



# PATHWAY TO POTENTIAL

Windsor Essex County's  
Poverty Reduction Strategy

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## A FRAMEWORK FOR REDUCING POVERTY IN WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY

**PREPARED BY:** The Steering Committee for Pathway to Potential

**DATE:** December 5, 2008



LEGAL ASSISTANCE OF WINDSOR  
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# **WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY'S PATHWAY TO POTENTIAL: A FRAMEWORK FOR REDUCING POVERTY IN WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In Windsor and Essex County over 50,000 people live in poverty. Poverty and the effects of poverty are more likely to be experienced by lone parents, recent immigrants, people with disabilities and Aboriginal peoples. The majority of low-income people in Windsor and Essex County reflect these demographics. Poverty puts children, individuals and families at risk in almost every way imaginable, so reducing poverty in Windsor and Essex County must be a priority.

Windsor-Essex County is the southernmost region in Canada and is home to one of the busiest border crossings into the United States. Construction and manufacturing are the region's primary industries and the many citizens enjoy a mean income higher than the Ontario average. However, at this time Windsor-Essex County has the highest unemployment rate in the province, and one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada. The region is experiencing an economic downturn, especially in the automotive industry, resulting in an adverse affect on employees in feeder plants, seasonal operations, small businesses and those already receiving social assistance. Recent layoffs in the automotive industry, which provides employment for 30% of the labour force in Windsor-Essex County, combined with the potential for further economic instability, are likely to result in more noticeable income-related issues in the near future.

Given the significant shift in the region's economy due to the downturn in the auto industry, it is imperative that the City of Windsor and County of Essex take action and join with local, provincial and national partners in a concerted effort to tackle poverty

in the community. Recently, the City of Windsor and the County of Essex demonstrated their leadership and commitment to the community's most vulnerable citizens through their endorsement of a local poverty reduction strategy: "*Windsor-Essex County's Pathway to Potential*".

The purpose of this proposal is to describe the need for a comprehensive, multi-year agenda to reduce poverty in Windsor and Essex County and to propose a community-wide mobilization strategy for poverty reduction. The local strategy was initiated by and will be aligned with, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Plan, announced in March 2008. In this regard, the work will be guided by the following principles:

1. ***Shared Responsibility:*** The federal, provincial and municipal governments must work in conjunction with the broader public and private sectors to address issues of poverty within our communities.
2. ***Community Action:*** A comprehensive poverty reduction strategy must harness unused and under-used resources while connecting people with opportunities for action based on the unique needs and solutions of each community.
3. ***Wrap-around Services:*** Shifting to a person-centered approach requires taking into account the interactions between programs and the complex needs presented within individual communities.
4. ***Evidence-Based Decision-Making:*** Utilizing credible research and data when making decisions and developing strategies.
5. ***Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship:*** Utilize documented entrepreneurial principles to organize, create and manage necessary social change ventures (Growing Stronger Together, 2008).

## **MEASURING POVERTY IN WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY**

The government provides three primary measures of low income in Canada – none officially endorsed as poverty lines. Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut Off After Income Tax (LICO-AIT) has been the main indicator of low income for 20 years and has consistently measured low income over time. The LICO-AIT examines what the average family in different sized communities must spend on basic needs: shelter, food and clothing, then determines the levels at which families spend a disproportionate amount of their income on these basic needs. The LICO-AIT for a family of 4 in our region is an income at or below \$28,202.00. According to this measurement, in 2005 13.1% of Windsor and Essex County residents are considered to have a low income – over 50,000 people.

The second measure, the Low Income Measure (LIM) sets the benchmark of low income at half the median income. International bodies, such as the United Nations use this measure to compare poverty across nations. Using this system, the median income of all census families in Windsor and Essex County was \$64,952 in 2001. One half of that median income is \$32,476; however, a two-parent family with each parent working full-time minimum wage jobs only makes \$29,894. These families are \$2,582.00 below the low-income benchmark.

The third measure is the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM defines a basket of goods and services, which would be required to live in communities across Canada, and then determines the necessary disposable income to purchase those services. The goods and services considered as part of “the basket” include: food, shelter, clothing and footwear, transportation and other expenditures such as out-of-pocket childcare, child

support and non-insured but medically required health products. In an area the size of Windsor-Essex County, a family of two parents and two children require at minimum \$26,194 to meet their basic needs. However, a family this size living on Ontario Works and including the Child Tax Benefit receives approximately \$20,316.

## **POVERTY IN WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY**

*“When I was working full time, it was only \$8.00 hour. That’s not a job. [I] Can’t make a living on that.”*

*“Three weeks of my cheque was going to rent so I considered social housing, but there’s lack of hope that you’ll ever get out of here.”*

*“If we get a job we can’t afford child care for our kids.”*

*“Once you adapt our environment & get the assistive devices we need we are very successful and we are extremely loyal employees.”*

These comments were made at a community forum in the Glengarry neighbourhood, a 484 unit social housing development in Windsor, Ontario. Hosted by Income Security Advocacy Council and Campaign 2000, the forum took place on June 6, 2008.

Now more than ever, the City of Windsor and the County of Essex need a poverty reduction strategy:

- Over 18,000 jobs have been lost in the last five years. The impact of these plant closures and layoffs is reflected in the 25% increase in personal bankruptcies from January to May 2007.
- The unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2008 was the highest in the province at 9.7%.
- In Windsor and Essex County, 16.1% of children under the age of 18 live in poverty; approximately 16,427 children. Poverty increases a child’s risk of lower functioning vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity and cognition.

- Although the rental market vacancy rate is estimated at 13%, over 2,300 individuals wait for affordable housing.
- In 2006/07 over 2,000 people were provided temporary emergency shelter 215 of those were children. Homelessness increases families' exposure to stress, instability and illness.
- In 2004, 162,741 people needed food bank assistance, 73,067 were children. Many families require food bank assistance more than once. Food recipients are disclosing fair and poor health at a rate that is approximately 31% higher than the general population.
- 32,565 individuals between the ages of 24 and 64 years of age have no high school certificate or equivalent.

The aforementioned demographics increase the likelihood of citizens of Windsor and Essex County to experience poverty.

### **THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

The moral and ethical necessity for a poverty reduction strategy is simple: it is wrong that so many people live in poverty, but there is also a strong economic case for reducing poverty (Laurie, 2008). Laurie (2008) noted that “Canadians who look at poverty through the eyes of those it afflicts know that the poor bear huge costs from having to live with deprivation and the stresses it imposes. Together with the strains they create within families, these direct costs of poverty – hunger and inadequate nutrition, inferior housing, alienation from mainstream society and scant opportunity for a better life – take a heavy toll on the health of the poor, their self-esteem and the ability of their

children to learn and thrive in school. These forces, in turn, can create a vicious intergenerational cycle in which poverty feeds on itself” (page 7).

To the extent that poverty affects individuals, there is also a cost that is paid by communities. Laurie (2008) stated that poverty has a significant cost for governments and individual households. He noted that the federal and Ontario government are losing at least \$10 billion to \$13.1 billion a year due to poverty and poverty costs every household in the province from \$2,299 to \$2,895 every year (page 4). Further, the remedial costs of poverty related to health care and crime are substantial, the annual cost of child or intergenerational poverty is very high and opportunity costs or lost productivity due to poverty has a great economic cost (Laurie, 2008).

#### **A FRAMEWORK FOR REDUCING POVERTY IN WINDSOR AND ESSEX**

The primary goal of the poverty reduction agenda in Ontario is to develop a focused strategy for reducing poverty, including associated indicators and targets, while creating effective partnerships between individual communities and governments in order to lift families from poverty and ensure that programs work effectively for those who need them (Growing Stronger Together).

As one aspect of the development of *Pathway to Potential*, a series of community consultations were held through the spring and summer 2008 (see Table 1).

**Table 1 – Administrative Chronology**

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Event</b>  | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---------------|---|---|
| 2007          | Province announced there would be a poverty reduction strategy in place by the end of 2008;<br>Province hosted community consultations throughout Ontario framed around 6 key questions; Province identified ‘5 pillars’ for poverty reduction strategy | Communities members attend consultations; begin to mobilize to determine the feasibility of local strategies  |
| May 21, 2008. | The Province holds a meeting in Windsor*  | Working group forms for Windsor-Essex County, comprised of representatives from the City of Windsor, Legal Assistance of Windsor, the United Way/Centraide and the University of Windsor            |
| May 22, 2008  | 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting of the working group  | Group decides to present the idea of developing a local poverty reduction strategy to the Social and Health Services Community Partners Table   |
| May 27/08     | Community Partners Table meeting  | The Social and Health Services Community Partners Table supports the initiative and the idea to approach the broader community for input  |
| June 6, 2008  | I.S.A.C.-(Income Security Advocacy Committee) hosts a community forum   | Citizens living in poverty provide feedback to representatives from Income Security Advocacy Committee, Campaign 2000 and Legal Assistance of Windsor. This feedback is given to the working group. |

|               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| June 16, 2008 | Community consultation*, facilitated by the City of Windsor with support from the working group | Participants identify indicators of poverty and give context to a poverty reduction strategy for Windsor –Essex County. Those invited to this meeting were either at the first meeting held by the province on May 21, 2008 or are a member of the Social and Health Services Community Partners Table  |
| July 2008     | Working group meetings  | Group notes that some indicators for poverty reduction are currently being measured in Windsor-Essex County; The Well-Being Report completed by United Way 2006 gives reference and provides a current status; University of Windsor, School of Social Work provides feedback on the indicators and makes recommendations regarding measuring and tracking poverty reduction indicators |
| July 10, 2008 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> community meeting   | A summary of indicators identified at the June 16, 2008 meeting, indicators currently identified in the United Way Well Being Report as well as “best practices” indicators are presented and discussed. Additional indicators are identified by the group and added to the list. Steps for action in poverty reduction for Windsor-Essex County are identified.                        |

\*See Appendix 1 for List of Agencies Invited to the Community Consultations

As noted in the Administrative Chronology, a Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction was organized, chaired by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews. The Minister hosted community forums across the province, including one in Windsor-Essex County. In addition to those participants identified

through the Minister's office MPP's, representatives from the Ministry, the City of Windsor, the County of Essex, the United Way/Centraide of Windsor-Essex County, the University of Windsor, and, Legal Assistance of Windsor, forwarded a list of consumers to participate in the consultation. During the consultation the five key components of poverty reduction proposed by the Provincial government were presented as follows:

- 1) Education and skills training
- 2) Affordable housing
- 3) Childcare and early learning
- 4) Income support
- 5) Health

(See Appendix 2 for a full description of components)

Participants were asked to provide recommendations related to the following six areas within each component:

- 1) Use of existing resources
- 2) New uses for existing resources
- 3) Best practices in individual communities
- 4) Integration of roles and services
- 5) Relationship of the strategy to other at-risk populations
- 6) Impact measures

(See Appendix 3 for consultation questions).

Soon after the consultation in Windsor, a small working group (now the Steering Committee) met to design next steps. The group consisted of representatives from the City of Windsor Social & Health Services, United Way/Centraide of Windsor-Essex

County, Legal Assistance Windsor, and the University of Windsor. Next steps included presenting the idea of a poverty reduction strategy for Windsor-Essex County to the members of the Social and Health Services Community Partners Table, a cross-section of human service organizations, chaired by the City of Windsor Social & Health Services. The Community Partners indicated their support for a local poverty reduction strategy and the working group agreed to begin the process of a local community consultation.

At their request, Legal Assistance of Windsor assisted the Income Security Advocacy Committee (ISAC) and Campaign 2000, to organize a second community forum on June 6, 2008. This forum was designed to gather feedback from those citizens experiencing poverty.

A third follow-up meeting was held with the broader community on June 16, 2008. At this meeting, potential indicators of poverty were identified. A final meeting was held on July 10, 2008 to review the indicators, discuss best practices in poverty reduction and discuss preliminary steps for a more comprehensive community-based action plan for Windsor-Essex County. At this meeting participants confirmed their support to integrate the Provincial government's components of a poverty reduction strategy into the Windsor-Essex County poverty reduction strategy. As previously noted, the 5 key components the regional strategy will be built on are:

1. Education and skills training
2. Affordable housing
3. Childcare and early learning
4. Income support
5. Health

As a result of a review of successful poverty reduction strategies in Ontario and feedback from local constituent groups, Windsor-Essex County's *Pathway to Potential* will include a multi-pronged approach:

1. The development of a multi-sectoral Roundtable, combining all three levels of government, businesses, the non-profit sector, communities and individuals;
2. The completion of an environmental scan;
3. The articulation and selection of measurable outcomes (including poverty rates, income after taxes, incarceration rates, education, literacy, and employment rates);
4. The alignment of the strategy with Windsor and Essex County's mission statements; and,
5. The development of key community-based interventions, which address a life-span approach and a two-generation approach involving both prevention and intervention.

This approach is in keeping with the recommendations made by the Ontario government that any strategy should:

1. Utilize more effective and efficient services tailored to the unique needs of individuals and their families.
2. Utilize a multi-sector approach, which includes a combination of all levels of government, businesses, not-for-profit agencies, volunteers and individuals (Growing Stronger Together).

### ***A Multi-sectoral Approach***

*Pathway to Potential* will include the formation of a multi-sectoral Roundtable. The Roundtable members will be drawn from the public sector, not-for-profit organizations, the private sector and citizens experiencing poverty. The criteria applied to select Roundtable members included:

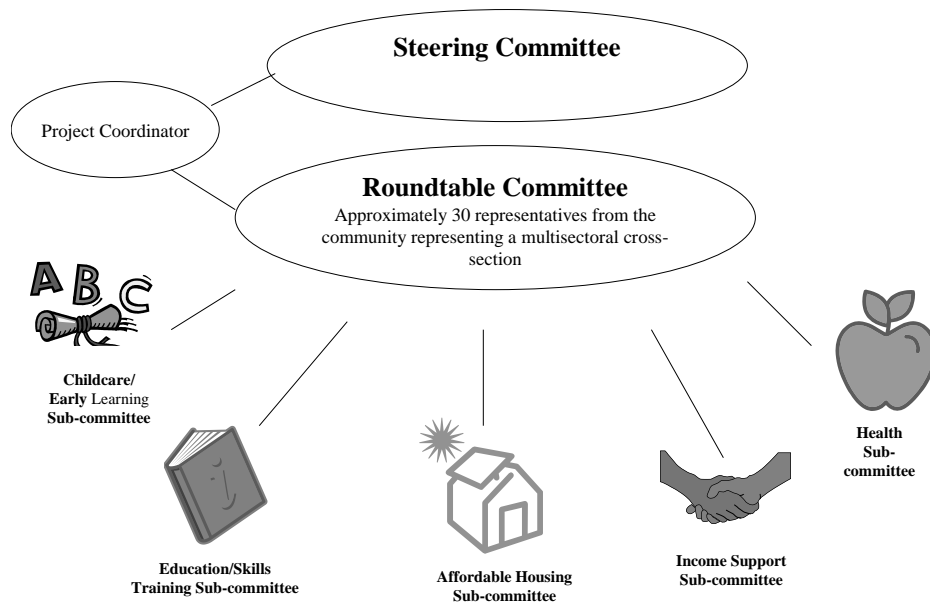
- Member has influence and/or resources as well as interest in poverty reduction;
- Member has identified expertise and knowledge in program planning, development and evaluation; and,
- Member is a low-income citizen who, based on personal experience, has a key role to play in informing the development of a local strategy.

The role of the Roundtable is to promote and champion a strategic poverty reduction plan by encouraging broad-based community engagement, leveraging resources, supporting concrete action and ensuring accountability through the articulation and measurement of outcomes. Further, the Roundtable will play a significant role in educating the broad community about poverty and its effects with the hope of engaging non-traditional partners in the overall poverty reduction strategy. The education initiative could result in leveraging resources (in-kind and financial), petitioning for policy and system changes and ensuring that poverty remains firmly on the political agenda.

The proposed Roundtable will act as an umbrella group, which will host five sub-committees. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1**

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY'S  
MULTISECTORAL ROUNDTABLE**



Each subcommittee will be aligned with the five key components identified by the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction. These sub-committees will be comprised of representatives from existing community groups who have expertise in their identified areas and as such will play a key role in recommending and implementing poverty reduction initiatives. Further, their knowledge and experience will be critical to assisting Roundtable members to develop indicators, desired outcomes and measurement tools and strategies.

***Environmental Scan***

Windsor and Essex County have extensive networks of individuals and agencies working in the five areas identified as important components of a poverty reduction plan. The environment scan will provide the Roundtable and the community with important information about community demographics and needs, juxtaposed against services and

service needs – a process of identifying community needs, what exists to respond to those needs and service gaps.

***Indicators and Outcomes***

In response to the Ontario government’s introduction of a poverty reduction strategy, Ontario Campaign 2000 suggested that all strategies should be attached to measurable indicators in order to evaluate the impact of the strategy. *Pathway to Potential* will ensure accountability through the identification of measurable indicators and outcomes for each of the five components of poverty reduction. These draft indicators have been developed based on feedback from the community, best practices in poverty reduction and input from the University of Windsor, School of Social Work (see Appendix 4 and 5 for proposed goals and indicators).

***Alignment to Windsor-Essex County Mission Statements***

The mission statements for the City of Windsor and the County of Essex (see Table 2) express collaboration, hope and a desire to ensure a bright and productive future for all citizens. A regional poverty reduction strategy will facilitate the achievement Windsor and Essex County’s desire to ensure a vibrant community in which all citizens achieve their fullest potential.

**Table 2 – Mission Statements**

| <b>City of Windsor Mission Statement</b>  | <b>County of Essex Mission Statement</b>   |
|---|--|
| Our City is built on relationships- between citizens and their government, businesses and public institutions, city and region--all interconnected, mutually supportive and focused on the brightest future we can create together. | The County of Essex is a municipal corporation of elected officials and employees working together to meet the challenges of today while respecting our past and preparing for our future. |

As a testament to the City of Windsor and County of Essex's commitment to reduce poverty and build for the future, a funding commitment of \$2,102,586.00 has been made towards efforts in reducing poverty.

### ***Key Community-based Interventions***

As a result of the information gathered from the community forums held throughout the summer of 2008, Windsor-Essex County is now in a position to move forward with the development of a poverty reduction strategy. The involvement of City and County municipal governments is critical to the success of the strategy and the commitment of all levels of government will facilitate the involvement of appropriate Roundtable members. At least two communities in Ontario have implemented successful community-based poverty reduction strategies (see Appendix 6 for a summary of the Hamilton Poverty Reduction Strategy and Appendix 7 for a summary of the Kitchener-Waterloo Poverty Reduction Strategy). *Pathway to Potential* will incorporate best practices and lessons learned by other communities into a local strategy with consideration given to the unique demographics and challenges of Windsor and Essex County and the five components identified by the Provincial government.

### **SUMMARY**

“Poverty is an extremely complex condition with economic, cultural, social as well as institutional roots. Complicating it even further is the fact that the causes and effects of poverty are known to interact” (Laurie, 2008). *Pathway to Potential* is a comprehensive community-based strategy to reduce poverty in Windsor and Essex County. The poverty reduction plan proposed by Windsor and Essex County recognizes that all levels of government have responsibility to participate in reducing poverty; thus

increasing the quality of life for its citizens. However, the plan also recognizes the critical role of individuals and organizations from all sectors in moving toward a community, which is free of poverty. There are many ways to take the measure of a community, but there is no more powerful or more significant measure of the health and strength of a region than the well being of its citizens. Windsor and Essex County have made the commitment to create a community in which all citizens are assured health and security and look to the future with optimism.

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## **APPENDIX 1: LIST OF AGENCIES INVITED TO THE FORUMS**

1. Bruce Crozier, MPP
2. Canadian Mental Health Association
3. CAW Union Local 444
4. Children First
5. Community Living Essex
6. Drouillard Place
7. Dwight Duncan, MPP
8. Family Respite Services of Windsor-Essex
9. Conseil scolaire de district des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest
10. Greater Essex County District School Board
11. Heart and Stroke Foundation
12. Homeless Coalition
13. Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital
14. Housing Information Services
15. Iris Inns
16. Joe Comartin, MP
17. Legal Assistance of Windsor
18. Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services
19. Ministry of Community and Social Services - O.D.S.P. office
20. Multicultural Council of Windsor
21. Sandra Pupatello, MPP
22. Sandwich Community Health Centre
23. South Essex Community Council
24. Street Health
25. Teen Health Centre
26. Unemployed Help Centre
27. The United Way/Centraide of Windsor-Essex County
28. University of Windsor
29. Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board
30. Windsor-Essex Community Housing Corporation
31. Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society
32. Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women
33. Youth and Family Resource Network

## **APPENDIX 2: COMPONENTS OF A POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

The Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction addressed existing programs within five key components: education and skills training; affordable housing; childcare and early learning; income support; and, health. The Committee reviewed these areas within the context of current and prospective programs, with a focus on need for additional support and components of successful programs.

### *1. Education and Skills Training*

The focus on education and skills training in Ontario has netted some improvement for children and new Canadians. For example, academic results for students in grades three and six have improved nearly 10% since 2003, and the graduation rate from secondary schools across Ontario increased from 68 to 75% in the 2003/2004 school year. The Student Nutrition Program, which provides nutritious meals and snacks to students, has been expanded, as the correlation between nutritious meals and student preparedness for learning has been confirmed (Growing Stronger Together).

In 2006 the Ontario government passed a law intended to level the playing field for new Canadians, the first of its kind in Canada. This law established the Office of Fairness and appointed a Commissioner whose responsibility is to assess registration and licensing practices and ensure compliance with them. This initiative also pioneered Global Experience Ontario, a one-stop resource center designed to help new Canadians navigate the system while trying to enter regulated professions. This center also promotes professional internships and mentoring programs to help new Canadians through the process of obtaining their professional licenses. The province is also working towards supporting bridging programs that will assist newcomers in obtaining their

license or certificate in their specific profession or trade, and to assist them in finding work in their field sooner than they might otherwise. Finally, English as a second language courses are being expanded upon within Ontario, this includes the creation of occupational specific language training (Growing Stronger Together).

Campaign 2000 has presented additional areas to promote accessible education and training:

- Freeze tuition costs;
- Increase the availability of needs-based post secondary grants;
- Offer ongoing support for individuals transitioning from welfare to work through high quality training programs; and
- Coordinate labour-matching programs to connect low-income individuals with employers, based on skills and need.

## *2. Affordable Housing*

In an attempt to address the issue of affordable housing, the Ontario government now provides 35,000 new housing allowances and is funding 18,000 new units of affordable housing across the province. Additionally, the 2008 budget increased spending on affordable housing, allotting \$100 million to rehabilitate 4,000 existing social housing units province-wide with a focus on energy and efficiency improvements.

According to the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, ending homelessness must be central to the poverty reduction agenda as individuals without affordable and stable housing rarely have the opportunity for success in their endeavors (2005). To address this broad concern, a long-term affordable housing strategy is being developed; this strategy will provide non-profit and co-operative housing while utilizing

creative financial options (not yet identified) (Growing Stronger Together). One consideration for such an initiative is renewing participation with the Federal government in the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program prior to its anticipated termination in 2009 (Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, 2005).

### *3. Child Care and Early Learning*

Accessible and affordable childcare provides low-income parents the support needed to find and maintain meaningful employment that would likely afford them an appropriate living wage. The availability of early childhood education gives children a foundation for future educational success. In accordance with this, all Ontario families with an annual income below \$20,000 are eligible for a full subsidy to cover the cost of regulated childcare (Growing Stronger Together).

The Best Start Plan was designed to ensure that all Ontario children are fully prepared to learn by the time they enter grade one. This plan incorporates a variety of programming, some of which have already been implemented including the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, which provides families information on parenting and child development from before birth up to age six. Other parenting programs are offered through Ontario Early Years Centres, which also aims to provide more opportunities for high quality, affordable early learning and child care for young Ontario families. The proposed Best Start Plan also describes potential programming such as an infant hearing program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, speech and language therapy for children who require extra help, as well as services for children who are blind or have low vision (Growing Stronger Together).

#### *4. Income Support*

While accessible and affordable housing, education and childcare have been identified as key components in the reduction of poverty, the provincial government also recognizes the importance of social assistance, and as such, has addressed the need for more support in this regard. Some groups have suggested that virtually every aspect of the labour market has changed dramatically since the 1960's, with the exception of the income security system. Minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation (Campaign 2000, 2007) and at the current minimum wage of \$8.75; a full-time employee can expect to earn \$18,200.00 annually (before taxes). As such the Ontario government has made a commitment to increase the minimum wage annually by \$.75 and will continue to do so until 2010 when minimum wage reaches \$10.25 per hour for an annual earning of \$21,320.00 [before taxes] (Growing Stronger Together).

The proposed introduction of medical and dental benefits for low wage-workers would also help to provide all Ontarians with equal opportunities for adequate and affordable health care regardless of the industry in which they work (Campaign 2000, 2007). Adjustments have also been made to social assistance at the provincial level, including a 7% increase in available social assistance from 2004-2007, and a further 2% raise incorporated into the 2008 budget.

For individuals on social assistance, the Ontario Child Benefit was implemented in the summer of 2008, which provides additional financial support to families with dependant children who have filed their income taxes. This benefit is in addition to the family's monthly assistance cheque, as well as the National Child Benefit (Growing Stronger Together).

## 5. *Health*

The Ontario government has also addressed the importance of good health in achieving educational success and employment stability. As such a variety of programs are offered, including:

- Prevention and treatment-oriented dental services for low-income families
- Publicly funded immunizations
- HPV vaccinations for young women in the eighth grade
- The provision of insulin pumps and related supplies for children with diabetes,
- A comprehensive newborn screening program for genetic disorders.
- Support programs for individuals facing the effects of mental illness.

These programs translate into improved health and health related savings for all low-income families in Ontario (Growing Stronger Together).

### **APPENDIX 3: MINISTRY CONSULTATION QUESTION**

1. Given that our first priority is children and their families, how can we do a better job with existing resources to improve opportunities for children living in poverty?
2. What new ideas could we incorporate into our existing supports that would increase opportunities for children living in poverty?
3. We know that communities are best positioned to understand and respond to the local realities of poverty and opportunity. What is already working in your community to support children, youth and their families living in poverty to achieve their potential?
4. We know that to be successful we must all work together. How can we better integrate the roles that we all play – individuals, not-for-profits, the private sector, volunteers and all levels of government – in creating opportunity for Ontarians living in poverty?
5. We are focusing on children first, but we will develop a comprehensive, long-term poverty reduction strategy for all people living in poverty. What are the key long-term goals for improving opportunity with respect to groups other than children?
6. We need to be able to measure our progress on poverty reduction. What measures do you think will best show our progress in improving opportunity for Ontarians living in poverty?

**APPENDIX 4 – PRELIMINARY INDICATORS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES  
FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY**

| <b>Education and Skills Training</b>  | <b>Affordable Housing</b>   | <b>Health</b>  | <b>Childcare and Early Learning</b>  | <b>Income Supports</b>   |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>High school dropout rate.</p> <p>Individuals on O.W. and O.D.S.P. who get post secondary training &amp; employment.</p> <p>Local literacy rate.</p> <p>Participation in skills re-training programs available that allow families to maintain a living wage.</p> <p>School absenteeism rate.</p> <p>Funding for programs to assist individuals with foreign credentials in obtaining Canadian credentials.</p> | <p>The use of emergency shelters</p> <p>Individuals owning a home</p> <p>Integrated Affordable housing units.</p> <p>Supportive housing units and supportive housing initiatives</p> <p>People that spend over 30% of their income on rent;</p> <p>People that spend over 50% of their income on rent.</p> <p>Youth requiring shelter</p> <p>The waiting list for subsidized housing and all other housing programs such as supported living facilities.</p> <p>Rent supplement programs, which would in turn cause a decrease in the vacancy rate.</p> <p>People accessing rent bank</p> | <p>Students accessing nourishment programs</p> <p>People using food banks</p> <p>Initiatives available to low income individuals for Extended Health benefits</p> <p>Families / individuals with complex needs waiting for access to primary health care</p> <p>Access to and the number of grocery stores or establishments that offer healthy alternatives</p> <p>The number of people with chronic illness that don't have a physician or health care provider</p> <p>The number of people with chronic illness</p> <p>The number of education/awareness opportunities for people with chronic illness</p> <p>The number of multi-disciplinary health teams (Tai Boo, FHT, CHC)</p> | <p>Options available for evening and weekend care.</p> <p>People/children accessing early learning initiatives such as Children First, O.E.Y. Centres and Licensed Child Care.</p> <p>Neighbourhood hubs</p> <p>The number of children/families accessing subsidized childcare.</p> <p>The number of children under the age of six</p> <p>The number of children over the age of 6</p> <p>The number of children over the age of 12 with special needs</p> <p>The number and variety of programs available for children with special needs</p> <p>The number of ODSP/OW/EI recipients who are accessing childcare when returning to school/skills training</p> | <p>The median household income</p> <p>People who are eligible for E.I.</p> <p>The duration of the claim period for E.I.</p> <p>Qualifying time for E.I.</p> <p>Communication to promote awareness of program availability</p> <p>Wait times for income support programs such as E.I, O.W., O.D.S.P</p> <p>Employers and positions available for people on O.D.S.P.</p> <p>Persons employed by placement/temp. Agencies</p> <p>Rates for O.W., O.D.S.P., and E.I.</p> <p>People working for a living wage</p> <p>Jobless households</p> <p>Income for Seniors</p> <p>Pension rates for Seniors</p> <p>People engaged in family care</p> <p>People accessing benefits such as G.I.S.</p> |

| <b>Education and Skills Training</b> | <b>Affordable Housing</b>  | <b>Health</b>   | <b>Childcare and Early Learning</b>  | <b>Income Supports</b> |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|------------------------|
|                                      | People accessing programs for utility assist<br><br>People living on the street<br><br>People that spend over 40% of their income on rent; | The number of people accessing services of a multi-disciplinary health team<br><br>The number of specialist available | The number of ESL LINK classes available with attached childcare (restrictions on who is eligible) |                        |

Forum participants in Windsor and Essex County identified potential indicators and outcomes for each of the five components of poverty reduction identified at the federal and provincial levels.

## **APPENDIX 5 - POTENTIAL INDICATORS TO TRACK SUCCESS OF THE WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

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August 2008

### 1. EDUCATION/SKILLS TRAINING:

- (a) High school dropout rates
- (b) Individuals on OW and ODSP who receive post secondary training and obtain employment
- (c) Literacy rates

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) High school graduation rates
- (b) Number of individuals with foreign credentials who obtain Canadian credentials and secure employment in their area of specialization
- (c) Number of job training programs in sectors of projected growth

### 2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

- (a) Rates of use of emergency shelters
- (b) Rates of home ownership
- (c) Number of people who spend 30% of their income on rent
- (d) Number of people who spend 50% of their income on rent
- (e) Number of people without shelter
- (f) Number of home repossessions or mortgage arrears
- (g) Size of waitlist for subsidized housing

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) Residents' perception of neighborhood safety
- (b) Residents' perception of neighborhood social capital

3. CHILDCARE/EARLY LEARNING:

- (a) Number of options available for evening and weekend care

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) Size of waitlist for subsidized child care
- (b) Proportion of family income spent on child care by families with young children (e.g., ages 6 and younger)
- (c) Proportion of young children attending childcare who demonstrate cognitive and/or behavioral improvements as a result of the child care

4. INCOME SUPPORT (e.g., OW, EI, ODSP):

- (a) Median household income
- (b) Rates for OW, ODSP and EI (e.g., compare benefit rates with median income)
- (c) Proportion of working people whose income meets or exceeds a designated "living wage"
- (d) Unemployment rate for Windsor-Essex
- (e) Number of people persistently earning a low-income (i.e., below the Low Income Cut-off {LICO})

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) Proportion of family income required to purchase a nutritious diet, as outlined in the Ontario Nutritious Food Basket
- (b) Average and median lengths of unemployment
- (c) Size of gap between the incomes of low-income individuals and families and the LICO

5. HEALTH:

- (a) Number of low birth weight babies
- (b) Number of children accessing immunization programs
- (c) Number of premature babies
- (d) Number of people using food banks
- (e) Number of people without a physician

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (a) Proportion of population that reports food insecurity
- (b) Proportion of population that reports food scarcity
- (c) Reported life satisfaction
- (d) Reported financial security
- (e) Proportion of population that reports being in poor/fair health

## **APPENDIX 6: HAMILTON POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY\***

### **Introduction**

The city of Hamilton, on the western end of the Niagara Peninsula, is home to the third highest proportion of new Canadians, following Toronto and Vancouver. Foreign-born Canadians make up more than twenty percent of the population of one of the most highly industrialized cities in the country (Stats Can). With steel production as its greatest industry, Hamilton is responsible for the manufacturing of over 60% of Canada's steel. Despite the presence of such manufacturing powers as Dofasco and Stelco, as well as the opportunities presented by McMaster University and the four colleges located in the city, one in five Hamiltonians and one in four children experience the direct effects of poverty on a daily basis (Tackling Poverty in Hamilton).

To address the issue of poverty within the community, the city of Hamilton developed a Social Development Strategy to identify flagship initiatives and related goals/rationales for further development through the creation of a *Roundtable for Poverty Reduction*.

### **Flagship Initiatives**

#### **1. Investing in children and families**

*Goal:* By meeting the basic needs of children and providing a range of opportunities for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, all children can be offered the best possible start in life.

*Rationale:* It has been well documented that critical brain development occurs in children between 0 and 6 years, which can affect life-long academic performance and labour market success. In Hamilton, 25% of children 0-6 years of age live in

poverty. In order to provide a foundation for success and break the cycle of poverty, families must be able to access high quality early learning and regulated child care. Parents of children in early learning facilities have the opportunity to form a stronger attachment to the labour force and as such have higher lifetime earnings. The community at large also benefits because every dollar invested in early learning and childcare results in savings in health care, education, justice and social services systems.

## **2. Investing in labour force and skills development**

*Goal:* By identifying the core clusters of the Hamilton economy, the Skills Development Flagship Initiative will work to match the knowledge and skills of workers with the needs of the local economy, while assisting workers that have been marginalized from the labour market to access opportunities for meaningful employment.

*Rationale:* It is expected that given the number of adults nearing retirement age by 2011, the labour force in Hamilton will begin to shrink, resulting in a shrinking economy. There are a large number of potential workers, but they face barriers to employment. These potential workers include persons with disabilities, New Canadians, young people and others who do not have skills that match the demands of the labour force. By increasing the employable skill base of Hamiltonians, individuals will benefit from increases in both job security and employment income. The creation of this highly skilled and adaptable labour force will continuously attract new industry and business development.

### **3. Investing in affordable housing**

*Goal:* To ensure that all Hamiltonians have access to affordable housing the municipal government will increase the supply of affordable housing, and promote its availability through the provision of:

- Rent subsidies
- Funds for home improvement
- Funds for the payment of first and last months rent
- Emergency and shelter arrangements

*Rationale:* There are three central concerns regarding the issue of affordable housing in Hamilton (similar to those facing many other urban areas in Canada):

- 1) Household incomes have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing
- 2) The development of affordable housing has not kept pace with the increased need
- 3) Many women attempting to access women's shelters are being turned away as the demand on these services far exceeds the capacity

By ensuring adequate, stable and affordable housing, Hamiltonians can expect to benefit from better physical and mental health, better educational outcomes, and a stronger connection to the labour market and higher income levels. At the community level, much like fostering educational opportunities, such an investment can contribute to reduced costs in providing health care, education and social services.

\*<http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca>

## **APPENDIX 7: WATERLOO POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY\***

The city of Waterloo is the fifth fastest growing community in Canada, with unemployment rates well below the national average, and the highest rates of charitable contributions in the country. Despite having the second lowest rate of poverty in Canada, officials in Waterloo are concerned about the 47,450 citizens (one in ten) who face financial instability and hardship. Opportunities Waterloo Region (OWR) is an award winning community support organization whose purpose is to address the issue of poverty as well as the widening gap between those experiencing poverty and those who are prosperous.

The vision of Opportunities Waterloo is in line with that of poverty reduction strategies at the provincial and federal levels. It is the belief of OWR that within the Waterloo community, food, housing and health care should be secure and affordable, opportunities for meaningful and adequately compensated employment ought to be abundant, education affordable and available life long, and diversity and multiculturalism valued. In essence, OWR aims to create communities in Waterloo that care about each other and in which children are cherished.

To achieve this vision, Opportunities Waterloo has engaged in a variety of initiatives, which are described below.

### **Initiatives**

#### **1. Leadership Roundtable**

The Leadership Roundtable is a community-based multi-sector body that sets broad strategic guidelines for all initiatives undertaken by the OWR, and provides advocacy for populations whose needs are not being met. The roundtable is comprised of

various individuals in the community who have a vision of Waterloo as a prosperous and generous city. This includes representatives from:

- The municipal government
- Non profit, low-income and business sectors;
- Labour, faith, education, research and health sectors
- Organizations that provide financial support to Opportunities
- OWR staff

## **2. Community Conversations**

These bimonthly workshops include speakers showcasing what has recently been accomplished in the field of poverty reduction as well as innovative models of successful poverty reduction in other Canadian communities. Following the presentations, participants are encouraged to engage in topic-related discussion.

## **3. Recreation for all Youth**

Opportunities Waterloo (supported by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Citizenship and Immigration, and the Ministry of Health Promotion) has conducted an environmental scan of opportunities for leisure and recreation for youth aged 6-17 years of age in Waterloo and surrounding regions. Following the completion of the scan and surveys, Opportunities will have a clear picture of the leisure and recreation opportunities for youth in the community as well as an understanding of the barriers preventing youth from engaging in such activities. This initiative came to fruition following the documentation of the importance of recreational opportunities in addressing poverty among youth.

#### **4. Social Purchasing Portal**

The portal is an online “hub” of purchasers, suppliers and employment service providers, where everyday products and services can be purchased at good value while contributing to local employment development efforts. Essentially, as these businesses gain access to a variety of markets their employment demands increase. These partners agree to hire individuals who will require some support in entering the workforce for this new influx of positions, which allows marginalized individuals the opportunity to gain meaningful employment. The Social Purchasing Portal has been successfully used in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Surrey, Fraser Valley, Calgary and Vancouver Island. Currently, at least ten other Canadian communities are investigating the potential benefits of bringing it to their cities.

#### **5. Sustainable Livelihood Approach**

This approach suggests that in order for individuals to find their way out of poverty they need support in five areas:

- 1) Financial – income, in kind services, absence of debt
- 2) Social – mutual relationships of trust
- 3) Personal – self worth, purpose, emotional well being
- 4) Physical – housing, food security, childcare
- 5) Human – health, skills and capabilities needed to increase other asset areas

This approach provides a context for the development of a formal poverty reduction strategy by Opportunities Waterloo. Currently, this strategy is in the preliminary stages, but it will work in concert with the efforts made for the Provincial and Federal poverty reduction strategies. [\\*http://www.owr.ca](http://www.owr.ca)