



CASE STUDY | STRATEGY RENEWAL IN PEEL REGION

AUGUSTINA NAGBERI-ASSEEZ, ADAOMA PATTERSON, ALICIA WILSON, AND NATASHA PEI

On September 18, 2018, the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee launched their second poverty reduction strategy and became the first community in Canada to commit to a 10-year plan to end poverty. This case study outlines the natural renewal process of a Collective Impact initiative, highlighting Peel’s experience progressing through their first full collaborative cycle and how they used their learnings and successes to inform the next phase of their work. It is most useful for collaboratives in the development or re-development phases of their work.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES – POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Collective Impact is not a linear process – far from. There are five phases that a successful collaboration often undergoes, in a cyclical fashion. Collaboratives can expect to move from: exploration – development – growth – maturity – creative destruction (renewal).

The *renewal* phase can be particularly difficult to fathom after going through such intensive community-wide exploration and development phases. But social change collaboratives cannot remain static if they are to be sustainable enough to achieve their long-term goals.

Over time, participants change, new information is learned, and the socio-political environment is likely to shift. Particularly when addressing poverty, to meet the ever-changing landscape, a period of renewal is often important to test the collaborative’s original Theory of Change against their new understanding of poverty and poverty reduction, take stock of what or whom is missing,

About Peel Poverty Reduction Committee

The Peel Poverty Reduction Committee was formed in 2008 and is co-convened by the Region of Peel and United Way Greater Toronto.

The first Poverty Reduction Strategy from 2012-2015 targeted economic opportunities, income security, affordable and accessible transit, affordable and accessible housing, and food security.

With a staff of only four full time employees, the majority of the work is undertaken by volunteers and multi-sectoral partners in the community.

On the heels of success with their first Strategy, the Committee has developed a new 10-year plan to scale the work up, out and deep, and make a significant impact on ending poverty in Peel.

and re-invigorate the project with energy to get things done.

KEY LEARNING

Plan for new beginnings. Poverty will continue to change and so too must our strategies to combat it. Renewing a poverty reduction strategy is a natural process in the development phase. Anticipate a period of review to take stock of what is going well that can be expanded or built on, and what should be done differently to achieve the overall objectives.

Plan long-term. Three years is a relatively short period of time to realize significant impact on the root causes of poverty, particularly when trust is still being built or re-built with the community. Look at least 10 years ahead and set short and medium-term targets to provide an indication of how the collaborative is progressing against the community's long-term goals.

Plan with all stakeholders. Include all community members and investors from the beginning "messy" stages of establishing priorities and all throughout the development and implementation. The deeper the personal and organizational investments, the stronger the sustainability of the initiative.

POVERTY IN PEEL REGION

Peel Region is the second largest region in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and is comprised of the mix of urban and rural areas of Brampton (pop. 593,640), Mississauga (pop. 721,600), and Caledon (pop. 66,000). Peel is also a very diverse region. Based on the 2015 census, 51.5% of the population are immigrants and 62.26% are visible minorities.

Low income and income inequality are on the rise in Peel region as the cost of housing, transportation and food continue to increase. 12.8% of the population is considered to be living on low-income, finding it challenging to make ends meet. This figure is higher amongst specific demographics such as children (18%) and racialized communities (16%).

Precarious, unstable employment and change in the types of jobs available are also on the rise in Peel region. 48% of Peel residents work part-time or part of the year. The local unemployment rate is 8.2% compared with Ontario's average of 7.4%, and this rate jumps amongst the youth population, to 19.7%.

Other trends primarily contributing to Peel Region's challenges include the affordable housing crisis, where individuals and families may be waiting years for housing subsidies; and the rise of marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity as the cost of feeding a family per week has increased to 26% since 2009.

PHASE 1: PEEL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY 2012-2015

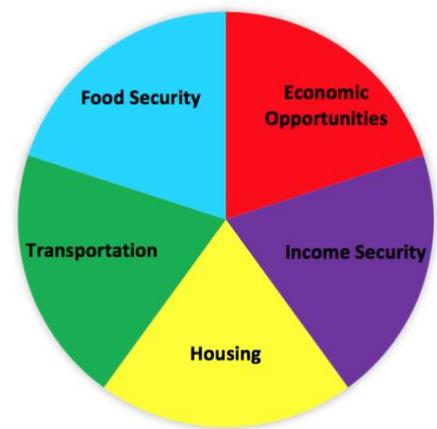
The Peel Poverty Reduction Committee (PPRC) was created in 2008 and is an independent community network, co-convened by the Region of Peel and United Way of Greater Toronto, hosting ongoing dialogues, collaboration and advocacy on poverty and poverty reduction amongst residents, local non-profits, labour, the private sector and local government.

Four staff members, employed by the Region of Peel, convene and support the Committee to come together to direct the priority-setting and work of the collaborative.

In 2012, the first set of poverty reduction priorities identified by the Committee were:

- Economic Opportunities
- Income Security
- Affordable and Accessible Transportation
- Affordable and Accessible Housing
- Food Security

2012 PPRC PRIORITIES



Since 2008, they have made substantial impact on legislation, policies and programs. Key highlights of the first Strategy include introducing: [The Affordable Transit Program](#), [Peel Food Charter](#), [Peel Food Map](#), Peel Community Benefits Network and the [Living Wage initiative](#).

In 2016, the Region of Peel and Mississauga Transit piloted a low-income transit pass for up to 1,300 eligible low-income Mississauga residents. Evaluation of the pilot indicated that for every \$1 investment in the program, \$3.39 is generated. On November 7, 2017 the Affordable Transit Program was approved by Peel Regional Council and is now permanent in Brampton and Mississauga.

Furthermore, as a result of the work of the Food Security Taskforce, a GIS map was created to identify food programs and community gardens. The Taskforce also worked with the community and stakeholders to develop the Peel Food Charter which has identify's 12 goals under six priority areas:

1. Agriculture and Economy
2. Community Engagement and Decision Making
3. Education and Awareness
4. Empowerment and Sustainability
5. Equity and Justice
6. Health and Well-being

The process of developing the Peel Food Charter brought together many food stakeholders in the community including the social services sector, Public Health, farmers, residents and a wide range

of community organizations to create a vision and action plan for a food secure community. The Charter will now inform the work of the emerging Peel Food Action Council.

RENEWAL: 2015-2018

Despite the major accomplishments of the first phase, poverty is deeply rooted and persistent. Many of the issues identified in the strategy still existed by the planned end date in 2015.

The 2012 Strategy created awareness about how poverty impacts rapidly growing urban and rural communities as well as allowed the community and stakeholders to work together in a different way, collectively and by consensus. It also focused on advocating for investments that mitigate and reduce the number of people experiencing poverty in Peel – the low-income transit pilot, the food charter priorities, the emerging Peel Community Benefits Network and a living wage that provides a benchmark on the local cost of living.

While several new priorities have been identified in the 2018 Strategy, a large number are an extension of the work that began in 2012, including many continuing partnerships and collaborations that have been the driving force behind achieving the strategic goals and outcomes. The new 2018 – 2028 priorities shift focus towards a more tangible increase of access and opportunity as well as changes to policies and systems while maintaining the momentum, building on gains that were made, and still advocating and raising awareness.

Renewing priorities was natural, given that the first phase of the 2012 Strategy ended in 2015. The Committee had to balance pausing, reflecting on its accomplishments and planning for the next iteration, all while continuing much of the work that began in the first phase. Developing outcomes and approaches with the Committee and community included: an extensive jurisdictional scan, a review of several research reports and consultations, reports on a range of related issues such as social assistance and housing, assessing the impact of the previous priority areas and facilitated workshops with key stakeholders and residents, including those with lived and living experience.

The 2018-2028 Strategy shifts from a large focus on raising awareness of poverty in the region and deliberately zeroes in on three priorities: Income Security, Economic Opportunity, Well-being and Social Inclusion including:

- Safe, affordable and accessible housing
- Safe, affordable and flexible childcare
- Affordable, accessible and connected transportation
- Physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food
- Integrated programs, services and supports that meet the needs of Peel residents

The three priorities expand on the work of the previous Strategy but go deeper and look further out at how they may impact residents given disruption and rapid economic and social changes.

In addition, this Strategy identifies specific populations (racialized communities for example) that are more likely to be impacted by poverty because of systemic barriers and discrimination. It links issues related to poverty to human rights and articulates the importance of a rights-based approach to reducing and eliminating poverty.

Interesting insights revealed during the development process, include:

- Reactions based on personal and/or professional experiences.
- Discussion and dialogue are essential in understanding issues from different perspectives and allowed for important connections between organizations and systems.
- Discussions about taking action versus planning or offering suggestions on how to achieve the collective's desired changes.
- Understanding the collaborative's capacity to achieve each desired/proposed changes.

THE APPROVAL PROCESS

Consensus-based decision-making was utilized throughout the planning process, including final approval from the Committee on the Strategy. An Advisory Group, comprised of members from the larger Steering Committee was formed to provide insights into the development and pre-approval of the Strategy. Final approval occurred through consensus at steering committee meetings devoted to the approval of strategy content.

Comprised of the three area municipalities, Peel Regional Council provided support and endorsement when the Strategy was presented in May 2018. In 2019, the Committee will share the Strategy with each of the municipal Councils and identify their roles and responsibilities as members.

Regional Council provided a few recommendations for the Strategy, such as providing elected officials with face-to-face education on poverty in Peel, to allow elected officials to advocate for poverty reduction policies and programs; to considering initiatives and strategies that are already in existence; finally, determining which stakeholders are missing at the Peel Poverty Reduction table.

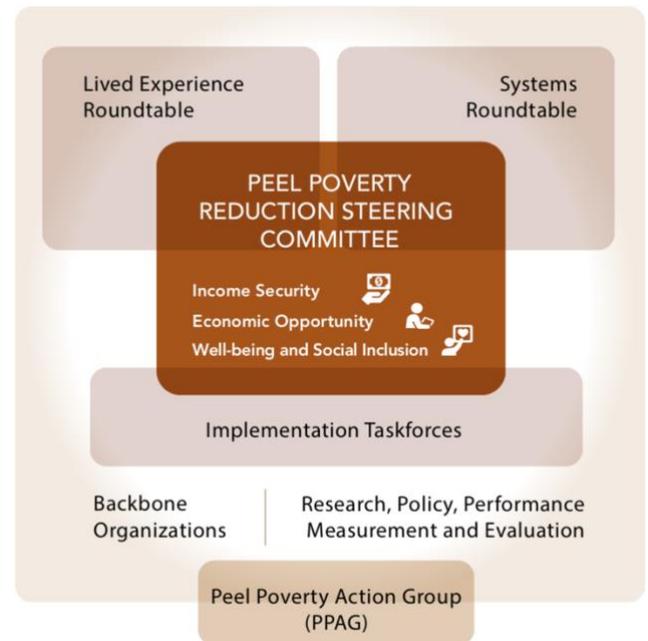
“ Access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing; access to affordable and accessible transportation; access to sufficient, affordable, and nutritious food, and access to quality health care and education are basic human rights. The Committee acknowledges that systemic barriers and discrimination can cause marginalized, racialized, immigrant, and newcomer communities to be disproportionately affected by poverty and urges everyone in Peel to work together as a community to eliminate poverty in Peel.”

(2018-2028 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy)

WEAVING LEARNINGS INTO A PLAN

The Committee has identified the need for a *Research, Evaluation and Policy Working Group* to develop an evaluation framework and report progress and impact of the Strategy annually. Some short (1-3 years), medium (4-7 years) and long-term (8-10 years) outcomes towards poverty reduction and associated actions have been established already. For example, under the Income Security priority area, progress over 10 years will be indicated by:

- Increased **awareness** about tax programs or benefits available to residents experiencing income inequality (*short-term*).
- Increased **awareness** about the impact of income inequality among stakeholders (*short-term*).
- Increased **access** to income supports available to residents experiencing income inequality (*short-term*).
- **Improved** affordable banking options for low-income individuals and families such as short term loans, credit and bank accounts that offer reduced interest rates and increased savings programs (*medium-term*).
- **Increased use** of payday loan map (tool) by stakeholders to inform income-based program planning and development (*medium-term*).
- **Decreased percentage** of people below the poverty line due to access to income programs such as tax and social assistance benefits (*long-term*).
- Greater **advocacy** that eliminates barriers to increased savings and participation in government programs such as Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) and subsidy programs (*long-term*).



LESSONS LEARNED

Difficulties encountered along the way:

- **Timing (slow it down):** When one goes alone one goes fast, but when we go together we go far and wide. It is important to ensure that everyone is involved even if this means you go slowly in order to have everyone's voice reflected in the work.
- **Control:** Acknowledging that the Committee may have little or no control or influence over some issues.

Surprisingly easy processes:

- **Trust:** Everyone that was supposed to show up for each meeting showed up and had their say.
- **Consensus:** Agreeing on the broad priority areas was easy.
- **Honesty:** It was easy for people to provide feedback.
- **Inclusion:** Members were willing to delegate to Council and were proud to do so.
- **Passion:** Members of the Committee are passionate about poverty reduction and are not afraid to champion issues, the Committee and the Strategy.

Advice for other poverty reduction collaboratives facilitating a renewal process:

- Have a common vision.
- Plan plan plan...what gets planned for, gets accomplished.
- Hire or have a strong facilitator.
- Get stakeholders involved in selecting your priorities, it takes time but it is worth it.
- Start broad and then focus in more. However, the final outcomes should not be too specific to ensure work from stakeholders aligns to the broader strategy.
- Use evidence (research and data) to support *why* priorities are selected
- The Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty network was very helpful in providing support around impact measurement, resources on how to facilitate the selection of poverty reduction priorities, and information on how *Opportunity for All - Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* will support the progress of local poverty reduction strategies.

“When one goes alone one goes fast. But, when we go together we go far and wide. It is important to ensure that everyone is involved, however this means you go slowly in order to have everyone's voice reflected in the work.”

Augustina Nagberi-Asseez, Peel Poverty Reduction Committee

LEARN MORE

- [Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018-2028](#)
- [Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy 2012-2015](#)
- [Peel Food Charter](#)
- [Peel Food Map](#)
- [MiWay Transit Pass](#)
- [Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee](#)
- [Reducing Poverty Together](#) (2018 Strategy launch video)

Funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnership Program.

Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.