

For Information

DATE: September 6, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **VIBRANT COMMUNITIES - CITIES REDUCING POVERTY**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

**OBJECTIVE**

To inform about the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee's membership in Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty initiative.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- On April 12–14, 2011, nine multi-sector poverty reduction roundtables from across Canada, including the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, participated in the five year Vibrant Communities - Cities Reducing Poverty initiative.
- Vibrant Communities is a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships that make use of our most valuable assets – people, organizations, businesses and governments.
- The first Vibrant Communities initiative ran from years 2002 – 2010 and was subject to rigorous learning and evaluation to demonstrate the positive impacts of innovative and collaborative approaches to fighting poverty.
- The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee is a multi-sectoral collaborative co-chaired by United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel.

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

Vibrant Communities is a national initiative through which 13 communities experimented with new and innovative approaches to poverty reduction. Established in 2002, it was sponsored by three national organizations: Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. These 13 communities participated in Vibrant Communities and achieved major changes together:

- 322,698 poverty reducing benefits to 170,903 households
- Thirty-five government policy changes across Canada
- 1,690 organizations partnering in Vibrant Communities

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On April 12–14, 2011, under the invitation of Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement, poverty reduction roundtables from Calgary, Abbotsford, Hamilton, Windsor, Saint John's, Medicine Hat, Montreal, Saskatoon and Peel met to discuss how to build on the successes and lessons of the Vibrant Communities 2002–2010 initiative. The various roundtables identified areas of commonality including policy, advocacy and coordination of community efforts aimed at highlighting and reducing poverty.

The nine collaborative roundtables agreed to participate in a five year initiative with a vision of building vibrant communities by significantly reducing the cost of poverty for Canadian cities. It is anticipated that 30 cities will be engaged by the end of year one, with an aspiration of 100 members by year 2016.

### **a) Key Components of Network**

In order to achieve the vision, several important strategies will be implemented:

- Development of a learning community with an agreed upon evaluation framework and establishment of common targets;
- Creation of policy templates including a business plan which frames the return on investment in poverty reduction efforts for cities and regions;
- Collective advocacy that mobilizes both at the community level and nationally;
- The creation of a National Poverty awareness Day to increase awareness in communities of the impact of poverty on individuals and families;
- A national summit on Cities Reducing Poverty;
- The engagement of a multi-sector national team to act as champions.

### **b) Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee**

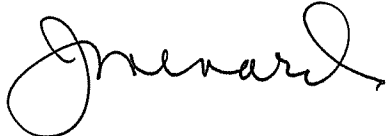
This Committee was formed in response to the provincial government's commitment to addressing poverty in Ontario and to address the critical and growing issue of poverty in Peel. Co-chaired by the United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel, the committee is working with various stakeholders, such as Fair Share Peel, the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group (PNSG), Success by Six Peel, the Peel Poverty Action Group and the community at large, to create a strategy that addresses poverty in the region. The Committee has also been working with provincial networks to ensure poverty remains a priority in the Province of Ontario.

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**CONCLUSION**

A collective approach to poverty reduction in Canada is still in the infancy stages; however, through initiatives such as Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty, communities are learning from each other, reinforcing the importance of cities and regions in peoples' lives and most importantly, collectively finding ways to help individuals and families build resilience and thrive in their communities.



Janet Menard  
Commissioner of Human Services

**Approved for Submission:**



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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