

Poverty Reduction Plan Kingston Newsletter

January 16, 2013

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Poverty Reduction in Kingston

BACKGROUND

Over the past five years, Kingston has been focusing its attention on reducing poverty starting with the Mayor's Task Force on Poverty in 2007. Other initiatives addressed increasing public awareness of poverty, revitalizing neighbourhoods, eliminating homelessness and increasing housing supports, improving access to services, and highlighting inequality.

In September 2010, a coordinated community approach was initiated to reduce poverty and was funded and supported by the City and United Way. The steering committee was composed of representatives from the City of Kingston, the United Way serving KFL&A and the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction.

Methodology was developed to allow the Project Steering Committee to consult widely with the community and ensure the voices of people who experience poverty were heard.

Survey results provided a starting point for community consultation and from this data, themes about causes of poverty and potential

solutions emerged. A number of focus groups validated these themes and a community workshop brought these themes, causes and solutions together into areas of focus, goals and objectives. At each phase, the Committee reviewed the feedback and screened the input through a local community filter, focusing priority on areas that could be achieved through local community efforts.

Three guiding principles emerged through the community consultation process:

- 1. Inclusion** - not only must solutions be available to everyone, but the process of planning and decision making must include all voices;
- 2. Community Wellbeing** - solutions will work toward being integrated, balanced and accountable, building on our strengths as a community; and
- 3. Collaboration** - all parts of our community have assets to offer and we agree to work collectively toward a common goal.

These principles continue to guide the process as we develop a comprehensive action plan for reducing poverty in our community.



City Hall, Kingston, Ontario

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Committee, building on the workshop outcomes and using the information gleaned from the literature review, which included the indicators of poverty and the deprivation index research results, refined the strategic focus areas and goals.

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WORKING GROUPS

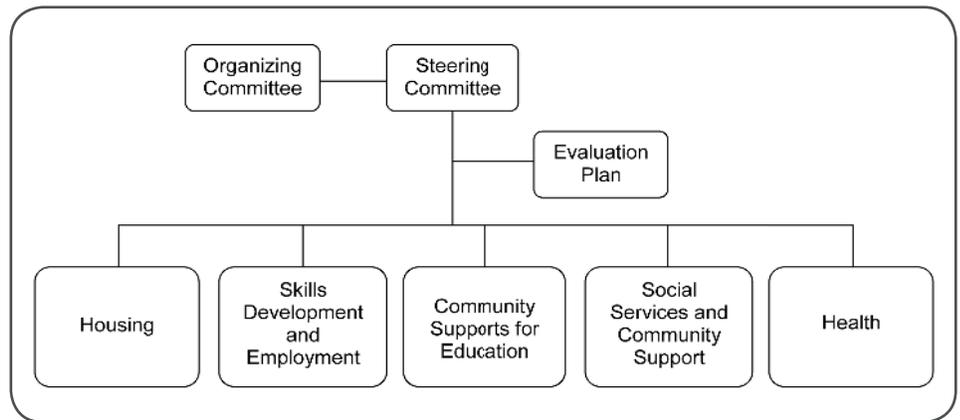
The five working groups are working with goals and objectives that were refined out of a comprehensive data collection process with community stakeholders. The groups are reviewing these and developing recommendations that will be collated into a community-wide action plan for reducing poverty.

Housing

The goals and objectives for the housing working group have been defined as “a safe, stable, accessible and affordable home for everyone.” The group has focused on the need for resident engagement, holding discussions with Kingston & Frontenac Housing Corporation regarding current challenges and attempts to improve the housing situation. They recently reviewed the draft Wally Elmer Redevelopment Plan from the City of Kingston, and are looking at methods for how to accurately and succinctly capture their recommendations.

Skills Development and Employment

The skills development and employment group is looking at an economic plan that creates living-wage employment opportunities, with the end goal being a community that understands and embraces benefits to the entire community of providing living wage jobs. They are also tasked with methods of enhancing skills and employment potential of people to access living wage jobs. This group has 3 sub-groups that focus on economic development, awareness, and programs. They have identified the need for affordable public transportation as a common theme and are looking into recommendations and solutions.



Community Supports for Education

This group has been provided with three focus areas for their goals: looking at local education supports that expose students to all types of options and helps them make choices to reach their full potential, ensuring all children, families and neighbourhoods have access to the support and services they need to support their education, and fostering an awareness that equitable, inclusive education reduces poverty. They have focused their efforts on parent and student engagement, access to programming and system navigation, and are currently looking at models within specific areas of the community that might be modified for a broader approach.

Social Services and Community Supports

The social services and community supports group goals and objectives include: programs and services that are coordinated, meet the unique and changing needs of individuals and families, a social assistance system that provides all eligible income security, programs and services to people in need, and an integrated and compassionate community that recognizes and accepts responsibility to individuals and the community. The group has

discussed the pros and cons of 211, citing certain improvements that would be beneficial. They are also looking at the possibility of engaging business groups for people living in poverty, potentially through apprenticeships or other programs.

Health

The goals and objectives for the health working group were developed with the understanding that the community at large understands that health is impacted by poverty, employment, housing, education, food security, income, social and physical environment and other determinants of health. In particular, there is a need for a safe, reliable, local, healthy, and sustainable food supply for all Kingston residents. The group is also tasked with the goal that all citizens have equal opportunities for their best health potential. So far this group has looked at the Canadian Index of Well Being and its potential use as a tool for Kingston, and at methods for raising awareness of health issues within the community, including things like Health Week and the Vital Signs report.