



Social Determinants of Health Fact Sheet:
Tahsis

The Strathcona Community Health Network is pleased to share these community health profiles. We have developed a community health profile for each of the eight communities within our region.

Community health profiles were developed for two purposes: 1) to support the ongoing work of the Strathcona Community Health Network, and 2) to build capacity within the Strathcona region.

1. The Strathcona Community Health Network (SCHN) has articulated our approach to work, which includes a commitment to being evidence-informed by balancing the best available data with local knowledge in collaborative decisions. These community health profiles, then, have created an opportunity to define and collect or generate local data to support decision making and future action by the SCHN.
2. Perhaps more importantly, the SCHN's approach also involves community capacity building. Per our Strategic Plan, we "encourage a capacity building approach so the community is strengthened and partners grow and improve their knowledge, skills and infrastructure through engaging with the network."

Community health profiles can be used to build community capacity in many ways, including the following:

- Use the information within to support planning and decision-making processes.
- Utilize this report as evidence when applying for grant funding and/or providing evaluation information to funders.
- Employ the information within when advocating for policy changes at all levels of government.
- Connect with the individuals, organizations, and coalitions within your community that are working towards greater outcomes. If you'd like more information about these groups, please contact us.
- Initiate conversations with your neighbours, family, friends, and colleagues about the information that stood out to you. Can you take any small or grassroots actions in support of increased community health?
- Let us know if the SCHN should be aware of any initiatives happening in your community related to the social determinants of health. Our contact information is on the final page.



Community Context

Like many other communities on Vancouver Island, Tahsis was the home to Nuu-chah-nulth people for thousands of years prior to colonization. There are no First Nations band offices or reserves in Tahsis, whose closest Indigenous neighbors are 19 nautical miles away, at Friendly Cove.¹ Tahsis is a small village with a population of **248** – a decline of **68** people, or **21.5%** of the population since 2011.² (At its peak, in the early 1980s, the population of Tahsis was **2500**. The mill closure in the year 2000 caused an immediate exodus – less than 1000 residents lived there in 2001). Compared to other communities in the region, Tahsis has a relatively small Indigenous population, at **4.7%**.²

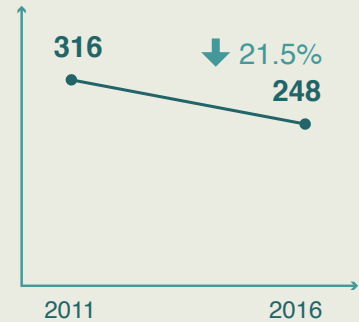
The largest age cohort in Tahsis is seniors: people age 60 years and greater comprise **44.4%** of the population. On the opposite end of the spectrum, children 14 years and younger comprise **16%** of the population. Unsurprisingly, the median age of the population is **58.0** years.²

The population increases in the summer, as part-time and seasonal residents journey to the community for fishing, boating, and other recreational pursuits.

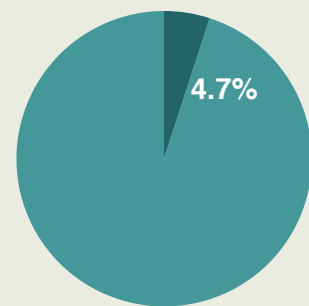
Tahsis has experienced population decline for the last 15 years, but new residents still move to the village. Between 2011 and 2016, **50** people moved to Tahsis – some from within British Columbia, and most from other provinces.² Anecdotally, the affordability of Tahsis attracts both families and retirees. Parents of young children may take the opportunity to work less and spend more time with their families, and retirees are able to stretch their budgets further than in other communities.

Like neighbouring communities, Tahsis fits into multiple service delivery areas. It is both a municipality and a member of the Strathcona Regional District (SRD). It is also included in School District 84 boundaries, and in Local Health Area 84 (Vancouver Island West), and in the larger North Vancouver Island Health Services Delivery Area.

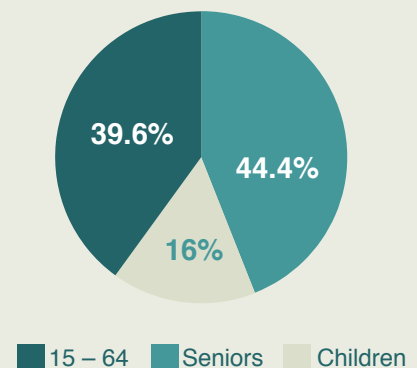
Population 2011-2016



Indigenous Population



Tahsis Age Cohorts





General Well-being

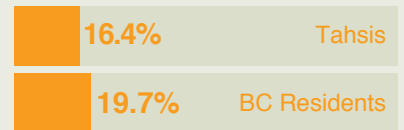
As members of the North Vancouver Island Health Service Delivery Area, residents of Tahsis report a high rate of community belonging: **77.6%** of residents report a somewhat strong or strong sense of community belonging, compared to **71.6%** of BC residents. Likewise, Tahsis residents report lower perceptions of life stress than provincial residents (**16.4%** report that most days in their lives are quite a bit or extremely stressful, compared to **19.7%** provincially).³

In Local Health Area 84, which includes Tahsis, **10.9** litres of absolute alcohol are sold per person. This is equal to the Island Health average of **10.9** litres and higher than the provincial average of **9.0** litres. Given that one litre of absolute alcohol is equivalent to 58 standard drinks, residents of LHA 84 are consuming **632** alcoholic beverages annually, on average.⁴ There is no population-level data about recreational drug usage.

Community Belonging



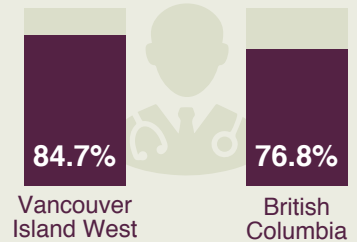
Life Stress



Health Care

Another measure in which residents of Island Health Region 84 (Vancouver Island West) compare positively to their provincial counterparts is in physician attachment. In Vancouver Island West, which includes Tahsis, **84.7%** of residents are patients of a physical or other primary health care provider (nurse practitioner, community health nurse, etc.). In BC, only **76.8%** of residents are attached to a primary care provider.⁴ Tahsis residents receive health services at the Tahsis Health Centre, which offers primary health care and emergency medical care services. A critical care nurse works full-time and is available for emergencies, and a doctor visits the community twice a week.⁵ There is no hospital in Tahsis – the closest is in Campbell River.

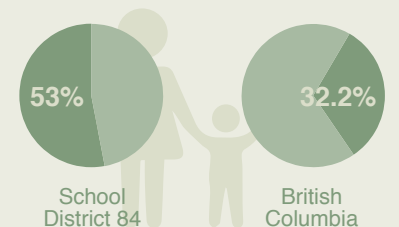
Physician Attachment



Children and Youth

Time and time again, research emphasizes that investing in the health and well-being of children and youth has positive health, economic, and community impacts for decades to come. One of the most important measures of young children's health is the Early Development Instrument, which examines a child's experiences in the first five years of life via 5 scales (Physical Health & Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language & Cognitive Development, and Communication Skills & General Knowledge). In School District 84 (Vancouver Island West), **53%** of Kindergarten children are deemed vulnerable, meaning that without additional support, these children may experience future challenges in school and society. Provincially, the vulnerability rate is **32.2%**.⁶

Child Vulnerability Rate

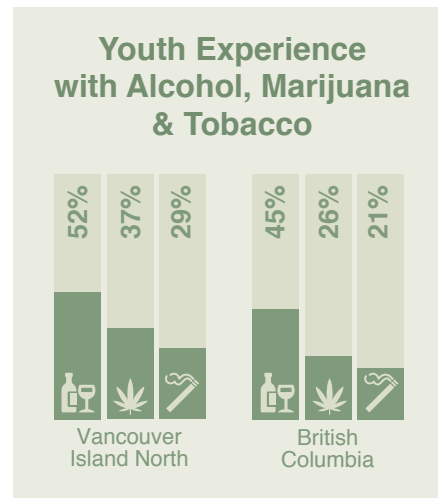


Another measure of support for early childhood development is the number of childcare spaces available. In Tahsis, there are **8** licensed spaces at Puddle Ducks Daycare. This is a municipally run childcare centre that provides affordable care to families. Childcare subsidy is accepted here, and Puddle Ducks Daycare staff can assist parents in accessing subsidy.⁷

As children get older, there are a number of institutions to support healthy development, including the Health Centre, a swimming pool, bowling lanes, a fitness room, a weight room, sports courts and a climbing wall, numerous parks and playgrounds, a library, and opportunities for organized sports and recreation. All of the amenities located within the Tahsis Recreation Centre can be used at no cost. This has increased use of the facilities.⁸

The youth obesity rate for Vancouver Island North, which includes Tahsis, is **7%** for both males and females. Provincially, it is **8%** for males and **4%** for females.⁹

The McCreary Adolescent Health Survey reports on youth experience with alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco. In Vancouver Island North, which includes Tahsis, **52%** of youth have tried alcohol, compared to **45%** provincially. Similarly, **37%** of Vancouver Island North youth have tried marijuana, compared to **26%** provincially. Tobacco sees a similar trend, with **29%** of Vancouver Island North youth trying tobacco, compared to **21%** of youth provincially.⁹

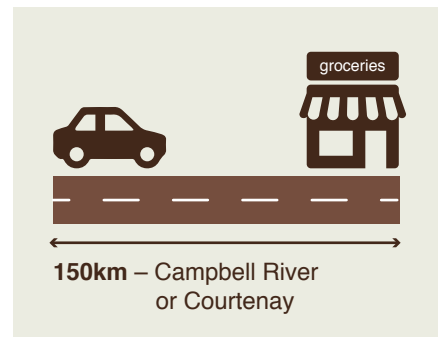


Food Security

The World Health Organization (WHO) includes food security in its list of social determinants of health and defines household food security as “appropriate food being available, with adequate access and being affordable (location of markets, supermarkets, and closure of small suppliers creating food deserts in cities).” WHO stresses the importance of food security particularly in small and remote communities.¹⁰

In Tahsis, there is some infrastructure to support food security. The Tahsis Supermarket stocks some dry goods, produce, meat, and dairy.¹¹ Still, if residents need food that is not available here, they must drive for at least **150** kilometres to a larger centre (likely Campbell River or Courtenay) to purchase groceries and household supplies.

Residents who need assistance to acquire food can access the Tahsis Food Bank or the Campbell River Food Bank. Between April 2017 and March 2018, the Campbell River Food Bank served **15** households - or **29** people - from Tahsis.¹² The food programs at Captain Meares Elementary Secondary School (a daily breakfast program and a weekly lunch program) and the weekly breakfast at Tahsis Community Church are also options for community members needing low- or no-cost meals.⁸



There is a community garden in Tahsis (the Tahsis Community Garden), which is well used and includes a bed that is used by students via the Farm to School Program. “The Local” is a self-serve local produce stand that sells produce from the community garden and from the gardens and kitchens of other community members.¹³

The Provincial Health Services Authority’s “Food Costing in BC” report for 2017 reports on the cost of sufficient, safe, and nutritious foods across the province. For the North Island Health Services Delivery Area, the monthly cost of healthy food is **\$1,036** (compare this to the provincial average of **\$1,019**).¹⁴ However, costs are significantly higher in communities like Tahsis, where roundtrip travel to the closest grocery store is 306km. Using the government rate of \$0.58/km traveled, which is inclusive of fuel and vehicle maintenance, a roundtrip from Tahsis to Campbell River costs **\$177.48**.



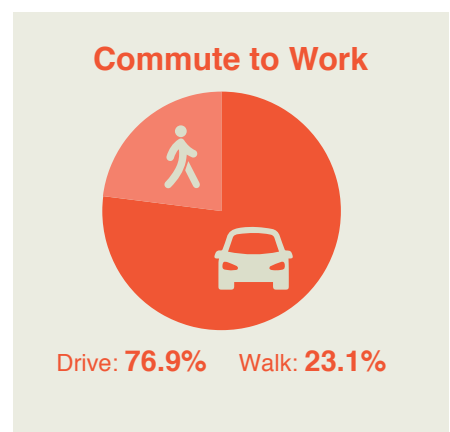
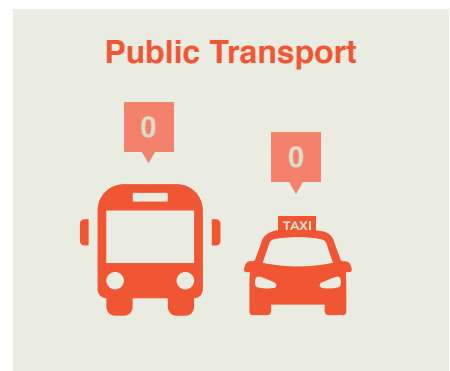
Transportation

Being able to get from one place to another is essential for everyone, but particularly for members of rural and remote communities. In Tahsis, having access to a vehicle is necessary to purchase food and household goods, access health and social services, and access employment, among other things.

There is no public transportation in Tahsis. No bus routes exist. There are no taxis. Aside from owning a vehicle, or utilizing active transportation, transport options are limited: there are two options for travelling on water (private water taxi company and the Uchuck), and private helicopter and floatplane companies for travelling by air.¹⁵ The need to own a vehicle for accessing basic needs, then, likely accounts for the **76%** of residents that have a driver’s license.¹⁷

There are no official active transportation routes in Tahsis, meaning that there are no officially designated bike lanes, or protected pedestrian paths near roads. For leisure, there are walking paths throughout the community, and mountain biking and hiking paths through the woods. The Community Unity Trail is currently in development, and will link Tahsis to Zeballos. Partners for the project include the Village of Tahsis, Village of Zeballos, the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, and the Ehattesaht First Nation.¹⁶

When asked about how residents get to work, the majority reported that they drive. **76.9%** of the Tahsis workforce commute to work via automobile. The remaining **23.1%** report that they walk to work.²



Housing

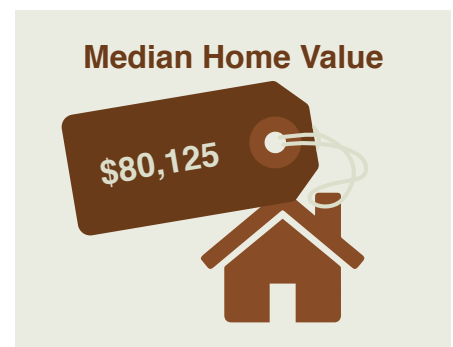
Access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing is essential in ensuring the health of a community's residents. Inadequate housing affects physical health – housing that is mouldy, dirty, or in need of major repairs may put a resident at risk of developing one-time or chronic illnesses. Housing that is unaffordable, overcrowded, or otherwise unsuitable contributes to increased stress and/or decreased quality of life.

House prices in Tahsis are significantly more affordable than many other island communities. The median value of a home is **\$80,125**. The median monthly cost of home ownership is **\$282**. Median monthly cost is the total cost for a mortgage, property taxes, and the cost of electricity, heat, water, and other municipal services.² (No comparable data about renters is available, due to the small number of renter households in Tahsis).

There is no accurate rental vacancy rate for Tahsis, though residents shared anecdotal knowledge about the rental market. Only **38%** of the Tahsis housing stock is occupied by usual residents, or people who count their Tahsis home as their primary residence.² The majority of the housing stock in Tahsis is owned by summer residents, who come from outside of the area, province, or country to spend their summer fishing and enjoying the outdoors. Thus, year-round rentals can be difficult to find.¹⁸

Of all homes in Tahsis (rented or owned), **17.2%** have been reported as requiring major repairs.²

As no formal homelessness count has been conducted in Tahsis, local residents were relied on for their input. Residents reported no absolute homeless people, but there may be hidden homeless people. The hidden homeless may be couch surfing or living in overcrowded residences. However, community members note that, because so many social services are available in larger centres, Tahsis residents may move to larger cities and sleep rough or live in absolute homelessness to access services.¹⁸





Connectivity

Access to phone and internet services is necessary for reasons related explicitly to health – including access to health and emergency services and opportunities for telehealth – but also to meet other needs. Access to phone and internet services also allows access to education and professional development, employment, connection to friends and family, and entertainment, among others.

There is no cell phone coverage in Tahsis. Thus, most residents rely on landlines. A landline from Telus, the most popular provider of home phone services in the area, costs **\$40** per month and includes unlimited local calling.¹⁹

In Tahsis, an individual household can expect to pay between **\$40** and **\$100** per month for internet, depending on desired speed and usage.²⁰ The Tahsis branch of the Vancouver Island Regional Library offers free access to the internet. The Village of Tahsis is also investigating the placement of internet hot spots throughout the village.¹⁸

Though not all residents who work from home would utilize home phone and internet, some do. In Tahsis, **13.3%** of the labour force work from home.²

Phone, Internet & Cable Costs



Phone (Landline)
\$40 per month



Cable/DSL
\$40 - \$100 per month



Employment and income

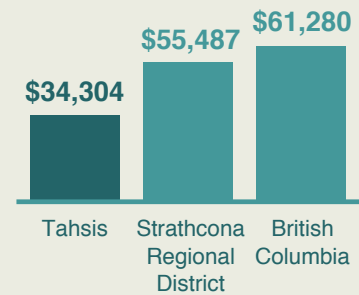
Living Wage Canada notes that: “Income plays an important role in health outcomes. In general, the less someone is paid the poorer their health is across a number of physical and psychological measures. In addition, employment and working conditions have a significant impact on our health.”²¹ Rural and remote communities like Tahsis have limited education and employment opportunities and may have fewer appropriate work opportunities than larger communities.

Tahsis has a low median household income of **\$34,304**, nearly **\$30,000** less than neighbouring Gold River and less than the Strathcona Regional District median of **\$55,487**.² The employment rate in Tahsis is **34.1%** and the unemployment rate is **13.3%**.² Nearly two-thirds of Tahsis residents are not in the labour force. The high median age in the community suggests many retirees.

In Tahsis, **73.7%** of the community’s labour force works part year and/or part time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that employment is highest in summer, when more businesses are open.^{2,18}

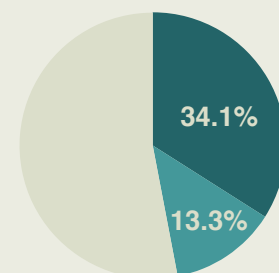
While most residents in Tahsis work within the community, **23%** of Tahsis’s labour force works outside of the community.²

Median Household Income



Employment Rates

■ Employed ■ Unemployed
■ Out of labour force





Education and Training

Education and training are becoming increasingly integral to employment success. In Tahsis, those wishing to access post-secondary training while still living in the community would be required to learn via distance. North Island Employment Foundations Society (NIEFS) visits the community occasionally to deliver job search skills and training. The Village of Tahsis offers some training, including First Aid and Lifeguarding courses.¹⁸



Ageing

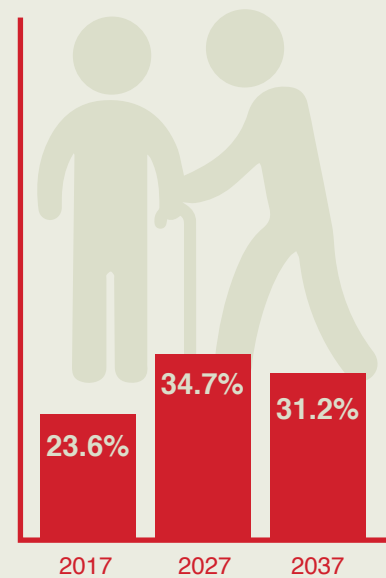
Growing old requires related social, financial, and health supports. Currently, the proportion of the population in Vancouver Island West (which includes Tahsis) that is comprised of seniors is **23.6%**. That proportion is expected to grow to **34.7%** by 2027, and then decrease slightly to **31.2%** by 2037.⁴

Community members report that older adults and seniors are retiring to Tahsis because of the low cost of living.¹⁸ Retirees may sell a home in a large community or urban centre and purchase a home in Tahsis while maintaining or even growing their nest egg. Additionally, seniors in Tahsis can participate in the Seniors Centre, which is based out of Captain Meares Elementary-Secondary School and has **34** members.¹⁸

However, there is currently very little care for seniors in Tahsis. Though residents have access to a homecare worker, there are no independent or assisted living facilities, no memory care facility for people with Alzheimer's or dementia, and no retirement homes. This makes it hard to paint a clear picture of the cost of ageing in Tahsis.

Likewise, one measure of senior health is the proportion of seniors who live at home (often called "ageing in place"). Seniors who age in place can feel isolated if they live alone; seniors that live with a partner, roommate, or family members often have a higher quality of life than those living alone. Given that there is no other option in Tahsis, all seniors live at home until their health care or other needs necessitate a move to a larger centre.

Percentage of Seniors



The Social Determinants of Health

The Strathcona Community Health Network (SCHN) works collaboratively to increase the health of the residents of the Strathcona Regional District. Focusing on upstream prevention, the SCHN focuses on the social determinants of health to guide its work.

In Canada, the following social determinants of health are frequently referenced: Income and income distribution, education, unemployment and job security, employment and working conditions, early childhood development, food insecurity, housing, social inclusion/exclusion, social safety network, health services, aboriginal status, gender, race, disability.

The SCHN has engaged in extensive community consultation, including two forums. Community consultation surfaced the following social determinants of health most relevant to the region: First Nations and Cultural Safety, Healthy Children, Food Security, Housing, Ageing and Caregiver Support, Connectivity, Transportation.

Within these seven distinct determinants, there are many areas of overlap. In Tahsis, for example, most jobs are low-paying. In addition to low wages, Tahsis sees high unemployment. Beyond a K-12 school, there are no formal educational opportunities in Tahsis. As the demand for advanced education increases, residents of rural and remote communities are at risk. Unless there are regular post-secondary and/or formal training opportunities available either in person or delivered via the internet, Tahsis residents will find difficulty in creating new, higher wage jobs.

Another evident linkage of social determinants of health is ageing and caregiving. Tahsis already has an older than average population, but by 2027, the community's senior population is expected to rise to 34.7%. There are presently no living facilities specifically for seniors, so seniors in need of additional help must either rely on homecare or move to another community.

Finally, housing is an important social determinant of health. In Tahsis, there is so little rental housing that data is not even available in the census. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that rental housing is a crucial need for a subset of the population, though almost none exists. When the mill closed and many residents left the community, several of the homes for sale in Tahsis were purchased by summer residents. These homes are unoccupied for most of the year, but are not included in Tahsis's housing stock.

Which links are evident to you?

Sources

- ¹ Village of Tahsis, History and Heritage of Tahsis, <http://villageoftahsis.com/recreation-culture-community/history/>.
- ² Statistics Canada, Census 2016, Tahsis
- ³ Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015-2016
- ⁴ Island Health, Local Health Area Profile 84 (Vancouver Island West), 2015
- ⁵ Village of Tahsis, Health Care, <http://villageoftahsis.com/resident-services/health-care/>.
- ⁶ Human Early Learning Partnership, Early Development Instrument, School District 84, 2014-2016, www.earlylearning.ubc.ca.
- ⁷ PacificCARE Child Care Information and Referral (Personal correspondence)
- ⁸ Village of Tahsis, Tahsis Recreation Centre, <http://villageoftahsis.com/recreation-culture-community/recreation-centre/>
- ⁹ Poon, C., Peled, M., Stewart, D., Kovaleva, K., Cullen, A., Smith, A., & McCreary Centre Society (2015). North Vancouver Island: Results of the 2013 BC Adolescent Health Survey. Vancouver, BC: McCreary Centre Society.
- ¹⁰ World Health Organization, The determinants of health, <http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/index3.html>.
- ¹¹ Canada 411
- ¹² Campbell River Food Bank (personal correspondence)
- ¹³ Strathcona Food Security Project, Food Security Needs Assessment, 2014, <https://www.greenwaystrust.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/sf-sp-needs-assessment-final.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ Provincial Health Services Authority. (2018). Food Costing in BC 2017. Vancouver, B.C.: Provincial Health Services Authority, Population and Public Health Program.
- ¹⁵ Village of Tahsis, Getting Here, <http://villageoftahsis.com/visit-tahsis/getting-here/>
- ¹⁶ Island Coastal Economic Trust, Excerpt from 2015-2016 Annual Report, <http://www.atvbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ICET-Annual-Report-R2-Tahsis-Zeballos-Unity-Trail.pdf?32d877>
- ¹⁷ ICBC, Statistics
- ¹⁸ Consultation with residents of Tahsis
- ¹⁹ Telus.com, Home phone plans
- ²⁰ FindInternet.ca, <https://www.findinternet.ca/en/tahsis-british-columbia>.
- ²¹ Living Wage Canada, What is a living wage?, <http://www.livingwagecanada.ca/index.php/about-living-wage/>.



**STRATHCONA
COMMUNITY
HEALTH NETWORK**

Contact:

Libby King, Coordinator

t: 778-348-0762 e: lking@srd.ca

www.strathcona-chn.net