Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Reduction Round Table

Strategic Action Plan

February, 2016

Roundtable Co-Chairs:

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1.0 Background

A recent study by the OECD (Ruiz and Wosloscko, 2016) suggests that the gap between the rich and poor is even greater than Canadians have believed, while other studies have provided substantial evidence linking poverty to poorer health outcomes (Raphael, 2009) and a broad range of childhood development disorders (Kohen et al, 2002). Canadian communities have been taking action to address this complex social problem for some time and increasingly have formed coalitions or collaborative undertakings, often under the leadership of municipal governments (*See, for example, the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network at:* www.ptbopovertyreduction.com) These efforts are directed at ameliorating the impacts of poverty on local citizens and range from the efforts of Edmonton to end homelessness within ten years (Edmonton Committee to End Homelessness, 2009) to efforts to reduce precarious employment (Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, n.d).

1.1 Establishment of the Sault Ste. Marie Roundtable on Poverty Reduction

Likewise, in Sault Ste. Marie numerous organizations have been working to reduce the impact of poverty on the health and well-being of the city's citizens, and have undertaken numerous consultations and studies in recent years to address this complex issue. The Sault Ste. Marie Report on Homelessness (SSMDSSAB, 2014), the United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and District's "Action for Community Change" (Hackett, 2015) and the "Downtown Dialogue and Action" (NORDIK, 2015) all engaged community members, service providers and community leaders in addressing some of the challenges inherent in addressing the impacts of poverty. One outcome of these various pieces of research was the formation of a Poverty Roundtable in the spring of 2015. Co-chaired by representatives of United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and District, the Algoma Public Health Unit and NORDIK, a community-based research institute affiliated with Algoma University, the Roundtable was intended to facilitate the development of an action plan to reduce poverty in Sault Ste. Marie.

The Roundtable has been meeting monthly since its inception, and in December 2015, adopted a Terms of Reference (attached as Appendix A). The vision statement of the Roundtable is

To reduce the impact of low income[1] on the health and well-being of individuals and families in Sault Ste. Marie

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[1] After much discussion, the Roundtable determined that 'low income' is a more inclusive term than 'poverty' which may require definition. Members observed that the 'working poor' were often denied access to essential services based on incomes only minimally above those in receipt of Ontario Works, and certainly were experiencing many of the hardships faced by those only slightly less fortunate.

The Roundtable members have worked diligently to develop an action plan aimed at achieving the above-noted vision, with the intent to submit this report to community leaders in the early spring of 2016 and obtain their support for implementation.

2.0 Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Roundtable: Advancing the Collaborative Impact

Research indicates that it is challenging for community organizations to coordinate their respective services in a way that can reliably comprehend and regulate complex social and community health issues within a given community (Jolley, 2014). In fact, researchers and practitioners from the various public health sectors throughout the world are often attempting to refine their practices and develop new approaches in order to better address the variations in the state of risk within a given community (e.g., Jabbar & Abelson, 2011).

There is however a general consensus that collaborative interventions engaging multiple organizations as well as the targeted health population are those most likely to succeed. Additionally, much research suggests that community-based interventions should be designed in a way that fosters the most reciprocal and reflexive learning process possible when it comes to the collaborative methods utilized by agencies and stakeholders to measure changes in individual and group level risk factors within a given community (Klinke & Renn, 2011).

The Roundtable, therefore, has adopted a collaborative approach to its work. This type of multi-sectoral collaboration, sometimes referred to as 'Collective Impact' is "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (Kania & Kramer, 2011, p.36).

> *Collective Impact is a framework to tackle deeply entrenched and <u>complex social problems</u>. It is an innovative and structured approach to making collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organisations and citizens to achieve significant and lasting social change.*
>
> *-n.d. <u>http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/</u>*

The Roundtable's work to date is analyzed below using the five key components of Collective Impact as identified by Kania & Kramer (2011): common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement, continuous communication and backbone organization.

2.1 Common Agenda

The Roundtable participants have had numerous discussions and identified a number of objectives and actions to support their overall goal. The 'theory of change' of the Roundtable is

The health and well-being of low-income people shall be improved through a set of prioritized actions led by a broad-based collaborative of community members and service providers, and endorsed by Sault Ste. Marie's community leadership.

2.2 Mutually Reinforcing Activities & Priorities

Based on the numerous consultations outlined in Section 1 of this report, the Roundtable has established five priority areas (see Schedule B attached):

- Food Security
- Essential Services
- Community Engagement
- Housing
- Workforce Participation

Many of the Roundtable members are already engaged in activities which support service provision in these areas, but have acknowledged that there are still individuals and families are unable to have crucial needs met at times of crises. The Roundtable's efforts are directed at enhancing services so that they do reach the person(s) in need at the time when the need is urgent, and to improve the overall health and well-being of community members by reducing the more extreme poverty.

This approach has guided the Roundtable members in their preliminary 'action analysis', i.e., examining the strengths and assets already existing (or forces with us); the gaps and challenges facing the priority area (or forces against us); and the 'unknown' that will require further research or inquiry. Based on this analysis, the members have also identified a series of actions to take to address these key priority areas (see Schedule B for all actions identified for Working Groups).

The Roundtable members have also identified that a crucial next step in advancing the Roundtable's work is ensuring that the community's low-income members, leadership and the general public endorse the work of the Roundtable to help ensure that we are 'on the right track'. As a result, the next step is communicating with these groups about the proposed actions and obtaining their feedback to integrate into the Strategic Action Plan.

2.3 Continuous Communication

While a Common Agenda amongst Roundtable participants has been clearly articulated (see above), it is essential that community leadership also endorses the Roundtable's work and priorities. Thus, the group proposes the following actions to ensure that community members, organizations and leaders all support the Agenda, Theory of Change and Priority Actions. Thus the Roundtable intends to undertake the following communication and endorsement strategy:

- February – April, 2016 – Review, revision & approval of Strategic Action Plan by Roundtable members, low-income community members, and Mayor and City Council
- May, 2016 – Formation of Working Groups to address priority areas. Working Groups shall be inclusive of low-income members, service providers and concerned citizens, and shall select amongst themselves a Chair who shall serve on the Roundtable (see TOR attached as Schedule A)
- May – June, 2016 – Roundtable shall establish a 'Shared Measurement' strategy which may consist of one or more tools and/or a set of indicators of progress
- May – June, 2016 – Based on feedback from Working Groups, Roundtable shall establish a Continuous Communication strategy that shall provide regular progress and activity reports to all working group members, community leadership and the general public

2.4 Shared Measurement

To date, the Roundtable has not established a set of Shared Measurement Indicators. This shall be established in discussions during the May – June, 2016 timeframe, along with the finalizing of a Continuous Communication Strategy.

2.5 Backbone Organization

To date, the 'Backbone Organization' has consisted of the three co-chairs, drawn from United Way, Algoma Public Health, and NORDIK Institute. The Co-Chairs have provided leadership, respectively, on obtaining political support and ensuring that organizational leadership is at the table; taking minutes and organizing meetings; and facilitating discussion and the Roundtable's processes.

The continuance of this tripartite 'backbone organization' will need to be revisited once the Working Groups have selected their respective chairs, and the Roundtable's workplan is endorsed by the various groups by June 2016.

3.0 Conclusions

The Sault Ste. Marie Roundtable on Poverty Reduction has worked hard over the past nine months to develop a shared agenda, a prioritized set of five mutually reinforcing areas of activity, and a collaborative structure to move its work forward. It has also identified the next steps to ensure that its Strategic Action Plan accurately reflects the feedback it has received from community members and leadership, including those most impacted by poverty in our community. Over the next three – four months, the Roundtable shall once again engage the community, this time in advancing the Roundtable's work through participation in the Working Groups themselves, and in determining how best to measure the Roundtable's progress on reducing the impacts of poverty on the community's health and well-being.

References:

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Sault Ste. Marie Poverty Reduction Round Table

Terms of Reference

Purpose:

To reduce the impact of low income on the health and well-being of individuals and families in Sault Ste. Marie

Objectives:

The Poverty Round Table (PRT) will:

- develop a comprehensive action plan to reduce the effects of poverty in Sault Ste. Marie
- establish working groups to implement the action plans
- oversee the development of action plans and evaluation processes for working groups
- monitor action plans and ensure coordination and communication between working groups
- communicate and provide reports back to the community, including City council

Structure:

- develop and implement an open recruitment and process for the PRT that is inclusive and accessible
- ensure engagement of public sector, private sector, those living in poverty and social service agencies in conversations regarding poverty reduction plans
- Ensure structure and processes that enable communication, collaboration and the building or strengthening of community relationships and partnerships from all sectors
- develop and implement processes for reviewing goals and objectives, measuring and reporting on progress, providing an ongoing evaluation that allows the necessary course correction as required
- develop and implement a process to recruit chairs of working groups as required

Membership:

- The PRT is made up of representatives from community-based organizations, individuals living in poverty and other key partners and stakeholders
- the Co-Chairs of the group will be individuals who encourage inclusivity, dialogue and open conversations and participation
- the PRT will include Chairs of established working groups

- the City of Sault Ste. Marie will have representation on the committee to ensure their strategic role in this partnership

Coordination and Support:

- Provided through Algoma Public Health, NORDIK Institute and the United Way of Sault Ste. Marie and district during the development stages; this will be reviewed in May 2016

Meetings:

- up to 10 meetings per year

Schedule 'B'

Poverty Round Table – Poverty Themes

1. Food Security

Critical Question Or Opportunity	How can we support low-income people in accessing affordable nutritious food?	
Long-term Goal:	To reduce / eliminate poverty in SSM	
Short-term Goal:	To make SSM a food secure city	
Forces for Us	**Unknown/Uncommitted**	**Forces Against Us**
Food Banks Churches Milk Programs Community Kitchens School Breakfast programs Christmas Community Dinners Community gardens (Etienne Brule, Allard Street) Soup Kitchen Good Food Box Mill Market Working relationships with local First Nation Therapeutic Garden at hospital	Being able to afford healthy food (all food groups) Increase agriculture-chickens, eggs, gardens Harvesting and storage skills Cost of Food Level of need Climate/Climate change	Adults less open to change Misconceptions re: time requirements Doom/Gloom/Pessimists Lack of awareness of initiatives Use of available land

Pay what you can programs Natural Environment Community Leaders/Elders/Mentors		
ACTION	**ACTION**	**ACTION**
Networking, continue partnerships Increase awareness of existing services Creativity Increase family participation and voice Increase youth participation and voice Engaging Elders and youth Intergenerational knowledge Transfer of Skills	Inventory of local resources, local farmers, RAIN, etc. Inventory of teaching skills ex. canning Money availability and / or commitment Engaging Elders and youth Intergenerational knowledge Transfer of Skills	Change our focus to youth, community members, retirees, farmers, lay people, church members etc. Evidence from successful community projects around the world, Canada and locally School based greenhouses, gardens, cafeteria projects Mental health / well -being promotion as part of outdoor gardens, healthy living, wellness clubs Social inclusion in plans/activities Engaging Elders and youth Intergenerational knowledge Transfer of Skills

2. Essential Services

Critical Question Or Opportunity	How can we make essential services available to low-income people?
Long-term Goal:	To reduce / eliminate poverty in SSM
Short-term Goal:	To provide access to essential / emergency services (food, housing, clothing, health, etc.)

Forces for Us	Unknown/Uncommitted	Forces Against Us
CAT		Clients unaware of services available
211		Knowledge
Housing Support Workers		Transportation
Shelters		Lack of Housing Stock
NRC	Continued / Sustainable funding	Lack of Resources
Community Hubs		Literacy
OW/ODSP	Political direction (new government)	Communication Barriers
Low Energy Assistance Program	What are the stats for low income?	Agency silo's (funding boundaries)
Soup Kitchen		Stigma
St. Vincent	Who are they?	Client's Trust
Salvation Army	Impact of industry closure / lay offs	Safety (those under the influence drugs/alcohol unable to receive services)
Credit Counseling		Eligibility criteria
WIC		Services not 24/7 or available on weekends
CNIB /Canadian Hearing Society / Red Cross /John Howard Society		Apathy on behalf of agencies,

All Social Services Public Health Situational Table (high risk cl's that are at danger of injury to self/community) Breton House Ken Brown Recovery Home Victim Services of Algoma		especially around looking for resources No funding increase for many agencies Agencies putting $ into staying open vs programs Fundraising difficulty to compete against larger agencies
ACTION	**ACTION**	**ACTION**
Encourage all agencies to keep up to date with 211 Continuing to promote 211 services More Coordinated planning amongst agencies Need clarification on; how well 211 is working Is the action for agencies or clients Coordinated planning	Keep MP, MPP informed of work being done @ Poverty Round Table Get on agenda for City Council and Leadership Table Access to #'s / unsure where to get these numbers	Expand advertising of services Work on building relationships with clients Establish core services @ each Community Hub Have community members (reps) on neighbourhood committees Have services available on weekends More information re:eligibility

3. Engagement

Critical Question Or Opportunity	How can we better engage with / include low-income people?		
Long-term Goal:	To reduce / eliminate poverty in SSM		
Short-term Goal:	To increase community inclusion of low-income people		
Forces for Us	**Unknown/Uncommitted**	**Forces Against Us**	
Leadership table City engagement NRC – Community Hubs Women in Crisis, Phoenix Rising Client's surveys Access to tools /Resources Political Supports Similarities with strategic planning Access to online data Engagement builds sense of trust, reciprocity, engage those in poverty, community members, business, local politicians	Political will Awareness of poverty (definition) How do we reach out to those living in poverty? Available Data –how to interpret it, access it, use it	Tools not being used to full potential Data is closed Fear when sharing strategic plans / mandates Advocacy / Lobbying Cultural / gender issues	
ACTION	**ACTION**	**ACTION**	

	Nothing provided	
Client Feedback surveys		Survey fatigue
Alternative use of accessing information (Facebook)		Ability to advocate
Carefully structured media tools		Lack of resources
Providing child care, transportation, food		Fear of speaking out (ex. OW, housing)
Consider Barriers for clients – unable to access resources (disability, culture, gender, age, sexuality etc.)		Lack of awareness of rights
		Attitude / Perception/ Stigma
Going to them (Soup Kitchen, NRC)		Working groups / individuals could take on this role
Good structured conversation (open)		
Workshops, educate, develop skills		
Volunteers		

4. Housing

Critical Question Or Opportunity	How can we develop and/ or maintain an adequate supply of decent affordable housing?
Long-term Goal:	To reduce / eliminate poverty in SSM
Short-term Goal:	To develop / maintain adequate supply of decent, affordable housing

Forces for Us	Unknown/Uncommitted	Forces Against Us
Affordable Potential housing stock

Housing development expertise

Bush Plan Enterprise / Social Renovations

Expertise from private landlords who have bought up housing stock

Invest $ to make properties sound

Current housing initiatives

Partnerships that are working | Willing partners to provide initial investment

Are there people willing to develop board / sit on boards?

What is current housing stock/ availability

Is it in the homelessness plan?

What is our city's commitment to development of new housing or renovating existing housing for rental property?

Are there downtown improvement$ for housing in downtown core?

What is possibility of co-op housing? | Out of city landlords raising rents

Lack of money for initial investments

Lack of community champions

Rent at affordable rates

Current stock being bought up by foreign owners potentially driving $rent up to unaffordable rates

Erosion of housing stock |

ACTION	ACTION	ACTION
Form a working group /board to pursue funding and fundraising ($50,000) Build partnerships with local transitional housing and fundraisers Build partnerships with housing support services Build partnerships with private landlords	Identify potential willing partners Prioritize approaching appropriate partners Explore how our cities provide incentives to landlords to retain housing for low income tenants Assess incentives for applications in SSM (relevant to our city) Explore possibility of dollars for downtown improvement housing Explore if co-op housing is a possibility Explore who would support co-op housing now since federal / provincial gov't have backed out!	Encourage Local landlords- educate about needs on local level Approaching engage service groups, community partners to engage in funding Educate community on housing issues to engage support Promote local landlords to invest in housing and how can we support landlords to invest Work with local service clubs, other housing providers to build stock

5. Workforce

Critical Question Or Opportunity	How can we support workforce entry for those facing employment barriers?
Long-term Goal:	To reduce / eliminate poverty in SSM
Short-term Goal:	Reduce /eliminate barriers to workforce entry

Forces for Us	Unknown/Uncommitted	Forces Against Us
Private enterprise supports CHS,CNIB,LDA, John Howard, OD, ODSP, employment supports Employment Connections Sault Career Centre HSCDSB & ADSB Program Read	Affordable daycare Long term funding sources Continuity of staff with appropriate knowledge to do affective outreach Future local employment opportunities	Affordable $ for programming (sustainable) Economy / employment opportunities (lack of), higher wages Fear of change (Participants) Lack of skills and abilities High incidence of mental health & addictions & lack of sufficient treatment services Lack of affordable transportation Participants lose benefits based on income

ACTION	ACTION	ACTION
Support existing programming	Set Criteria for experience and education requirements for outreach workers Research funding sources and apply where applicable	More employer incentives to hire people with barriers More support for employees in the workforce Provide coaching and support for potential employees in preparation for services needed to get employment Provide outreach workers in all community low income regions Apply for $ to support outreach