

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
 Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 22 June 1999

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON POVERTY**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That Community Services Committee recommend Council receive the report of the Task Force on Poverty.

PURPOSE

This is to request that the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive the report of the Task Force on Poverty entitled People First: Creating Hope Through Change (July 1999).

DISCUSSION

In the spring of 1997, the initial People First/Les gens d'abord (October 1997) report was presented to Regional Council. Subsequently, it was referred to Community Services Committee, and, on 16 Apr 98, the Committee approved the following:

1. That a Task Force on Poverty be created in order to deal with implementing the recommendations from the People's Hearings on Poverty;
2. That membership on the Task Force include representation from RMOC departments and agencies including Social Services, Health, Planning and Development, OC Transpo and the Ottawa Economic Development Corporation, as well as up to 10 community representatives including the Alliance to End Homelessness, and;
3. That the Social Services Department co-ordinate this Task Force.

The Task Force on Poverty was formed bringing together elected representatives of communities of the poor and appointed delegates of Regional government to work together to find ways to improve the lives of people living in poverty. The work of the Task Force has resulted in the attached document People First: Creating Hope Through Change , the interim report of the Task Force on Poverty.

The report is the result of a unique process, and as such remains a community effort, although Social Services provided a coordinating role for the Task Force. It is in this capacity as coordinator that this request to receive the report comes forward.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report and the recommendations it contains are the result of collaborative work from many different individuals who hope to bring change and improve the situation for people living in poverty. The Task Force on Poverty members are:

Barbara Bareham	Louise Bazinet	Candice Beale
Elizabeth Burrell	Bob Busby	Marni Cappe
Terri Cousineau	Nicole Danis	Elsy Fuentes
Cliff Gazee	Gordon Hodgins	Sandra Huntley
Joel Koffman	Linda Lalonde	Jeannine Larocque
Ah Mwega Kena Lela	Sheila McDonald	Terrie Meehan
Claudette Nadon	Colleen Pellatt	Joyce Potter
Jocelyne St Jean	Rosette Wakeham	Teotiste Wood
Eva Sullivan	Martine Cl��roux	Annelis Von Oers
Douksie Ibrahim	H��l��ne Perrault	Mary Whallen
Connie Wolaschuk		

Thanks to the following Community developers who supported the process and the individuals throughout the Task Force's many meetings and deliberations.

Sue McLatchie	Moe Garahan	Richard Monette
H��l��ne Perrault	Claude Crustin	Andr�� Fontaine
Naini Clouthier	Andrew Rh��aume	Doug Henderson
Steve Clay	Zamzam Tani	Cathy Lawrey

Other thanks to people who gave of their time to share their knowledge:

Francine Riopelle	Nicki Sims-Jones	Chris Cope
Jill Scott-Douglas	Trudy Sutton	Suzanne Gagnon
Lynn Sherwood	Monique Beaugard	Michel Gouault
Peggy Feltmate	Nicole Besner	Ann Wardrop
George Brown	Ethel Cot��	Paul Koch
H��l��ne Lepage	Linda Osmond	

Thanks to the following people who gave technical support to the preparation of the document:

Christine Gorman
Catherine Latham

Thanks to the members of the People's Hearings Monitoring Committee who supported the work of the Task Force:

Barbara Bareham
Bob Busby
Ken Clavette
Steve Clay
Naini Cloutier
Ann Cook
Wendy Croome
Claude Crustin
Nicole Danis
Suzanne Doerge

Moe Garahan
Cliff Gaze
Joanne Lowe
Sue MacLatchie
Denise Mattox
Helene Menard
Richard Monette
Helene Perrault
Graham Smith
Louise Delisle

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Task Force on Poverty represents a process unique in Canada. Under the Task Force, elected representatives of communities of the poor have come together with appointed delegates of Regional government to work together to find ways to improve the lives of people living in poverty. The Task Force was established in September 1998, chaired jointly by a community representative and a Regional representative (Social Services). People First: Creating Hope Through Change (July 1999) presents the interim report of the Task Force on Poverty. The final report of the Task Force will follow in the fall of 1999.

Recent studies confirm the growing gap between rich and poor in Canada's cities, including the Region of Ottawa-Carleton. The initial People's First/Les gens d'abord report (1997) presented the stories of people living in poverty at a series of People's Hearings held across the Region which testified to the impact on the lives of the poor of this growing gap.

The Task Force on Poverty represents a community based approach to poverty reduction combining social and economic objectives. As defined by the Caledon Institute, a community based approach to poverty reduction is based on 4 key interventions: meeting basic needs, removing barriers, building skills and promoting economic development. The recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty encompass all four of these key interventions.

The Task Force has had a number of successes and impacts to date, for example, providing input to the Region's National Child Benefit Reinvestment Plan and Allocations Process, to OC Transpo on the establishment of individual day passes and Sunday family passes, and to the Task Force on Employment "Partners for Jobs". Further details and examples of successes to date appear in the body of the report.

Origin of the Task Force on Poverty

The People's Hearings was a process developed by a group of community organizations to provide a forum for the voices of the poor. Testimony from the hearings was captured in a report entitled People First/ Les gens d'abord which was presented to Regional Council. Subsequently, Community Services Committee approved a motion that a Task Force on Poverty be struck, including community representatives and Regional staff to ensure the recommendations in People First became the basis for action.

Community representatives were elected from cluster groups of people living in poverty across the Region. Representatives continue to liaise with their cluster groups on an ongoing basis.

Several community developers from Community Health and Resource Centres attended the Task Force meetings as observers and provided a range of supports to the Task Force, for example, meeting spaces, child care, and organizational supports. The Region also provided a range of practical supports to the Task Force, for example by providing child care and transportation

subsidies to support the participation of community members, and administrative and other resources to support the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force used the recommendations of the initial People First report as its starting point. Sub-committees were formed based on all topic areas as they appeared in People First. The sub-committees explored ways to move the broad recommendations appearing in that document to practical, action oriented recommendations for implementation. Each sub-committee drew on the experience and knowledge of Task Force members as well as the expertise of a range of people from other groups and organizations. Sub-committees then brought back their recommendations to the Task Force as a whole for discussion and approval.

A summary list of the recommendations appear below by topic area. The topic areas of employment and social assistance have been combined into one new heading “Employment and Income Security” as the Task Force has taken a community based approach to poverty reduction which seeks to combine social and economic objectives.

Employment/Income Security

Adequacy of Social Assistance Rates

1. **That the Region in partnership with the community lobby the Province to increase social assistance rates for basic needs and shelter to reflect the actual costs of a nutritious diet and adequate housing and utilities.**

Independent Development Accounts (IDA’S)

2. **That a pilot project be initiated by December 1999 to establish IDA’s (Independent Development Accounts), exempt from asset limits, in Ottawa-Carleton to enable low-income people to save for an education for themselves or their children, a house, a business or other approved purposes, and that a sponsoring mechanism be developed to enable community donors to contribute to these accounts.**
3. **That the Region in partnership with the community lobby the Province to increase asset limits and earnings before claw-back for both OW and ODSP given that the current limits act as a barrier to increasing social assistance recipients’ economic self-sufficiency.**

Micro Investment Funds

- 4 That the Region establish an arms-length Micro Investment Fund that will require applicants to provide an approved business plan, and will be linked with appropriate training and mentoring, and that the Region secure ongoing sources of operational funds for the fund itself and assistance in securing capital for the Investment Fund.*

(Note: The Investment Fund capital will be sought from the private sector, not for profit sector, charitable foundations and other sources in the community).

Technology Learning Centres

5. That the Region support the development of a pilot project to provide:
- a) technology access points through Community Resource and Health Centres;
 - b) training, technology, materials and technological support in these centres;
 - c) mentorship to community residents who seek advice, counsel, and support in order to successfully participate in the economy; and
 - d) additional programs and services to be locally defined by each community.

Job Training and Economic Development

6. That the Region develop employment development and training projects for :
- a) provision, collection of donations, re-conditioning and repair of washers and dryers for social assistance recipients and the working poor; and
 - b) repair of vehicles for social assistance recipients and the working poor

Essential Health and Social Supports (EHSS)

7. That Social Services review its policies for the provision of Essential Health and Social Supports (EHSS) to ensure an appropriate needs test and to ensure that the working poor have as complete access to the range of items under EHSS as are available to social assistance recipients, and report back to Community Services Committee.

Education

School Bus Transportation

8. That the Region, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and other stakeholders work as a community to find a solution to affordability of school transportation for children of low-income families.

Housing

More affordable Housing for people living in poverty

9. That vacant buildings owned by the Region and other municipalities be assessed for suitability as housing in order to retain buildings and offer them for affordable housing to social housing providers.
10. That surplus Regional land and land owned by other municipalities which is appropriate for residential use be retained and made available for affordable housing; and further that the land be leased to social housing providers at affordable rents. Further, that the Region should explore additional ways to maximize the feasibility of investment in affordable housing.

Community Programs

Access for Everyone to Resources

11. That the Region financially support and maintain a complete resource centre in all community health and resource centres or other public institution (e. g. libraries in rural areas) to provide access to a wide range of information on services for people living in poverty.
12. That the Region support the development of a user friendly, plain language 211 information line for central access to a wide variety of social and health information. There should be access by means of a “menu” to receive the information in a choice of different languages.

Unused Recreational Family Subsidy

13. That the Region request that municipalities convert the individual subsidy provided by the municipality for recreational programs to a Family subsidy so that unused portions of one family member’s subsidy may be used by another family member.

Child Care

Choosing Unlicensed Care

14. That information on how to choose a caregiver be more widely available to parent at an accessible price and/or no cost to the parent, that a one page check list on key safety concerns in choosing safe child care similar to that produced by the Infant and Toddler Safety Association be available to all parents, in the official language of their choice, and that the checklist be widely distributed to hospitals, midwives, community resource and health centres, community houses, and schools.
15. That Regional funding be provided to create and distribute the information to be provided to the agencies, and that agencies explore other creative funding sources to create and distribute the information, excluding outright sale of the products.

More Licensed Care

16. That Regional Council advocate for more subsidized licensed care in Ottawa-Carleton.
17. That Regional Council advocate more specifically for flexible licensed care for evening and night time child care.

24 Hours Flexible Services

18. That the Region of Ottawa-Carleton provide resources (funds and staff) to prepare a project proposal to create a 24 hour child care service which would provide flexible child care arrangements for people working evenings, nights or rotations, and that Social Services lead this project in collaboration with community partners.
19. That the project seek creative funding arrangements from different funding sources, that it be based on a combination of new child care spaces and the re-allocation of existing spaces, and that the project proposal explore the use of space vacated by school closures.

In-home Licensed and Subsidized Night Care

20. That the Region approve in principle that parents working night shifts have access to subsidized child care in the parent's home, and that Regional Council lobby the Province to allow in home licensed and subsidized night care for reasons other than a disability.

Transportation**Universal Access to Transit Services**

21. That the Region approve in principle that all members of the community have universal access to transit services whether their needs are fulfilled by regular or Para Transit services.

Subsidized Bus Passes

- 22 (a) That reduced fare bus passes be made available to low income individuals and families. For the purpose of this recommendation, low income includes social assistance recipients, employment insurance recipients, people receiving disability benefits (OSDP) and the working poor.
- 22 (b) That a reduced fare assistance program for social assistance recipients should have no detrimental effect on regular social assistance benefits.

Emergency Ticket Program

23. That a formal emergency ticket program should be established at all centers serving the community to provide basic transportation to individual and families who require it. Tickets may be provided for reasons such as hospital/doctor visits, job interviews or other approved reason.

Single Tickets

24. That customers be able to purchase single tickets form any OC Transpo vendor.

Telephone, Hydro and Gas

Telephone, Hydro (and gas) - Essential Services

25. That the Region, community members and organizations lobby the Provincial Government to create new funds to cover hydro and telephone basic fees, along with “Basic Needs” and “Shelter”, as part of basic monthly social assistance rates.

Security Deposit

26. That the Region act as a co-signer/guarantor for the Security Deposit requested by hydro and telephone companies from social assistance recipients and low income earners.

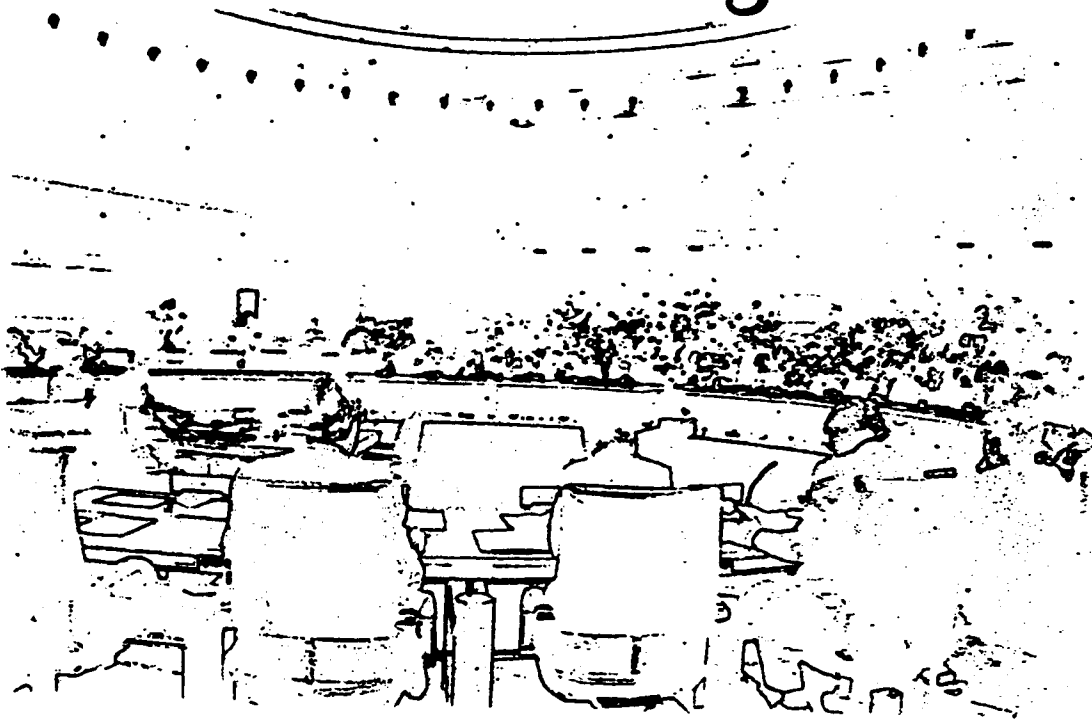
Sensitivity Training

27. That the Region collaborate with hydro and telephone companies to ensure that appropriate special sensitivity training be given to hydro and telephone companies’ employees dealing with social assistance recipients and low income earners.

*Approved by
Cliff Gaze, Co-Chair
Task Force on Poverty*

*Approved by
Jocelyne St Jean, Co-Chair
Task Force on Poverty*

PEOPLE FIRST:
*Creating Hope Through
Change*



TASK FORCE ON POVERTY

In the

Region of Ottawa-Carleton

INTERIM REPORT

July 1999

Community Services Committee Agenda 8 July 1999
Reference Item 2