

DRAFT

**Community Public Meeting
Ontario's Poverty Reduction Plan**

Monday, July 28, 2008

6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Twin Pines Apartments, Owen Sound

Background

In the spring of 2008 the Ontario Provincial Government issued a call to Ontarians to address issues of poverty. A special Cabinet committee was established to consult with Ontarians on issues of poverty.

This committee wanted to hear from communities.

In response a committee was formed to encourage local MPPs to host meetings in the Bruce Grey region. Letters were sent to area MPPs requesting a meeting be held in each riding, and offering the assistance of the committee in making the meeting happen.

Members of the committee were representatives from:

- Grey Bruce Legal Clinic (chair)

- United Way of Bruce Grey

- S.H.A.R.E. (Self Help And Regional Empowerment)

- Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey (outreach)

- Members of the general public who are and have experienced poverty

Kincardine – Huron Bruce Riding Event

On July 7th 2008, MPP Carol Mitchell (Huron Bruce) hosted a meeting in Kincardine. The results of that meeting are held by Ms Mitchell's office.

Owen Sound – Bruce Grey Owen Sound Riding Event

MPP Bill Murdoch was contacted on May 20th 2008 and declined to host a meeting.

The committee felt they should go ahead and host one regardless, and a date of July 28th was set.

At this point the Grey Bruce Labour Council offered its resources to assist in convening the meeting. They had already funded the rental of a van to transport people to Kincardine for that meeting. The Grey Bruce Labour Council paid for the refreshments for the meeting and President Dave Trumble offered to co-host the meeting.

Posters and notices were put up throughout the community, flyers were placed in Good Food Box, and an email was sent out through "Information Bruce Grey" (the United Way's I&R database) encouraging people to attend.

**Owen Sound – Bruce Grey Owen Sound Riding Event
in response to the provincial call for
community consultations regarding issues of poverty in communities.**

Approx. 50 in attendance

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Meeting hosts:

- David Trumble Grey Bruce Labour Council
- Francesca Dobbyn Executive Director United Way of Bruce Grey.

Committee members were recognized

Glenda Devlin, Community Legal Worker, Grey Bruce Legal Clinic

- Gave a brief history on the committee and the Kincardine event

John Argue, from the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice was introduced.

- John had travelled to Owen Sound to attend the meeting as he had only attended similar meetings in Toronto.

Dave Trumble: President of the Grey Bruce Labour Council,

- Detailed how critical tonight's meeting is Everyday 150 jobs in Ontario are lost which means 150 people are facing the prospect of poverty each day, this translates to 350,000 jobs in 2 yrs.
- Encouraged everyone to share and thanked those that have come to share their stories and give the report that is needed

Francesca Dobbyn, Executive Director; United Way of Bruce Grey

- Thanked everyone for attending and apologized that remarks need to be kept short as there simply isn't enough time for full stories. She encouraged everyone to utilize the sheets to ensure their voices were heard
- Pointed out the various proposed budgets that were up on the walls

Absence of MPP Bill Murdoch

- Mr. Murdoch had sent a letter stating he would be unable to attend
- Comments expressed about how disgraceful and suggested a letter signed by those present stating how disgraceful it is.

Format

Four questions would be asked. On each table, each question corresponded to a colour of paper, and participants were encouraged to continue to write their thoughts and ideas down on each page.

Floor was opened up for input

What does poverty look like in the Community:

Housing

- Lack of low income housing.
- Substandard housing: cramped quarters, rat and bug infected, cold,
- Absentee landlord
- People living on the street, homeless
- Lack of transitional housing
- There are no Emergency shelters/accommodations
- Not making it on minimum wage.
- A lot of people living w/ family members/stress for families helping those in poverty
- Landlords turning down people on assistance.

Women

- Women risk financial ruin when spouse is incarcerated and they receive no support
- Women/ men are encouraged to stay in poverty/abusive relationships
- Women take the risk of losing their home and facing poverty when calling the police or workplace injury.
- Underemployment
- Women earn less . they get 69% less.
- The wages were addressed.
- Pay equity .72c /dollar for women
- Seeing more women and children in the shelters and the homeless youth

Health Care – Personal Care

- Lack of access to dental care
- Constant paperwork
- Cant save up for glasses
- Food banks
- Access to medical resources is limited, no doctors to sign forms
- Mental health issues and drug and alcohol issues are on the increase
- Health impacted by poor nutrition literally
- Changes to drug plans makes one jump through hoops

Work Related

- Can't afford the right clothes, shoes, etc when applying for jobs if you're on Ont. Works
- Can't afford work-required uniforms.
- Can't afford transportation.
- Hard to get work when need haircut and dental work

Child and Youth

- Kids not having breakfast, lunch, dinner
- Kids can't access recreation
- Children working help pay the bills

General Comments

- Rural poverty is different
- Repeated incarcerations due to poverty
- Social isolations and transportation issues
- Can't afford the gas or insurance on the car that you have
- Need access to emergency funds
- Business closures, lack of jobs
- Being forced off the grid financially no bank account.
- Not fitting the criteria (ie not being eligible for EI or OW)
- Agencies opening for p/t workers/ temporary agencies – no real jobs
- Disabled cant access recreation
- There is access to emergency funds but a lot of people don't know that if they're on assistance
- Govt. workers without resources
- Marriage breakdown has its own financial impact
- Not only children living in poverty it's the families
- Not having phone or internet
- Peer pressure concerns at school
- The inability to participate in society.
- Family courts etc do not really try to keep families together
- Keeping clean, life skills

What is working

- Drop in centres
- Thrift stores
- Clothing giveaway
- Community Legal clinic
- The churches are giving,
- Access to the mental health clinic
- One Church provides housing
- Friends/connections in the community
- Support for glasses: certain times of the year? They will subsidize or help w/ glasses. – resources detailed
- Y employment
- Recreation subsidies
- Stress lines
- United Way programs
- Social networks
- Good food box.
- School nutrition programs
- Supportive housing
- Food bank
- New communities looking at accessibility for disabled.
- Y housing
- Interagency information sharing.
- Not-for-profit-sector is under funded stressed but it is really good for people
- Even transfer payment agencies.
- Habitat building houses
- Rural women take action on poverty
- Trade Unions
- Women shelters
- Sexual Assault Services
- Habitat for Humanity's ReStore
- Ont. Coalition for Social Justice,
- S.H.A.R.E. (Self Help And Regional Empowerment)
- Ontario Coalition against Poverty
- Teacher's Federation
- Credit Counselling/Holly
- Bruce Shoreline
- OSAP,
- Cradlelink,
- Assistance for those with young children (Early Years Centres)
- Disability transportation,
- City transit: courteous bus drivers
- Parental support: especially for early years
- Literacy programs
- Community rallies around crisis
- Tourism and special events, a lot are free
- Health Unit
- Subsidizing spots in daycare
- Health and Dental Clinic for low income for kids or seniors

- Bruce Power economy based services spin-off. Free care for some
- A new way of addressing health and social concerns
- Counselling for abused women
- Access to information: newspaper, library
- Family Law information clinic
- CMHA drop-in, they go beyond their mandate
- Lots of websites
- Free concerts from city

What would make an immediate difference in the lives of people living in poverty?

Financial

- 40% rise in disability rules and 60% rise in general welfare
- Short term jobs to make instant dollars
- End claw backs
- To be able to have a part time job and not lose ½ of everything you earn.
- Regular guaranteed income
- Indexed increases
- Bonuses and incentives to get ahead
- Free dental below \$20,000 yr.
- Change EI eligibility for Rural communities
- Turn back “Mike Harris” impact
- Card check certification of unions
- Politicians can’t increase their salaries without increasing assistance rates
- Emergency credit card to participate in society
- Grocery voucher program

Respect and Dignity

- Give benefit of doubt when people seek help
- End endless referrals.
- Public education Campaign talking about the truth of poverty incl. right wing propaganda
- Rules that are not putative
- Don’t punish poor for being poor
- Respect and end discrimination
- Code of Ethics
- Standard of care/ethics
- Recognizing the rights of the disabled
- Recognize the rights and challenges of the invisibility disabled

Community Supports

- Peer networks
- End silos
- Encourage cross agency cooperation
- Better training for workers
- Change banking laws, enable micro loans
- Access to childcare 24/7

- Local officials need to work with us
- 150 new Ombudsmen
- Cannot get your handicapped sticker renewed – no doctors

General

- Political will to deal with issues
- Charter challenge of Govt. Assistance programs, over not following the law on providing a adequate standard of care
- Look at Educational systems
- Standardized post secondary textbooks, so they can be shared around
- Buy local
- An effective govt that works together
- Cross sector conversations
- Recognize positive impact of union
- Political activism
- Get involved in political process
- Recognize lack of doctors
- Impede “form required by government” – too much non-standardized paperwork
- The govt form is flawed and you’re set up to fail when applying for disability

What would make an long term difference in the lives of people living in poverty?

- Implement all the suggestions from question #3
- Get real stats on poverty.
- Address:
 - Underemployed
 - Pink ghetto
- End poverty
- Drop political crap
- Go for what works
- Provide leadership
- Rich helping poor resulting in having no one in need
- Deem homelessness “a national emergency”
- Fundamental shift in how we think
- Right to equality
- “Acquisition of stuff” phased out, end materialistic driven society
- Family geared to 4: redefine family for those larger, smaller or just different
- Use Chart of Rights to fight for change
- Using those with experience work in the sector
- Don’t tax necessities
- Communal living
- Dollar shift in health care~> poverty is a disease
- More supports in education system
- Get rid of taxes
- Loss of taxes equals loss of services
- Stronger links within the community
- Comprehensive strategies to deal with all the issues
- Ending parental poverty ends child poverty

- Better consultation on tax spending
- Tax breaks for small business
- Illustrate/research/holler about cost savings in reducing poverty.
- System that puts people through school for lower dollars
- Preventative needs to be addressed
- Mandatory living on social assistance, for a year, when elected as an MPP
- Look at the waste in the system
- Provide support for people going through crisis
- Address First Nations
- Deal with treaty cases
- Bridge school/employment

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Squeaky wheel is effective
- Petition and letters to the Editor
- Political changes
- Turn out tonight shows how important the issues are
- Networks are getting built
- Doesn't end tonight: clipboard signatures
- People have good ideas when they come together
- Short summary to your MP AND MPP
- Keep pressure up on government
- Oct 17: United Nations Day to end World Poverty
- Colleen Purdon to speak on poverty to the UN