Citizen Delegations

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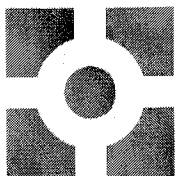
The Social Planning Council's Community Strategy to Reduce Poverty in the City of Greater Sudbury

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Introduction

The Social Planning Council of Sudbury was commissioned by Human Resources Development Canada to develop a poverty reduction strategy for the City of Greater Sudbury (CGS). Through two Job Creation Partnership positions funded by the Federal government, two Community Development Workers were hired to research and assist with the development of this strategy. The project was undertaken in two phases. The first, in conjunction with the CGS Community Solutions Team on Homelessness, resulted in the development of the Housing First Strategy. The second phase, building on the work that the SPC has been engaged in for many years including local consultations, conferences, community planning sessions and research has resulted in the development in this draft strategy. Research was undertaken on poverty from local, national and international perspectives. The local situation was examined in consultation with community organizations, a more recent count of homeless individuals and families was conducted, and focus groups at the N'Swakamok Friendship Centre and Better Beginnings, Better Futures.

Executive Summary

The entire community benefits when its members are housed, fed, clothed, can leave their loved ones in safe and stimulating environments and travel to where they need to go. When the level of poverty in a community declines so does the costs to health care, social services and the criminal justice system. As direct beneficiaries, the economic, education and training and health sectors as well as all levels of government and the community at large have a role to play in this strategy. Believing that reducing poverty is possible, affording it the same attention and importance as any other issue that affects the whole community and monitoring success are key steps in moving this strategy forward.

Giving poverty reduction strategies the same priority and attention as economic and environmental strategies will allow for a sustained focus on employment and training, affordable housing, food security and transportation. By creating a human services planning and policy development body the CGS Council will be investing in the type of social infrastructure that will allow the local poverty reduction strategy and any other social strategy, committees, solution teams, roundtables and/or advisory panels to be a part of a process that would inform the direction of social development in the CGS. It would also become a platform for sustained collaborations between the private, public and voluntary sectors and will result in the type of innovative and creative ideas essential for chance. Increasing collaboration between the education and training sectors and access to the labour market with specific outcomes linked to poverty reductions while at the same time encouraging the health and child care sectors to adopt the community poverty reduction strategy are the key to our success.

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Implementation of the local poverty reduction strategy needs to be aligned with provincial and national efforts, most notably National Campaign 2000, giving the community every opportunity to advocate both formally and informally for structural change. Finally, opportunities to engage the public in poverty reduction at the local level would be well served by the City of Greater Sudbury adopting a Civic Engagement Framework that incorporates a Public Participation Policy. This would ensure citizens are meaningfully engaged in these and other pressing concerns throughout their implementation, evaluation and communication to the community.

The picture of poverty; locally, provincially and nationally.

According to the 2001 Census 11.3% of families in the City of Greater Sudbury have incomes below the Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICO) (the measure of poverty used in this report and the most common measure used by Statistics Canada). LICOs are the level of income below which individuals are considered to be living under "straightened circumstances" whereby a family that spends 70% or more of its income on essentials including food, clothing and shelter. The LICOs vary according to the number of individuals within a family and the size of the community. Particularly high rates of poverty exist among female lone parent families (52%), unattached individuals 15+ years (41%), unattached individuals 15-24 years of age (73%), unattached female seniors (41%) and Aboriginal individuals (29%).

Ontario has seen tremendous economic growth over the past number of years, however this growth has not provided a corresponding drop in poverty rates. As of 2005, using the LICO-after tax measure, 10.3% of all people in Ontario were living in poverty. The poverty level for children in Ontario is perhaps most striking, as it is higher than the national average as one in six Ontario children is living in poverty. Over half of these children have a parent in the workforce. Once again very specific groups of the population face the most severe crisis in child poverty. Over half (54%) of all low income children are lone mother led families. As of 2001, children of new immigrant families represent 47% of poor children[1]. Low wages, poor working conditions, and precarious employment, including contract work, temporary and part-time jobs are part of the reason. A lack of labour protection and a lack of social support also contribute significantly. Under today's standards, a minimum wage job is not sufficient to provide a guarantee of a life out of poverty.

Nationally, as of 2002 the poverty rate was 15% but much higher for vulnerable populations including Aboriginals (55.6%), recent immigrants (52.1%), unattached adults (45.2%), female lone parents (46%), and people who are disabled (36.1%). In 2000, 30% of all low-wage workers lived in poverty and 71% of low wage workers include female lone parents, unattached adults, recent immigrants and those without a high school diploma. Poverty is deeply

entrenched in gender and race. For example, women earn on average 82% of what men earn to do the same work. Similarly, the calculated rate of poverty for Aboriginal individuals alone would place them in 78th place according to the UN Human Development Index. Recent immigrants often discover upon entry to Canada that their foreign credentials are not acknowledged in this country. Youth poverty is also becoming a major issue influenced by high unemployment rates, precarious work conditions, and restricted access to employment support programs.

Step #1: Believe that Reducing Poverty is Possible

Poverty is not inevitable ... and it's expensive.

Existing literature suggests that the economic costs of poverty surpass the costs to eradicate poverty. A 2004 study on the cost of poverty conducted in Calgary entitled, "The External Costs of Poverty: A Conservative Assessment"[2], concluded that the implementation of a poverty reduction strategy would save the city a conservative estimate of $8.25 million dollars per year to a speculative assessment of $46 to $56.8 million dollars. The calculated costs included expenses in health care, education, criminal justice, social support services and income support. Studies on homelessness specifically have provided evidence that providing emergency shelters and support services to homeless people is more costly than providing social housing. According to Gordon Laird in Shelter – Homelessness in a Growth Economy: Canada's 21st Century Paradox[3], housing the homeless in Canada would save the government $4.5 - $6 billion dollars annually in spending on health care, the criminal justice system, social services and emergency shelters based on an estimated 150,000 homeless people in Canada.

Poverty is about more than just not having enough money.

Many policies and programs have shown to be effective in reducing the depth and the incidence of poverty – particularly policies and programs grounded in research on the social determinants of health (SDOH) and social inclusion. Individual health is determined by social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behaviours that interact to create overall health status. Evidence from Canada and other countries support the idea that the social and economic circumstances of individuals affect health more than health care or life-style behaviours. [4,5]

SDOH are non-medical and non-lifestyle resources that a society makes available to its members. They are early life opportunities, education, employment and working conditions, food security, health services, housing, income and income distribution, social inclusion/

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exclusion, a social safety net, and unemployment. Since as early as 1986 Canadian government policy has identified the importance of the SDOH in determining health status yet the perception that the major influences on health are lifestyle behaviours remains. Health status indicated by self-reports of overall health status, infant mortality rates, chronic conditions, activity limitations/disability status or the Health Utility Index indicate that lower income is directly related to lower health status. People living in poverty and groups that are vulnerable to poverty (i.e. Aboriginal people and lone parents) are less healthy than the population as a whole. Social and economic circumstances affect health throughout the lifespan, interact with each other and have a cumulative effect on health. Socio-economic status is also directly related to outcomes for children in terms of education, employment and health status as adults. For example, childhood poverty is more directly related to instances of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adulthood than lifestyle behaviours.

The SDOH are critically important in determining health status and although government policy has identified the importance of SDOH to health status, public health practice still promotes behavioural and lifestyle strategies more strongly than programs that deal with the SDOH. In order to address the issue of poverty it is critical to address the SDOH. The 2005 Report Card on Child Poverty[6] concluded that the "nations that have significantly reduced child poverty have invested in quality childcare and early learning programs, effective child benefit systems, national affordable housing programs and generous income security and unemployment benefits. These nations also facilitated a healthy labour market."[7] The National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion is an initiative by Quebec's government to eradicate poverty[8]. Released in 2002, the initiative aimed to create "an act to combat poverty and social exclusion (Bill 112), which brings together several anti-poverty initiatives within a legislative framework". It explicitly states that poverty is detrimental to the economic and social development of Quebec society, and that it is a barrier to human development. It requires the government to develop specific action plans to improve the social and economic conditions of marginalized people, and it is designed to encourage citizen engagement, collective action, and social collaboration. It views poverty reduction from a longer lens and considers education, health, and housing equal to employment and income in eradicating poverty. Newfoundland/ Labrador is the only other province in Canada to address the issue of poverty with a comprehensive and integrated strategy based upon a social exclusion framework[9].

Ireland's 10-year National Anti-Poverty Strategy put poverty issues at the centre of government planning, and targeted every aspect of poverty—income, employment, health, education and homelessness/housing, and focused on specifically excluded groups, which were identified as being women, children, seniors and the disabled. The plan also took account of the differing

needs of urban and rural areas, targeting poor neighbourhoods for special government investment. It encouraged local partnerships that brought together the business community, activists, and the poor to develop community appropriate solutions. As a result, since 1997, Ireland has managed to slash its poverty rate from 15% to 6.8%, and has been dubbed "the Irish Miracle"[10].

The groundwork for a local poverty reduction strategy is laid.

The Sudbury & District Board of Health has made the determinants of health a strategic priority. In March 2006, The Sudbury and District Health Unit developed a framework[11] to integrate the social and economic determinants of health into the Ontario Public Health Mandate including the recommendation that the economic and social determinants of health be incorporated into the revisions to the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines (MHPSG). The City of Greater Sudbury's Official Plan's Human Services Strategy[12] recommends the development of an Anti-Poverty Advisory Panel and identifies an action plan to address employment, education and training, housing and food security.

The documents Key Social Trends, Policy Issues and Strategies for Change in the City of Greater Sudbury 2005[13] and Convening for Change: Report of the 1st Annual Social Planning Conference[14] both prepared by the Social Planning Council of Sudbury identify local issues related to the SDOH and outline recommendations. Finally, the Greater Sudbury Healthy Community Strategy[15] also recommends increased awareness of poverty and strategies for poverty alleviation as an element of the Civic Engagement/Social Capital strategic priority. The model includes a Public Awareness Campaign consisting of several individual projects targeted to specific audiences that include poverty awareness as a component.

Align local efforts with provincial and national strategies.

National and provincial poverty reduction strategies provide essential linkages to the local strategy and the City of Greater Sudbury needs to make the most of the synergies taking place between them. Campaign 2000 is a Canadian network of over 90 national, provincial and community partner organizations working together to end child and family poverty in Canada. It was developed in response to the government's resolution in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000. Today 1.2 million children or 1 in 6 still live in poverty. National Campaign 2000 is calling for all three political parties to commit to developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Ontario. They propose provincial governments work with federal partners to realize minimum reductions of 25% in child poverty rates in the province by 2012, and minimum 50% reductions by 2017.

The national policy framework of Campaign 2000 for poverty reduction across Canada rests on the cornerstone target of assuring every parent working full time, full year, a living standard out of poverty.

To achieve this goal would require the following initiatives from the federal government:

- Increase the NCBS to create a full child benefit of $5,100 (2007 dollars)

- Increase federal work tax credits to $2,400 a year

- Establish a federal minimum wage of $10 an hour (2007 dollars)

- Restore Employment Insurance eligibility and support at poverty prevention levels

Provinces would be expected to contribute in the following areas:

- Raise and Index minimum wages to poverty reduction standard of $10 an hour (2007 dollars)

- Invest provincial revenue in affordable housing initiatives

- Invest provincial revenue in extended drug and dental coverage

- Invest provincial revenue in early learning and child care

The just differential target across Canada would be to reduce the depth of poverty for families with children on social assistance to at least 80% of the poverty bench mark. In order to achieve this in most provinces would require:

- Families to receive full child benefits of $5,100 (2007 dollars) without claw backs and rate reductions in social assistance programs

- Full indexation of social assistance rates in all provinces starting in 2008

- Annual increases to social assistance rates of 3% or more above inflation also starting in 2008.

(Taken from *Summoned to Stewardship: Making Poverty Reduction A Collective Legacy Campaign 2000 Policy Perspectives*, Marvyn Novick September 2007)[16]

Throughout the implementation of the local poverty reduction strategy it is important that local efforts are aligned with provincial and national efforts, most notably National Campaign 2000. How well the community takes advantage of every opportunity to advocate for change at these levels directly impacts the success of the local strategy. Quite simply, real change at the local level is not possible without change at the national and provincial levels.

Step # 2: Afford Poverty Reduction the Same Importance as Economic Development

Poverty reduction, like economic development and reversing climate change will not happen by itself. High levels of economic growth and prosperity have not led to reductions in the structural causes of poverty in Canada. Assurances that the best way to reduce poverty is through more prosperity, have not panned out. The last ten years of economic growth have not benefited the least advantaged. From 1995 to 2005, GDP per capita in Canada grew by 27% in real dollars. The highest 20% of families saw their after-tax incomes grow by more than 22%. The lowest 20% saw gains of 9%.[17]

Poverty is a structural problem and as such needs structural change based on real plans with real resources attached. Locally, one of the most effective ways to help facilitate this change is to strengthen organizational capacity at the municipal level by creating a human services planning and policy development body.

Invest in social infrastructure.

Initiatives like the Mayor and Children's First Roundtable, and the Mayor and Council's Committee on Senior's Issues, among many others, are in place to address specific areas of social concern and their heath impacts. However, opportunities for long-term planning and policy development, based on research and evaluation, particularly across departments and sectors, are limited. As has happened in other municipalities in Ontario, the current governance and associated organizational structure has struggled to keep up as mandates and priorities have changed through amalgamation, provincial downloading and demographic changes.

A body responsible for long-term planning and policy development would ensure that social issues within the community are integrated into the overall plan of the community. By investing in this type of social infrastructure, similar to the community's Economic Development Plan and EarthCare's Environmental Plan, the CGS would be well on its way in

keeping with the Healthy Communities model that integrates the economic, environmental and social sectors in its approach to solving community issues. Once in place the local poverty reduction strategy as well as any number of other strategies, committees, solution teams, roundtables or advisory panels, either existing or new, would help to inform the direction of social development in the CGS.

Collaborate with many sectors.

At one point, it was acceptable to expect the government to find the solution to poverty and poverty related issues. However, problems have become so complex that solutions lie outside the capacity and responsibility of any single sector, interest group or government to solve. The old ways of doing things aren't working. What is working is community collaboration where there are many partners, including citizens, from multiple sectors and government ministries at the same table. The reality is that there needs to be horizontal partnerships between the private, voluntary and public sectors as well as community groups, individuals affected by and/ or living in poverty as well as all three levels of government in order for this strategy to succeed.

The involvement of the private sector can and does take many forms. In 2003, The Toronto Board of Trade released a paper called "Affordable, Available, Achievable: Practical Solutions to Affordable Housing Challenges"[18] outlining thought provoking and reasonable recommendations aimed at all levels of government. In Saint John, the business community is very engaged forming the Business Community Anti-poverty Initiative (BCAI).[19] They see their role as catalysts working together with people living in poverty, community organizations and government to reduce the number of people who live in poverty. By contributing leadership, business expertise, influence and assistance to community organizations in accessing resources and financial support and by focusing on partnerships, a business approach and longer-term "break the cycle" solutions like housing, youth poverty and training and employment, a number of successful projects have developed as a result.

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Consistently include citizens.

The City of Greater Sudbury has been proactive in involving citizens in decisions making. Participatory budget processes, various planning and development initiatives, numerous Advisory Committees, Panels and Solution Teams, and neighbourhood level involvement through the Community Action Networks (CANs) are all examples of this. Most recently, City Council endorsed the formation of the Community Solutions Team on Homelessness Initiatives, consisting of several members of the Sudbury community, to address the funding crisis facing emergency shelters with regard to the City's homeless population. Best practices show that effective services must include those who are directly affected in the decision-making process, in their own individual service plans and in the design of the system, in order to provide a voice and to ensure that relevant and effective services are in place. The issue of homelessness is a good example of where engaging citizens has had a direct impact for the better on a social issue.

This is a growing trend and what is needed now is a more formal roadmap to guide future citizen engagement activities in a way that will ensure they are standardized, consistent and sustainable for all. There is a growing consensus among people in the community about what civic engagement means and how it should be applied. People want to be involved in making decisions about things that affect their lives and a quite willing to volunteer their time to do so. Sudburians value meaningful participation. Consultation that is rigid and restricts citizens to dealing with only a narrow part of a larger issue or that happens after decisions have already been made is not meaningful. People want to know that their input counts, they want to know how their input affected the decision and they want to have input into deciding what they can have input into and how they will do that.

Engaging the public is not a one size fits all approach. Different issues require different levels of engagement. Different groups need to be engaged in different ways. The Healthy Community Principles and the International Association for Public Participation's core values[20] best reflect the civic values of Sudburians and should guide the implementation of a civic engagement framework. As well, a Public Participation Policy as a key component of the Framework would help to ensure that the process of engagement is integrated throughout the corporation, so that for every planning process, civic engagement activities are given proper consideration and that the steps, like capacity building, evaluation and communication, needed to make the process meaningful, are taken.

Take care of the basics.

One of the National Campaign 2000's four cornerstone principles[21] rests on available and affordable essential resources in four areas to protect family budgets and promote pathways to equal opportunities of all children. It states it is important to restore access to Employment Insurance (EI) eligibility and protection; to provide continued access to prescription drug and dental benefits; to prevent the high costs of housing from draining the food budgets of low income families; and to ensure universal access to high quality learning and care for all children during the early years.

- **A place to call home.**

Affordable and appropriate housing is a key component of this poverty reduction strategy. Within the City of Greater Sudbury, this component has now become vital. Our community is facing a housing crisis, and to ensure that all citizens have the potential to have affordable housing, there must be new housing units developed. Currently in Sudbury over 1400 applicants are waiting for geared to income housing.[22] Housing prices have skyrocketed making it difficult for low-income families to purchase a home or find an apartment. There are currently approximately 400 homeless people in Sudbury including couples, families and young people.[23] Homeless individuals in Sudbury cited unemployment, lack of access to affordable housing, being transient or relocation, and physical or mental disability as reasons for their homelessness.

In 2000, the provincial government passed the Ontario Social Housing Reform Act (Bill 128), which transferred the funding and administration of social housing programs to municipalities, thereby downloading the responsibilities of providing affordable housing to the local level. In 2006, the City of Greater Sudbury agreed to participate in the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (AHP), a federal-provincial housing framework aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing across Canada through cost sharing, new construction or rehabilitation. Under this program, municipalities select projects, contribute their own resources, set program objectives to meet local needs, and monitor projects for program compliance. This program allows the city to access approximately $7 million to build affordable housing in Greater Sudbury, with potential developers receiving $1 million to help offset development costs. However, local developers have recently commented that despite offers from the city to raise the allotment of funding, it is unlikely that any local developers will take an interest, as it takes approximately ten years to recover costs spent on large development projects. An additional problem is zoning policies and building codes that restrict construction variances within a neighbourhood, as was recently pointed out by an outside developer.

The affordable housing picture is complex. Although policy responses tailored to specific community needs are required, it is apparent that initiatives to address affordability at the national level could effectively reduce the overall incidence of homelessness. Convincing governments to fund enough affordable housing in Canada seems to be the biggest challenge for communities, especially in the absence of a national affordable housing strategy. To address absolute and at-risk homelessness, increased resources are needed for municipalities and community-based groups so they can more efficiently fulfill the responsibilities given to them by the provinces. Without consistent funding for housing municipalities face serious challenges concerning this issue.

- **Healthy food from a healthy planet.**

With the high cost of nutritious food, a healthy diet is a major barrier to individuals living in poverty. In a 2003 study on the Dependence on Food Banks[24], a Laurentian University graduate student determined that of 92 food bank recipients surveyed, 40% received Ontario Works benefits, 22% received OSDP benefits and 10% were working mainly in temporary or casual jobs. The mean monthly income of the respondents was $921.11 and the average housing cost was $513.09 leaving slightly over $400 for food, clothing, transportation and other life expenses. The majority of the respondents were chronically sick and suffered from emotional problems and high levels of stress. The reasons for the dependence on food banks were stated as welfare cuts, high unemployment rates, low minimum wage, and difficulty finding employment for people with disabilities, high housing costs, high childcare costs and low Employment Insurance benefits.

However, food security is an issue that goes beyond ensuring everyone can afford to eat nutritiously. Food security considers individual and community health, food-based economic development and environmental sustainability through local production, processing and distribution. In an effort to address food security the Food Security Network developed guidelines through its Food Charter. The City of Greater Sudbury, through the poverty reduction strategy, is well positioned with City Council's adoption of the Food Charter in 2004, to support the implementation of the Charter making the CGS food secure.[25] While food banks provide an emergency response to hunger and must continue to do so, long term community food security needs to be the primary goal.

- **Quality child care and early childhood education.**

The quality of childcare and early education is critically important as the foundations of adult health are laid in early childhood and before birth. Mothers who live in poverty are more likely to have poor nutrition, greater amounts of stress, greater likelihood of cigarette smoking and drug and alcohol use, less likely to exercise and receive inadequate prenatal

care. Lack of proper infant development can result in lack of school readiness, low educational attainment, behavioural problems, and risk of social marginalization. Slow growth in infancy is associated with a number of health problems that include reduced cardiovascular, respiratory, pancreatic and kidney development and these health problems increase the risk of the development of illness in adulthood. Emotional and mental health are also important to child development as poor emotional support in childhood results in reduced emotional and cognitive functioning in adulthood.[26]

Preventative measures are crucial to reducing health risks for children in poverty. Adequate health care prior to pregnancy, postnatally and throughout early childhood is an important preventative measure to increase child health. The 2005 Report Card on Child Poverty[27] concluded that nations, who have significantly reduced child poverty, have among other initiatives, developed quality childcare and early education programs. Good nutrition, health education, preventative care, social resources and support for parent/child relations are necessary to support child health. Childcare services in the City of Greater Sudbury have become more accessible and available and are for the most part meeting the needs of local children. There is a need for infant spaces. Subsidized spaces are available for low-income families and fees are charged on a sliding scale according to family income.

The Children First Charter[28] developed by the Mayor and Council Children's First Roundtable (2000-2003)[29] identifies strategies to ensure healthy development for children aged 0-6. The Charter was adopted by a variety of community organizations, school boards and the Sudbury and District Health Unit. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services introduced its strategy for early learning and childcare entitled Best Start in 2004. At the local level the City of Greater Sudbury has developed the Best Start Child Care Plan for 2005-2007 that outlines an implementation strategy for Best Start. The planning and implementation of this strategy by the local Best Start Network is an excellent example of how the community can organize itself to meet local needs and better utilize existing resources. The local Best Start Network planning partners have utilized existing resources and the strength of their partnerships with each other to establish the first five Best Start "hubs". Centres of early learning and childcare, these sites will serve as examples to the rest of the community and the province as to how services can be offered in a way that meets the needs of children and families. It is expected that the location of the hubs and the services offered there will go a long way to impacting a key social determinant of health – early life opportunities. Having the Best Start Network adopt the community poverty reduction strategy and keeping in mind the important role that they play in this key SDOH will be paramount in the strategies success.

- **A way to get to work.**

Transportation is a crucial issue for the residents of the City of Greater Sudbury especially considering the huge geographic area; 3,627 square kilometers in total that the city covers. The ability for low-income residents to access services is dependent on the quality of the transportation services. Most residents use personal vehicles as their primary mode of transportation but it is often difficult for low-income individuals to   afford the expense of a vehicle and therefore have to depend on public transportation. Significant improvements to the public transportation system have been made recently with the contribution of gas tax revenues to the municipal government. Extended routes for both regular service and handi transit have been implemented. The U-pass has been adopted by the University providing all students with a bus pass as part of their student activity fee. It is imperative that the needs of low income citizens be considered when changes are being made to the public transportation system. Several driving programs have been initiated to support the trans-portation needs of area residents. The Canadian Cancer Society and the Sudbury & District Health Unit have developed programs to help people access services. The Canadian Red Cross provides transportation to seniors so that they can access local services. GEODE's program Rideshare was recently discontinued due to lack of funding. This program provided rides to parents and their children to access children's services. In partnership with the Greater Sudbury Environment Network (GSEN) a Car Sharing Program is currently being explored. This type of a program would provide individuals that do not own their own vehicle with access to a vehicle on an as needed basis.

Clear the way between education, training and employment.

The City of Greater Sudbury is experiencing the realities of the new economy. As manufacturing jobs have shifted from the developed world into the developing world, new employment opportunities have emerged. However, these employment opportunities are often marked by a lack of stability, lower wages, and a lack of benefits.[30] The unemployment rate for CGS in April 2007 was 5.8%, significantly below the provincial rate of 6.5%.[31] The employment trend has shown a decrease in resource sector jobs and an increase in jobs in the retail/service sector that generally pay lower salaries. Thus, while the unemployment levels remain strong for the City of Greater Sudbury, the reality is that the number of working poor is on the rise.

Unemployment and income are related to educational attainment. The CGS on average has lower rates of educational attainment than the province or the country. For example, 18% of Canadians hold university degrees compared with 11% of CGS residents, although this rate has been increasing.[32] A strong workforce requires a strong enough economic base to support secondary industries and an adequate supply of highly skilled and adaptable workers. It also

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requires affordable and accessible education and training opportunities. Just as having an educated workforce is key to developing a strong and innovative economy, on-going education and training of the workforce is key to ensuring the growth of the economy.

The Social Planning Council identifies the need to enhance existing community action plans that would increase collaboration between and access to the education and training sectors and the labour market with specific outcomes linked to poverty reduction.[33] It is important that educational and training opportunities reflect the skills required in the local labour market and that all learners, especially those most at risk like young Aboriginals, receive the support they need in order to be successful in their studies and in their transition to employment.

Step #3: Keep Believing and Monitor, Evaluate and Report on Progress

In a 2007 report, the National Council of Welfare[34] offered four fundamental requirements for any poverty reduction strategy to be successful. These include the need for a strategy with long-term vision and measurable targets and timelines. They also cover accountability concerning implementation and evaluation of action and a manner to monitor change and assess progress. A key feature in the monitoring, evaluating, and reporting of poverty reduction progress revolves around the definition and measurement of poverty itself. In utilizing one measurement, consistent evaluation and measurement can occur and the entire population can better understand the poverty issue, along with any evaluation of poverty. The after tax Low Income Cut-Off measurement has been utilized in the past, however, as the Campaign 2000 strategy suggests, there could also be a 'poverty zone' which incorporates the three major measurements (LICO – After Tax, MBM, and LIM- After Tax) currently utilized in Canada.[35]

Upon clarifying a specific poverty measurement, a poverty reduction plan must monitor progress. This implies that a plan must have a set of targets and benchmarks to strive to achieve. These targets should be created within the context of a wide-ranging view of poverty and each specific target must be given a specific number reduction and time frame. For example, in Greater Sudbury, one such target should be that there is a specific reduction of the number of people waiting to receive social housing within a specific timeframe. Upon creating specific targets and timeframes, a poverty reduction plan must also report on progress to the public. In reporting progress, the public can see where actions are working and where changes need to be made. This will ensure that the poverty reduction strategy is accountable and effective.

Recommendations

1. That the community champion poverty reduction by aligning implementation at the local level with provincial and national efforts, most notably National Campaign 2000, seizing every opportunity to advocate both formally and informally for change.

2. That the CGS City Council invest in social infrastructure by creating a human services planning and policy development body of which this local poverty reduction strategy and any other social strategy, committees, solution teams, roundtables and/or advisory panels would help to inform the direction of social development now and into the future and that this human services planning and policy development body:

   - Foster collaboration between the private, voluntary and public sectors as well as the general public and individuals affected by or living in poverty by including them in various aspects of the work of the human services planning and policy development body.

   - Be the drivers of innovative and creative ideas that will result from collaboration among the private, public and voluntary sectors as they adopt the poverty reduction strategy.

3. That through the newly created human services planning and policy development body, focus will be maintained on income, employment and training, affordable housing, food security and transportation - with particular attention to female led lone parent families, Aboriginals, children, unattached female seniors, immigrants, youth and persons with disabilities, and poverty reduction will be placed alongside economic development and environmental sustainability as community priorities.

4. That the CGS City Council will be encouraged to adopt a Civic Engagement Framework and Public Participation Policy to ensure citizens are meaningfully engaged in these and other pressing concerns throughout their implementation, evaluation and communication to the community.

5. That existing community action plans be enhanced to increase collaboration between employment and training and access to the labour market with specific outcomes linked to poverty reduction.

6. That the education sector through the Best Start Network be encouraged to adopt the community poverty reduction strategy in their role as key contributors to the social determinants of health.

7. That the Sudbury & District Board of Health be supported in their social determinants of health strategic priority.

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