

Joint Task Force and Roundtable Meeting
Thursday, July 17, 2014, 4:00 - 6:30 PM
Rowand Suite, 2nd Floor, Edmonton Sutton Place Hotel
10235-101 Street, Edmonton

Present:

Members: Mayor Don Iveson (Co-Chair), Bishop Jane Alexander (Co-Chair), Councillor Ben Henderson (via phone), Justin Archer, Jeffrey Bisanz, Kate Chisholm, Yvonne Chiu, Dr. Joseph Doucet, Dr. Louis Francescutti, Mark Holmgren Councillor Amarjeet Sohi, Eugene Ip, Carman McNary, Zahra Somani

Roundtable Members: Pieter de Vos (Facilitator), Fiona Cavanagh, Allan Undheim, Peter Faid, Deanna Williamson, Jolene Volpe, Patti Laboucaine, Daniel McKennit, Brenda St. Germain, Elizabeth Potskin

COE Staff: Lyall Brenneis, Kate Gunn, Patricia Waisman, Walter Trocenko, Bin Lau, Ward Antoniuk, Lucenia Ortiz, Spela Crnic, Kris Andreychuk, Gord Stewart

Guests: Leann Wagner, Anne Smith

Regrets: Sarah Eadie Sandra Huculak, Tiffany Linke-Boyko, Maria Mayan, Janice Melnychuk, Lisa Weber, Lisa Wolfe, Rachelle Venne, Cheryl Whiskeyjack, John Kolkman

Minutes

Discussion

1. Opening Prayers by Elder Betty Lafferty

2. Call to Order

- Mayor Don Iveson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- The agenda and the minutes of June 17 meeting were approved.
- Welcomed Anne Smith (United Way), Pieter de Vos (Facilitator) and Betty Lafferty (Elder)

3. Understanding Current Reality and Context of Poverty in Edmonton

Pieter de Vos presented an overview of the facilitated discussion that included the purpose, outcomes and guiding principles for discussions. (For details, please see attached PPT slides). Reference documents for this discussion were: a) *Summary of TF Assumptions*; b) *Revised working definition of poverty*; and c) *Briefing on the context of poverty in Edmonton*.

Small Group Discussion

Four small groups composed of a mixed group of Task Force and Roundtable members were formed to discuss the following:

- What is creating conditions of poverty in Edmonton? [Causes and Drivers]
- What is making it difficult for people to move out of poverty?
- Who is most impacted by poverty in our city?
- How does our **definition of poverty** align with this picture?

(For details of small group discussion, please see Attachment)

Plenary Session

The large group discussion covered key points on the discussions about the key drivers of poverty and comments on the revised working definition of poverty.

Key Drivers of Poverty

The participants identified key conditions that are creating poverty that includes the following:

- Inability to access the labour market as result of individual and societal circumstances such as low level of education, poor health, lack of confidence or self-esteem, transportation barriers etc.; it was noted that access to the labour market is not a guarantee that someone will be kept out of poverty since a significant number of people living in poverty have full time jobs (working poor) experiencing low wages, poor working conditions\
- Structural drivers perpetuate poverty such as legislation that undermines efforts to act on poverty, inadequate health and social services system that is responsive to those most vulnerable i.e. mental health
- Underlying ideological, philosophical and cultural discourses about poverty lead to systems that create poverty and practices that penalize poverty. Examples of these are racism and discrimination impacting on certain groups of people, historical/colonial roots of poverty among Aboriginal people most often ignored in policies, programs and services

In the discussion, participants suggested the following as key elements in defining our approach to poverty elimination:

- Engagement - we need to move beyond “intellectualization of poverty” to address the huge disconnect between the experience of poverty and how we talk about it; engagement must be embedded in our work
- Advocacy - we need to address system changes, review legislation and policies that create and sustain poverty and propose/adapt a new approach
- Cultural shift -we need to frame messages that foster a cultural change - in beliefs and attitudes about poverty
- Accountability - we need to have clear benchmarks and milestones to inform us of how much we are progressing into the work and who is responsible.

The Task Force also needs to be guided by a set of assumptions that articulates our values and ethical principles and provides strong structural and ideological drivers for our work.

Working Definition of poverty

The revised definition of poverty was presented for review and discussion presented below:

“Edmontonians experience poverty when they lack the economic and social resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community.”

While there was over-all support for the concept behind the definition, there were comments and suggestions that must be incorporated in the final working definition such as:

- Add **“dignity”**
- **“they lack”** to be substituted with **“deprived of”**
- Use **“are denied”** instead of **“lack of”**; this is intended to balance both social and individual responsibility
- Add **“cultural”** to the definition, even though the word **“social”** includes it
- Noted that the DEFINITION could also be the basis of a vision: **“Edmonton is a city where all citizens experience quality of life”**

- All Edmontonians need to be included since poverty affects everyone; we are poorer if there is poverty in the city.
- Need to have stronger contextual statements to cover causes and structural drivers and ethical principles.

Action:

Participants expressed an overall agreement with the definition but changes mentioned above must be added. The Project Team will connect with the Roundtable Chairs to incorporate suggestions and comments on the revised definition, including a Context Section in the working definition document. This revised definition will be needed in August 26 at the Orientation Forum for community volunteers, which will gather individuals who have expressed an interest in being part of the Task Force Working Groups.

4. United Way's Creating Pathways Out of Poverty

- Presentation by Anne Smith, CEO, United Way Capital Region
- Open Forum: Opportunities for collaboration and alignment with the United Way's initiative and the work of the Task Force were identified such as participation

5. Poverty Elimination Approaches, Framework and Go Forward Working Groups

Pieter de Vos facilitated the second small group discussion that asked participants to critically reflect on the Recommended Framework. Two key reference documents for this discussion were: a) *Summary Sheet - Recommended Framework*; and b) *Matrix of Best Practices*

Small Group Discussion:

Participants critically reflected and discussed the following questions:

- How do the overall approach (goals, principles, assumptions) fit with our understanding of the drivers and realities of poverty in Edmonton?
- Will the goals contribute to the elimination of poverty in our city? Why?
- How can we improve the framework?
- What resonates for you? What key ideas or concepts jump out at you?
- What do you feel is missing?

(For details of small group discussions, please see Attachment).

Plenary Session

The large group discussion focused on the participants' over-all reflections on the Recommended Framework specifically on the goals, approaches and focal areas. There were no comments during the plenary on the four goals and key approaches in the Recommended Framework. Pieter and Co Chairs led the discussion to help the group identify preliminary focal areas.

The participants identified the following focal areas for further development:

- health and wellness - holistic health
- education
- early childhood supports
- income and employment - living wage
- access to services (housing and transportation)
- security and safety
- food security

The participants also noted that there are areas that cut across the focal areas which include:

- Aboriginal pillar or lens,
- Engagement and communication,

- Advocacy

These areas need to be defined and developed for their inclusion in the preliminary framework.

Action

The project team was directed to further refine these focal areas for review and development. A draft to be shared with Task Force members for their comments prior to August 26 Orientation Forum.

6. Wrap-up

Bishop Alexander summarized the key discussions in the meeting. She highlighted that the group had reached a consensus on the following:

- Revised definition of poverty as a **working definition** with the contextual piece to be developed further during the process
- **Overall approach or framework** that is subject to further work on the contextual piece, which will be refined and decided upon August 26.
- Creation of **working groups** through focal areas that were identified and further refined and developed.

7. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 6:50pm.
- All members invited to attend the **Working Group Orientation Forum on Tuesday, August 26** from 4:00 to 6:0 pm at the Angus Shaw Suite, 2nd Floor, Edmonton Sutton Place Hotel, 10235 - 101 Street. All Task Force and Round Tables members are invited and expected to attend.
- **Next Task Force meeting: Wednesday, September 24 from 4:00 to 6:30 pm**
- **Location: To be determined**