



CITY OF KINGSTON
REPORT TO COUNCIL

Report No.: 10-272

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Terry Willing, Acting Commissioner, Community Services
RESOURCE STAFF: Jim de Hoop, Director, Community and Family Services
DATE OF MEETING: September 7, 2010
SUBJECT: Poverty Reduction Strategic Planning Process

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Kingston has joined a growing list of Kingston organizations that are supporting the vision of Kingston - Canada's Most Sustainable City by becoming community partners to the Sustainable Kingston Plan. It is therefore timely to consider the next steps in strengthening one of the four pillars to the plan – that of social equity. In discussions City staff has held with The Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction, funders, and frontline agencies there is an opportunity now to take a renewed approach to community-wide strategies to address the issue of poverty that will build upon the work done to date by countless volunteers and service agencies.

In an effort to gain a commitment and strategic plan/approach for poverty reduction in the community, staff have solicited the advice of The Roundtable regarding a community engagement and facilitation process, which is intended to draw on the numerous resources available in the community to set a course for the future. The Roundtable appreciates the importance of embarking on the next evolution of a community engagement process and recognizes that it is beyond their current capacity without additional support.

The local United Way serving KFL&A has offered to partner with the City and The Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction over the next six to eight months in facilitating the next evolution of a strategic plan to establish a long term and collaborative community poverty reduction strategy. It is clear that no one organization or agency can do this alone. This will need to be a shared community effort, recognizing that many can and do want to play a role in this critical issue. The incoming Council will have the benefit of the work by the second quarter of 2011, to enable it to make decisions on the priorities for its term.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council authorize City staff to work with the United Way and the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction to develop a community strategic plan for community poverty reduction and report back to Council with a draft plan in April 2011; and further
2. THAT \$25,000 be allocated and funded from the Working Fund Reserve in 2010 to match a \$25,000 contribution from the United Way for a total of \$50,000 for the purposes of developing the plan; and further

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3. THAT the 2011 Community and Family Services department draft operating budget include funding of \$85,000 for the year 2011 to support completing the work of the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction.

AUTHORIZING SIGNATURES:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER Terry Willing, Acting Commissioner, Community Services
ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

CONSULTATION WITH THE FOLLOWING COMMISSIONERS:

Cynthia Beach, <i>Sustainability & Growth</i>	√
Denis Leger, <i>Transportation, Properties & Emergency Services</i>	N/R
Jim Keech, <i>President and CEO, Utilities Kingston</i>	N/R

(N/R indicates consultation not required)

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OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

In the fall of 2007, the Mayor's Task Force on Poverty issued a series of recommendations towards poverty reduction in our community, one of which was the creation of a roundtable to work towards the implementation of the recommendations from the Task Force report. The Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction held its inaugural meeting in early 2008. The Roundtable is made up of a cross section of community members interested in long-term social change in our community. The group includes social justice advocates, community members, people currently living in poverty or have significantly experienced poverty, and social agencies.

The Roundtable's focus has been largely at the policy level in addition to organising several awareness raising events. In 2009, the Roundtable worked with the City on the introduction of subsidies for transit and recreational services for low-income residents. The Roundtable provides input to several committees of Council, and has provided input into Provincial and Federal consultation processes. The Roundtable has successfully piloted and run two youth conferences that use an experiential teaching model to expose high school students to the reality of living in poverty in Kingston.

Also in partnership with the City, the Roundtable has been working on a deprivation index to measure and set a baseline for poverty reduction in Kingston. The Roundtable regularly acts as a resource to the City and other agencies/organisations to build awareness of poverty in Kingston. The Roundtable has established relationships with various departments at Queen's University and St Lawrence College through student practicum and joint research projects.

The Roundtable recognizes that a large-scale campaign to evolve the strategy to the next level is beyond its present capacity, thus the need for greater involvement from other key stakeholders such as the City and the United Way, who can act as added facilitators in gathering input from a wide range of organizations and interests.

The United Way of Kingston has partnered successfully with the City on a number of social policy and community development initiatives including Homelessness Strategy, Success by Six, and the 211 access service

This community strategic plan for poverty reduction would have the further benefit of helping to realize the goals set out in the Social Equity pillar of the recently completed Sustainable Kingston plan.

Just three of the lessons learned that we need to address in a renewed strategy include:

1. We cannot wait for higher levels of government to take the lead.
2. We cannot assume that one group, or even a collective of a few people or organizations bears the responsibility for poverty reduction. We are moving away from a culture of blame that surrounds social problems by engaging in a spirit of collective purpose while working toward solutions that benefit our entire community. Every organization and individual has community assets to offer – we can continue to find creative ways to put those assets to work. Local organizations are effective in mobilizing broad-based community support for efforts to deal with local problems. With these allies, we can create increased capacity for the entire scope of community poverty reduction.
3. We need to ensure that strong mechanisms for accountability, from all organizations and individuals are built into the process.

Similar to the process used for other community initiatives, we would propose that the next step is the development of a community strategic plan for poverty reduction. The development of this plan would be coordinated by a Steering Committee of the City of Kingston, United Way, and The Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction. The Roundtable and the

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United Way have partnered successfully with the City on a number of social policy and community development initiatives. The City of Kingston and the Roundtable have both endorsed the 25 in 5 goal of reducing the number of people in poverty by 25% in 5 years. By engaging community organizations and interests, the strategic plan would include specific outcomes, accountability measures, indicators and timelines. A draft outline of the approach and timelines for the Steering Group is included as Exhibit A.

Research has identified four key approaches to poverty reduction: comprehensive thinking and action, multi-sector collaboration, community asset building, and community learning and change. With the development of a detailed work plan it is fully expected that the planning efforts will result in a comprehensive strategy for reducing poverty in the City of Kingston.

The Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

Sustainable Kingston was developed by the FOCUS Kingston Steering Committee based on extensive input from individuals, municipal government, Kingston institutions, businesses and community organizations. *Sustainable Kingston* has several high level objectives, including:

- Set the direction for current and future municipal decision-making, leading toward a sustainable future for the community of Kingston
- Provide a framework for aligning, building on and integrating municipal and community plans, policies, programs, processes, and initiatives that are currently underway or being planned
- Become a conduit for community input and a catalyst for discussion that will result in the development of a community owned and community involved process that is tailored to the unique needs and desires of Kingston

The general statement within the Poverty and Homelessness theme in the sustainability plan is that: "All citizens have a way to meet their basic needs. The community is working towards long-term solutions that break the cycle of homelessness and poverty." Specific goals in the plan include taking specific actions with local initiatives like the Roundtable on Poverty Reduction and provincial initiatives such as Breaking the Cycle to reduce poverty; reducing food bank usage; increase public awareness of poverty; ensuring a range of affordable housing choices with varying levels of care; and empowering, engaging, and leveraging neighbourhoods as a strategy to reduce poverty.

City Community Services Programs Impact

The role that the City plays in community services has a far reaching effect on the amelioration of some of the worst effects of poverty. Community programs and services reach approximately 10,000 individuals a year through such programs as income supports, childcare subsidy, subsidized housing, homemaking, and homeless shelters. Our funding envelopes impact over 70 community agencies.

Community and Family Services key objectives related to poverty reduction include:

1. Enhanced employment programs, education & training for clients
2. Sustaining social housing stock and emergency shelter system and homelessness programs
3. Development of municipal housing strategy
4. Shifts in funding, management responsibilities and mitigation strategies for Early Learning and Child Care
5. Reviewing current service delivery models with input from stakeholders to improve and enhance program delivery
6. Defining our roles in community poverty reduction strategy and the Sustainable Kingston Plan

It is worthwhile to reflect that the impact of the recent economic recession has resulted in a 20% Ontario Works enrolment (515 cases from Nov. 2008 to June 2010) increase in Kingston-Frontenac. It is recognized that this increase is less significant than in other parts of Ontario where increases of more than 35% were experienced in the first 12 months of the recession alone. The

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Community and Family Services department strives to reduce the impact of poverty through these programs and services. Over the next six to eight months it is anticipated that local policy targets and strategies will be adopted as identified in this community strategic planning phase, including a review of current service delivery models.

Other Resources:

The work of the steering group will need to be supported by a coordinator. It is advised that project coordination duties be assigned to existing staff resources within the City and supported with adequate space and access to critical data. Other human resources will also be provided as in-kind supports from existing agencies, primarily but not solely from the United Way and The Roundtable. In addition to this, there will need to be a group of dedicated volunteers and facilitators to work with the steering group on the consultations, and a group whose role will be data collection and research support.

The community strategic plan will address the need for the ongoing allocation of resources and capacity along with clear lines of community accountability and monitoring of the plan.

Ultimately, durable results come from building incrementally from a modest but firm foundation. The forthcoming strategy may begin with projects that show tangible, short-term results, while keeping the broader vision in mind over a much longer period of time. At the heart of the poverty reduction agenda is community building that reconciles individual and collective welfare; maximises the development of human potential with the active participation of individuals in decisions that concern or affect them; and respects cultural differences. Social participation and social inclusion are key goals.

By understanding and measuring how people meet basic needs, remove barriers, build skills, and promote social and economic development we can effectively mobilize various sectors to undertake activities that create better opportunities for the reduction of poverty.

The project outline in Exhibit A reflects the steps and milestones associated with the project. Terms of Reference and scope will be developed by the Steering Committee and will be used as a guide for achieving the project deliverables. As funders, the United Way and the City of Kingston are prepared to assign co-chairs to the Steering Committee.

EXISTING POLICY/BY LAW:

There is no existing policy/by law.

NOTICE PROVISIONS:

There are no notice provisions with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

This report is available in an alternative format upon requested.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A 2011 budget allotment of \$85,000 for the work of the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction will be in the 2011 Community and Family Services departmental draft budget submission. Matching funding of \$25,000 from the City can be provided as one time funding in accordance with Working Fund Reserve policy.

CONTACTS:

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OTHER CITY OF KINGSTON STAFF CONSULTED:

Adele Lafrance, Manager, Finance & General Administration Ext. 4801
Tanie Steacy, Manager, Program Delivery Ext. 4802
Cheryl Hitchen, Manager, Community Programs Ext 4806
Desiree Kennedy, City Treasurer Ext 2220
Tracy Newton, Community Development Facilitator Ext 1251

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED:

Bhavana Varma, President and CEO, United Way KFL&A
Leadership Working Group and Coordinator, Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction

EXHIBITS ATTACHED:

Exhibit A - Project Outline 2010/2011

EXHIBIT A

Project Outline 2010/2011

Objective	Timeline
A project steering committee be recruited, made up of representatives from City staff in Community Services, Sustainability & Growth, the United Way, the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction, and Child & Youth Services. Co-chaired by Jim de Hoop and Bhavana Varma	October
Data collection and analysis	October - January
Best practices and learnings from the past and from other communities in North America	October - February
Extensive consultation, input, conversations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community conversations with key groups and organizations • Discussion with key informants • Focus groups 	October - February
Development of strategies and key recommendations	February/March
2 day professionally facilitated conference/workshop to discuss findings and proposed strategies	March
Development and finalization of plan, milestones, timelines and accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes, indicators and measures (simple, prioritized and manageable) • Recruitment of group to oversee implementation and reporting: inclusive of not-for-profit, frontline agencies, private sector, government, health, funders, youth and those experiencing poverty 	March/April
Implementation of plan, reporting	ongoing