

For Information

DATE: April 18, 2013

REPORT TITLE: **UPDATE ON PROVINCIAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services
Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on the 2012 Annual Report of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy requested as part of the 2009 Council Resolutions on poverty reduction (2009-180, 2009-181, 2009-195).

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2009 the Province of Ontario launched a five-year poverty reduction strategy aimed at reducing child poverty by 25 per cent in five years.
- As part of the commitment, an annual report card is released; 2012 represents year four of the strategy.
- The 2012 report card, released December 2012 includes a number of initiatives that impact poverty, namely the review of social assistance and the Youth Action Plan that was created in 2012 to support at-risk youth.
- The Province of Ontario is renewing the strategy and will consult with stakeholders and people with lived experience to inform the new five year strategy.
- The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, a community collaborative table, will participate in the community consultation to ensure Peel's perspective is represented.

DISCUSSION

1. Breaking the Cycle the Fourth Progress Report

In 2009, the Province of Ontario passed *Bill 152, An Act Respecting a Long-Term Strategy to Reduce Poverty in Ontario*. The five year strategy focuses on reducing child poverty in Ontario by 25 per cent in five years. Key components outlined in the original strategy include an investment of \$1.4 billion for increases to the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB), implementation of the Low Income Dental Program, Community Use of Schools and the Student Nutrition Program. The report card highlights several accomplishments that are the result of investment and interventions. For example, since the inception of the strategy, 40,000 children have moved above the poverty line. Additionally, the Ontario Child Benefit has increased from \$1,100 in 2009 to \$1,210 in 2013 with a commitment to a further increase to \$1,310 in 2014.

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The 2012 report cites additional interventions that focus on the root causes of poverty for children and their families:

- a) **Child Care Modernization** – Since 2003, the government has invested more than \$1 billion in child care. The Region of Peel's 2013 allocation for child care is \$81,931,712, an increase of more than 50 per cent.
- b) **Review of Social Assistance** – In 2012, the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance released its report, *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to creating a framework for change but will immediately work with employers to better connect clients and people with disabilities to the workforce, make improvements to employment services for social assistance recipients and determine the best way to simplify the system.
- c) **Full-day Kindergarten** – Approximately 122,000 students in Ontario are currently enrolled in full-day kindergarten. The government has restated its commitment to making full day kindergarten to all Ontario four and five year olds by September 2014. In Peel region, approximately 21,063 children will be enrolled in full-day kindergarten in 2013.
- d) **After School Program** – During the 2012 – 2013 year, \$12.5 million has been invested in after-school programming for Ontario children and youth ages six to eighteen.
- e) **Youth Action Plan** – building on the recommendations from the Roots of Youth Violence report, an action plan was released in 2012 to ensure youth at risk have access to the supports they need. Key interventions include an increase in the number of Youth Outreach Workers in Peel and other communities and an expansion of the Summer Jobs for Youth Program.

Provincial Next Steps

The Province will begin a process to inform the development of a new five year Poverty Reduction Strategy. Similar to the development of *Breaking the Cycle*, the new strategy will be developed in consultation with those experiencing or at risk or experiencing poverty. In addition, the strategy will be informed by the recommendations from the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance. The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, a community collaborative, will work to ensure Peel residents and stakeholders are included in the consultation process.

2. Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy

As reported to Regional Council in October 2012, the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy was launched in October 2012 at the Poverty, Health & Homelessness in Peel conference held at Sheridan College. The development of the community strategy was led by the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, a collaborative of stakeholders, organizations and individuals, co-chaired by United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel.

The three-year strategy is comprised of five key issues: affordable and accessible housing, food security, affordable and accessible transportation, income security and economic opportunities. Through discussions with partners, it was determined that affordable and accessible transportation would be addressed first. The specific actions include the creation of an affordable transit program in Brampton and/or Mississauga and partnerships with local grocers to offer free or discounted transportation to their stores.

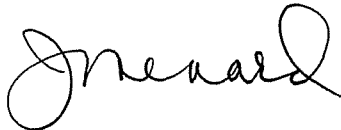
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As part of the implementation phase, the committee has begun meeting with senior leadership teams in the public, non-profit and private sectors to create awareness and get support for implementation of the actions. For example, as a result of recent presentations to City of Mississauga's executive management team and the City of Brampton's executive management team, further discussions will be held to understand issues related to transit affordability and review what other municipalities are doing to address the issue. Additionally, a presentation to Town of Caledon Council resulted in a commitment to determining what role staff will play on the committee. The committee will continue to host forums that raise awareness about poverty in Peel and work with others to advocate for investments that mitigate the impact of poverty for many of Peel's residents.

CONCLUSION

The Province of Ontario continues to acknowledge the need to address the root causes of poverty and has articulated the need for collective action. The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee will continue to engage the Province of Ontario to ensure that the voices of Peel residents experiencing poverty are heard and that there is involvement in the development of the new five year provincial poverty reduction strategy. The committee will also continue to engage Peel residents and stakeholders to gain wide support for the actions outlined in the Peel strategy.



Janet Menard
Commissioner of Human Services



For Janette Smith
Commissioner of Health Services



David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact Lisa Duarte at extension 4862 or via email at lisa.duarte@peelregion.ca

Authored By: Adaoma Patterson

c. Legislative Services