



Working Definition of Poverty September 2014

“Edmontonians experience poverty when they 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.”

Context

Our definition of poverty reflects the Task Force’s understanding of the historical roots and systemic causes of poverty in Edmonton and how it impacts the ways we seek solutions to end poverty. We view poverty beyond the lack of material resources to conditions that limit people’s capacity to build trusting and helping connections with each other and with their communities. This definition affirms our commitment to tackle the roots of poverty, address the immediate effects of poverty and to engage those with lived experience with dignity and in meaningful and authentic ways.

Key assumptions on the definition of poverty

1. The definition reflects the community experience of poverty and includes key aspects that can be measured.
2. The definition aligns with the definition of the Provincial Poverty Strategy the United Way’s Creating Pathways Out of Poverty and with those of other Canadian cities.
3. Diverse and comprehensive perspectives representing Aboriginal people, newcomers, single parents, and others living in poverty should be embedded in the overall approach of the poverty elimination plan as it is developed.

Measuring Poverty

No single measure of poverty can completely describe, explain or assess poverty in Edmonton. In keeping with our definition of poverty, the Task Force will explore and consider using a variety of measures of poverty which may include:

1. Economic Resources (Income and Expenditure Measures) – Low Income Measure (LIM) after Tax, Consumption Indicators etc.
2. Social Resources (Deprivation Indices)
3. Quality of Life Indicators (FCM’s Quality Of Life Reporting System, Canadian Index of Well Being)
4. Prosperity Measures (Genuine Wealth measures)

Key elements in the definition

1. Edmontonians –individuals, families and groups who live in Edmonton and reflects diversity in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, life stages, ethnicity, culture, abilities and socio-economic status
2. Economic resources –the sum of all monetary and material resources that individuals have control of to meet their daily needs including wages and salaries, income transfers, value of assets and earnings from other sources
3. Social resources –both non-monetary and non-material resources that individuals have control of to function effectively at home, at work and in their community including access to services, social supports and the capacity to build social connections and relationships
4. Cultural resources –sum of values, beliefs and practices as well as the historical and social experience shared by a group of people. It means that understanding the causes of poverty must consider the historical roots of the poverty among Aboriginal peoples and the cultural nature of the poverty among ethnic and cultural minorities. More importantly, the solutions to poverty must incorporate the values and perspectives of Aboriginal culture as well as harness the talents and skills of people from culturally and linguistically diverse cultures.
5. Quality of life – individuals’ perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.(WHO, 1997)
6. Full and meaningful participation – the ability, a sense of belonging and confidence to take part in the community’s social, economic, political and civic life
7. Community – social unit that shares a common identity, values and relationships