

END POVERTY IN A GENERATION

A STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2015

endpoverty
edmonton

Edmonton is a prosperous city.

Our city is growing and thriving. Unless we see or experience poverty first hand, we may not realize that **our prosperity is not shared by all of us.**

POVERTY EXISTS IN THE MIDST OF OUR PROSPERITY

One out of every eight people living in Edmonton – 100,870 of us – is living in poverty¹. Those twelve per cent of us do not have the means to assure stable secure housing, adequate nutritious food or the conditions that foster health, safety and basic quality of life.

One out of every five Edmonton children – nearly 33,000 – is living in poverty. Just over one in three Edmonton children who lives in a lone-parent family live in poverty.² In addition, almost one in two Aboriginal children lives in poverty. Those children's living conditions are less likely to foster their healthy development or enable them to get the full benefit from their education. That limits their opportunities to thrive into successful adulthood.

POVERTY HURTS ALL OF US

Poverty has an economic impact – Aside from the cost of services that might not be needed if one in eight of us did not live in poverty, our fellow Edmontonians who live in poverty are consumed with meeting their survival needs. They have little energy or time to contribute their creativity and skills to the greater economy and community. They do not have the financial means to be employees, customers and clients of our businesses.

Poverty has a human rights impact – The United Nations Charter highlights "...the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair... with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential." Too many of us do not experience those conditions.

WE CAN CHANGE THIS – AND WE MUST

In March 2014, EndPovertyEdmonton was appointed as a Task Force by City Council. Building on a history of collaborative work led by the City and the United Way Capital Region, the Task Force is moving ahead boldly to identify collective and tangible actions needed to eliminate poverty in Edmonton.

THE GOAL: END POVERTY IN ONE GENERATION

*...A child born in poverty today will not live in poverty as an adult.
...One generation later, that child's child will not be born into poverty.*

There are no quick fixes. The Task Force has identified actions that Edmontonians can take now to have an immediate impact and that address the root causes of poverty. Ultimately these actions will enable Edmontonians to become their own agents of change and fulfill their aspirations for a better life in our city.

Join the movement to end poverty in one generation.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Mayor Don Iveson
City of Edmonton
EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force Co-Chair



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Rt. Rev. Jane Alexander
Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Edmonton
EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force Co-Chair

THE EndPovertyEdmonton STRATEGY AIMS TO DO THREE THINGS

1. Paint the picture

so Edmontonians know the reality of poverty in our city – what it is, what it means in people's lives, and how it affects all of us.

2. Set priorities

that begin to have an immediate impact for people who are living in poverty now, while we address root causes and generate long-term solutions that will end poverty.

We don't just want to help people cope with poverty. We want to END POVERTY in one generation.

3. Kick start a movement

We are nearly a million strong. We have a track record of amazing accomplishments. We can do this.

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Build a movement

"To be successful, to end poverty, this has to be a movement. It's about building a truly inclusive city for all."

*Mayor Don Iveson,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force Co-Chair*

EndPoverty Edmonton

PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE

TOWARD TRUE RECONCILIATION

1. Establish an Aboriginal culture and wellness centre
2. Initiate people-first and trauma-informed policy and practice
3. Implement a community witness program
4. Provide opportunities where Aboriginal people in poverty can “show and grow” their talents
5. Make systemic changes to better reflect the needs, interests and culture of Aboriginal people

JUSTICE FOR ALL

6. Eliminate racism
7. Decriminalize poverty
8. Make it easier to vote and participate in elections
9. Make Edmonton a “human rights city”

MOVE PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY

10. Advocate for livable incomes for Edmontonians
11. Make transit reliable, accessible and affordable for Edmontonians
12. Improve and expand transit services
13. Negotiate with other orders of government to increase funding for affordable and supportive housing as well as rental subsidy programs
14. Develop a community-based learning group to look at housing and zoning innovations
15. Improve skills training to help people gain sustainable employment
16. Improve literacy
17. Reduce barriers to getting information and accessing City programs and services
18. Help people navigate systems in order to access resources and opportunities
19. Improve timely access to mental health and wellness services



INVEST IN OUR POVERTY-FREE FUTURE

- 20.** Grow social enterprises to build sustainable livelihood and assets
- 21.** Invest in food security-oriented enterprises aimed at increasing food access and gainful employment
- 22.** Partner with community organizations and other stakeholders to create a community development corporation
- 23.** Plan and implement a system of early learning and care
- 24.** Reduce barriers for children and families to access services, including out-of-school care and respite care
- 25.** Advocate to the provincial government for the implementation of culturally sensitive curricula and for standards that require well-educated staff in all early learning and care centres
- 26.** Advocate to the provincial government for sustainable, predictable and adequate funding for school-based wrap-around services
- 27.** Keep the individual at the centre in providing care, services and supports

CHANGE THE CONVERSATION: BUILD A MOVEMENT TO END POVERTY

- 28.** Launch a collaborative broad-based community engagement and education initiative to change people's attitudes about poverty

Why is it important to eliminate poverty?

"The idea of merely reducing poverty implies that it is acceptable at some level. Our numbers tell the story and it is obscene. We want a community where everyone has the opportunity to be successful."

*Bishop Jane Alexander,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force Co-Chair*



Photo provided by Boyle Street Community Services Artist in Residence Program

"About 70 per cent of the people who are living below the poverty line are working – often two or three jobs.

They are also often supporting large families. So we haven't really addressed some of the deeper challenges."

*Mayor Don Iveson,
EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force
Co-Chair*

PAINT THE PICTURE: POVERTY IN EDMONTON

What is poverty?

Poverty is defined as when people lack, or are denied, economic, social and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community. (Task Force definition, 2014)

The Cree word for “poor” is **okitimâkisiw**, which loosely translated into English means “a person in need, one who is poor,” or **kitimakatchihow**, which means “he lives poorly” with no direct reference to money.

You can be monetarily poor, but rich with your traditions, culture and family to sustain you. You can be monetarily rich, but poor without a circle of true friends or values to guide you.

For many Aboriginal people, these terms also refer to loss of culture, traditions, language and spiritual connections. Being “poor” is about missing out on someone’s potential, gifts and talents, or losing access to the wisdom of Elders or the support of family.

In Edmonton, our definition is about more than just money, because poverty as experienced by diverse Edmontonians – from First Nations to newcomers – is more complex than an economic circumstance.

When people live with poverty, they have fewer choices and chances to achieve their dreams, and a reduced ability to contribute to society. By necessity, they expend their energy on survival. The daily stress takes its toll. Children often don’t receive what they need to break free of the cycle of poverty. Many feel defeated before they enter adulthood. And the cycle begins again.

POVERTY EXISTS IN EVERY PART OF OUR CITY

When thinking about poverty in Edmonton, many of us picture homeless people downtown. You may be surprised to know that poverty is experienced all over our city. Some neighbourhoods have a higher proportion of people in poverty, but poverty is experienced in every quadrant of our city.

MOST PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY ARE EMPLOYED – THEY ARE THE WORKING POOR

Most Edmontonians have good jobs and make decent wages. However, in 2012, 12.3 per cent earned a low income. Even after working full time for a year, their salaries brought in an annual income below the poverty line. Poverty among those who work exists because a significant proportion of jobs are low-paying. These low-paying jobs are often precarious: lacking job security without fixed hours of work and with few or no benefits.

In 2013, over three-quarters (75.2 per cent) of jobs in Edmonton were in generally low-paying sectors like retail, accommodation and food services, janitorial, private security and personal care.³

19.5%
of all employed
Edmontonians earn
less than
\$15/hr.



Who is more at risk of living in poverty?

The 100,870 people living with a low income include...

- ▶ 42,200 persons in low-income couple families
- ▶ 30,600 persons in lone-parent families
- ▶ 26,070 single adults, and
- ▶ 2,000 others.

The highest poverty rate is experienced by lone-parent families, followed by single adults and then couple families.

Several populations are over-represented among our fellow Edmontonians who live with poverty. These are...

- ▶ Children and youth
- ▶ Aboriginal people
- ▶ Working poor
- ▶ Newcomers
- ▶ Women, and
- ▶ Persons with disabilities.

"If I get sick for two weeks, I lose my wages."

"Some of the hardest-working people are paid the least."

Focus Group participants

Root causes of poverty and vulnerability

EndPovertyEdmonton aims to *eliminate* poverty, not just manage it or help people to cope with it. Therefore it is important to understand the root causes of poverty. Where does it come from? What conditions increase the probability of poverty? If we know the answers to those questions, that should help us to identify where to focus our work to end poverty.

Four sources of vulnerability can increase the risk of poverty:

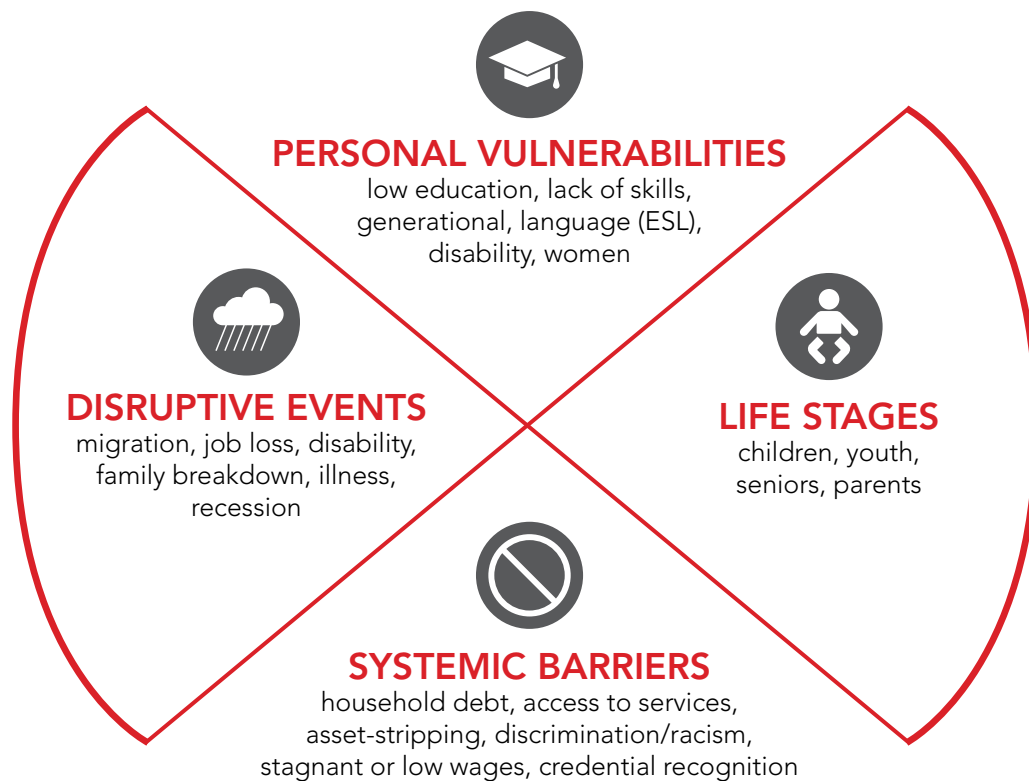
- ▶ Personal vulnerability
- ▶ Life stages
- ▶ Disruptive events, and
- ▶ Systemic barriers.

"Poverty is not about laziness, or having too many children, or poor people making poor choices with their money. The poverty of our fellow citizens is a choice we, all Edmontonians, make every day when we don't demand something different and better from our politicians and policy makers."

*Sarah Eadie,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force member*

ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY

Sources of Vulnerability*



*Source: Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative, 2013

IN MARCH 2015,
14,794 PEOPLE
WENT TO THE
**FOOD
BANK.**

40%
of people served by
Edmonton's food bank
ARE YOUTH
under the age of 18.

Poverty may be temporary – or not

Poverty may be temporary or short term for people who experience a disruptive event, or whose vulnerability is, for example, a skill gap which can be learned (**transitional poverty**).

Poverty may be persistent when people experience a continuous spell of low income lasting ten years or more, caused by a combination of many factors beyond the individual's control (**chronic poverty**).

Sometimes conditions of poverty can be passed on to individuals, families or communities trapped in the complexity of poverty's causes with little or no access to help get out of it (**intergenerational poverty**).

Each type of poverty requires different approaches in order to end it. The priorities suggested later in this report offer actions that can impact different types of poverty.

"Someone has a good paying job and then gets injured or ill. In that situation, their assessed income from the year looks high, so they're not eligible for help. There's no safety net."

Focus Group participant

"When I was back home I used to own a big business, would send my kids to school, buy whatever I wanted to buy and help others. But when I came here because of war, everything was lost. When I moved to Canada, I was 'supported' instead of 'supporting.'"

Focus Group participant



What does poverty mean in people's lives?

Shared abundance and shared prosperity are about more than just income. They are also about shared equity and shared opportunity. Living in poverty impacts every aspect of people's lives.

Fewer choices. When people live with poverty, they have fewer choices, less potential to achieve their dreams and a reduced ability to contribute to society.

Stress. By necessity, people living in poverty expend their energy on survival. When you are one paycheque away from disaster, simple things become complicated and small things become big. One fewer shift at your job, or one unexpected expense, can shake everything. The daily stress takes its toll.

Poorer health. The World Health Organization has declared poverty to be the single largest determinant of health. Poverty impacts health in several ways.

When families are short of money and they cannot lower expenses for rent or public transit to get to work and school, one of the first places they cut expenses is on food. Many turn to cheap starch products since they cannot afford the cost of healthier options such as fruits and vegetables. There's no money for prescription drugs or dental care not covered by Alberta Health. Poor nutrition and lack of medical care impact health.

Factors such as these, combined with ongoing grinding stress, can lead to illness. In turn, illness can lead to intensified poverty due to missing work, resulting in decreased earnings or being fired for absenteeism.

Children suffering. With the adults in their lives being under constant stress, children also feel the tension. Parents working two or three jobs may not have time or energy for

nurturing. The family may live in a neighbourhood that feels unsafe, so outdoor play is limited. Organized sports or involvement in arts and culture are not possible within the family income. The prosperous-appearing families they see in media, or even among other children at school, are nothing like those they see around them. Children and youth may feel defeated before they enter adulthood – and the cycle continues. Chronic stress also affects children's early brain development with potentially lifelong consequences.

Growing inequality. Poverty does not just impact individuals and families; it impacts society as a whole. Between 1982 and 2012, the income of the top one per cent of Edmontonians grew by 50 per cent while the income of the remaining 99 per cent of Edmontonians increased by less than ten per cent.⁴ This income gap shows a pattern of growing inequality in our city. This pattern is also occurring across Canada.

History, and the experience of other cities and countries, tells us that growing inequality has a tipping point that can have a disruptive impact on society.

EndPovertyEdmonton priorities include actions to address immediate stressors while helping individuals and families move out of, and stay out of, poverty. These actions, combined with other actions that tackle root causes of poverty, will close the door on poverty and increase shared opportunity and abundance for all Edmontonians.

"As an emergency medicine physician practicing in a busy inner city hospital, I see on a daily basis the impact of poverty on the health of these individuals. This Task Force to End Poverty is bold, timely and can serve as a catalyst and rallying cry for much needed societal change. Make no mistake about it. Poverty impacts your health – almost always negatively."

*Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force member*



**"Stress wears on you. The ripple effects...
either too stressed to eat well or can't
afford to eat well – a cycle of poor
emotional and physical health."**

Focus Group participant

Meet four Edmonton families living in poverty

Here are profiles of four Edmonton families who have experienced life below the poverty line. These are real Edmonton families who told their stories during recent research.⁵ To protect their privacy, the names of individuals have been changed.



MEET LING

Ling is an immigrant single mother who gave birth to a daughter, Katelyn, in Edmonton five years after she arrived from China. She was a teacher in China and has had her credentials assessed by Government of Alberta as equivalent to that of a teaching certificate. Initially, she had a lot of difficulty securing employment because she was unable to get suitable childcare for her baby daughter, even for job interviews. She is also entangled in a child support lawsuit with her daughter's father, which is very stressful for her. She takes transit to her destinations, which is difficult in winter with a baby. She eventually determined the challenges of finding work, transportation, childcare, and the legal system to be too much and made the difficult decision to send Katelyn to China to live with Ling's parents. Since then Ling has taken two jobs, both temporary, and works seven days a week. She is currently out of poverty.

MEET JULIE AND NICK

Julie and Nick live in a north-central neighbourhood with their three elementary school-aged children. Due to a workplace injury, Nick has needed six operations and is no longer is able to work. Julie works part-time and, together with Nick's disability payments, they live below the poverty line. Even though they cannot always afford sufficient food, they do not access the Edmonton Food Bank, relying instead on contributions from their church. The family does not own a vehicle and walks or takes the bus to get places. Julie would like to take their children to different city activities during school holidays but cannot afford the bus tickets. They own their house; however, due to their restricted incomes and Nick's disability, the family cannot complete all the repairs that the house desperately needs. Nicks receives a notice from WCB stating his benefits will soon stop. He is now looking for work even though he is in no condition to be working. Julie and Nick are currently entrenched in poverty.





MEET CLAY

Clay is an Aboriginal single father of two children under the age of 12. He is a very committed father and likes to stay active with his children. The family does not feel safe in its neighbourhood since there have been several stabbings and assaults in the area. Clay does not have much in the way of friends and family. Despite a lengthy career in construction, Clay got behind in his bills after a brief period of unemployment. He began working again but, to get by, the family accesses the Edmonton Food Bank. During this time Clay is informed by the after-school daycare that his children are no longer welcomed as the daycare is tired of dealing with subsidy arrangements. Now he has to work part-time to care for his children, and is let go by his employer one week later. Clay finds new jobs, but has trouble keeping them due to interpersonal conflicts. He is eventually employed full-time once again. Clay now struggles to find help for his daughter, who has just revealed she had been abused when she was younger and living on the reserve. Clay and his family cycle in and out of poverty.

MEET KIM

Kim is a single mother of Euro-Canadian background, who was born and raised in Edmonton. Kim, along with her teenaged son, Brandon and preteen daughter, Erica, live with her father in a two-bedroom home. It is too small for the family and is in need of major repairs; however the rent is cheap. Despite a 13-year history of paid employment, Kim is currently not working due to multiple physical and mental health issues. Brandon, who has bipolar disorder and is over six feet in height, has been violent with both Kim and Erica. After continuously missing classes, he eventually drops out of school, having achieved a Grade 9 level of education. The family does not own a vehicle and struggles with transportation. They are also reliant on food banks, and the thrift stores and the Goodwill for clothing. Kim and her family are entrenched in poverty.



Later in this document we will see how the EndPovertyEdmonton priorities have the potential to improve the quality of life for Ling, Clay, Julie and Nick, and Kim.

Chronically homeless people
cost taxpayers directly and indirectly
over **\$100,000 a year per person.**

(Direct costs include emergency shelters, services and programming;
indirect costs include correctional, justice and health system costs)

**PROVIDING
SUPPORTS
& HOUSING
FOR A HOMELESS
INDIVIDUAL GENERALLY
COSTS ABOUT
\$35,000 A YEAR.**

THE CASE FOR ENDING POVERTY

THE ECONOMIC CASE

Poverty is currently one of the largest burdens on the economic, healthcare and criminal justice systems in Canada. Finding realistic solutions to move people out of poverty will save taxpayers money in the long run. We cannot afford to have people live in poverty. It's that simple.

We can strengthen the economy by helping unemployed or underemployed people to get jobs that support them and their families. It will also reduce costs to taxpayers. Our future economic growth is dependent on continued labour force expansion: we can ensure each Edmontonian is equipped to play his or her role.

Business and the not-for-profit sectors stand to benefit from ending poverty. Increased incomes mean more purchasing power to buy more goods and services. Workers with adequate wages contribute to increased productivity. The leadership and innovation offered by the business and the not-for-profit sectors will be key to ending poverty.

Here are the facts.

- ▶ In 2011, the federal government spent \$19.9 billion on employment insurance and an additional \$4 billion on transfers to low-income families⁶.
- ▶ In Alberta, calculations have shown poverty costs the province between \$7.1 and \$9.5 billion every year⁷.

That means poverty is costing each adult Albertan between \$2,700 and \$3,600 every year.

The cost of poverty is unsustainable. It makes good business sense to create a strong economic and social legacy for future generations. Investing in finding solutions will not only yield a healthier, more engaged, more productive populace, but it will also save us money.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS CASE

Poverty is more than living with a lack of income; it robs individuals to live a life in dignity. We must affirm the basic human rights and freedoms of all Edmontonians to participate in the civil, cultural, political, social and economic dimensions of society.

If we do not acknowledge these basic rights, we are tacitly accepting, for example, that a child needs to be "deserving" enough in order to have adequate food, shelter and educational opportunities.

Edmontonians and Canadians prove, time and time again, that we believe in the value and dignity of each child – we only need our actions and public policy to rise to that belief.

Ending poverty does not just mean that individuals, families and children have adequate income, housing and food. It also means all people have the opportunity to be engaged in our city, to contribute to the solutions and to be involved in shaping the community we live in.

Together we must challenge stereotypes and combat injustice in every neighbourhood. Now is the time for us all to share in Edmonton's prosperity.

"Because cities are the crossroads where resources and creativity intersect, we become labs where ideas reach their tipping point and become reality. Nowhere is that more true than in Edmonton."

*Mayor Don Iveson,
State of the City Address
May 2015*

THE PUBLIC OPINION CASE

Edmontonians do not need to be convinced that addressing poverty is a good idea.

A Leger survey of Edmontonians in February 2015 showed strong support for ending poverty.⁸

Is eliminating poverty a good use of taxpayer dollars? YES.

- ▶ Seventy-two per cent of respondents agreed that poverty is a core issue in the city and it should be prioritized.
- ▶ Ninety-four per cent believe that eliminating poverty will benefit society.

Can poverty really be eliminated? YES.

- ▶ Eighty-seven per cent of respondents agreed that poverty can be eliminated or drastically reduced if enough efforts are made.
- ▶ Eighty-seven per cent of respondents agreed that everyone plays a role in ending poverty.

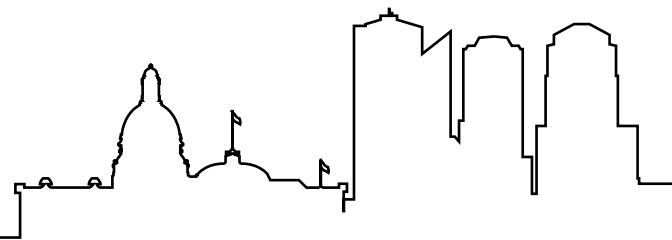
We have made the case to end poverty. Now it's time to act.

THE ECONOMIC CASE.

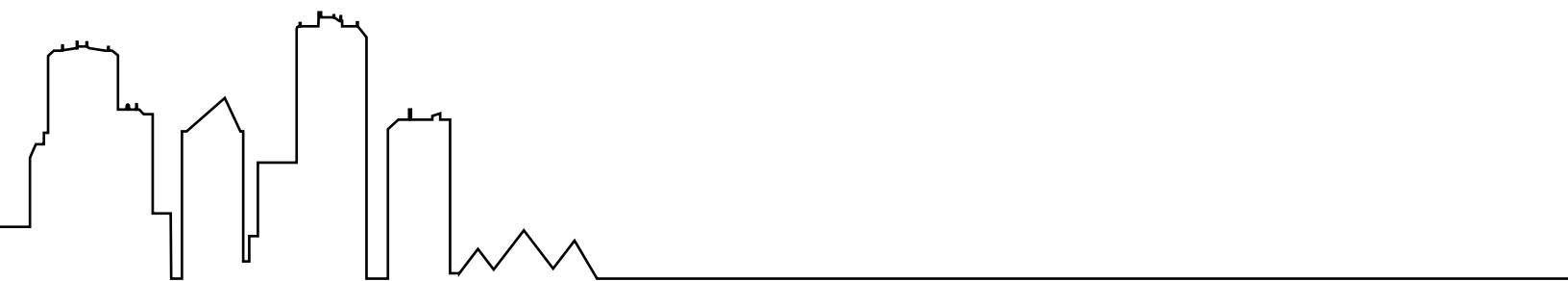
THE HUMAN RIGHTS CASE.

THE PUBLIC OPINION CASE.

**We have
made the
case to end
poverty.**



**NOW
IT'S
TIME
TO
ACT.**



SET PRIORITIES: THE EndPovertyEdmonton STRATEGY

EndPovertyEdmonton TASK FORCE

In March 2014, EndPovertyEdmonton was formed as a Task Force. The mandate: develop a strategy to end poverty in Edmonton within one generation. The Task Force built on the work of the previous Edmonton Poverty Elimination Initiative which was co-chaired by the United Way Capital Region and the City.

In addition, EndPovertyEdmonton acknowledges the Housing First vision of *Edmonton's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* released in 2009. Indeed, that provision of affordable quality housing to those living in the cycle of poverty is a pillar of EndPovertyEdmonton's work. Ending poverty is a critical success factor for achieving our city's plan to end homelessness.

STATEMENTS OF BELIEF

From the beginning, the EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force was guided by these Statements of Belief:

- ▶ We believe that ending poverty means supporting each and every Edmontonian to feel included and valued.
- ▶ We believe that finding solutions involves the whole community – most importantly Edmontonians living in poverty.
- ▶ We believe that ending poverty means changing hearts and minds so, as a community, we can all commit to ending poverty.
- ▶ We believe that investing in people and communities is the right thing to do – and it's financially responsible.
- ▶ We are in this for the long term: poverty is complex, systemic and deeply rooted.
- ▶ This is our opportunity to transform our community: to think creatively and take bold action.

The Task Force began by consulting with two Round Tables, reviewing past work and commissioning new research. Most importantly, people who were living with poverty talked about the real, tangible things that would make the greatest difference to them. Based on what they learned, the Task Force engaged roughly 200 people in seven Working Groups to focus on specific aspects of poverty.



FIVE DEFINING FEATURES

As information was generated from research and the Working Groups, the Task Force identified that its strategy and priorities for action to end poverty speak to five defining features.

1. Honour the Treaty spirit

Our city has a surging number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who seek a bright future in our city. Many of these people have been dramatically affected by the intergenerational trauma of residential schools and assimilationist policies, and poverty represents a legacy of inequities and injustices that continue today.

Edmonton is located on Treaty 6 territory, and City Council declared 2014-2015 a year of Truth and Reconciliation in Edmonton. Mayor Don Iveson points out, “we are all Treaty people.” Starting from this perspective, the EndPovertyEdmonton strategy has been shaped by its vision that Edmonton become a city where all can enjoy prosperity and equity, a city that lives and breathes the treaty spirit, and a city that uplifts us all.

2. Change attitudes

EndPovertyEdmonton is about actions, but we know that actions grow out of beliefs and attitudes. Only by correcting inaccurate beliefs and changing attitudes about poverty will our actions be effective. Clear thinking based on accurate information, and attitudes of openness and willingness to change will open up opportunities for new solutions and innovations to emerge.

3. Start a movement

Ending poverty in Edmonton is not something that the Task Force – or any group – can do alone. An ambition like this must involve the whole community in a movement that takes on a life of its own. A community champions a movement in big and small ways because it cares and it wants change. By actively engaging all Edmontonians as part of the solution, this grassroots EndPovertyEdmonton movement is the catalyst for change.

4. Tackle root causes

We need to address the systemic underlying causes of poverty. While we are taking action on behalf of our most vulnerable people, we are also working to address underlying issues – racism, unresponsive systems, the widening income gaps – that will take longer to change.

5. Lever local partnerships

One of the things the Task Force discovered during its work is how quickly and easily new partnerships can be formed. Most people want to rally together. By connecting them with others having different perspectives, new possibilities emerge. Within partnerships of diverse stakeholders, we may discover how to use technology in new ways, or how to adapt concepts from business, industry, philanthropy, medicine, community development, faith communities and education in order to end poverty.

Why do you believe we can end poverty in a generation?

“We just have to. It’s not right to have people wanting for the basics here in Alberta. And particularly for children – we need to give them a chance. We’re all they’ve got.”

*Justin Archer,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force member*

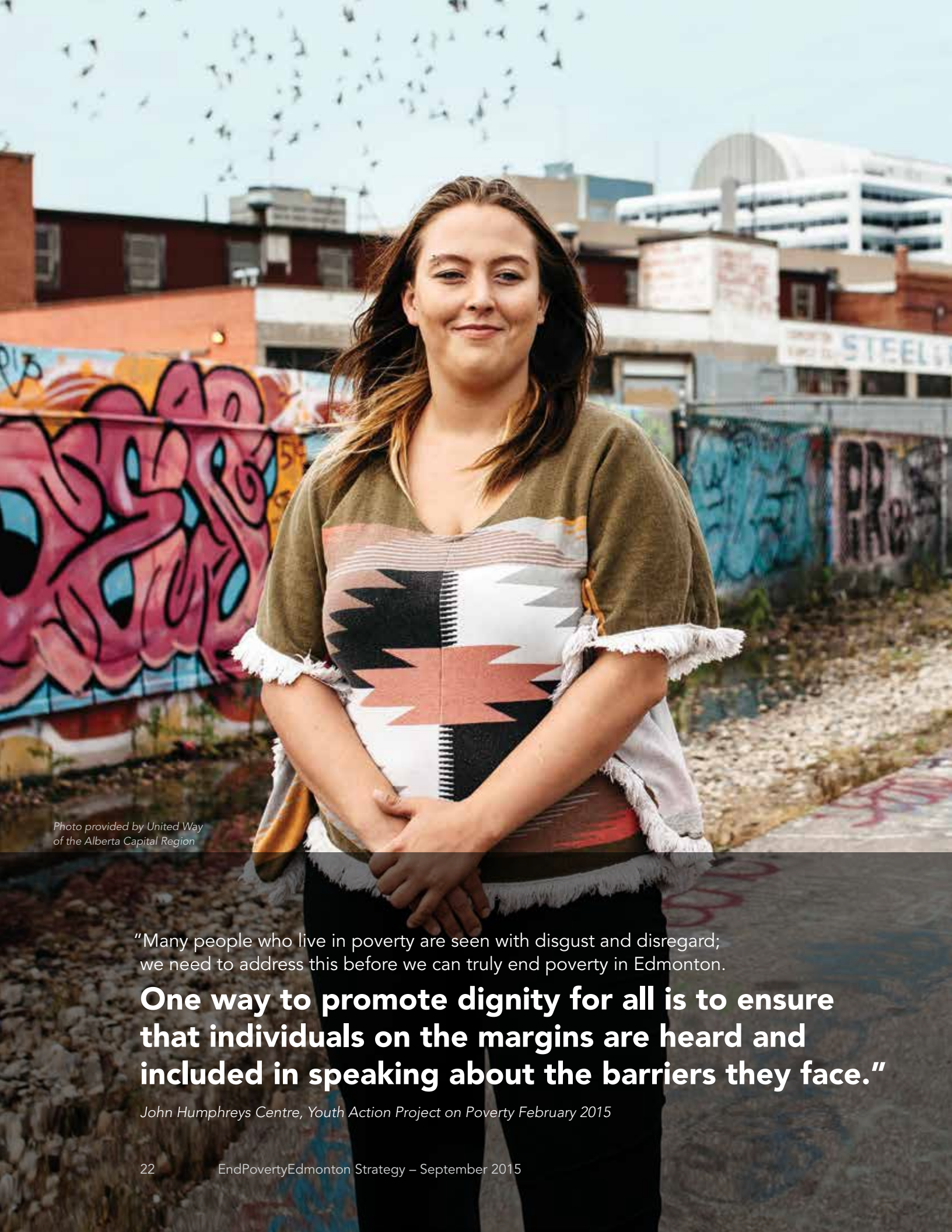


Photo provided by United Way
of the Alberta Capital Region

"Many people who live in poverty are seen with disgust and disregard;
we need to address this before we can truly end poverty in Edmonton.

**One way to promote dignity for all is to ensure
that individuals on the margins are heard and
included in speaking about the barriers they face."**

John Humphreys Centre, Youth Action Project on Poverty February 2015

PRIORITIES

From the stories and experiences of people living with poverty, from the research and background information, and from the expertise and experience of the two Round Tables and seven Working Groups, more than 80 recommendations and 400 actions were generated. In order to determine priorities, the Task Force used five criteria.

Five criteria

1. Foundational and sustainable change - Recommendations that focus on tackling root causes, addressing systemic or structural change and, if achieved, would on their own contribute to eliminating poverty in a measurable way, fundamentally shift our thinking and create lasting change.

2. Impact on vulnerable populations - Recommendations that will reach and improve the lives of those who are most at-risk of, or impacted by, poverty such as Aboriginal people, children and youth, working poor, newcomers, women and persons with disabilities.

3. Upstream and prevention focus - Recommendations that make the most impact on people and represent long-term thinking to create conditions for all people to enjoy healthy and prosperous lives.

4. Ripple effects - Recommendations that are capable of linking with, and influencing, other priorities, across multiple areas and leverage other efforts.

5. Achievable - Recommendations and ideas that are tangible and feasible.

Using the five criteria, the Task Force arrived at a set of priorities that represent actions and steps needed to begin the work of eliminating poverty. They include a suite of policy initiatives, program investments, service enhancements and community-driven activities. They address poverty from multiple dimensions, including responding to urgent and immediate needs, removing barriers to change, and tackling the root causes of poverty.

The priorities are closely linked and they affect each other in many ways. The priorities are grouped to show how best to tackle urgent needs, while working through those that need more time to implement. However, they are inter-related and priorities listed in one section often have relevance for those in other sections.

The priorities are grouped into four areas, with one overarching priority:

- ▶ Toward true reconciliation
- ▶ Justice for all
- ▶ Move people out of poverty
- ▶ Invest in a poverty-free future

Overarching priority:

- ▶ Change the conversation: build a movement

As you review the priorities you will see ways that **you** can make an impact to help end poverty.

TREATY ROOTS

Amiskwaciwaskahikan

Beaver Hills, was the Cree name for this place before we knew it to be **Edmonton**.

EDMONTON IS ROOTED IN ABORIGINAL HISTORY.

Its location was part of an important Aboriginal **trade route** and served as **a gathering place**, which for centuries has been a peaceful and spiritual place of **harmony**, **balance** and **commerce** for many Aboriginal peoples.

It was in this place that early relationships led to the adhesion of Treaty 6, the Province of Alberta, and the City of Edmonton.

Toward true reconciliation

We acknowledge that we reside on Treaty 6 territory and together call upon honoured traditions and our spirit to maintain a strong and lasting relationship between the City of Edmonton and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Non-Status Aboriginal peoples.

This relationship is embodied in memoranda of relationships between the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations and the City of Edmonton as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta and the City of Edmonton. These agreements reflect the spirit of mutual sharing and respect. As well, City Council in 2005 affirmed its commitment to building relationships with Aboriginal peoples by a declaration which:

- ▶ Acknowledges past injustices from the legacy of colonialism that created the unique challenges facing Aboriginal peoples today
- ▶ Values and celebrates the unique contributions of Aboriginal peoples today in the areas of enriching Canada's cultural identity, advancing economic potentials in workforce development and improving quality of life for Aboriginal children
- ▶ Recognizes that for many Aboriginal people, self-governance is rightfully viewed as a first step in community capacity-building and resolution of many of the issues experienced by their communities.

Canada's first peoples have endured centuries of trauma, discrimination and cultural genocide. Their stories received the profile they deserve through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its 2015 report. The legacy of the Indian Residential School system and other government policies and programs contributed significantly to the reasons there are proportionately more Aboriginal people living with poverty than any other demographic group.

Nearly 42,000 people in Edmonton identify as Aboriginal.⁹ Compared to other Edmontonians, Aboriginal people in Edmonton are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed.

Further, 44 per cent of Aboriginal children under the age of five live in poverty¹⁰ which is more than twice the proportion of other Edmonton children.

Issues related to the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs of Aboriginal people need to be addressed in order for those living with poverty to improve their quality of life.

"...No matter what I do. My people have gone through this forever – they want to assimilate us. No matter what I do – if I get a job, mortgage, dog – it will never be enough because I'm Aboriginal..."

Focus Group participant

Discrimination plays an enormous role when Aboriginal people try to get a job, find a place to rent or even walk down the street. Hurtful assumptions are made, opportunities are lost, and hope is abandoned.

The legacy of the residential schools has inspired and emboldened Aboriginal people to be hopeful and resilient. The Aboriginal Round Table, composed of members from First Nations and Métis with diverse backgrounds, worked hard to engage Aboriginal communities to develop their priority actions. These priorities are important steps towards a generational journey to healing, improving well-being and building a future of prosperity within mutual and respectful relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

We can – and must – change things. Here’s what the Task Force to End Poverty believes is important.

PRIORITIES

1. Establish an Aboriginal culture and wellness centre

Ceremonies such as Pow Wows, special gatherings, and weddings would be hosted at an Aboriginal culture and wellness centre. It will also function as an Aboriginal “one stop” service hub where vulnerable people will be “wrapped around” with many necessary resources (cradle board) to enable them to improve their lives significantly. Along with having a suite of core Aboriginal services, the centre would also be able to have outside services including, but not limited to, victim services, housing, income support, system navigators, and access to Elders.

Additionally, the centre would work with others for acquiring “spaces in other places” to host programs in the broader community. The centre will provide Aboriginal people more opportunities for culturally appropriate healing practices and teachings. Since colonization has eroded many Aboriginal people’s sense of self, it is vital to reclaim cultural healing practices in order to address the legacy of residential schools. A holistic model such as the Medicine Wheel is needed to identify and address the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma on the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical aspects of health.

2. Initiate people-first and trauma-informed policy and practice

Racism and the impact of colonialism are at the heart of poverty for Aboriginal people. Greater knowledge about these issues among non-Aboriginal Edmontonians can help foster better understanding of the barriers facing Aboriginal people. Policies and practices will be developed that acknowledge and incorporate the historical trauma of Aboriginal people as a root cause of poverty. It would seem timely and appropriate in the year of Reconciliation that a trauma-informed training and education for all City staff be both introduced and adopted as a wise policy.

In the **People-First** philosophy, people are at the centre of all development and recognized as active agents of change; it means that Aboriginal peoples strengthen themselves to be resilient, to take control of their healing process and build their lives in holistic and culturally safe ways. It means that solutions to end poverty will be intentional in addressing what matters most to Aboriginal people.

Trauma-informed practice offers tremendous insights for both frontline workers and managers into the lives of those living with poverty. This practice has an innovative lens that encourages people to reflect on what may have happened to persons experiencing poverty, not on what is wrong with them. There are also benefits to receiving people-first and cultural safety training that are complementary to becoming trauma-informed. This training would be extended to the Edmonton Police Service and advocated by the City to the Government of Alberta for trauma-informed staff training and policy adoption.

Calling upon our citizens to become trauma-informed is important for building cultural awareness that will bring enlightening conversations and perspectives on Aboriginal poverty.

3. Implement a community witness program

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada states that the term “witness” refers to the **Aboriginal principle of witnessing**, which varies among First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. In a general sense, witnesses are called to be the keepers of history when an event of historic significance occurs. This is partly because of the oral traditions of Aboriginal peoples, but also to recognize the importance of building and maintaining relationships in-person and face-to-face. Through witnessing, the event or work that is undertaken is validated and provided legitimacy which deepens our understanding.

Through the creation of a **community witness program**, witnesses are asked to store and care for the history of significant events in a person’s life (trauma, injustice, sexual abuse, and even successful achievements) that they witness, and most importantly, to share it with their own people when they return home. Witnessing has significant potential to transform people into feeling valued in our community.



4. Provide opportunities where Aboriginal people in poverty can “show and grow” their talents and abilities

A homeless man from Edmonton became a viral sensation when a video of his piano playing was posted to YouTube. Within 24 hours, it drew nearly 800,000 hits. A week later, almost two million people had watched the video worldwide. Viewers posted many comments on the quality of his skill and musicality.

His story speaks to the value of the **multitude of talents and abilities that people living with poverty have** and how they can meaningfully contribute to our community. This can include opportunities to showcase talents in public spaces and promote with social media, support venues for Aboriginal business people to pitch their ideas, and others.

5. Make systemic changes to better reflect the needs, interests, and culture of Aboriginal people

Initiate discussions with municipal, provincial and federal governments to reduce barriers to subsidies and services. For example, income ceilings and lack of a mailing address are barriers to housing, food banks, day care subsidies and funding.

Poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, unemployment, poor living conditions and domestic violence all contribute to Aboriginal people coming into conflict with the law. The challenges to which the criminal justice system must respond are rooted in addressing these unfortunate conditions.

“I would open a house for women where they learn how to cook, parenting skills, life skills, and financial management.”

Focus Group participant

These conditions are often linked to the profound inadequacies of other tax-funded systems including social services, child protection, income support, transportation education and legal aid.

The myriad of conditions that contribute to poverty can be greatly affected if systems are easier to access, apply for, and use.

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

- ▶ Recognize we are all Treaty people. Read Treaty No. 6 for yourself; it provides a guide to how we all can cooperate and the role of self-determination. For more information on Treaty 6, please go to jamesmithcreenation.com/downloads/TREATY6TEXT.pdf.
- ▶ Read *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015) to learn more about Aboriginal issues. Please go to trc.ca.
- ▶ Participate in Aboriginal events and cultural experiences.
- ▶ Participate in people-first and trauma-informed training opportunities.
- ▶ Support local Aboriginal businesses. For more information you can visit: aksis.website/
- ▶ Be part of the development of a community witness program in Edmonton.
- ▶ Host a viewing of the National Film Board's documentary “Trick or Treaty” by Alanis Obomsawin. Please go to nfb.ca/film/trick_or_treaty.



"Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world..."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Justice for all

Citizenship means that people have full rights and responsibilities in the society to which they belong. Our rights and freedoms in Canada are enshrined in federal and provincial legislation. But what does that citizenship mean in practice? How can we ensure the voices of those living with poverty are heard?

Poverty is more than a lack of income – it is a barrier for people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. For example, the ability to vote that so many take for granted is unavailable to many living with poverty. Why? Voting requires a permanent address and identification.

Racism also affects many living with poverty. Racist beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours violate fundamental

principles of human rights relating to respect, equality and dignity for all. Confronting and eliminating racism is a critical part of ensuring that everyone can fully engage and participate in our community.

The EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force has identified this and other issues that inhibit the ability of people living with poverty to fully participate in society.

"Being homeless increases the likelihood of ending up in jail, while imprisonment increases the risk of homelessness."

John Howard Society

"It's hard when you don't have an address or phone number (or have a shelter as an address). Employers won't touch you."

Focus Group participant



In 2011, the average cost to keep an individual incarcerated in a federal institution was **\$130,305/yr** and in provincial institutions was **\$62,415/yr.**

Reasons for non-voting in Alberta are indifference towards politics, lack of time, difficulty getting voter eligibility and did not know where to vote.

Parkland Institute Study, 2015

PRIORITIES

6. Eliminate racism

Racism is a set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that assert one race is superior to another because of their race, color or other physical characteristics. These attitudes and behaviors violate fundamental tenets of human rights relating to respect, equality and dignity for all. Aboriginal people and visible minorities are among those who have experienced discrimination that put them at risk of poverty. Stopping racism begins by learning about its history in Canada and in communities. Taking steps to eliminate racism will remove barriers to full participation by all Edmontonians in community life.

Actions

- ▶ Appropriately resource agencies that support intercultural learning related to Aboriginal history and experiences of visible minorities, particularly for new immigrants.
- ▶ Expand human rights, anti-racism and intercultural competence training programs for providers of front-line services as well as City and government workers.
- ▶ The City of Edmonton monitors and reports on the diversity of its workforce, particularly the gender balance and ethnicity.

7. Decriminalize poverty

The justice system can work against the poor as they are often trapped in a perpetuating cycle. Fines for minor violations turn into arrest warrants when there is no means of payment. These warrants turn into jail time and criminal convictions that further dim their chances of acquiring the necessary resources to bring them out of poverty.

Actions

- ▶ Develop policies and amend bylaws to provide Edmonton Police Service, bylaw officers and other peace officers with structured flexibility when issuing minor infractions.
- ▶ Develop alternatives to fines for minor infractions that warrant consequences, such as diversion programs, mediation and other restorative justice initiatives.



8. Make it easier to vote and participate in elections

It is important for all people who live in our city to have a say in how the city is governed. Providing easier access for those in poverty to participate in the electoral process will ensure the political landscape is more reflective of all who live here.

Actions

- ▶ Develop participation toolkits for organizations serving people in poverty.
- ▶ Advocate to remove barriers that hinder people's ability to participate in the electoral process such as accessible, easy-to-read resources, transit passes and more.
- ▶ Work with partners to increase the number of Aboriginal candidates, women, youth and people with a range of ethnicities including newcomers, to run for elected positions.

9. Make Edmonton a "human rights city"

By ensuring human rights are upheld in Edmonton, we will make certain that all citizens of every colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious background have equal access to the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential and participate equally within in the community.

Actions

- ▶ Create and promote a Day of Dignity to elevate the importance of human dignities.
- ▶ The City of Edmonton initiate its own statement of human rights and review its policies and bylaws to support this statement.
- ▶ Work with other orders of government and utility providers to identify regulations that mitigate utility cut offs for people living in poverty.

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

- ▶ Start a conversation to better understand the experience of people living with poverty.
- ▶ Learn about the costs and impacts of poverty in our city.
- ▶ Advocate for anti-racism and intercultural competence training in your workplace.
- ▶ Recognize the human dignity in every person you meet.
- ▶ As a parent or teacher, take your kids to Edmonton City Hall School.
- ▶ Learn more about human rights at albertahumanrights.ab.ca.

"A living wage is not a welfare program. It should be based on what it costs to live a reasonable quality of life. A living wage should allow parents to invest in the future of their children. If people don't save for retirement, they will cost society more later on. Shouldn't a living wage be about now and tomorrow?"

*Mark Holmgren,
EndPovertyEdmonton
Task Force member*

Move people out of poverty

We know that 100,870 Edmontonians are living with low income – one in eight adults and one in five children. Those who live with low income have told us they struggle with five sources of pressure on a daily basis.

Low income affects their ability to afford:

- ▶ Adequate housing
- ▶ Transit fares
- ▶ Child care
- ▶ Food, and
- ▶ Medical and dental care not covered by health care.

Some of the actions required to relieve these pressures are beyond the jurisdiction of the City of Edmonton. However, as a community we can still ease the pressure of daily living while we work for longer-term change. Actions that relate to pressures caused by low income are found in this "Move People out of Poverty" section as well as the "Invest in a Poverty-Free Future" section which follows.

PRIORITIES

10. Advocate for livable incomes for Edmontonians

A livable income is the amount of income an individual or family needs to meet basic needs, maintain a safe, decent standard of living in their community, and save for future needs and goals. The Edmonton Social Planning Council estimates that for a family of four, both parents will have to earn \$17.36 per hour for 35 hours a week to meet the cost of living in Edmonton.

The majority of Edmontonians who live in poverty are full-time workers earning less than \$15 an hour. In numerous consultations, those receiving government transfers and income support spoke of the gap between what they are receiving and the actual costs of daily living.

Livable Income

Providing livable income enables individuals and families to maintain a decent standard of living. Raising the minimum wage to that of a living wage and the implementation of a guaranteed annual income can be two tools to improve economic security of those in poverty. Providing a guaranteed annual income can also assist those who may not be able to enter the workforce due to age, disabilities, criminal records, mental health, etc.

Living Wage

A living wage is a community-specific hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs once government transfers have been taken into account. It is calculated on the actual local costs of food, rent, utilities, clothing, child care, transportation and communications. A living wage is a current and realistic picture of what it actually costs a household to maintain a modest standard of living. While it covers the basic necessities it does not account for debt payments, savings, vacations or post-secondary education.

Guaranteed Annual Income

Guaranteed Annual Income intends to ensure that all citizens have access to modest but adequate income to meet basic needs. This can be done by providing all citizens the same lump sum cheque every month or providing a lump sum cheque to those that meet certain requirements. Similar terms include mincome (minimum income), universal basic income and guaranteed adequate income.

Sources:
Edmonton Social Planning Council Report on Minimum Wage. 2015
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on Living Wage. 2015
Citizens for Public Justice. Income Security for All Canadians. 2015

Actions

- ▶ Implement a living wage policy for all City of Edmonton staff and contracted services.
- ▶ Implement a recognition program for businesses that provide living wages for workers.
- ▶ Advocate for a guaranteed annual income that allows individuals and families to meet their physical, emotional and social needs.
- ▶ Encourage employers to provide employee benefits and incentives that support sustained employment such as child care and supplemental health and dental care.

11. Make transit reliable, accessible and affordable for Edmontonians

Public transportation is a critical service for citizens to get to and from work, to shop for basic needs, to attend to health needs, and participate in community life. Accessible and affordable transit will make it easier for Edmontonians to get to work, school, recreation, and support services.

Families living in poverty often depend on public transit. For a family of two adults and two school-age children, the cost of monthly adult and youth transit passes is \$316. For a family outing of two adults and two school-age children, the return trip cash fare is \$25.60. These are high costs for a low-income family.

Actions

- ▶ Free public transportation for children 12 years and under, rather than the current six years and under today.
- ▶ Provide discounted or free passes for agencies to provide to youth at risk.

- ▶ Institute a low-income bus pass with a 60 per cent discount, consistent with the AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped) pass, based on the same criteria as the City's existing Leisure Access Program.

12. Improve and expand transit services

Connecting the city with its neighbouring municipalities strengthens its role as a northern regional hub through an expanded transit system. It helps Edmontonians who work outside city limits, to get to their workplaces and Aboriginal people to find opportunities in the city without having to move from reserves if they don't wish to.

Actions

- ▶ Introduce easy-to-purchase "smart cards" which can be used to pay for transit trips.
- ▶ In partnership with other regional and industry stakeholders, expand transit service to nearby worksites.
- ▶ In partnership with other regional, governmental and First Nation stakeholders, consider expanding transit service to nearby First Nations reserves.
- ▶ Make transit routes, scheduling and frequency more responsive to shift work hours.
- ▶ Expand LRT network across all parts of the city.

13. Negotiate with other orders of government to increase funding for affordable and supportive housing as well as rental subsidy programs

Edmonton has a significant shortage of supportive housing options for people with mental illness, addictions and disabilities. A disproportionate number of homeless people have

these challenges. Providing people with supportive housing will cost less than half of what it costs to leave homeless people on the street. A report from Homeward Trust notes that a homeless person costs taxpayers \$100,000 a year in terms of emergency shelters, programming and health care. Providing a homeless person with housing and support costs only \$35,000 a year.

Rent subsidies are the quickest form of affordable housing to implement, and they support inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods throughout the city. Rent subsidies directly address the problem of limited income for those who are not earning enough to cover the cost of living. They also contribute to reducing the geographic concentration of poverty as people have more housing locations.

Actions

- ▶ Ensure sufficient land and suitable sites for supportive and affordable housing, including designating some of the surplus school sites and reserving land in all new neighborhoods for this purpose.
- ▶ Advocate for new and expanded current subsidy programs, such as a financial program to cover damage deposits for low-income renters.
- ▶ Explore new and innovative ways to build non-market housing that does not require subsidies.
- ▶ Engage citizens and communities in awareness and education about non-market housing.

14. Develop a community-based learning project to look at housing and zoning innovations

Housing should not just be affordable but also responsive to changing needs of the population. Different types of housing are appropriate for larger families, single individuals, older adults and people with disabilities. Diverse housing design options should be explored with the possibility of adapting some options to a larger scale if they prove to be feasible.

Actions

- ▶ Examine creative housing design options done in other places such as tiny houses, pod apartments, lodge-type facilities, green housing options, and temporary modular housing.
- ▶ Look into changing zoning regulations that can meet innovative housing design requirements such as building height, stairways, and emergency exits.
- ▶ Design housing units that also support community-building through features such as co-location of child care facilities, social services, and recreation activities.

15. Improve skills training to help people gain sustainable employment

Job-readiness for those unemployed and underemployed is a priority to find work and stay in them. It is well known that among underemployed workers in the city, internationally trained professionals are those that are most impacted. They end up in low-paying jobs because of the length and stringent requirements of getting professional accreditation. The City of Edmonton and businesses can lead by example in creating opportunities for newcomers to find suitable employment.

Actions

- ▶ Increase the number of paid internships within City departments for qualified newcomer residents seeking to build their Canadian work experience.
- ▶ Advocate for increased access to bridging programs that support internationally trained professionals to enter regulated professions.
- ▶ Advocate for targeted employment support strategies for those who face labour market barriers through a tripartite partnership with businesses, agencies and the Province.

16. Improve literacy

Research consistently shows that people with lower levels of literacy need hospitals and financial assistance programs more than people with higher literacy levels. People with low literacy skills are also more likely to have a low income, and more likely to spend time in jail.

Further, employers now seek workers with a sophisticated set of skills that include decision-making, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, information technology, communicating effectively and a desire to learn. Fewer jobs are available to people with low literacy skills.

Actions

- ▶ Work with Edmonton Public Library and other organizations, including schools and places of worship, to establish multi-purpose community centres where learners are able to get help in navigating systems, access community learning programs, increase literacy skills and thereby open more doors to higher-income employment.
- ▶ Advocate for increased provincial investment in literacy development programs for families and adults struggling with literacy.

"Where you conduct business, you have a duty to serve the city that you are living in, the community you are living in."

Edmonton entrepreneur



"Education and literacy are the most important springboards out of poverty..."

Knowledge and learning are keys that unlock the doors to both economic wealth and social well-being....Basic educational success and literacy proficiency are not just a good thing – they are essential in a knowledge economy."

Caledon Institute of Social Policy'

17. Reduce barriers to getting information and accessing City programs and services

Limited knowledge about City of Edmonton services and programs remains a significant barrier to using them, especially for those who have limited literacy or English language skills. Many Edmontonians have difficulty applying for subsidized programs because the programs are each administered separately and the application process is cumbersome and tedious. These are barriers to participation in City programs, initiatives, events and community engagement processes.

Actions

- ▶ Create a one-access card that can be used for all City programs and services.
- ▶ Make it easier for people to apply for subsidized programs using a single entry process.
- ▶ Explore multiple forms of communicating City programs and services to diverse Edmontonians.
- ▶ Design new ways of engaging people living in poverty and those with barriers to participation in City consultation and engagement processes.

18. Help people navigate systems in order to access resources and opportunities

The Families First Edmonton study¹¹ showed that low-income families who had a worker to help them navigate the complex web of programs and services have better opportunities for improving their life situations.

This finding was echoed in a series of engagement sessions with over 200 people living in poverty. In community discussions, participants living in poverty said that having access to support workers was a significant factor in helping them have a better chance of moving out of poverty. These workers stayed with them for a lengthy period of time as the family moved in and out of crisis, doing their best to find ways to access resources from the system.

Actions

- ▶ Strengthen current community-based local navigation and supports initiatives.
- ▶ Bring agencies, and government funders and departments together to design a social innovation initiative to show effectiveness of navigation support practice across sectors – health, social services, employment and legal/justice system.

19. Improve timely access to mental health and wellness services

The area of mental health remains one where the need for services far outpaces the supply of available services, especially “talk services.” Access to mental health care is restricted by the high cost of private mental health services which makes it rarely accessible to low-income individuals and families. Low-income persons need more access to prevention-oriented mental health services that take into account the challenges of poverty while promoting a range of healthy lifestyle behaviours, better coping skills, and good interpersonal and relationship skills.

Actions

- ▶ Advocate for improved ways of providing mental health services such as extending hours of service and the locations of services, and permitting multiple points of access, etc.
- ▶ Advocate for increased funding and support for mental health and wellness education programs.
- ▶ Advocate for increased coordination and integration of children’s mental health services.

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

- ▶ Support businesses that pay a living wage and encourage businesses to pay a living wage. You can learn more about Edmonton’s living wage at edmontonsocialplanning.ca.
- ▶ Be an advocate for inclusive housing and mixed income communities.
- ▶ As an employer, create healthy workplaces and encourage employees to build their skills.
- ▶ As a business person, be a mentor and share your business expertise with organizations that find new solutions to poverty.
- ▶ Volunteer with an organization to teach literacy skills.
- ▶ Speak out to reduce the stigma around mental health.

Invest in our poverty-free future

Ending poverty in Edmonton in a generation calls for fresh new approaches. The priorities in this section speak to new ideas and ways of working. They will help transform our economy for the long term and ensure our children have a strong start.

Actions to invest in a thriving, innovative local economy will support greater prosperity and security for all Edmontonians. Social enterprise, grassroots entrepreneurship and new business models and partnerships offer opportunities to transform our local economy. Investing both human and financial capital in sustainable new approaches will have a positive impact on people's lives.

Ending poverty is also intimately linked to investing in quality child care and early learning – investment that will deeply impact the success and quality of life of our next generation. We know education is a tool to move people – and keep people – out of poverty. Supports to provide a nurturing learning environment from the earliest ages will offer a solid start and ensure our children get to school, stay in school and complete their education.

"A better society means better business. A better society means a better government and better place to live for everyone."

Edmonton entrepreneur

PRIORITIES

20. Grow social enterprises to build sustainable livelihood and assets

Social enterprises or social business models are an emerging approach adopted by corporations around the world to practice social responsibility beyond philanthropy. According to the Harvard Business Review in March 2015, a social enterprise has three characteristics:

1. It seeks to alleviate social problems, including all forms of poverty;
2. It must be run sustainably – not lose money; and
3. Profits are reinvested in the business rather than shareholders.

In Edmonton, the full development of social enterprises is confronted with many challenges: complicated and costly requirements to start-up a new business and limited funding through income-generating loans. More often, funds and resources are directed to students with entrepreneurial interests, or technologically inclined and highly skilled individuals. As such, there are few opportunities for low-income individuals to have access to resources to start a small business.

Actions

- ▶ Collaborate with the City's **Emerging Economy and Ignite Edmonton** initiatives to ensure that inclusive language and access points are used to reduce barriers to entrepreneurship.
- ▶ Invest in funding and programs to build the entrepreneurship capacity of low-income Edmontonians.
- ▶ Apply lessons learned about business models that feature market-based solutions to poverty and reinvestment of profit in the business.
- ▶ Collaborate with the business sector to open opportunities for social enterprise support including business partnerships, small business loans and business mentoring programs.

How has poverty impacted you?

"The food bank is where people would go when they don't have food, and a long time ago, I went there because my dad was in our home country and no one in our family was allowed to work."

Child Focus Group participant

21. Invest in food security-oriented enterprises aimed at increasing food access and gainful employment

Many families living in poverty struggle to get adequate and healthy food. In a recent survey across the province, almost two-thirds of school principals surveyed say teachers are providing "emergency food" to hungry students in Alberta classrooms.

More than accessing food, the idea of a food systems enterprise creates opportunities for employment and livelihood. Food systems enterprises are comprehensive businesses that include community-supported food production, food-processing, food distribution and marketing (support for farmers markets) and farmer-to-table restaurants. These initiatives can help all people eat healthily. This grassroots initiative can be considered as a "niche of innovation" that combines alleviating a basic need while advancing activities that have the potential for transforming social and economic situations of people.

Actions

- ▶ Advocate for lunch programs in all schools.
- ▶ Work with the Edmonton Food Council and other partners to:
 - support community gardens to expand their expertise into food-processing ventures;
 - make more land available for community gardens and/or connect Edmontonians that have available land to those interested in growing food for food systems enterprises;
 - organize business-community partnerships to start-up food systems enterprises; and
 - offer community education programs on all aspects of food security (food production, food processing, distribution and healthy eating).

22. Partner with business, industry, community organizations and other stakeholders to create a community development corporation

Edmonton's low-income neighbourhoods struggle to find or organize the human, financial or technical resources needed to tackle poverty. These neighbourhoods often have absentee and/or unresponsive landlords, high-priced convenience stores and pay day loan and cheque-cashing services that add more expenses to the already limited income of families. Residents often face a lack of living wage jobs, few affordable housing options, and a shortage of basic services such as grocery stores and banks. As well, there are very few services that provide job training and access to living wage jobs.

A strategy is needed that allows low-income communities to participate in finding solutions and taking actions on the challenges that they face every day. It means mobilizing the right people and resources to provide the tools required to enable communities to thrive locally and be part of Edmonton's prosperity.

Actions

- ▶ Establish a community development corporation (CDC) that can provide the infrastructure and sophistication needed to engage the community to take on these challenges by:
 - supporting the creation of affordable and supportive housing;
 - offering job training/placement, investing in appropriate community based business development; and
 - creating new community-owned businesses.

The CDCs will be engines of development and economic opportunity that require significant start-up capital and the focused deployment of equity, debt, and grant funding. Although municipalities often play a pivotal role in starting CDCs, these organizations most commonly operate at arm's length from city government.



Photo provided by Bissell Centre

"The period from birth to the beginning of formal schooling provides the foundations for a lifetime of intellectual, social, emotional and personal development.

High-quality early learning and care – in centres, day homes or with families or kin – contributes greatly to early development and incorporates ample opportunities for children to learn the skills they need to succeed."

Early Childhood Development Working Group

23. Plan and implement a system of early learning and care

In Alberta, no single ministry and no order of government has the clear mandate to provide for the overall welfare of young children. An integrated system of learning and care is critically needed, especially for families in poverty or at risk of falling into it. Plus, an integrated system of support for early learning and care is one that helps every child build the core competencies needed to thrive.

A comprehensive system should include centre-based care, day homes, respite care, kinship care, and other forms of care for young children, as well as supports for stay-at-home parents and for the people outside children's homes who work with young children. This system must ensure early learning and care that is high in quality, universally available, inclusive, accessible to all families, and either free or affordable. Early learning and care must also be designed to meet the needs of Edmonton's Aboriginal families, immigrant and refugee families, and families with children who have special needs.

Actions

- ▶ The City works with the provincial government and other partners to identify the unmet needs for high-quality early learning and care to serve young children and families, with special regard to Aboriginal families, newcomer families, and children with disabilities.
- ▶ The City and its partners develop and implement a plan to address those needs and to coordinate and improve services, such as through a municipal early learning care service network and a municipal early learning and care advisory board.

24. Reduce barriers for children and families to access services, including out-of-school care and respite care

In Edmonton, and much of Alberta, care for children prior to school entry is fragmented and insufficient. Supports for stay-at-home parents, including respite care, are much in demand but difficult to find. Centres typically are not available in low-income areas where the need is particularly high. Costs are prohibitive and subsidies are insufficient for many low-income families.

A research project known as Families First Edmonton identified the frustrations that many low-income parents experience in finding accessible, affordable and quality child care.

Actions

- ▶ The City and other partners work together to coordinate welcoming and effective services for children and their families who are living with poverty.
- ▶ Advocate for sustainable, predictable and adequate funding for early learning and kindergarten, and programs that help children living with poverty.
- ▶ Create neighbourhoods hubs where educational, social and health services can be co-located, particularly in underserved areas.

Poverty is...

"They're homeless and hungry. All the food we waste would mean something to them, and love would be very powerful to them."

Child participant in a focus group⁵

25. Advocate to the provincial government for the implementation of culturally sensitive curricula and for standards that require well-educated staff in all early learning and care centres

Appropriate curricula are essential for ensuring high-quality early learning and care and for helping all children and their families to feel welcomed and valued. The province needs to have a long-term educational strategy and regulations to ensure that well-trained and well-paid early childhood educators are in place to make the best use of these curricula. The provincial government and the municipality need to work together to generate the fiscal and regulatory resources required for high-quality early learning and care.

Actions

- ▶ Advocate to the Province to develop a culturally sensitive curricula and standards for all early learning and care centres.
- ▶ Advocate to the Province to develop a workforce strategy for implementing the culturally sensitive curricula, incorporating the demand for high quality early learning and care.
- ▶ Advocate with the Province to generate the fiscal and regulatory resources to implement and sustain implementation of the early learning and care system in the city.



26. Advocate to the provincial government for sustainable, predictable and adequate funding for a school-based “wrap-around” services

School-based “wrap-around” models provide a wide range of supports, programs and services for students to meet the educational needs of the learner, the complex needs of the whole child and the broader supports required by the family. This may include nutrition programming, therapy, mental health and addiction support, after-school enrichment, child care and parent supports. It is a successful model implemented in the US, UK, Australia, Netherlands and other countries for vulnerable populations. Successes of wrap-around full-service schools include academic gains, improvement in school attendance, reduction in high-risk behaviours, increased parent involvement, lower incidence of child abuse and neglect, and lower rates of violence in the participating communities. It should be made available to children K-12.

Actions

- ▶ Review initiatives of school-based wrap-around models in Alberta and Edmonton.
- ▶ Design a school-based wrap-around program within an Edmonton context.
- ▶ Collaborate with the school boards and community partners in advocating for funding and resources to implement the school-based wrap-around model.

27. Keep the individual at the centre in providing care, services and supports

Many service providers are overwhelmed or underfunded and as a result are often slower in responding or their supports are inadequate in scope. As a consequence, many low-income people report waiting too long for counselling, family violence shelter space, and basic and/or specialized medical care. The lack of sufficiently co-ordinated and collaborative efforts between community agencies results in a fragmented system of care.

A person-centered and holistic approach to health and wellness takes into account the complex needs of low-income individuals and families. It is responsive to the individual as a whole person – his/her needs and capacities to take control of his/her care well-being.

Actions

- ▶ Expand and increase funding for programs that have been effective in providing person-centred care to low-income people.
- ▶ Make it easier to coordinate services for vulnerable populations with complex issues.
- ▶ Explore ways to make services accessible and easy to navigate such as decentralizing services and co-location of services.
- ▶ Collaborate with Aboriginal communities in making programs and services culturally responsive.
- ▶ Include anti-racism and intercultural competence education in training and professional development of all those providers.

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

- ▶ As an entrepreneur or business person, get involved in mentoring community groups to create social enterprises that alleviate poverty, pay for themselves and allow for reinvestment in the business or community.
- ▶ Learn about food security issues and initiatives in Edmonton.
- ▶ Donate healthy and nutritious foods or help with a community garden.
- ▶ Volunteer for an early childhood learning or care organization.

- ▶ Participate in a workshop that helps you relate and work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ Advocate for early learning and care and school-based wrap-around services.

Check out endpovertyedmonton.ca for other ideas.

Change the conversation: Build a movement to end poverty

Ending poverty in Edmonton is not something that the Task Force – or any group – can do alone. To be successful, an ambition like this must involve the whole community and generate a sense of civic imperative and pride in the collective aspiration.

A movement is not a plan or a campaign – it's something that emerges from the community and takes on a life of its own. It is an idea that a community champions in big and small ways because it cares and desires change. The movement creates spaces in neighborhoods where everyone can be part of the conversation. It will build groups and communities that are empowered, resilient and able to take actions to end poverty locally and within the greater Edmonton community.

Already more than 200 people are involved in the EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force, Roundtables and Working Groups. Many more are poised to be part of the ground-level engagement in the fall of 2015. Still more will be part of a broad-based movement as the EndPovertyEdmonton strategy and plan are completed.

We will work with others to build a movement that will capture the hearts and minds of all Edmontonians. To do this, we need to equalize opportunity for people to reach their full potential by harnessing necessary human capital and financial resources. The goal of the movement is to change

the conversation from managing poverty to ending it poverty with three objectives:

1. Enable Edmontonians to re-frame how they see and respond to poverty;
2. Mobilize Edmontonians to be part of or take actions on solutions; and
3. Engage other Edmontonians to join the EndPovertyEdmonton movement.

EndPovertyEdmonton must start with people impacted by poverty and to whom solutions to end poverty will matter the most. The movement creates space and ways that make it easy for people living with poverty to be part of the conversation. From their voices, Edmontonians can understand that each one of us has a role to play in eliminating poverty and that this is within our grasp.

PRIORITY

28. Launch a collaborative broad-based community engagement and education initiative to change people's attitudes about poverty

"Education is the key in eliminating poverty. Only if people understand something can they act for change!

"Let us talk to them, let us tell them our stories... voice our concerns to leaders and politicians."

Focus Group participant

Actions

- ▶ Build on and strengthen local creative initiatives that maximize opportunities to re-frame the poverty dialogue using diverse tools and media i.e. storytelling, poetry and music, indigenous art, theatre, music and dance.
- ▶ Organize community conversations on resilience and strengths, discrimination and racism.
- ▶ Integrate education about poverty into all levels of the education curriculum from grade one to university.
- ▶ Build a new language around poverty to remove fear and stigma.

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN HAVE AN IMPACT

- ▶ Challenge your own perceptions of poverty by participating in the United Way's poverty simulation exercise. Please check dates at myunitedway.ca/poverty-simulation.
- ▶ Develop empathy. Volunteer in organizations that serve the homeless and those struggling with poverty.
- ▶ Use your creative skills in art, video, music or writing, to foster new understanding of poverty and prosperity.



Photo provided by Bissell Centre

"As we intentionally hear and gather the lived experience of those who live in poverty,
I learn more about the importance of the deep and committed engagement of those living in poverty in a genuine process of citizen participation,
a continued process of learning from them and involving them in decision-making."

Yvonne Chiu, EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force member



How the priorities can help our four families

LING

Ling is a single mother who had to send her daughter back to China. An improved and more accessible and affordable transit system (#11, #12) would make things much easier for Ling from getting to and from work, to getting groceries and to other appointments (e.g., for her lawsuit).

A living wage policy as well as employment programs (#10, #15) could help Ling so that she no longer has to work two jobs and can instead gain a sustainable full-time job that would allow time for rest and other activities.

With a living wage, more secured income (through more secured employment and child support payments), as well as access to an integrated system of early care (#23, #24), Ling would be able to bring her daughter home and plan for their future together.

JULIE AND NICK

Julie and Nick have three young children. Because of an injury, Nick cannot work.

High-quality early learning and school-based services (#23, #24, #26) could help Julie and Nick's children prepare themselves for a better future as the family struggles with the challenges of poverty and disability.

Having someone to guide Julie and Nick through various government and community programs (#18) would help Nick access and receive

available support and resources for his disability so he is not forced to re-enter the workforce before he is ready and able to do so.

Affordable transit services (#11) as well as a one-access card (#17) would allow Julie and Nick to take their children to different city activities and facilities. This could restore a degree of childhood joy in the children's lives, something that was so abruptly taken from them since their father's workplace injury and disability.

CLAY

Clay is an Aboriginal single father of two school-age children.

Skills training programs (#15) and access to affordable, flexible, and reliable system of early learning and care (#23, #24) could greatly benefit both Clay and his children. Clay may be able to keep his job and therefore sustain, or even improve, his family's income level, and his children's development would be better supported.

Access to mental health and wellness services that are individual-centred and trauma-informed (#19, #27) may help the family cope with the abuse that Clay's daughter endured and ensure the family gets the necessary supports going forward.

An Aboriginal culture and wellness centre (#1) would be another valuable resource for the hard-working single father as he strives to work on the family's issues and provide the best that he can for his children.

KIM

Kim is the single mother of a teenage son and pre-teen daughter, living with her father in a small two-bedroom home.

Improving transit and making it more accessible and affordable (#11, #12) would make it easier for Kim and her family to get to medical appointments and to school.

In addition, having more affordable housing options (#13, #14) would allow the family to improve its living conditions.

Due to Kim's mental health issues and Brandon's bipolar disorder and violent behaviours, the family is in desperate need of timely mental health and wellness services (#19). These services would help improve Kim's health condition, and may one day help her return to the workforce.

In addition to mental health services, Brandon may also benefit from having school-based wrap-around services (#26) that could help him return to and stay in school, and help Kim and himself manage his bipolar disorder and violent behaviours.

The family would also benefit from having someone help navigate different systems in order to access needed services (#18). Together the services could greatly improve the outlook for Brandon's future and the quality of life for the entire family.

SIX GAME CHANGERS

Research indicates that there are six key areas of actions that will make a significant difference to individuals and families struggling with poverty:

1. ELIMINATE RACISM
 2. LIVABLE INCOMES
 3. AFFORDABLE HOUSING
 4. ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE TRANSIT
 5. AFFORDABLE & QUALITY CHILD CARE
 6. ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
-

THESE ARE CRITICAL PLACES TO START AND ALONG WITH OTHER LONG-TERM ACTIONS **WILL END POVERTY.**



Photo provided by Bissell Centre

"It will take a community working together to solve the many complex issues connected to poverty."

Taking these steps will mean real progress in one of the boldest collective approaches we've ever seen; moving beyond managing the symptoms of poverty and delivering solutions that move us closer to ending it."

Anne Smith, EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force member

KICKSTARTING A MOVEMENT: NEXT STEPS TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE

This report is just the beginning. It is the culmination of months of work and helps to define what we need to do.

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

Fall 2015 will see a series of public engagement activities to review and test the ideas in this strategy. After the public engagement activities and further review of these priorities, an updated EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy will be submitted to City Council in December 2015.

COMPLETE AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

How we take on this work will be the focus of a comprehensive implementation plan that will spell out the steps needed to carry out the priorities, as well as the specific measures of progress. The EndPovertyEdmonton Task Force will provide oversight of the implementation planning process, guided by the experience of people living in poverty and informed by policy, research and practice.

This ten-year plan will be presented to Edmonton City Council for their approval in Spring 2016.

The implementation plan will outline:

- ▶ Goals and objectives of the plan (What will be achieved in ten years?)
- ▶ Phasing of priority actions (How will actions be phased within a ten-year timeline?)
- ▶ Governance structure (Who is responsible for the leadership and stewardship of implementing the plan)
- ▶ Accountability (Who is responsible for which actions?)
- ▶ Resources (What is needed and where will it come from?)
- ▶ Measuring progress and success (What are the outcomes and how will we know we have achieved our goals and objectives?)
- ▶ Engagement and communication strategy (How will we engage and mobilize Edmontonians in the EndPovertyEdmonton movement?)

MEASURING SUCCESS

EndPovertyEdmonton will adopt a suite of poverty measures that capture the economic and social impacts of poverty. It will allow us to collect data which are comparable nationally and internationally, but which can also measure our progress in poverty elimination. These measures include:

- ▶ Low Income Measurement-After Tax (LIM-AT) – means that those who have after-tax incomes 50 per cent or below the national after-tax median income, adjusted for family size, are considered to be living in low income.
- ▶ Market Basket Measure (MBM) – reflects the cost of buying a specified basket of goods and services.

- ▶ Non-economic measures capture the social and cultural aspects of poverty such as access to cultural resources and experiences of discrimination.

Measuring poverty will also include the use of data analytics to examine how different actions interact with each other to produce a defined outcome.

The EndPovertyEdmonton implementation plan will provide a more fully developed evaluation framework. It will clearly describe and explain how success will be measured, and how impact will be assessed.

Because we can: Cities are drivers of change

Cities are increasingly the place where work is getting done. Enterprising cities like Edmonton are the agents of change.

Cities also generate the conditions for families, individuals, organizations and businesses to *thrive* by shaping the environment that attracts people and investment. A city like Edmonton is truly a magnet; a regional hub which offers a strategic platform

of programs and services to residents and those who come here in search of a better life.

Ending poverty requires all of us. Together we can make a difference. Can we count you in?

"There is growing awareness that cities fuel the engines of national economies."

*Sherri Torjman,
Cities at the Centre,
Caledon Institute May 2015*

Imagine a city where...

Children don't go to school hungry, homelessness is a thing of the past and everyone has a chance to thrive and prosper!

COUNT ME IN!

HOW YOU CAN **HAVE** **AN IMPACT**

JOIN THE **EndPovertyEdmonton** **MOVEMENT:**

- ▶ Participate in our EndPovertyEdmonton engagement sessions.
- ▶ Share your ideas on solutions and actions to end poverty at **endpovertyedmonton.ca**
- ▶ Spread the word and share this Strategy with colleagues, friends and family.
- ▶ Talk with your local elected representatives about ending poverty.
- ▶ Champion the cause of ending poverty in your neighborhood.

PRIORITIES AT A GLANCE – WHO TAKES THE LEAD?

Our 28 priorities were further sorted according to purview or responsibility:

City (C) – those actions that are clearly within the City’s mandate

City-Stakeholders (C-S) – those actions that involve the City with community leaders and stakeholders

Movement (M) – those actions where leadership resides with different stakeholders in the community and are carried out collectively.

TOWARD TRUE RECONCILIATION

- C-S** 1. Establish an Aboriginal culture and wellness centre
- C-S** 2. Initiate people-first and trauma-informed policy and practice
- C-S** 3. Implement a community witness program
- C-S** 4. Provide opportunities where Aboriginal people in poverty can “show and grow” their talents
- M** 5. Make systemic changes to better reflect the needs, interests and culture of Aboriginal people

JUSTICE FOR ALL

- M** 6. Eliminate racism
- C** 7. Decriminalize poverty
- C** 8. Make it easier to vote and participate in elections
- C** 9. Make Edmonton a “human rights city”

MOVE PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY

- C-S** 10. Advocate for livable incomes for Edmontonians
- C** 11. Make transit reliable, accessible and affordable for Edmontonians
- C** 12. Improve and expand transit services
- C-S** 13. Negotiate with other orders of government to increase funding for affordable and supportive housing as well as rental subsidy programs
- M** 14. Develop a community-based learning group to look at housing and zoning innovations
- C-S** 15. Improve skills training to help people gain sustainable employment
- C-S** 16. Improve literacy
- C** 17. Reduce barriers to getting information and accessing City programs and services
- C-S** 18. Help people navigate systems in order to access resources and opportunities
- C-S** 19. Improve timely access to mental health and wellness services



INVEST IN OUR POVERTY-FREE FUTURE

- C-S** 20. Grow social enterprises to build sustainable livelihood and assets
- C-S** 21. Invest in food security-oriented enterprises aimed at increasing food access and gainful employment
- C-S** 22. Partner with community organizations and other stakeholders to create a community development corporation
- M** 23. Plan and implement a system of early learning and care
- C-S** 24. Reduce barriers for children and families to access services, including out-of-school care and respite care
- C-S** 25. Advocate to the provincial government for the implementation of culturally sensitive curricula and for standards that require well-educated staff in all early learning and care centres
- C-S** 26. Advocate to the provincial government for sustainable, predictable and adequate funding for school-based wrap-around services
- M** 27. Keep the individual at the centre in providing care, services and supports

CHANGE THE CONVERSATION: BUILD A MOVEMENT TO END POVERTY

- M** 28. Launch a collaborative broad-based community engagement and education initiative to change people's attitudes about poverty

THANK YOU



"Sometimes it falls upon
a generation to be great.
You can be that great
generation."

Nelson Mandela

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. It's important for everyone to understand the issues and see some clear strategies to end poverty in one generation.

We also appreciate the contributions of the many people living with poverty who told us their stories and answered many questions. We learned a lot and know that we have so much more to learn and do together as we tackle this complex issue.

We thank the over 200 people who took part in seven Working Groups and two Round Tables with extraordinary commitment and passion. Working Groups included Aboriginal people and newcomers, young and old, people who work with those living with poverty, business leaders, faith communities, doctors, academics, lawyers, educators, Government of Alberta representatives and others.

Achieving this bold vision
will take a generation. **Join
us in the movement to end
poverty in Edmonton!**

EndPovertyEdmonton

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AND... ALL EDMONTONIANS



*John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights,
Youth Action Project on Poverty*



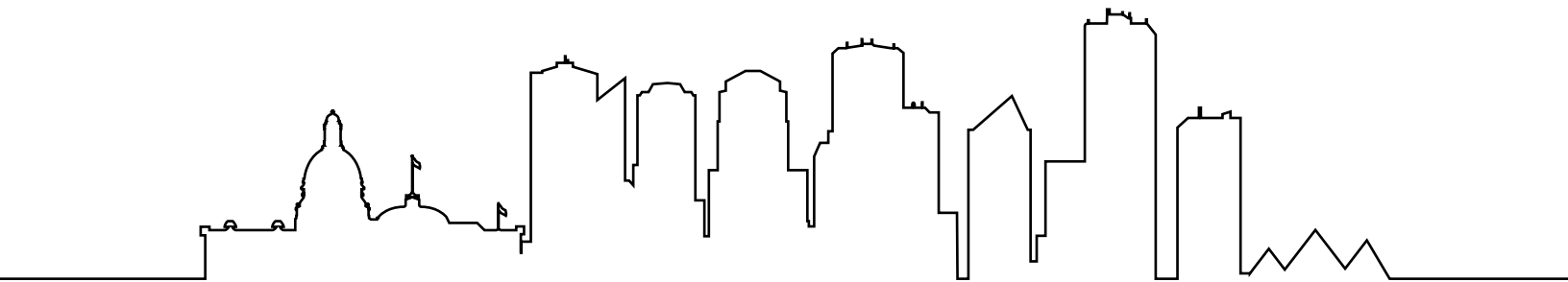
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and we will keep you in the loop **@EndPovertyeg**.

EndPovertyYEG

Share **Facebook stories** and ideas about what you
are doing in your community to end poverty.

