around a large table at the DTES NH on January 25 to meet Jagrup Bar. He's the courageous NDP MLA who took the challenge by Raise the Rates to live on \$610 for one month, the standard welfare rate for an "employable single" person. A wide-ranging discussion followed about many topics of vital interest to the DTES population: food line ups, welfare rates, and job searching.

Jag wanted to know about the Neighbourhood House's mission. Bill explained that we offer a healthy alternative—a balanced choice of veggies, fruit, and soy protein--compared to the typical sugar and starch meals served in the majority of DTES food places.

Asked if he was eating well, Jag shook his head sadly and said, "No...I feel hungry all the time." He went on to explain the reasons for taking the "welfare challenge":

- to meet with people, share experiences, and listen
- to tell the poverty story (e. g., 137,000 children in poverty; gap between wealthy and poor)
- to understand how such a beautiful and admired city can tolerate so much poverty
- to bring a greater awareness about conditions in the DTES
- to initiate debate about the issues and to take his experience to the NDP caucus.

Jag added that he had not been personally aware of the depth of the housing crisis; for example, that he would be sharing a bathroom with 15-20 other people, that he would have no kitchen to prepare his own food, and that he would be forced to spend hours every day lining up for meals.

Theresa, a community activist, pointed out that people on welfare are given just enough to reduce the chance they will organize and make demands. "We must be a little hungrier than we are," and "we are out of the rain, but that's not really a home" were two of her comments that struck home.

Many in the gathering were keen to discuss their experience waiting in food line ups, and Jag mentioned his own feelings about the difficulty, embarrassment and degradation it causes. Lou said the amount of time spent in food lines makes it almost impossible to look for work. And since meals are only available during the day, people with jobs are not able to access free food. In addition to the stigma, "It's illogical and cruel to stand in line," Lou stated.

As Jag summarized the discussion, "Existence becomes going from one line up to another."

Jag asked the group what society can do to improve the situation of people on welfare; suggestions:

- more laundromats, since it takes many hours to do laundry
- more money so people are not forced into a life of poverty
- sit in at welfare offices
- bigger allowance to earn money without it getting clawed back
- more college and university programs so people can equip themselves for jobs; meanwhile Pathways, a job-finding place, is closing down
- begin subsidized daycare for single moms, who have to pay what they earn for child minding.

Jag said the biggest challenge to raising the welfare rates is the common perception that poor people will spend the extra money on drugs. On this issue, there is only a small but highly visible percentage of drug users, but nevertheless there's a big push-back against raising the rates for this false reason.

On a lighter note, when Donna asked Jag what food he missed the most, he said Indian food, especially roti, lentils, chicken, steamed veggies, and fish. More controversially, someone noted that although he admired what Jag was doing, it was clear that he was not poor and not really on welfare. Jag listened sympathetically and responded that he understood this completely and that he had explained his position on his website: [www.mlaonwelfare.com](http://www.mlaonwelfare.com)

When asked how the NDP caucus could capitalize on the media attention he's received, he said it was his personal choice to take the challenge, that he was listening to problems and solutions, and that it's important to raise public support, for example, as happened with the HST revolt.

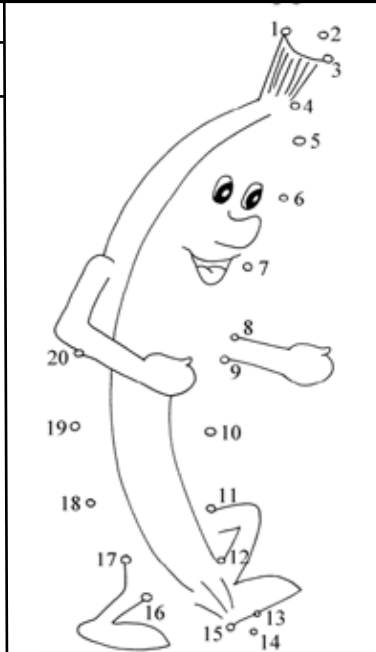
Throughout the meeting, Jag listened compassionately and took voluminous notes about people's stories and suggestions. His January challenge has raised lots of media attention, and he will have a strong platform in the coming months to bring his worthwhile cause to the legislature.

# KID'S RIGHT TO FOOD ACTIVITIES

COLOR IN THE  
IMPORTANT  
FOODS WE EAT  
EVERYDAY



CONNECT-THE-DOTS



# Vertical Gardening

By Heathcliff Cambell

On Wodens' Day November 2nd, I attended a presentation at the DTES-NH by R. Michael Corbin, an Agro-Ecologist and Founder of the organization Gardeners Without Borders Canada, where he teaches garden crafting variations like micro gardening and urban gardening. You can access his website and blog at this web-address: <http://gwb4u.wordpress.com/>

Today, he brought loads of supplies to help participants to create their own starter "Vertical Gardens" and began by dividing the supplies, making sure everyone had what they needed. Vertical Gardening refers to the fact that these plant-bases can be arranged to wind around furniture or plant-stands and crawl up, vine-style, to create a vertical garden. Despite the day being dark, wet and cloudy, the turn-out was so impressive that that there wasn't enough supplies to go around! Micheal's talk was divided into sections and followed the natural order of the process.

First, he talked about the materials being used. He discussed the benefits of constructing planters from repurposed household items and made some general recommendations. He discussed the differences between larger scale gardening on the land (or farming) and gardening in small created mediums, like pots, planters and terrariums, as well as comparing and contrasting the different kinds of planters and materials used to make them. Healthy soil was the next topic covered. This included useful tidbits about soil aeration, the importance of evenly mixing the original growth medium, whether to include worms and other tiny lifeforms, and how to deal with moulds, mildews, and conditions that are too wet or too dry. For the purposes of the Vertical Gardening presentation, only soil-based mediums were covered in the discussion. Soil-less growing was not covered here. He recommended potting mix as the best choice to buy to use either alone or as a base to create your own specialized mix. He then listed popular soil additives and covered their purposes and advantages. Gravel, perlite, moss including sphagnum, sand, humus and compost were all included.

Now, with trowels in hand, the group began constructing their individual planters, called "canoes" because of their shape. A long rectangular piece of burlap (measuring at least one metre in length but only a third of that in width) is paired with two inner layers: one of cork foam and one of coconut liner. These three are stapled together to form a canoe shape. This is then filled, ensuring the long open side remains up, with the soil mix, starting at either end. With the two ends full and therefore balanced, the soil in the middle is added last. Then the top side is also stapled shut, but leaving holes large enough to insert the clones or cuttings.

The final step is to carefully insert the new plant shoots, pinching the soil closed tightly against the stem. Before they give their new transplant its first watering, everyone was instructed to transport their planter carefully home first, for obvious reasons!

But, before everyone left, watering and feeding was briefly covered. One point stressed was to remember gravity when watering! If you have your canoe climbing vertically, watch the quantity to ensure you don't over-water to the point that fluid starts dripping from the bottom of the burlap!

For this demonstration, Spider Plants were chosen. The reasons were: 1) Spider plants are beneficial to all; they clean the air. 2) This is an easy, beginners plant. 3) Propagate easily and will have better survival rates than other choices, and finally 4) This is off-season. There are fewer choices now but it will be a real triumph to everyone who's plants survive until this time next year!

A couple questions that arose during the presentation concerned his use of metal staples and, secondly, about what plants could be grown using this system. To the question of staples and whether rusting would hurt the plants, his response was "No". The staples, rusting or otherwise, did not seem to negatively impact the health of the plants.

As to what plants could be grown, it is important to keep in mind that the soil medium is extremely shallow, and for that reason, only surface rooting plants can be used. Root crops like carrots could not be grown. Also, as medicinal cannabis was repeatedly mentioned, it was clarified that cannabis does not grow well in the system due to insufficient rooting depth, among other reasons. This system works best for small and medium height and climbing plants.



“It takes hours to cook, minutes to clean up,  
and seconds to eat for a lifetime of health.”

- Candace

# Seasonal Vegetable Chart for British Columbia

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Beans						█	█	█				
Beets	█	█	█				█	█	█	█	█	█
Broccoli						█	█	█	█	█	█	
Brussels sprouts									█	█	█	█
Cabbage - red	█	█	█				█	█	█	█	█	█
Cabbage - green	█	█				█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Carrots						█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Cauliflower						█	█	█	█	█	█	
Celery						█	█	█	█	█		
Chinese veg.					█	█	█	█	█	█		
Corn						█	█	█	█	█		
Cucumbers - field							█	█	█	█		
Leeks	█	█	█				█	█	█	█	█	█
Lettuce	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Onions - green					█	█	█	█	█	█		
Onions - red/yellow	█	█	█					█	█	█	█	█
Parsnips	█	█					█	█	█	█	█	█
Peppers - field							█	█	█	█		
Potatoes	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Radishes				█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Rhubarb - field				█	█	█	█					
Rutabagas	█	█				█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Spinach				█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
Turnips - white	█	█			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Zucchini						█	█	█	█	█		

## Kale Wrapped Dates with Almonds

### Ingredients:

1 bunch kale, stems removed and discarded  
1 pound dates  
1 cup whole roasted unsalted almonds

### Directions:

1.) Tear each kale leaf into two halves.  
2.) Split the dates in half, removing the pit. Place an almond in each date half in the space left by the pit. Wrap each date half in a kale leaf half; pierce each with a toothpick to keep wrapped.

“You must always have an extra bag of rice in your home because the boat might not come” My Ex Wife’s grandmother was born in China in the 1880’s. Fire, flood, drought, bandits, and unjust bureaucrats- any or all of these made food security precarious in any season. – Ray

## Crunchy Chickpeas

1. Soak about 1 Cup dry chick peas in water overnight.
2. In the morning drain water and rinse.
3. Put into large pot, cover with water about 4-5 inches above the chickpeas.
4. Cook on medium heat until tender approx 45 min. Check from time to time, if water goes down too much add more water.
5. When cooked, drain and rinse with cold water. Drain well.
6. Pour onto a baking tray. Season with your choice- curry and cayenne are very nice. Salt if you want. Bake at 350 degrees F 25-30 min (Check so it doesn’t burn). When chickpeas are crispy cool for later or enjoy right away.

Yum!

# Being Raised by a Single Mother

by Paul Taylor

Being raised by a single-mother meant that to me my Mother was the strongest woman in the world. The most important lessons I learned included always standing-up for myself and my integrity, being proud of curiosity and never being afraid to ask for what I felt I deserved.

The one time I saw my mother in a completely different light was when we went to the food bank. My mother seemed especially sad leading up to our food bank visit; it took me awhile to understand why. When we were at the food bank I was forever changed because I saw my mother in a way no son should : feeling defeated and demoralized. This couldn't possibly be what the good-meaning people who donate to charity intended.

I never did go back to the food bank with my mother, and it took me awhile to understand why. Instead, next time she took my identification (as well as my older brother's) so that those dispensing charitable food at food banks could be convinced that my mother actually had more mouths to feed.

She would come back with a cart of strange food that we rarely ate--my mother was a true Iron Chef as she worked to transform these ingredients--that always seemed dusty and out of place in our kitchen, into something that we could eat.

As a child I watched my mother become angrier and angrier at my brother and me, as she struggled to feed and keep a roof over our heads. Poverty placed added strain on our family because the more difficult our financial challenges became the more stressful our house seemed. I remember feeling as if I had done something wrong by having had been born poor. I have come to understand these hurtful feelings as the effects of a broken welfare system and the continued proliferation of the charity model.

In British Columbia where I now live, my neighbours on welfare have their rent paid directly to their landlords. This is a system that teaches poor people that they are not trustworthy. They cannot be trusted to make their own choices, not that they would have many when it comes to the maximum of \$610 an individual on assistance receives in British Columbia. When I talk to people about the numbers they are stunned to imagine what our government considers enough for other human beings to live on. In the Downtown Eastside (with the highest rents per capita in Vancouver), you would be hard pressed to find a SRO for \$375/month. If you were, it would likely be the worst of the worst, and would introduce you to a variety of additional health concerns. That leaves \$7.58/day for food, transportation, clothing and recreation. The first problem is that the math doesn't work, especially in a city like Vancouver where the cost of living is prohibitive for many of those who are working at minimum wage full time, let alone on welfare.

On \$7.58/day some on assistance have so few resources that they are lured into gambling or a variety of other activities that society has deemed 'criminal activity' – when really it has simply become criminal to be poor. This is the system that placed undue stress on my family as a child, made my mother feel like a failed parent – and is doing the same to families across the province. We need provincial leadership now; government must take action on an issue that is affecting families across the province.

British Columbia needs a provincial poverty reduction strategy, and we need the amount of money that people receive on assistance to increase. They want the ability to make their own food choices.

Charity is not about choice for the charity recipient. It is about accepting society's cast-offs, which reinforces to low-income people that they are not valued. They can have the dented tins, the expired food and mislabelled products. This is not justice, and not what I want my government or public broadcaster to position as a solution.

On December 2nd I participated in an action out front of the CBC on the 25th Anniversary of the annual CBC Food Bank day. I was again reminded that poor people and their voices are not valued by society. Myself and others with personal histories of receiving welfare attempted to present a card to the CBC. Our goal was to thank everyone involved for their charity, but instead ask that as allies they listen and understand that what low-income people are after is justice. Donating to food banks is important because people need food now, but what they also want is the ability to buy their own food and live with some dignity. We were halted by the thuggish security goons and then by some CBC staffers.



## Cabbage Rolls

Submitted By  
Sean Hanson

1 Cabbage (whole leaves, washed)  
1 Can Kidney Beans  
1 Can tomato Paste  
1 Can Tomatoes  
1 Cup Rice (cooked)  
3 Cloves Garlic  
1 Onion  
6 Mushrooms  
1 Can Corn  
Dill  
Apple Cider Vinegar  
Vegetable oil

1. In a large pan sauté onions, garlic and mushrooms over medium high heat until onions are soft.
2. Add Kidney beans, tomatoes, corn, and tomato paste. Boil. Reduce Heat and simmer until liquid is reduced. Add Rice and Vinegar.
3. In a large pot, boil water and add cabbage leaves a few at a time for 2-3 minutes each batch until soft.
4. Layout Cabbage leaves and add the filling in the middle. Roll like a burrito and put in an oven-safe baking pan (greased).
5. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes.

# Saving the Save On Meats Man: The Zine Interviews Mark Brand

by Ludvik Skalicky and Stan Shaffer

Ludvik and Stan, two members of the Right to Food zine, met with Mark on Wednesday, February 8, at SAVE ON MEATS. Despite his many obligations, Mark was exactly on time and invited us to join him at a booth in the restaurant where we were served water and coffee. The discussion was wide-ranging, from a recent anti-gentrification meeting at the Carnegie the previous week, to Mark's background and five year experience opening restaurants in Gastown and the DTES, to the impact of the TV show, *Gastown Gamble*.

The previous week's meeting at the Carnegie Center, sponsored by the DTES Not for Developers coalition, was billed as "Why are Mark Brand and Oprah attacking the DTES?" Lou, Bill and Stan attended and were offended by the hostile attitudes toward Mark, who sat in the audience despite the obvious prejudice against him and his new business. During the interview, Mark told us that the pain and anger expressed at the meeting were not unexpected and that the audience's negative emotions made him feel both the deep-seated pain and hurt people in the room experience as well as a personal sadness. After the event, an elder from the community expressed regret, telling Mark, "No wonder nobody engages us." Mark said he went to the meeting because he has a "thicker skin" than most other business owners in the neighbourhood. Remarkably, Mark claims he bears no hard feelings about the meeting and has always been a fan of the Carnegie Center.

Mark, who began establishing restaurants in the Gastown area in 2007 while living in a small apartment in East Van with friends, had to fight city hall for a couple of years. The businesses that grew through his entrepreneurship in the following years were financed on shoe-string, credit-card budgets, daring, and plain hard work. Despite what some people in the DTES believe, Mark's family background was modest, growing up in Nova Scotia with "caring parents" who never turned anyone away from their doorstep. He had "stars in his eyes" in the early restaurant years about achieving social goals by hiring and training local people, but due to barrier problems the success rate was low. Now he contracts some of the services—general cleaning, recycling (United We Can)—and most of his employees live within six blocks. He has more realistic expectations about staff and invests in their long-term training.

Few people know that SAVE ON MEATS provides 480 meals (100 pounds of food) every day to SROs and SRAs, despite causing some "bloodshed" with other providers. Mark's philosophy is to feed everyone "regardless of station," from low-cost (\$1.60 breakfast sandwich, \$3.00 soup, and daily specials) to higher-end customers. In fact, since the launch of the TV show *Gastown Gamble*, more people from the burbs are coming to the business, as well as customers from years ago who used to shop at the original store. Thus, the DTES gains more exposure by folks having a favourable attitude about what they see.

Mark, who is always positive, tells us that the Carnegie meeting was a "conversation that had to happen," and that more good has come out of it in terms of support he's received. Finally, you've got to respect the courage and compassion of a businessman who wears a large, silver death's-head ring on his left hand and tattoos with the letters L O V E on the fingers of his right hand.

# The Educated Omnivore

by Ray Ballantyne

We had wrapped up our weekly Monday Zine meeting when one of our regular visitors to the DTESNH beckoned me over to where he sat at the coffee table. He said his name was Matt and told me, “I eat here (at the DTESNH) so that I can afford my medication.” At first I was angry at the inequity, but Matt didn’t seem to be upset. Sometimes it seems difficult not to be “angry” on someone else’s behalf, but doing so is just a loss of energy. A friend eats at the Downtown Eastside Neighborhood House three days out of seven. Justice and security for him would include the dignity of a healthy meal seven days a week. Many of us are forced to make stark choices in our lives around healthy, affordable dietary choices.

It seems to me that to dwell on misery is a waste of time. It’s futile to blame our present food dilemmas and dysfunction on any group or any institution. On the other hand, our main food supply system is highly industrialized and relies heavily on preservatives and processing to get food sold in super markets. Not all of us are best served by the modern food supply system, and it should be society’s responsibility to create and maintain a healthy and affordable system for those of us who cannot or choose not to eat over-processed foods. This is my starting point for future articles, essays and meditations as the “Educated Omnivore” on food and food security in future “Right to Food” zines. I intend to share information and points of view on why we have such a complex relationship with food, how the economics of the food production system dictate to consumers what they will eat, and how we have been persuaded to believe that we don’t need to control our appetite. I would like to get back to the foods that our great-grandparents would recognize as unprocessed, whole foods.

I nearly ate myself to death before I regained control of my diet. It sounds dramatic, but many of us have come to the horrifying realization that our diet is killing us. Some of us have long seen that we have been losing our respect for food and the true nature of our relation to it.

I am a father and a food professional. I want to bring change through education, not to inflame awareness to anger at those who could be seen to be profiting from us and slowly poisoning us at the same time.

I am elated to have found the DTES Neighborhood House. I am past this crisis of food security in my own life. When I could no longer eat “charity” food, I had a friend who went out of his way to bring me the real whole foods my body craved. Through it all I remain an omnivore. There is no doubt that vegetarianism and veganism are valid, healthy and affordable diets, but animal protein will not be disappearing any time soon. One of my many issues with our food supply is our terrible treatment of animals along its length. I select my meat with great care, keeping in mind how animals were treated before and after slaughtering. Of my entire protein intake, I think that less than five percent of it now comes from meat sources. This makes me feel good – almost like I was finally an educated omnivore.

# My Experience With the Free Food Lines in the Downtown Eastside

Written by Ludvik Skalicky

Edited by Heathcliff Campbell

On every one of my visits, I've noticed that there are a lot of hungry people in this community. The residents of the DTES represent all ages, whole families too, not just single individuals. For the slim hope of having a good, sustaining meal, the hungry Canadians must endure long hours in line, never knowing whether there will even be food left when it is their turn. Never mind that the portion given will be small - when it is available ! When they've run out, it means deciding whether there's time (and strength left!) enough to endure another line elsewhere and at least another 1-3 more hours in the cold, rainy outdoors.

At times, the portion size of the meal received were too meagre to sustain anyone. As MLA Jag concurred in his recent statements to the media summarizing his "Living on basic welfare rates" challenge. Jag recalled how, while standing in line for over an hour, he was hungry. After consuming the small free meal that the residents receive, he was still hungry! Hunger, missing his favourite foods and significant weight loss were Jag's souvenirs from his admittedly life-changing experience.

Some places to go for meals are advertised as affordable rather than completely free. What constitutes "affordable" is clearly a matter of interpretation! This interpretation is informed by each owner's current (and past) living experiences. For someone who has never felt the sting of being homeless, or even in receipt of welfare monies, paying \$10CAD for a breakfast or lunch meal may seem perfectly reasonable. But, to a Canadian who has (or is) living through such hardship, \$10CAD for a single small meal is ridiculously expensive!! At minimum, that ten dollars had better buy food for the whole day! To eat at many of the places listed as affordable, a welfare recipient would literally have to save up for a week to eat there once! Canadians who do not even receive that much aid cannot even save for it. (Examples include Carnegie, Evelyn Saller, Save On Meats, Ovalteen, Kent's Kitchen and VCC cafeteria.

One other point of free food access worth mentioning is the Potluck Cafe. Twice a month they provide the ingredients, tools, preparation space and expertise to host a group of 15 residents. Residents are taught nutrition, health benefits, recipes and cooking tips while preparing then consuming a healthy meal. The meal is prepared by those about to consume it, using a selection of fresh, wholesome seasonal, local foods. The only drawback is that the group size is limited to about 15 people at a time and, although there is great hope for future expansion, does not run daily at this point in time.

A final word on the food available for the people here. The poor are not a homogeneous group. We are the same mix of seniors, children, singles and families found in all communities. As such, our food requirements are the same as for everyone else. Yet, as everyone affected knows, it is literally a job in itself to obtain enough healthy food to sustain oneself each day. Daily access to a variety of wholesome, fresh foods in the quantities and kinds (eg. Fruits & vegetables or meats & proteins or milk & dairy or breads & cereal grains) recommended by Canada's Food Guide is only a dream at this time. In reality, foods offered are highly processed, past their sell-by-date and chockful of saturated fats, starches, white sugar and other nasty stuff. Regularly featured are cakes, muffins, brownies and doughnuts. Food is stale, old, bad-tasting and a direct reflection of the value placed on our existence by those who own and control access to the resources.

# Adequate or Not Adequate?

by Stan Shaffer

On January 26, the Vancouver Sun published an article called "B.C.welfare rates are adequate" by three economists from the Fraser Institute about NDP MLA Jagrup Brar living on \$610/month. The Fraser Institute, which publishes policy papers and reports, is a right wing think-tank favouring smaller government, tax relief for corporations and individuals, and public school rankings. In summary, the article claims that \$610/month for a "emplable single" was "adequate" because the essential needs—shelter, clothing, food—can be purchased for this amount. However, the article also mentions "basic needs" which include the above plus "personal hygiene, a telephone, public transportation, household insurance, health and dental care costs, and a host of other items." The Fraser Institute writers argue that social assistance is deliberately below the basic needs level for single employables because income assistance is designed for short-term situations and "welfare should not be attractive to them." Furthermore, the article states that if the government doubles the rate to \$1300/month, which is the amount Raise the Rates is demanding, the number of people on social assistance will increase dramatically and "create a larger problem of welfare dependency." The writers claim this is what happened in Ontario some years ago, when welfare rates doubled and the number of recipients tripled. They claim that the lower payments "give [people] an incentive to work."

A letter to the editor about this article was published on Monday, February 6 along with a dozen others, most of which disagreed with the Fraser Institute claims. Following is Stan's letter:

## NOT ADEQUATE

"B.C. welfare payments are adequate," January 26, A13

The Fraser Institute economists should do some simple math: the \$610 payment to "employable singles" includes a minimum of \$375 for rent. By subtraction, that leaves the meagre and hardly adequate sum of \$235 per month or \$7.70 per day for all other expenses. In what part of the Lower Mainland, or the rest of B.C. for that matter, can a single person purchase the "basic needs level...to buy a nutritious diet, shelter, clothing, personal hygiene needs, a telephone, public transportation... and a host of other items"? These expenses are not frills because the unemployed person must look for work. Even the "absolute necessities" of "shelter, food, and clothing" cannot be adequately purchased for \$610/month. One of the most time-wasting and demeaning parts of absolute poverty is the hours spent every day lining up for free food, which is often less nutritious as it is based on starches and sugars.

I agree with the writers sensible final point that the government should allow people on welfare to work and keep a large percentage of what they earn without clawing back their basic payment.

PS: When discussing this article with my Ziner colleagues, they told me that rents in SROs currently cost \$450/month. Doing the math again, that leaves \$160/month for all other expenses, or \$5.25/day.

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