



Making Poverty Everyone's Business Summary



On Wednesday, January 19th, 2011, Pathway to Potential hosted a community event entitled “Making Poverty Everyone’s Business” which featured keynote speaker Mark Chamberlain, CEO of Trivaris and former chair of Hamilton’s Poverty Reduction Roundtable. The event highlighted the fact that poverty reduction is truly a community effort. Mark’s speech focussed on the necessity of working together as a community to address economic sustainability and poverty reduction.

The event also gave us an opportunity to hear about poverty from the perspective of two local leaders: Tom Lucier, owner of Phog Lounge and Taking On Media, and Patrick Persichilli, Executive Vice President of the Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation. Both speakers conversed on their experience in participating in “Do The Math Challenge.” Patrick further spoke on promoting and tapping into the potential of the great skilled workforce that is currently on Ontario Works.



The event culminated with breakout learning and brainstorming sessions on food security, affordable housing, public awareness, affordable transportation, and jobs. In these breakout group participants discussed who needs to be involved in these initiatives, what R.E.A.L. (Raising Awareness, Engaging the Community, Advocacy, and Learning) action our community can take, and potential initiatives to research. The following is the summary of the learning and brainstorming session.



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Focus Group: Food Security

Who should be Involved?

- Business
- The Community
- Schools
- All levels of Government
- Farmers
- Food Banks

Raising Awareness:

- Raise awareness about the need for food security in the Windsor Essex Community.
- Raise awareness about the nutritional issues in food banks – high sodium content.
- Create more food awareness in school regarding healthy eating.

Engaging the Community:

- Farmers donate fresh food but there is not much space for this food in food banks - business could possibly create a place where these farmers can bring the food to be stored / refrigerated and services such as food banks and kitchens can get the food and have it delivered.
- Increase communication among all community members about the need of food security.
- Have more community involvement in community kitchens.
- Look into purchasing as directly as possible – local, organic, co-op farm model

Advocacy:

- There is a need for leadership and resources.
- Improve school programs such as after school snack programs by advocating for more funding.
- Advocate for the donation of a building to store food.



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Learning:

- Building a common understanding of the importance of knowing about where our food is coming from and what is in it.
- Food banks need to provide consumers with food that is usable (e.g. someone got a bag of flour in the “Do the Math” challenge but couldn’t use it for anything)
- Need to find ways to accept and store all types of food.
- Eradicate food stigma by educating the public.

Potential Initiatives to Research

- Move from a charity model to an empowerment model.
- Coordination of food distribution is key.
- Eradicate food stigma.
- Change the mindset from canned goods to fresh, nutritious foods in food banks.
- Continue to improve community gardens.
- Continue with the creation and improvement of a Food Charter. (The students at the University of Windsor are currently creating one).
- Create a website to link with food producers.
- Business to donate food and land for community gardens.
- Increase in gift card availability to buy fresh food.

Focus Group: Affordable Housing

Who should be Involved:

- The community.
- CMHC, H.A.C, CHIP, Rent Bank, Emergency Energy Fund. Etc.
- Other agencies and organizations.

Raising Awareness:

- Need to develop public awareness – The issue of poverty and the need for housing.



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- Raise awareness in regards to the importance of mixed income level housing instead of segregating low income individuals.
- Raise awareness on the housing issues in the county.

Engaging the Community:

- Need coordination on all levels – individual/community/government.
- Engage trades people to help with renovation /energy retrofit program.
- We need to take action and approach business in the endeavour.
- Offer incentives – affordable home ownership programs – property tax for example.
- Develop a community fund to “top up” things like rent banks to bridge government money.
- Engage the city in offering affordable warehouses to store donated items.

Advocacy:

- Social Service Department – bring landlords/residents together to provide people with roots/stability. There is a need for this to be increased because people who have low income are often restricted to reside in certain communities.
- Check to see if the municipality is doing all it can – tax breaks, waive fees, H4H – if not advocate for more work to be done.
- Family network conference on housing for people with disabilities.
- Strengthen policy framework.

Learning:

- It is important to provide support and supplies to people who due to financial circumstances do not have the necessary furniture and other basic necessities to comfortably reside in their home. This entails agencies; policymakers etc. to understand what people need instead of assuming what they need and how to go about providing this support.
- Supporting people in learning how to be good residents –providing them with the knowledge and tools they may need to take care of



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their property and become active members of their housing community.

Potential Initiatives to Research

- Need to develop a municipal strategy around our belief in affordable housing.
- Review zoning policies as they are preventing private business from helping.
- Zoning by-law needs to change. For example families with adult children with disabilities.
- Transportation need to allow people to live where they want - especially in the county.
- Business to provide a storage site for household items
- Mixed use planning for new developments. What to do with existing communities? Toronto example, (Regents Park, Vancouver model (B.P)).
- Allow communities to have flexibility when spending provincial/federal money
- Legislative changes allowing creativity – i.e secondary suites.
- Pay direct rent – helps landlords.
- Transporting items for people who do not have access to personal transportation
- Rent Support programs – educating landlords about this program.
- Perhaps we can work alongside businesses and set up a “community fund.” Businesses could donate to this fund.

Focus Group: Jobs

Who should be Involved?

- Employers – Business – Corporations
- The Community
- All levels of government
- Ontario Works



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Raising Awareness:

- Need more easily accessible information for people in “grey areas” – people who are between jobs or people who have not completed school.
- The importance of educating employers about stereotyping.

Engaging the Community:

- Utilize resources such as YMCA kids club – homework club, childcare and healthy living (nutrition, etc.) are offered for 3 hours after school.
- Employers should be educated to be more sensitive to worker's personal lives. Single mothers are sometimes stressed because they do not have reliable child-care. If employers are more sensitive, more people can maintain employment.
- Need partnerships between community members.

Advocacy:

- The government should be involved in the process of creating jobs.
- It is important for employees that have disabilities to be given access to service.
- Temporary and part-time jobs lack benefits that full-time work has. The goal should be to help people obtain full-time work in order to have benefits and live a healthy life.

Learning:

- Networking was identified as being very important. People should have the chance to make connections. The groups discussed that it is also important to educate the employers against stereotyping.
- Need to change the *culture* of youth. Engage students to be more pro-active in networking, in obtaining job experience, and being more assertive in getting jobs.

Potential Initiatives to Research:

- If there are no existing jobs available we can try to create new ones. The Government funds small business start ups, and few business



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owners know this. There is a need for advertising – perhaps workshops for the public.

- Create training and skills development workshops for people to learn skills to be eligible to start up their own businesses.
- One business owner stated that if business taxes were lowered, business owners could afford to hire more people.
- Employers should offer child-care in the work place.
- Internships are valuable because they teach skills so that people have experience

Focus Group: Public Awareness

Who should be Involved:

- The public
- Community members
- Business
- All levels of Government
- Agencies and Organizations

Raising Awareness and Learning:

- Developing broad based education that is deeply rooted in raising awareness on poverty is critical. The internet can be used as a platform to reduce stereotypes.
- Educating children and involving them in community services that work with poverty to help children develop their own set of values on the issue.
- Public awareness on available resources in the community for people living in low income and how to access them is important. In addition, it is important to get the basic information about poverty into the public.

Engaging the Community and Advocacy:

- Create strategies using visual messages that put a face on poverty to engage the community in poverty reduction.
- Create a thought provoking message that will capture the viewer's attention to promote awareness and incline people to take action.



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- Involve people with lived experiences of poverty, such as Voices Against poverty in any development of plans or actions taken place to work with poverty.
- Develop a concrete action plan of 1 or 2 goals.
- Advocate for a society that does not have poverty within it and raising awareness about the benefits of this type of society

Potential Initiatives to Research

- Engage government leaders when they are making decisions.
- Engage Transit Windsor to have a public awareness message about poverty on public buses.
- Look at Evidence Based Practices on poverty reduction and look into initiatives that have proven successful in other cities, provinces or countries and their potential for our city.
- Inform businesses about the benefits of raising wages. If businesses were aware of the overall benefits associated with adequate pay, (such as lowered health costs and lowered turnover) they may be more inclined to take part in this practice.

Focus Group: Affordable Transportation

Who should be Involved:

- Businesses (shift work, county)
- Education system
- Child care system
- New Canadians
- Seniors
- End-users
- All levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal)

Raising Awareness

- Awareness and Education campaign to promote transportation alternatives (target younger generation and have it be multi-languages)
- Promote transportation as a human right



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Engage the Community

- Define transportation for this region
- Create an asset map of all available forms of transportation and determine the current gaps
- Look into affordable transportation alternatives to busses

Potential Initiatives to Research

- Vehicle co-op like in Waterloo
- Ride Share Program (A formalized safe carpool program)
- Job bus like Niagara Falls
- Bike rental system like Montreal
- Partnership between business and government to have the cab companies supplement the busses. A cab system that would allow seniors to utilize 100 rides.