



Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies Across Canada

A Summary Report of Emerging Principles and Practices

September 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE:

This report provides an overview of current and emerging practices from across Canada in municipal poverty reduction, to assist in the development of a City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy. It summarizes the strategies developed in fourteen Canadian municipalities.

PART 1: THEORETICAL MODELS/PRINCIPLES

The first part of this report outlines three theoretical frameworks for local poverty reduction:

- **The Collective Impact Model** (Vibrant Communities Canada)
- **The Resilient Communities Model** (Caledon Institute for Social Policy)
- **The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach** (UK Department of International Development)

While Toronto may not choose to base its poverty reduction framework on any single one of these approaches, they may provide a useful starting point for conceiving of a high level narrative for tackling issues of poverty at the local level.

Broadly, all three models confirm the important role that municipalities have to play in reducing poverty. There is a common emphasis on the importance of ongoing communication and alignment of existing efforts across sectors. Whereas the scope of the Collective Impact Model is more focused on how to engage in meaningful multi-sector partnerships, the other two models look at different high-level ways to think of the common pathways to poverty reduction.

PART 2: BREAKDOWN OF THE TYPICAL FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

Governance Structure

The most common form of governance is a stand-alone, multi-sector Steering Committee/Roundtable body.

This body is usually developed with the leadership or support of the municipal government, but is operationally outside the purview of the government's direct control. The Steering Committee is typically supported by a number of working groups charged with implementing specific initiatives that are structured around the poverty reduction strategy's key priorities. It is also often supported by a small staff body that is responsible for convening meetings, locating relevant research, handling PR and assisting with the development of the strategy.

Consultation Process

All of the cities in this report underwent public and stakeholder consultations as they developed their poverty reduction strategies. Common forms of consultation included community-wide forums and working groups structured around the target priorities. In most cases, the foundation of the strategy stemmed from a consultation phase lasting anywhere from three months to two years.

Strategic Goals

Municipal leaders tend to look for ways to communicate and build on existing initiatives that target the interconnected roots and impacts of poverty. The range of specific targets includes:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Workforce development | • Food security |
| • Affordable housing | • Early childhood supports |
| • Training and education | • Transportation |
| • Income security | • Asset building |

Typically, these targets are addressed through:

- Advocacy and public awareness campaigns
- Engaging with multi-sector partners
- Aligning existing policies/programs
- Advocating for policy and program improvements at the provincial and federal levels
- Monitoring and evaluating common efforts across sectors

Success Indicators

Of the municipal poverty reduction strategies across Canada, ideas of success and progress vary widely. Some cities (Peel, Thunder Bay) have used Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy as a model for measuring progress. Others (Hamilton, Niagara, Saint John and Windsor-Essex Region) are using the Common Evaluation Framework developed by Vibrant Communities Canada. A number of strategies have not explicitly identified a set of tools and targets.

The inconsistency with which success has been monitored and reported makes it difficult to compare progress. This is compounded by the fact that many of these strategies have only recently begun to implement their poverty reduction plans.

PART 3: MUNICIPAL CASE STUDIES

As of September 2014, the varying approaches taken to poverty reduction can be illustrated through a number of case studies:

- **Calgary, Alberta (2013)**
The **Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative** (CPRI) was initiated by the City's mayor, for whom reducing poverty was a key campaign platform. The development of the CPRI was preceded by an exhaustive consultation process. The CPRI is currently in the midst of establishing a long-term governance structure and identifying first steps towards implementation.
- **Hamilton, Ontario (2005)**
The **Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction** (HRPR) has taken a child-focused approach to poverty reduction. Wealth creation was a key concept in the initial Change Framework (2005), but has not been prioritized in the work to date. Given that the two largest demographic groups living in poverty are those on social assistance and the working poor, the HRPR has focused its efforts on raising social assistance rates and advocating for a living wage. The HRPR is unique for having a strong lived experience presence in its governance structure – they currently comprise approximately half of the Roundtable's membership.
- **Montreal, Quebec (2009)**
Montreal's **Social Economy Partnership for Community-Based Sustainable Development** aims to strengthen relationships, consolidate actions and acknowledge the contributions of non-profits, co-operatives, and mutual organizations whose work contributes to local economic development, social solidarity and environmental sustainability. Rather than focusing directly on poverty reduction or elimination, the plan is noteworthy for taking a shared prosperity approach, which aligns with certain wealth creation ideas, such as local enterprise, economic empowerment and social innovation.
- **Niagara Region, Ontario (2008)**
The **Niagara Prosperity Initiative** (NPI) provides an annual investment of \$1.5 million to support poverty reduction and prevention initiatives in the city's priority neighbourhoods. The NPI took the place of Opportunities Niagara, which had operated since the 1980s but closed for financial reasons in 2008. The NPI's neighbourhood focused approach is an attempt to be targeted and universal at the same time with the available resources.
- **Saint John, New Brunswick (1997)**
Saint John is unique when it comes to the leadership role played by the business community in poverty reduction efforts. In 1997, a group of business leaders started the **Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative** (BCAPI). A comprehensive, multi-sector poverty reduction strategy was initiated in 2004, through **Vibrant Communities Saint John** (VCSJ). VCSJ has produced regular progress reports using Vibrant Communities' Common Evaluation Framework. These reports are accessible online. The next iteration of the poverty reduction strategy, **Living Saint John**, is currently in the consultation and strategy development phase.
- **Waterloo, Ontario (2012)**
In Waterloo, the **Municipal Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction** is an internally focused strategy, which prioritizes aligning policies, strategies and divisions within the regional government, rather than on multi-sector collaboration. This was likely initially due to the long-running existence of **Opportunities Waterloo Region** (OWR) in the non-profit sector. However, OWR ceased active operations as of early 2014. There is no indication yet whether the Comprehensive Approach will therefore expand its reach in light of these recent changes.

LESSONS FOR TORONTO

There is not a single cause of poverty, nor is there a single solution. According to the 2013 *Vital Signs Report*, "more than 1 million Torontonians live in low-income neighbourhoods (20% or more below average incomes) and the polarization of wealth and poverty is deepening."¹ This trend is mirrored in cities across the country and internationally. Despite growing consensus that poverty is an issue that should be tackled at all levels of society, there is disagreement about what a comprehensive municipal solution should look like.

In recent years, a number of Canadian cities have introduced strategies to target poverty at the local level. Each municipality faces its own challenges and has its own strengths to build upon. However, with building interest across jurisdictions and at every level of government, this is an opportune time for Toronto to look at the work that is happening across the country and identify best practices for developing its own approach to poverty reduction.

This report concludes with **thirteen lessons for the City of Toronto**, based on the common and emerging trends in municipal poverty reduction across Canada.

1. Think comprehensively about tackling the root causes of poverty.

Even though poverty reduction strategies tend to differ in the language they use to describe their strategic priorities, they commonly acknowledge that the roots and impacts of poverty are widespread, and therefore require a comprehensive and multi-pronged response. In most cases, efforts are made to inventory existing policies and programs that are already underway, to prevent the duplication of efforts. The strategic priorities act as an umbrella to frame the network of new and existing initiatives.

2. Consider how best to frame and communicate the vision and narrative of the strategy.

Twelve of fourteen cities framed their approach around *reducing* poverty, which may in part be the influence of Vibrant Communities, which is founded on the principle that 'poverty is better addressed when reduction, not alleviation, is the goal'. In Calgary, poverty is envisioned as something that affects everyone, and to which everyone is vulnerable. Through this lens, everyone is equally responsible for building resilient families, neighbourhoods and institutions, in order to create broader shared prosperity within the City. On the other hand, some strategies have chosen not to highlight 'poverty', but rather to emphasize shared wealth/opportunity or social renewal, in order to make the issue more publicly palatable. This was the case in Montreal's social economy approach, which focused on community-based sustainable development and collective wealth. Likewise, the next iteration of Saint John's strategy is calling itself a 'social renewal' plan, with the vision of creating 'a strong community working together to improve the quality of life for all citizens.'

3. Strategies often stem from political impetus or in response to a widely publicized local poverty report.

Strong mayoral support pushed the issue to the forefront of City thinking in Calgary, Edmonton and Kingston. On the other hand, a major reason the Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy was discontinued was due to the lack of continued political support past a single political cycle. Given the newly elected mayor's strong push for addressing housing and homelessness, the PRS was transitioned into a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2011.

4. The Collective Impact Model is the most popular approach to poverty reduction.

Of the municipalities in this report, Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2009-2011) was the only one that did not explicitly reference this framework. It has been reported that this model is most appropriate given its minimal design specifications and place-based adaptability.

5. There are pros and cons to City-led poverty reduction initiatives.

City-led strategies tend to have more resources and staff time to commit to developing a comprehensive poverty response, and the municipality is a powerful force for getting influential and unconventional players to the table. However, strategies that are internal to the City are more vulnerable to political changes and sometimes struggle with getting community buy-in.

6. The municipal government acts as a convener and advocate, with both substantive and process-oriented roles to play.

Municipal governments are pivotal to facilitating multi-sector collaboration. In most cases, although the City may own the strategic framework, the collaborative leadership bodies are stand-alone projects outside the purview of the City's direct control. The City's role in these bodies varies case by case. Municipal governments also play a crucial role in actively advocating for local awareness of poverty issues and for policy changes at the provincial and federal levels.

¹ Toronto Community Foundation. 2013. *Vital Signs Report*. <https://tcf.ca/torontos-vital-signs-report>

Strategic priorities typically revolve around the municipal mandate, in areas such as affordable housing, transportation, recreation, community infrastructure and corporate modelling through the city's own employment practices. Furthermore, the municipal government often takes on the 'convener' role, to catalyze the leadership roundtable and commit resources to initial consultations and strategy development.² Once the strategy has been approved and the leadership table begins to assert itself, the convener generally steps back to enable others to take the lead.

7. Almost every strategy has engaged in multi-sector collaboration and created a coordinating entity to monitor and sustain progress over time.

Across the board, efforts are made to integrate a variety of actors into poverty reduction efforts. These may include leaders of the non-profit sector, business community, government, academia and citizens with lived experience. A convening body/steering committee is often formed to ensure accountability among multiple stakeholders.

8. It is crucial to get the right people around the table.

Multi-sector leadership tables with prominent and influential leaders are more likely to galvanize public support and community buy-in. In comparison, leadership tables comprised exclusively of government staff and community agency representatives tend to face more difficulty in building momentum for their work.

9. Achieving meaningful/sustained representation from those with lived experience & the private sector is challenging.

Strategies with the strongest business sector involvement have used influential business leaders to champion the work within their own networks. Common ways to engage those with lived experience are through speakers' bureaus and targeted efforts to lower barriers to participation (i.e. strategic meeting times/locations, dedicated working groups, leadership/training programs, transportation stipends, etc). A number of poverty reduction initiatives have included the voice of lived experience in response to community criticisms of not being inclusive enough in the governance structure. This was the case in Hamilton, where citizens with lived experience now comprise half of the 80-member leadership roundtable.

10. Poverty is commonly targeted through systemic policy and program changes.

The broad focus of most municipal strategies is to *reduce* poverty, with efforts to *alleviate* and *mitigate* its impacts as secondary goals. As such, the main focus is often on systemic program and policy shifts, which prioritize the interrelated root causes of poverty, rather than treating its symptoms alone.

11. Consider how best to manage competing interests, expectations and timelines.

In many cases (Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Niagara Region, Saint John, etc.), the development of the poverty reduction strategy and its consultation process spanned over a year, and involved broad cross-sector consultations. For example, in the case of Calgary, the consultation process incorporated over 200 participants in 16 multi-sector working groups. However, it is important to balance the need for broad consultation with developing tangible, focused and achievable goals and priorities.

12. Identify common indicators to measure progress.

The sporadic reporting of success indicators across the board demonstrates the difficulty that many poverty reduction plans are facing in measuring and conveying the progress of their efforts. The longest-running strategies have shown that change is slow, and it is often difficult to ascertain exactly what role an individual organization or initiative may have played in producing any incremental outcome. Furthermore, in some cases the choice of measurement tools can inadvertently impact the types of activities that organizations choose to pursue, by implicitly encouraging them to undertake initiatives with easily measurable outcomes such as lunch programs and training workshops. Therefore, municipalities should exercise care when selecting indicators, and rely on the common practices of existing initiatives.

13. Building strong cross-sector partnerships and heightened public awareness are the most common accomplishments.

Despite varying contexts, priorities and strategy design, these two themes emerged in the interviews of every municipality in this report. However, Hamilton and Saint John have also highlighted reductions in poverty levels which they attribute to local efforts.

² This has notably been the case in Niagara Region, where the multi-sector Niagara Poverty Reduction Network recently delinked itself from the government-led Niagara Prosperity Initiative and is now a standalone poverty reduction initiative in its own right.

INTRODUCTION

Toronto is a vibrant, diverse and prosperous city, the largest municipality in Canada and the nation's leading economic engine. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture, and is consistently ranked among the world's most livable cities by various international reports. However, despite its economic strength, poverty is an ongoing challenge facing the City and its residents.

The causes and impacts of poverty and growing income polarization are pervasive and deeply rooted.

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, the incidence of low-income in the City of Toronto (19.3%) is greater than in Canada (14.9%), Ontario (13.9%) and the rest of the GTAH (11.5%).³ Headline unemployment rates remain high (fluctuating between 9 and 10% over recent years), while precarious work and youth unemployment in Toronto is on the rise, and more than one million residents now live in low- and very-low income neighbourhoods.⁴ These trends intersect with a range of complex issues, such as transit and housing affordability⁵, access to childcare and recreation, food security⁶ and social determinants of health. This is further compounded by growing awareness of income disparity. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the top 1% of income earners in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area had 18.1% of all income in 2010, up from 11.7% in 1982 (adjusted for inflation). In comparison, the total income of the bottom 90% was \$1,900 less than it was in 1982. Despite these troubling trends, poverty is neither inevitable nor irreversible, and the City of Toronto recognizes the important role that it can play in finding innovative and local solutions to these problems.

On April 1, 2014, City Council approved the development of a City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy.⁷ This report provides an overview of current and emerging practices in municipal poverty reduction from across Canada, to assist the City in creating a comprehensive framework for its own context.

Recent years have seen a growing number of cities and municipalities across Canada adopt formal poverty reduction strategies. In addition, seven Canadian provinces and territories⁸ have introduced official poverty reduction strategies. Ontario's *Breaking the Cycle* poverty reduction strategy was released in December 2008, with a commitment to update every five years.⁹ The new PRS, *Realizing Our Potential*, released in 2014, focuses on child poverty reduction, employment and training integration and ending homelessness. Meanwhile, while Canada currently lacks a national framework for poverty reduction, a number of Standing Senate Committees and Parliamentary Committees have released reports¹⁰ calling for a federal action plan on poverty. This has added to the voices of many advocates, such as *Campaign 2000*, *Citizens for Public Justice* and *Canada without Poverty*. Similar trends are also evident across the US, UK and mainland Europe.

In Toronto, a number of anti-poverty advocates have released reports identifying the need to develop a poverty reduction strategy for the City of Toronto.¹¹ It is important to recognize that much of the onus for poverty reduction falls on the shoulders of the provincial and federal governments. For example, municipal government has limited influence in areas such as income support compared to other orders of government. Moreover, municipalities range in size and face a number of unique challenges that limit the types of anti-poverty measures they can undertake.¹² A municipal poverty reduction strategy would thus focus on actions and ideas for the City of Toronto and its Agencies and Corporations to implement, as well as areas where inter-governmental advocacy is required, and where leadership from the community sector and other partners is needed.

The City is also already doing important work to tackle issues related to poverty. Toronto has adopted a range of strategies that aim to address the inequities that its residents face, including the Housing Stability Service Plan, the

³ City of Toronto. 2013. *Background: 2011 National Household Survey, Income and Shelter Costs*.

<http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Social%20Development,%20Finance%20&%20Administration/Shared%20Content/Demographics/PDFs/Reports/nhs-background-income-shelter.pdf>

⁴ Toronto Community Foundation. 2013. *Vital Signs Report*. <https://tcf.ca/torontos-vital-signs-report>

⁵ 43.5% of the City's renter households and 19.8% of total households are experiencing housing affordability issues. As a traditional measure of affordability, Statistics Canada and Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation use the percentage of income households spend on shelter. If a household spends more than 30% of their income on shelter costs, they are considered to be experiencing affordability issues. According to the 2011 NHS, there were 207,097 renter households that fall into this category. (City of Toronto. 2013. *Background: 2011 National Household Survey, Income and Shelter Costs*)

⁶ Food insecurity remains a challenge for many residents, with close to a million food bank visits in 2013. (Toronto Community Foundation. 2013. *Vital Signs Report*. <https://tcf.ca/torontos-vital-signs-report>)

⁷ City of Toronto. 2014. *Developing a Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*. <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CD27.9>

⁸ These provinces and territories are: Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Yukon

⁹ In May 2009, the province passed Bill 152, an act requiring that Ontario maintain a poverty reduction strategy and set new targets every five years.

¹⁰ See: *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada* (HUMA Committee, 2010); *Children: the Silenced Citizens* (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, April 2007); *In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness* (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009); *Sixth Report of the Human Resources and Social Development Committee*, (House of Commons Debate, 2009)

¹¹ See: Toronto Community Foundation. 2013. *Vital Signs Report*; and Social Planning Toronto and Alliance for a Poverty Free Toronto. 2013. *Toward a Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto*.

¹² See: Macleod Irons, Angela. 2013. *Noble Frustration: The Practical Problems with Many Municipal Poverty Initiatives*. <http://www.manningfoundation.org/Docs/Noble-Frustrations.pdf>

Workforce Development Strategy, Seniors Strategy, Newcomer Strategy, Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, Economic Growth Plan and Youth Equity Strategy. **However, what is lacking is a comprehensive framework to align this work through a poverty reduction lens.** By providing insight into the emerging principles and frameworks across Canada, this report seeks to inform and advance these efforts locally.

The focus of this report is to summarize current practices in municipal poverty reduction across Canada. It is divided into four sections. The first section details three theoretical frameworks that may help in developing a high-level framework for a City of Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy. The second section provides a summary of typical approaches, with respect to governance structure, consultation process, strategic goals and success indicators. The third section offers a breakdown of six case studies displaying varying approaches to poverty reduction: Calgary, Hamilton, Montreal, Niagara Region, Saint John and Waterloo. Lessons for Toronto are offered in a brief conclusion.

This report encompasses the experiences of poverty reduction efforts in fourteen Canadian cities: Calgary (2013), Edmonton (2012), Hamilton (2005), Kingston (2007), Montreal (2009), Niagara Region (2008), Ottawa (2008), Peel Region (2008), Peterborough (2008), Saint John, NB (2004), Sudbury (2012), Thunder Bay (2013), Waterloo (Municipal Strategy – 2012, Opportunities Waterloo Region – 2000), and Windsor-Essex Region (2000).

The City of Toronto now has the opportunity both to reframe the work that it is currently engaged in and to broaden its thinking about the ways that poverty can be addressed at the local level. As the experience of other jurisdictions shows, by building new and innovative approaches, engaging both traditional and non-traditional actors and creating local solutions to locally specific problems, municipalities can take positive steps to address poverty.

PART I: THEORETICAL MODELS/PRINCIPLES

This section will outline three theoretical frameworks that a number of municipalities have explicitly drawn from when developing their poverty reduction plans. While Toronto may not choose to base its poverty reduction framework on any single one of these approaches, they may provide a useful starting point for developing a high level narrative to tackle the issues of poverty and social exclusion at the local level.

In the pages to follow, each model will be briefly discussed. The section ends with a summary of broad principles and lessons that can be drawn from all of them.

1.1: COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL¹³

The **Collective Impact Model** is used by **Vibrant Communities**, a network of cities across Canada that are mutually committed to exploring the extent to which communities can substantially reduce poverty by using comprehensive, multi-sectoral partnerships.

The goal of the Vibrant Communities network is to leverage the existing assets in each community to drive change and target the root causes of poverty.

The Vibrant Communities approach is based on five principles of poverty reduction:

1. Poverty is better addressed when **reduction, not alleviation**, is the goal
2. Poverty is more effectively addressed by **multi-sector leadership and collaboration**
3. Poverty reduction is more effective when it is focused on the **interrelated causes and effects of poverty**
4. Poverty reduction is more effective when it is **built on local assets**
5. Poverty reduction efforts are more productive when they are part of an **ongoing process of learning, evaluation, and change**



¹³ Vibrant Communities Canada. 2013. "Collective Impact Approach" http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/vibrant_communities_canada_collective_impact_approach_0.pdf

The **pre-conditions for collective impact** are:

- Urgency of the issue
- Influential leaders
- Appropriate resources

The **conditions of collective impact** are:

- Common agenda
- Shared measurement
- Mutually reinforcing activities
- Continuous communication
- Backbone support

A number of cities across Canada are active participants in the Vibrant Canada network, including:

- Abbotsford, British Columbia
- Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Kingston, Ontario
- Halton, Ontario
- Hamilton, Ontario
- Chatham-Kent, Ontario
- Waterloo, Ontario
- Windsor, Ontario
- St. Michel (Montreal), Quebec
- Saint John, New Brunswick

In addition, a number of other cities such as Calgary and Philadelphia have adapted the principles of the model to fit their own contexts.

1.2: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES MODEL

The **Resilient Communities Model** was developed by Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy in her book *Shared Space: The Communities Agenda*. It is the basis of the poverty reduction strategies in Waterloo and the Region of Peel.

According to this framework, communities must work in four clusters of activity to achieve healthy and resilient communities.



The four clusters of community resilience are:

1. Sustenance

- a. Basic needs
- b. Decent affordable housing
- c. Income security

2. Adaptation

- a. Early childhood development
- b. Social networks
- c. Literacy

3. Engagement

- a. Cultural expression
- b. Empowerment
- c. Meaningful participation in the arts, recreation and decision-making

4. Opportunity

- a. Employability
- b. Job creation
- c. Asset building
- d. Ownership

The core task of the Resilient Communities agenda is to improve the links among actors within each cluster, between each cluster, and between communities and governments.

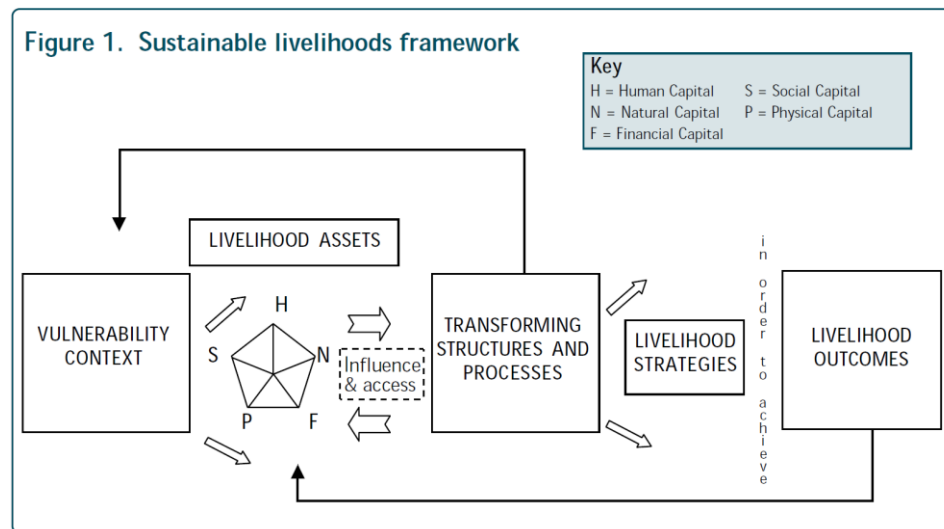
1.3: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH¹⁴

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is based on an "Asset Pentagon" and focuses on the idea that an individual needs to make progress in all five asset areas of their lives in order to maintain a sustainable livelihood. These asset areas are: human capital, social capital, physical capital, personal capital and financial capital.

This perspective prioritizes bringing together **multi-sector partnerships to create meaningful opportunities** for citizens.

The SLA was originally developed by the *Department for International Development* in the UK. Internationally, it has been used for poverty reduction efforts in a number of developing countries throughout Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Opportunities Waterloo Region (OWR) adopted the SLA for its work on poverty reduction. It was the first to use this approach in Canada, but its framework bears many similarities to other regional and municipal poverty reduction strategies.¹⁵ In early 2014, OWR ceased active operations, due to loss of funding. Poverty reduction work in Waterloo is now undertaken by the regional government's Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction (see page 28).



1.4: SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES

As the City of Toronto begins to develop its own poverty reduction strategy, there are a number of common principles offered by these three theoretical models that may help in conceiving a high-level framework.

- **Broadly speaking, the various models differ in the scope of their focus.** The Collective Impact Model sets out a number of core principles for creating successful multi-sector partnerships to affect change. In contrast, the Resilient Communities Model and Sustainable Livelihoods Approach are more focused on conceptualizing the specific starting points and pathways to poverty reduction.
- **All three models commonly suggest that municipalities have a role to play in reducing poverty and social exclusion.** The Collective Impact Approach and the Resilient Communities Model emphasize the importance of place-based strategies that target the unique roots of poverty in each particular community, and that utilize the community's own resources and assets to address them.
- **The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach shares some of the language of the wealth creation agenda that has been popularized in the US,** in the way it envisions the multiple forms of assets/wealth that are needed to sustain livelihoods.
- **In all three models, success is dependent on building strong, multi-sector partnerships.** It is commonly assumed that collaborative initiatives are more successful at reducing poverty than isolated projects undertaken by individual bodies and organizations alone.
- **There is a common emphasis on facilitating ongoing communication and aligning existing strategies under a common framework to prevent the duplication of efforts.**

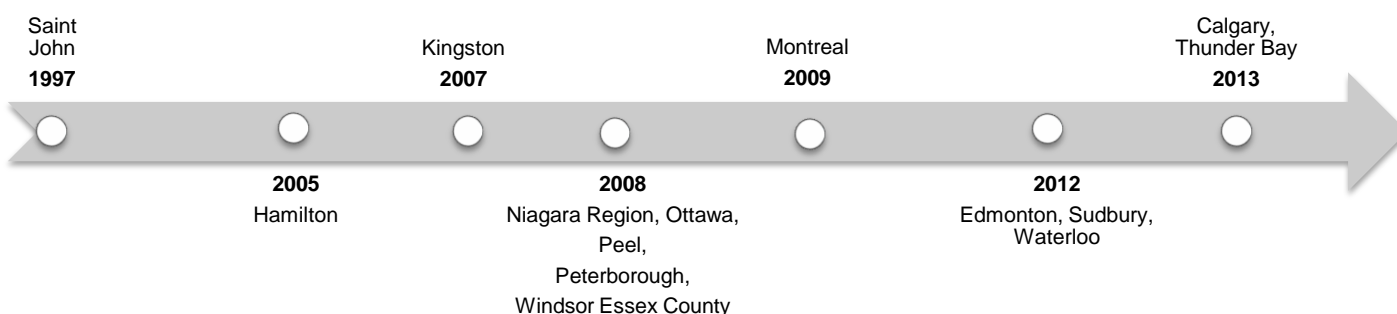
¹⁴ Krantz, Lasse. 2001. "The Sustainable Livelihood Approach to Poverty Reduction" http://www.forestry.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@forestry/documents/asset/cfans_asset_202603.pdf

¹⁵ See: MacKeigan, Mary and Govindaraj, Sanjay. 2004. "Putting People First: Exploring the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in Waterloo Region." http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/vc/Wat_People_First.pdf

PART II: BREAKDOWN OF THE TYPICAL FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

The purpose of this section is to summarize and break down the basic elements of the fourteen municipal poverty reduction strategies studied for this report.

2.1: TIMELINE OF START DATES



The longer running poverty reduction initiatives (Saint John and Hamilton) are part of the Vibrant Communities network. These initiatives conceptualize their work using the Vibrant Communities Collective Impact Model (see: pg 7), govern their efforts through multi-sector Roundtables (see: pg 11), and measure their success with its Common Evaluation Framework (see: pg 17).

In comparison, it is more difficult to analyze more recent, City-led initiatives since few have been in place for long enough to report significant outcomes.

2.2: GETTING THE LANGUAGE RIGHT

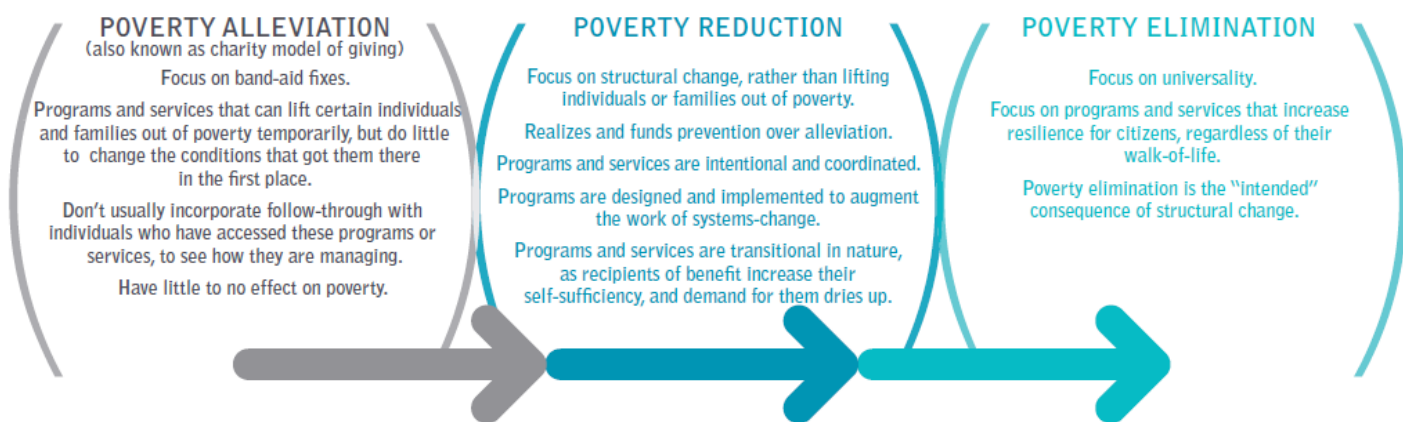
Twelve of fourteen cities framed their approach around *reducing poverty*. This may in part be the influence of Vibrant Communities, which is founded on the principle that “poverty is better addressed when reduction, not alleviation, is the goal”¹⁶.

Edmonton is the only city that has chosen to use the language of *eliminating poverty*. Its vision is to see “poverty end in Edmonton within a generation”.

The Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI) envisioned poverty as something that affects everyone, and to which everyone is vulnerable. Through this lens, everyone is equally responsible for building resilient families, neighbourhoods and institutions, in order to create broader shared prosperity within the City. The CPRI also encouraged citizens to think of poverty as a timeline, to explain the differences between poverty reduction, alleviation and elimination. Summarized in the following graphic, the idea is that if the framework is implemented successfully, then outcomes will organically reflect all of these terms over time.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cabaj and Leviten-Reid. 2006. "Understanding the Potential and Practice of Comprehensive, Multi-Sectoral Efforts to Reduce Poverty: The Preliminary Experiences of the Vibrant Communities Trail Builders."

¹⁷ Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative. 2013. "Capturing Hope: Approach and Discoveries of Multi-Sector Collaboration to Reduce Poverty in Calgary." <http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Capturing-Hope-Volume-2.pdf>



On the other hand, some strategies have chosen not to highlight 'poverty', but rather to emphasize **shared wealth/opportunity or social renewal**, in order make the issue more publicly palatable. This was the case in Montreal's social economy approach, which focused on community-based sustainable development and collective wealth. Likewise, the next iteration of Saint John's strategy is calling itself a 'social renewal' plan, with the vision of creating 'a strong community working together to improve the quality of life for all citizens.'

2.3: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The most common mode of governance is a stand-alone, multi-sector **Steering Committee/Roundtable**. This body is typically the decision-making board that leads the overall direction of the poverty reduction strategy. It is usually comprised of a mix of representatives from the government, nonprofit sector, business community, academia and citizens with lived experience.

Of the cities in this report that are in the implementation phase of their poverty reduction strategies, there is only one case where no multi-sector **Steering Committee/Roundtable** exists.

- Waterloo's Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction is focused on aligning and improving existing programs and policies within the municipal government.
 - This internal focus is likely due to the fact that the region benefits from having a long-established history of coordinated community action on poverty reduction through Opportunities Waterloo Region, a non-profit body that is part of the national Vibrant Communities network. However, OWR recently ceased active operations, and it is yet unclear what impact, if any, this will have on the work of the Comprehensive Approach.

Often, the **Steering Committee** is supported by a small staff body that is responsible for convening meetings, locating relevant research, handling PR and assisting in the development of the strategy. This has been the case in Calgary, Niagara Region, Opportunities Waterloo Region and Windsor Essex County.

In half of the cities studied, the **Steering Committee** further governs a number of working groups that are charged with implementing specific initiatives structured around the Strategy's key priorities. The Chairs of these working groups usually sit in on the Steering Committee's meetings.

The **Steering Committee** is usually developed with the leadership or support of the municipal government. Operationally, however, it is a stand-alone body that is outside the direct purview of the government's control.

Governance Structure and Multi-Sector Participation

The following schematic describes the governance structure of each poverty reduction strategy studied for this report, as of September 2014. It shows the size and composition of the Steering Committee (and working groups where applicable), a breakdown of the sectors that are actively engaged in the Steering Committee and the role played by the municipal government.

City	Name of Initiative	Year Est.	Steering Committee Membership	Steering Committee Leadership	Role of the City	Cross-Sector Involvement*					Working Groups
						G	B	N	A	C	
Calgary	Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative	2013	18 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Calgary - United Way 	Lead	•	•	•	•	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community team - Business team - Asset-building team - Services team - Aboriginal team
Edmonton	Edmonton Poverty Elimination Strategy	2012	26 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Edmonton - United Way 	Lead	•		•	•	•	N/A
Hamilton	Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction	2005	80 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HRPR executive director - (HRPR initiated by City of Hamilton and Hamilton Community Foundation) 	Support	•	•	•	•	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth voice against poverty working group - Governance working group - Policy working group - Evaluation and learning working group - Government engagement working group - Neighbourhood development strategy working group
Kingston	Kingston Poverty Reduction Initiative	2007	8 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Kingston - Kingston Community Health Centres - United Way KFL&A 	Lead	•		•		•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing - Skills development and employment - Community supports for education - Social services for education - Health
Montreal	Social Economy Partnership for Community-Based Sustainable Development	2009	16 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ville de Montreal - Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale (ARUC-ES) 	Lead	•	•	•	•		N/A
Niagara Region	Niagara Prosperity Initiative	2008	11 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Niagara Community Foundation - Business Education Council - Niagara Region Community Services 	Support	•	•	•	•	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ad-hoc working groups established as required

*G = government B = business community N = non-profit sector A = academia C = citizen champions/ citizens with lived experience

City	Name of Initiative	Year Est.	Steering Committee/ Roundtable	Leadership	Role of the City	Cross-Sector Involvement*					Working Groups
						G	B	N	A	C	
Ottawa	Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy	2008	15 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Ottawa - Community Foundation of Ottawa 	Lead	•	•	•	•	•	N/A
Peel Region	Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy	2008	Varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - United Way - Region of Peel - Commissioner of Human Services 	Lead	•		•		•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing taskforce - Food security taskforce - Economic opportunities taskforce - Income security / affordable transportation taskforce
Peterborough	Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network	2008	15 members	<i>Unclear</i>	Support	•		•		•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing work group - Food security work group - Basic needs work group - Income security work group - Employment and training work group - Community Hubs work group - External/internal communications work group
Saint John, NB	Vibrant Communities Saint John	2004	35 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Saint John - Urban Core Support Network - Saint John Human Development Council - United Way of Saint John 	Support	•	•	•		•	N/A
Sudbury	Community Strategy to Reduce Poverty in the City of Greater Sudbury	2012	Not yet established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Planning Council of Sudbury 	Support	Not yet established					N/A
Thunder Bay	Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy	2013	Not yet established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lakehead Social Planning Council - Poverty Free Thunder Bay 	Support	Not yet established					N/A
Waterloo	Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction	2012	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Waterloo – Social Planning Policy and Program Administration 	Lead	•					N/A
Windsor Essex County	Pathway to Potential – Windsor Essex County's Poverty Reduction Strategy	2008	35 members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City of Windsor Social and Health Services - United Way - Legal Assistance Windsor - University of Windsor 	Lead	•	•	•	•		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable housing - Childcare and early learning - Education and skills training - Health - Income support

*G = government B = business community N = non-profit sector A = academia C = citizen champions/ individuals with lived experience

2.4: CONSULTATION PROCESS

Most cities underwent multi-sector community and stakeholder consultations as they developed their poverty reduction strategies.

- Five cities hosted one or more **community-wide forums** to receive feedback on their poverty reduction plan.
- Five cities incorporated **structured focus groups** into the process, by inviting small groups of multi-sector partners and individuals with lived experience to engage on specific topics that were of interest to the development of the strategy.
- Two of the longer-running strategies created **forums for ongoing community input**. For example, Opportunities Waterloo Region annually hosted five sessions in a Community Conversation Series (CCS), which acted as a platform to engage as many people as possible in ongoing efforts to address poverty.

The following table depicts the consultation framework of the various strategies in this report.

Consultation/Engagement Framework

City	Community-Wide Forum	Focus Groups	Ongoing Consultation Forum
Calgary	N/A	16 constellation groups - Multiple consultation rounds	N/A
Edmonton	N/A	18 focus groups - Single consultation round	N/A
Hamilton	11 Community engagement sessions (late 2005-early 2006)	6 community sessions tailored to: business, government leaders, community organizations, Roundtable members, broader community	N/A
Kingston	N/A	5 working groups - Multiple consultation rounds	N/A
Ottawa	2 public consultations	N/A	N/A
Peterborough	Series of community consultations	N/A	N/A
Saint John, NB	N/A	N/A	Annual public dialogue
Sudbury	3 community planning session	N/A	N/A
Thunder Bay	Community forum, open house	Working groups - Series of meetings	N/A
Windsor Essex County	- 3 community-wide consultations - Forum for citizens living in poverty	5 working groups - 2 rounds of meetings	N/A

*Information not available for: Montreal, Niagara Region, Peel Region and Waterloo

Of the cases studied, Calgary's consultation process was the most elaborate. Prior to developing its poverty reduction plan, it created 16 *Constellation Groups* to engage in the following areas of concern:

- Urban Aboriginal persons
- Children and youth
- Community commerce
- Disability
- Education
- Employment and skills
- Financial literacy
- Food dignity
- Health
- Housing
- Immigrants
- Justice
- Neighbourhood strategies
- Seniors
- Social infrastructure
- Women

These groups met regularly over the course of a year, and then produced final reports with recommendations based on their topic areas. The 16 Constellation Groups were then asked to align their strategies, and presented 150 joint recommendations to the Stewardship Board (Steering Committee), which were considered in the development of the official strategy.

In Edmonton, the consultation process focused exclusively on getting feedback from those with lived experience. The Steering Committee worked with community agencies to conduct a series of focus groups over the

course of four months in 2013. Conversations were held in the agencies' own facilities and with their own staff, to create a safe and stigma-free environment for participants to share their thoughts. Approximately 200 people participated in the process.

2.5: STRATEGIC GOALS

Municipal leaders tend to look for ways to communicate and build on existing initiatives, given the wide-ranging impacts of poverty across society. As such, strategies generally focus their efforts on a **range of specific targets**, including:

- Workforce development
- Affordable housing
- Training and education
- Income security
- Food security
- Early childhood supports
- Transportation
- Asset building

Municipal poverty reduction efforts have taken a number of different avenues to address these targets, including:

- Raising public awareness
- Engaging multi-sector partners
- Aligning existing policies/programs
- Advocating for policy and program improvements at the provincial and federal levels
- Monitoring and evaluating common efforts across sectors

Specific strategies differ in the way that they organize these goals and pathways. See the next section on municipal case studies and the *Directory of Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies* (Appendix 1) for more information on how specific strategies have elaborated their goals and objectives.

2.6: SUCCESS INDICATORS

Of the municipal poverty reduction strategies across Canada, success indicators vary widely.

- Some strategies are using the indicators in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy as a model for measuring progress (Peel Region and Thunder Bay).
- Five cities are using Vibrant Communities' Common Evaluation Framework (Hamilton, Niagara Region, Saint John, Opportunities Waterloo Region, Windsor-Essex Region).
- A number of strategies have not made their measurement indicators explicit (Edmonton, Kingston, Ottawa, Waterloo Comprehensive Municipal Strategy).

The inconsistency with which success has been monitored and reported makes it difficult to compare progress and success. This is compounded by the fact that many of these strategies have only recently begun to implement their poverty reduction plans. This section will elaborate on 1) poverty indicators by income 2) indicators in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and 3) the Vibrant Communities Common Evaluation Framework.

Measuring Poverty by Income

Canada does not have an official measurement of poverty. Instead, several different indicators are used to measure the number of Canadians living in poverty.

- **Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO)**
 - Level of income below which a family spends 20% more of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family (varies by the size of the family unit and community population)
- **Low Income Measure (LIM)**
 - Based on 50% of median family income, adjusted for family size, but not for community size

- **Market Basket Measure (MBM)**

- Based on the cost of a defined basket of goods that represents a basic standard of living for a reference family of four.

Statistics Canada's LICO is the measure that is favoured by most anti-poverty advocates. However, the LIM is growing in popularity, due to the discontinuation of general-release LICO in the National Household Survey and Ontario's decision to use the LIM in its Poverty Reduction Strategy. Alternatively, some academics prefer to use the MBM because it provides a reference point for absolute buying power rather than relative levels of poverty.¹⁸

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy

Peel Region and Thunder Bay have explicitly based their measurement indicators on Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy uses the following indicators to measure progress:

1. School readiness (Early Development Instrument)
2. Educational progress (EQAO scores)
3. High school graduation rates
4. Birth weights
5. Depth of Poverty (LIM 40%)
6. Low Income Measure (LIM 50%)
7. Ontario Housing Measure
8. Standard of living (Deprivation Index)

The province also developed the Ontario Deprivation Index to measure standard of living. It is a non-monetary way of determining the percentage of Ontario children being raised in poverty.

The Index identifies a child as having a poverty-level standard of living if at least 2 out of the 10 items in the Index (right) are missing in the child's household because the family cannot afford them. This is consistent with deprivation indices used internationally, such as in Ireland.

Ontario Deprivation Index

1. Able to get dental care if needed
2. Able to replace or repair broken electrical goods such as a stove or toaster
3. Able to buy modest presents for family/friends at least once per year
4. Own appropriate clothing for job interviews
5. Have friends or family over for a meal at least once a month
6. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables every day
7. Able to get around the community, either by having a car or in a larger centre a monthly bus pass or equivalent
8. Hobby or leisure activity
9. Eat meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent at least every other day
10. Have a home or apartment free of pests, such as cockroaches, bedbugs and mice

Vibrant Communities

Many of the longest-running poverty reduction strategies in Canada are members of the Vibrant Communities network. Vibrant Canada has developed a Common Evaluation Framework (CEF) to measure progress¹⁹. Of the cities in this report, the CEF is used in Hamilton, Niagara Region, Saint John and Windsor Essex Region.

The Common Evaluation Framework measures outcomes on three levels:

1. Community capacity for poverty reduction
2. Individual and household assets
3. Policy and systems change

In addition to reporting the indicators under each of these categories (see below), progress reports typically include **community stories** that provide an overview of the Strategy's successes to date.²⁰

The Common Evaluation Framework further uses **contribution analysis**, an evaluation method that examines the contribution of each partner to a particular outcome.

- Key partners are identified and asked to comment on the contribution of local collaboration to advancing the poverty reduction initiative in question. They are also asked to rate the extent of the collaboration's contribution to reducing poverty (1=minimal, 7 = vital).

¹⁸ Irons, Agela Macleod. 2013. "Noble Frustration: The Many Practical Problems with Municipal Poverty Initiatives."

¹⁹ Cabaj, Makhouli and Leviten-Reid. 2006. "In From the Field: Exploring the First Poverty Reduction Strategies Undertaken by Trail Builders in the Vibrant Communities Initiative."

²⁰ There are three limitations of this narrative approach: it is time consuming; it relies heavily on the opinions of the person being interviewed; and at best, it provides only a general sense of the contribution played by a specific organization in a project or initiative.

Common Evaluation Framework: Key Indicators and Measures

Community capacity for poverty reduction	Individual and household assets	Policy and systems change
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convening capacity <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Convening organization in place b. Financial resources to support c. In-kind resources to support 2. Multi-sector leadership <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Leadership Roundtable in place b. # of business partners c. # of government partners d. # of people with lived experience partners e. # of social sector partners f. # of other types of partners g. # of working groups in place 3. Collaboration <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of partners involved in governance and financing b. # of partners involved in specific poverty reduction strategies c. # of partners involved in occasional activities d. # of multi-partner poverty reduction strategies complete e. # of multi-partner poverty reduction strategies in progress f. # of multi-partner poverty reduction strategies intended 4. Community awareness <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of mechanisms in use to raise community awareness of poverty b. # of media stories/coverage c. # of public learning events 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of inner resources added b. Types of inner resources added 2. Physical assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of Emergency supports b. Food c. Housing d. Transportation e. Child/dependent care 3. Social assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Civic participation b. Networks 4. Human assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Health b. Life skills c. Financial literacy d. Education e. Employment skills 5. Financial assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Employment income b. Non-employment income c. Savings and capital assets d. Reduced debt costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public policy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of external community partners (beyond local) b. # of people engaged in the policy change process c. # of substantive policy changes 2. Service and support systems <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of new mechanisms to enable collaboration b. # of low-income earners participating in decision making c. # of changes to systemic design and operation 3. Community resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of changes to funding process b. # of changes to levels and use of resources 4. System-level assets <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. # of changes to community assets

PART 3: MUNICIPAL CASE STUDIES

Of the existing municipal strategies, it is useful to examine the different approaches to poverty reduction through a number of case studies. While each differs in the challenges that it faces and the assets that it has to respond, the City of Toronto may look broadly to the experiences of these cities as it develops its own poverty reduction framework.

The following pages offer a breakdown of each city's approach to poverty reduction (summarized below, with expanded profiles to follow). Details of the other poverty reduction plans in this report are available in Appendix 1.

Calgary, Alberta (2013)

The **Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative** (CPRI) was initiated by the City's mayor, for whom reducing poverty was a key campaign platform. The development of the CPRI was preceded by an exhaustive consultation process. The CPRI is currently in the midst of establishing a long-term governance structure and identifying first steps towards implementation.

Hamilton, Ontario (2005)

The **Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction** (HRPR) has taken a child-focused approach to poverty reduction. Wealth creation was a key concept in the initial Change Framework (2005), but has not been prioritized in the work to date. Given that the two largest demographic groups living in poverty are those on social assistance and the working poor, the HRPR has focused its efforts on raising social assistance rates and advocating for a living wage. The HRPR is unique for having a strong lived experience presence in its governance structure – they currently comprise approximately half of the Roundtable's membership.

Montreal, Quebec (2009)

Montreal's **Social Economy Partnership for Community-Based Sustainable Development** aims to strengthen relationships, consolidate actions and acknowledge the contributions of non-profits, co-operatives, and mutual organizations whose work contributes to local economic development, social solidarity and environmental sustainability. Rather than focusing directly on poverty reduction or elimination, the plan is noteworthy for taking a shared prosperity approach, which aligns with certain wealth creation ideas, such as local enterprise, economic empowerment and social innovation.

Niagara Region, Ontario (2008)

The **Niagara Prosperity Initiative** (NPI) provides an annual investment of \$1.5 million to support poverty reduction and prevention initiatives in the city's priority neighbourhoods. The NPI took the place of Opportunities Niagara, which had operated since the 1980s but closed for financial reasons in 2008. The NPI's neighbourhood focused approach is an attempt to be targeted and universal at the same time with the available resources.

Saint John, New Brunswick (1997)

Saint John is unique when it comes to the leadership role played by the business community in poverty reduction efforts. In 1997, a group of business leaders started the **Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative** (BCAPI). A comprehensive, multi-sector poverty reduction strategy was initiated in 2004, through **Vibrant Communities Saint John** (VCSJ). VCSJ has produced regular progress reports using Vibrant Communities' Common Evaluation Framework. These reports are accessible online. The next iteration of the poverty reduction strategy, **Living Saint John**, is currently in the consultation and strategy development phase.

Waterloo, Ontario (2012)

In Waterloo, the **Municipal Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction** is an internally focused strategy, which prioritizes aligning policies, strategies and divisions within the regional government, rather than on multi-sector collaboration. This was likely initially due to the long-running existence of **Opportunities Waterloo Region** (OWR) in the non-profit sector. However, OWR ceased active operations as of early 2014. There is no indication yet whether the Comprehensive Approach will therefore expand its reach in light of these recent changes.

3.1 CALGARY, AB

Current Status: City Council approved the CPRI in May 2013. It is currently at the beginning of its implementation phase, and is in the midst of determining a permanent governance structure.

Start date: 2013

Context: The Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI) is a multi-sector, stand-alone project launched in 2012 as a joint initiative between the United Way of Calgary and the City of Calgary.

Vision: “Ignite community action and leadership to create bold solutions that reduce and prevent poverty through collaboration, advocacy and education.”

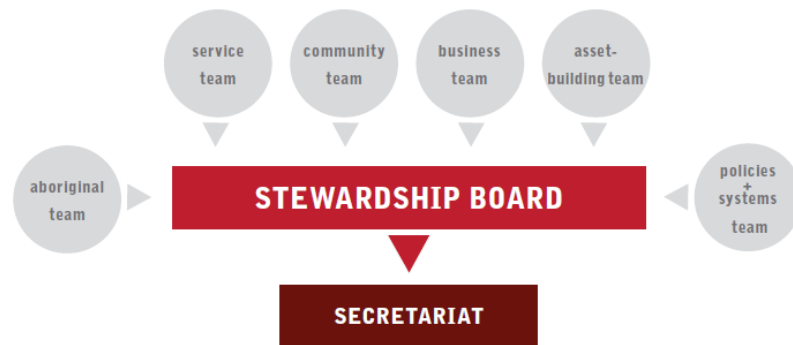
Governance Structure:

During the strategy development phase, the CPRI was governed by an 18-member volunteer *Stewardship Group* and a *Secretariat* of two full-time staff.

- The *Stewardship Group* was the decision-making board, with representatives from all three orders of government, the private sector, non-profit sector, academia, and persons with lived experiences of poverty.
- The *Secretariat* was a staff team that drives the process forward by supporting the constellation groups, hosting conversations, locating relevant research, PR and assisting in the development of the Strategy itself.

Implementation Teams were responsible for coordinating the implementation of the priority areas within the Strategy. They include:

- Community team
- Business team
- Asset-building team
- Service team
- Aboriginal team
- Policy and systems team



This interim governance structure was dissolved after the strategy was approved by City Council. The CPRI is currently working on establishing a permanent governance model to carry out the implementation of the strategy.

Consultation Process:

In developing the strategy, 16 *Constellation Groups* were established, co-chaired by a Stewardship Group or Secretariat member and a Community Chair. Membership was determined within each group. Groups were engaged in the following areas of concern:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Urban Aboriginal persons | • Health |
| • Children and youth | • Housing |
| • Community commerce | • Immigrants |
| • Disability | • Justice |
| • Education | • Neighbourhood strategies |
| • Employment and skills | • Seniors |
| • Financial literacy | • Social infrastructure |
| • Food dignity | • Women |

These constellation groups met throughout 2012 and produced final reports. They were then asked to align strategies and came up with 150 recommendations. These recommendations were evaluated by the Stewardship Group for final recommendation, and presented to Calgary City Council and United Way Board in May 2013.

The engagement process also involved 25 community workshops from June to November 2012. The CPRI further invited independent written submissions from interested stakeholder groups and received submissions from five community organizations.

Throughout the consultation process, participants were asked to envision what Calgary would look like if no action was taken to address poverty, and what it would look like if the CPRI were successful in addressing poverty. They were also

asked to produce a list of key issues that are important to poverty, along with their recommendations. Input from the consultations was compiled into Volume III of the CPRI Final Report, "*Heroes to Each Other*".²¹

Strategic Goals:

All Calgary communities are strong, supportive and inclusive

- Establish community hubs
- Build personal support networks (peer support and mentoring programs)
- Raise public awareness about poverty (public awareness strategy)

Everyone in Calgary has the income and assets needed to thrive

- Support Community Economic Development (CED) through Social Business Centre and Community Investment Fund, and through Strong Neighbourhoods Initiative
- Promote inclusive business practices
- Build assets together through an Office for Financial Empowerment and Financial Empowerment Taskforce

Everyone in Calgary can easily access the right supports, services and resources

- Provide a common access point and provide access to information
- Ensure basic needs are met in food, housing, childcare, income assistance

All Aboriginal people are equal participants in Calgary's prosperous future

- Develop an Aboriginal Poverty Reduction Strategy

Priority outcomes:

- By 2023, 95% of all people living in Calgary are at or above Statistics Canada's LICO rates
- By 2023, 90% of all people living in Calgary are at or above 125% of Statistics Canada's LICO rates
- By 2018, Calgarians consider reducing poverty to be a high priority

Measurement indicators:

Goal 1: All Calgary communities are strong, supportive and inclusive:

- Percent of individuals living in low-income households by neighbourhood
- Percent of Calgarians who report they have at least three people they can call on for support in times of crisis or need
- Percent of Calgarians who report that reducing poverty is a high priority

Goal 2: Everyone in Calgary has the income and assets needed to thrive:

- CIBC Employment Quality Index value for Calgary
- Percent of Calgary labour force earning an hourly wage equivalent to the pre-tax LICO for a single person
- Sum of Credit Risk Scores for Calgary
- Percent of Calgarians reporting that they have a three month emergency savings fund

Goal 3: Everyone in Calgary can easily access the right supports, services and resources:

- Percentage of Calgarians who report they accessed a program or service, by income
- 2-1-1 follow-up measure of effectiveness of referrals
- Number of unique individuals receiving emergency food assistance from the Calgary Inter-faith Food Bank
- Number of persons accessing emergency shelters
- Percentage of low-income households receiving income assistance

Goal 4: All Aboriginal people are equal participants in Calgary's prosperous future:

- Percentage of Aboriginal persons living in low-income households (pre-tax LICO)
- Average full-time employment income of persons age 15+

Community Outcomes: The CPRI was approved in May 2013, and is currently in the first stage of implementation.

For more information:

- CPRI. 2013. *Enough For All (Final Report Volume I)*. http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/EnoughForAll_vol1_Final.pdf
- CPRI. 2013. *Capturing Hope (Final Report Volume II)*. <http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Capturing-Hope-Volume-2.pdf>
- CPRI. 2013. *Heroes to Each Other (Final Report Volume III)*. <http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Heroes-to-each-other-Volume-3.pdf>

²¹ Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative. 2013. *Heroes to Each Other: Input from Stakeholder and Community Engagement, Issues and Recommendations*. <http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Heroes-to-each-other-Volume-3.pdf>

- CPRI. 2014. *Foundations for Change (Year 1 Report to the Community)*. <http://www.enoughforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Foundations2014Final.pdf>

3.2 HAMILTON, ON

Current Status: Ongoing implementation.

Start date: 2005

Context: The 2001 Hamilton Poverty Matrix found that 20% of the City's residents are living in poverty. In response, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was formed in 2005. It is co-convened by the Social Planning and Research Council, the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation.

Vision: "Making Hamilton the best place to raise a child."

Governance Structure:

The Roundtable has close to 80 cross-sector members, with representatives from business, government, voluntary sectors, and residents with lived experience. Approximately half of the Roundtable is comprised of those with lived experience. The Roundtable does not offer direct programs or services. It has four main roles:

- Strategic poverty focus
- Broad community engagement
- Support change and action
- Learning and communication

Strategic Goals:

In its initial Change Framework and Starting Points Strategy, the Roundtable identified *five critical points of investment* that aligned with critical points in the lives of children and their families:

1. Early learning and parenting (0-6 years)
2. Skills through education, activity and recreation (elementary school years)
3. Targeted skills development (high school and post-secondary)
4. Employment (movement to employment)
5. Asset building and wealth creation

Three strategies were at the core of the work plan:

- *Macro Strategy* - focused on making policy and systems level changes
- *Leveling the playing field* - through the five critical points of investment
- *Collective leadership* - by promoting local solutions led by community partners

In Spring 2010, the Roundtable confirmed its aspiration of "Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child." It identified three values to drive forward the effort: *inclusiveness, urgency and collaboration*. Four new action priorities are now shifting the focus of the Roundtable:

1. Changing attitudes about poverty
2. Addressing income disparity
3. Including all citizens in community life
4. Promoting innovative ways to tackle concentrated poverty in neighbourhoods.

There are no published strategies or reports to further elaborate on this new focus.

Consultation Process:

11 community engagement sessions and 15 local consultations were held in late 2005 and early 2006. The Roundtable also hired a representative from the Collaboratory for Community Support to conduct six community sessions in which participants learned a new way of thinking and acting. Each session was tailored to a specific group: business, government leaders, community organizations, Roundtable members and the broader community.

Measurement indicators:

Results are framed around the Vibrant Communities Common Evaluation Framework:

- Impact on individuals
- Community collaboration
- Policy and systems change

Specific indicators are not detailed in the existing literature.

Community Outcomes:

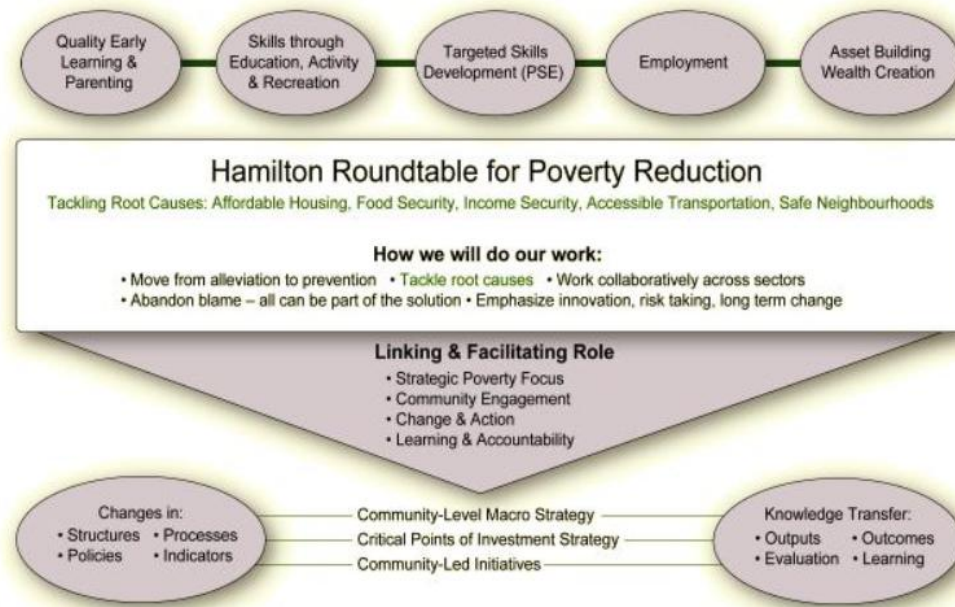
At a June 2009 Senate Sub-Committee on Cities, HRPR reported a reduction in the poverty rate from 20% to 18.1% resulting in 6,000 fewer citizens living below the LICO.

Furthermore, as of 2009:

- Two working groups were established at the provincial and federal level to guide macro- and systems-level change
- Collaborative tables were created to carry out specific tasks:
 - Steering Committee
 - Youth voice against poverty working group
 - Governance working group
 - Policy working group
 - Evaluation and learning working group
 - Government engagement working group
 - Neighbourhood development strategy working group
- The following programs were established under the five points of investment:
 - Early learning and parenting:
 - *The Hamilton Best Start Network*: Improves the availability and awareness of high quality Early Learning and Care Hubs in low-income neighbourhoods
 - Skills through education, activity and recreation:
 - *School Aged Solutions*: Gives school aged children access to high quality out-of-school programs in their neighbourhoods
 - Targeted Skills Development:
 - *Skills Development Flagship*: Integrates best practices for skills development in youth at risk
 - Employment:
 - *Jobs Prosperity Collaborative*: Develops partnerships to support employers in hiring immigrants
 - Asset building and wealth creation:
 - *Affordable Housing Flagship*: Helps low-income families build savings and assets, which moves them along the housing continuum (including social housing, rental housing and ownership)
- Highlights of changes made to municipal policies and programs include:
 - National Child Benefit claw-back – municipal portion returned to families
 - Affordable Transit Pass Pilot Project for Low Income Workers
 - Child Care wait list strategy
 - Investment in early learning and parenting programs
 - Investment in recreation infrastructure and access to recreation
 - Local immigration partnership planning
 - Support for rental supplements and hostel to homes project
 - Community Action Plan on Homelessness

The Aspiration: Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child

Infographic:



For more information:

- *Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: Setting the Table for Change*. Vibrant Canada Case Study. March 2009. http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/hamilton_roundtable_-_setting_the_table_for_change.pdf

- *Shared Leadership, Collaborative Governance: Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction*. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. May 2007. <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/638ENG.pdf>
- *Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction Starting Point Strategies*. HRPR. Feb 2007. http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/vc/HAM_Starting_Point_Strategies.pdf

3.3 MONTREAL, QC

Current Status: Ongoing implementation

Start date: 2009

Context: The Social Economy Partnership for Community-Based Sustainable Development was initiated in 2006. The partnership is in line with Imagining: Building Montreal 2025, a long-term vision for Montreal's development.

Vision: The partnership shares Building Montreal 2025's vision to "offer Montrealers a pleasant and stimulating place to live where everyone can flourish. It plans to support a variety of initiatives linked to the social economy and innovative means of encouraging individual integration and development, in particular among its most disadvantaged residents. It will work to integrate different social groups, in particular young people, and in so doing to boost the city's social cohesion."

Governance Structure:

The partnership is guided by a steering committee comprised of the City Council Executive Committee member responsible for economic development, senior representatives from different municipal departments, and members of a multi-sector Partnership Advisory Committee.

Consultation Process: N/A

Strategic Goals:

The partnership is founded on guiding considerations regarding the complementarity of the social economy with the actions of the municipal administration, economic empowerment of individuals and communities, and local development.

The main goals established by the partnership are as follows:

- To formally acknowledge the contribution made by the Social Economy to Montreal's development;
- To support the social economy by building on past achievements, strengthening existing means and adopting new approaches that will allow it to flourish; and,
- To consolidate and increase the contribution by players in the Social Economy to sustainable development in greater Montreal by fostering and creating community based enterprises meeting its citizens' needs.

Strategic actions by the city and by players in the social economy are organized under five priority areas:

- More support for community-based entrepreneurship.
- A greater role for the social economy in major Montreal projects.
- A greater role for the social economy in improving quality of life.
- Greater openness to doing business with social economy enterprises.
- Better-integrated promotion of the social economy.

Measurement indicators: N/A

Community Outcomes: N/A

For More Information:

- <http://www.sdemontreal.com/en/business/social-economy>

3.4 NIAGARA REGION, ON

Current Status: Ongoing implementation through a neighbourhood-specific approach.

Start date: Niagara Prosperity Institute - 2008

Context: The Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) was established in 2008, and provides an annual investment of \$1.5 million to support poverty reduction and prevention initiatives. The NPI took the place of Opportunities Niagara, which had operated since the 1980s but closed for financial reasons in 2008.

Vision: "All Niagara residents live above the poverty line. Private, voluntary and private sectors work together to improve the quality of life in Niagara."

Governance Structure:

An advisory committee guides investment decisions and works to leverage community resources. It is comprised of representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors. Within the Steering Committee, there are three leadership roles:

- *Convener* (Niagara Community Foundation) – builds community partnerships with business and service providers
- *Secretariat* (Business Education Council) – provides infrastructure support to the Committee
- *Support* (Niagara Region Community Services)

Ad hoc working tables are established as required.

Consultation Process: N/A

Strategic Goals:

The NPI took a neighbourhood-focused approach, as specific poverty issues and community dynamics vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This was an attempt to be simultaneously targeted and universal with the available resources (\$1.5 million annual investment).

The Niagara Prosperity Initiative established three priorities:

1. Dispel myths about living in poverty
2. Improve collaboration and actions in poverty reduction efforts by all stakeholders
3. Engage and include all individuals in the community

Actions and deliverables are organized under the following categories:

- Advocacy
- Communication
- Engagement
- Research and evaluation

Measurement indicators:

The NPI has a Neighbourhood Mapping Tool which has identified neighbourhoods across the twelve municipalities. The Neighbourhood Mapping Tool:

- Uses defined neighbourhoods
- Uses municipal and not regional averages as a baseline
- Matches areas of need with existing resources
- Identifies neighbourhoods in need of attention

Results are framed around the Vibrant Communities Common Evaluation Framework:

- Impact on individuals
- Community collaboration
- Policy and systems change

All funded projects are also required to submit qualitative data in the form of impact statements from 5% of the people served. These impact statements are then themed according to the priorities set by Council.

Furthermore, a number of quantitative measures are tracked (see appendix of "Building a New Legacy"). Initially, NPI attempted to mirror the measures in the Ontario Deprivation Index, but did not have the resources to follow through.

Community Outcomes:

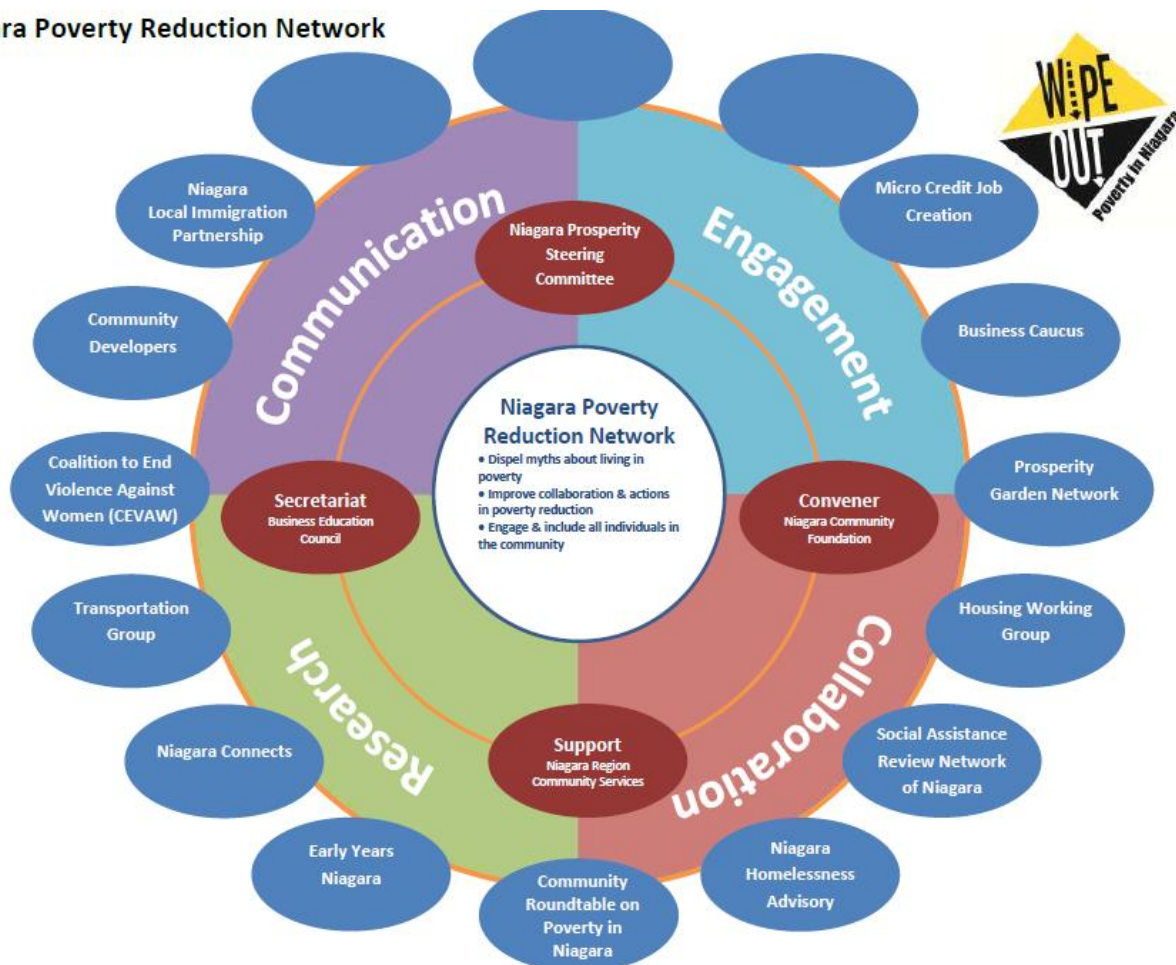
Since 2008, 183 projects have been funded through 62 different community agencies. Over half were geared towards assisting children and youth.

The NPI has conducted qualitative surveys of residents receiving assistance. Analysis of feedback collected from 352 residents shows that 52% have experienced improvements in individual and household assets, and 48% have experienced an increase in the community's capacity for poverty reduction.

Prior to closing in 2008, Opportunities Niagara played a role in the creation of a large affordable housing project, brokering funds for homelessness projects, a transportation-employment program, and exploration of a 'smart card' to facilitate access to transit and other services.

Infographic:

Niagara Poverty Reduction Network



For more information: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/niagara-prosperity-initiatives.aspx>

3.5 SAINT JOHN, NB

Current Status: Ongoing implementation.

Start date: 1997 (Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative), 2004 (Vibrant Communities Saint John)

Context: In 1997, a number of champions in the business community initiated the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI). Its goal was to lead poverty reduction efforts in the City of Saint John with a focus on addressing root causes. Vibrant Communities Saint John (VCSJ) was founded in 2004 to coordinate the efforts of the BCAPI, the Human Development Council, the Urban Core Support Network and the City of Saint John. Currently, the City is partnering with multi-sector partners to create the next iteration of its poverty reduction strategy, the Living Saint John Social Renewal Strategy.

Vision: The vision for the Living SJ strategy is "a strong community working together to improve the quality of life for all citizens of the Greater Saint John area."

Governance Structure:

The current poverty reduction strategy is governed by a multi-sector Leadership Roundtable that brings together members from the five Priority Neighbourhoods, three levels of government, business community, non-profit organizations and residents with lived experience. It has 35 members.

Consultation Process:

VCSJ is committed to engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the community. In 2013, a public dialogue was held with approximately 100 attendees including representatives from the provincial and municipal governments, business and academic communities, non-profit organizations and neighbourhood residents. Attendees were asked to participate in focus group discussions on the Strategic Goals.

Strategic Goals:

Neighbourhood Revitalization and Housing

- Resident mobilization and training
- Housing Strategy
- Social, physical, and economic improvements

Children and Youth

- Early Learning Centres
- School supports / Community schools
- Youth programs / Engagement / Leadership
- Coordination of services

Workforce Participation

- Multiple pathways and supports
- Remove barriers: childcare, transportation, health insurance, tuition
- Employer leadership
- Living wage replaces minimum wage

Single Parents

- Adequate and affordable housing strategyp
- Childcare
- School completion
- Parenting
- Health and wellness

Measurement indicators:

VCSJ has produced a number of evaluation reports on community outcomes that are available online. The most recent report is from 2010. Outcomes are measured on three levels:

- Community capacity for poverty reduction
- Individual and household assets
- Policy and systems change

In addition, VCSJ evaluation focuses on:

- Examining the experience of several individuals who have made gains toward workforce participation
- Working with local agencies to develop a mechanism for the coordinated tracking of clients and shared learning
- Telling stories of neighbourhood success from the perspective of residents

Community Outcomes:

In 2005, VCSJ set a three-year goal to "assist 2000 individuals (800 households) in continuing their journey out of poverty." They surpassed this goal by reaching over 3,000 individuals. VCSJ set a 10-year goal of reducing the City's poverty rate from 24% to the national average of 16% by 2015. It has also set a goal of reducing the child poverty rate from 32% to 9% by 2025.

When VCSJ was first convened, Statistics Canada reported that Saint John had highest poverty rate in the country – 28%. By 2006, census data showed it had dropped to 20.8%. Recent Statistics Canada data suggests that in 2011 the poverty rate was further reduced to 18%. Although it is unlikely that Saint John will meet its initial target of bringing the poverty rate down to the national average by 2015, it has seen the most significant change in poverty of all cities across Canada.

In its 10-year report published in 2013, VCSJ reported the following outcomes:

Neighbourhood Revitalization and Housing

- Neighbourhoods with high numbers of individuals living in poverty identified as a priority
- City of Saint John commits to Neighbourhood Development Stimulation grants
- Quarter of a million *Around the Block* community newspapers delivered
- Residents engaged as leaders in changing their neighbourhood
- Neighbourhoods have community plans
- Community and government services are working directly in neighbourhoods
- *Safe Harbour for Youth* project is underway

Children and Youth

- Early Learning Centre established as one of five demonstration sites in NB
- Early Learning is part of the Department of Education
- Parent and child early learning programs established in neighbourhoods
- Healthy Vision, Healthy Smiles: health, dental and vision plan for low income children
- Children impacted through strong partnerships between community partners and schools (PALS)
- PALS extended into high schools
- Promise Partnership connecting children and families to UNBSJ

Workforce Participation

- Increases to the minimum wage
- Essential skills training complements GED preparation
- Increased coaching and mentoring supports
- Coordinated agency efforts respond to the hiring needs of employers
- Individuals connected to employers
- Increased supports for self-employment and social enterprises
- Three-year extension of health card

Single Parents

- First Steps Housing – 10 years assisting over 300 young women and children
- 40 young men graduated from high school through First Steps

Infographic:



For more information:

- *Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Reduction... Moving Forward.* Vibrant Communities Saint John. March 2013. http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/moving_forward.pdf
- *Poverty Reduction Chart.* Vibrant Communities Saint John. August 2013. http://0101.nccdn.net/1_5/337/148/032/Poverty-Reduction-Strategy---Chart.pdf
- For additional evaluation reports, see: http://www.vibrantsj.ca/publications_1.html
- Living SJ: <http://www.livingsj.ca/main.html>

3.6 WATERLOO, ON

Current Status: the Municipal Comprehensive Approach was approved at the end of 2012. It is internally focused on changes within the sphere of the government's direct influence. The lack of multi-sector involvement was largely due to the presence of Opportunities Waterloo Region (OWR), which was a member of the Vibrant Communities network. However, OWR ceased active operations in early 2014. It is unclear how this will impact the work of the Comprehensive Approach.

Start date: 2012

Context: The Region of Waterloo's Comprehensive Approach to Poverty Reduction was developed to address poverty across Regional Departments.

Vision: "Waterloo will be an inclusive, thriving and sustainable community committed to maintaining harmony between rural and urban areas and fostering opportunities for current and future generations."

Governance Structure:

The Comprehensive Approach is more internally focused than other poverty alleviation strategies. It concentrates on actions that can be taken with existing policies and programs in the government's direct control.

Consultation Process: N/A

Strategic Goals:

The strategic priorities are as follows:

Ignite a passion for a poverty free region

- Utilize regional communication channels to raise awareness about poverty
- Identify and secure opportunities to engage diverse stakeholders in discussions about poverty and solutions for poverty reduction
- Where appropriate, find ways to support City Council's efforts to advocate to other governments for policy and program improvements

Change attitudes and actions together

- Implement a corporate-wide social marketing campaign
- Develop a positive and inclusive language tool kit that provides corporate-wide suggestions for communicating about poverty
- Exchange knowledge and expertise about poverty across the corporation

Build bridges

- Exchange knowledge with others working to reduce poverty
- Develop a corporate-wide planning table to provide infrastructure for coordinated planning
- Increase staff awareness of the processes and venues available to advocate for policy and program improvements
- Identify and build on existing lenses that promote corporate-wide common good decision-making to improve people's living conditions
- Identify opportunities to leverage impact and align the Region's poverty reduction efforts with community efforts to reduce poverty

Make big ideas happen

- Create an innovation hub
- Harness opportunities to make big changes
- Participate in Vibrant Communities Canada

Take a person-centred approach

- Enhance information sharing about regional programs and services for people living with low income
- Identify ways to streamline the intake processes for programs and services that pertain to people living with low income
- Explore flexible and accessible forms of service delivery

Level the playing field

- Enhance supports to help youth secure employment
- Create and share an inventory of Regional programs, services and strategic initiatives that focus on enhancing life skills and employment related skills
- Identify ways to ensure that people living with low income have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged and involved in decision-making related to reducing poverty

Measurement indicators: N/A

Community Outcomes:

To date, the Region reports the following successes:

- A facilitation guide developed to build staff knowledge
- A social services social media campaign undertaken as a pilot
- A portal page launched to enhance corporate-wide impact on poverty reduction
- Building connections through the work of Children's Planning Table
- Innovation Hubs on Housing and Affordable Housing options are being explored by regional staff
- Public Engagement Project Working Group has been established
- Service First Call Centre staff have participated in Poverty Myth Busters training
- Corporate-wide eligibility survey administered to regional programs and services that support people living in low income to better understand how eligibility is determined for programs

For more information:

- <http://socialservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/communityplanningpartnerships/poverty.asp>

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FOR TORONTO

There is not a single cause of poverty, nor is there a single solution. According to the 2013 *Vital Signs Report*, "more than 1 million Torontonians live in low-income neighbourhoods (20% or more below average incomes) and the polarization of wealth and poverty is deepening."²² This trend is mirrored in cities across the country and internationally. Despite growing consensus that poverty is an issue that should be tackled at all levels of society, there is disagreement about what a comprehensive municipal solution should look like.

In recent years, a number of Canadian cities have introduced strategies to target poverty at the local level. Each municipality faces its own challenges and has its own strengths to build upon. However, with building interest across jurisdictions and at every level of government, this is an opportune time for Toronto to look at the work that is happening across the country and identify best practices for developing its own approach to poverty reduction.

This report concludes with **thirteen lessons for the City of Toronto**, based on the common and emerging trends in municipal poverty reduction across Canada.

1. Think comprehensively about tackling the root causes of poverty.

Even though poverty reduction strategies tend to differ in the language they use to describe their strategic priorities, they commonly acknowledge that the roots and impacts of poverty are widespread, and therefore require a comprehensive and multi-pronged response. In most cases, efforts are made to inventory existing policies and programs that are already underway, to prevent the duplication of efforts. The strategic priorities act as an umbrella to frame the network of new and existing initiatives.

2. Consider how best to frame and communicate the vision and narrative of the strategy.

Twelve of fourteen cities framed their approach around *reducing* poverty, which may in part be the influence of Vibrant Communities, which is founded on the principle that 'poverty is better addressed when reduction, not alleviation, is the goal'. In Calgary, poverty is envisioned as something that affects everyone, and to which everyone is vulnerable. Through this lens, everyone is equally responsible for building resilient families, neighbourhoods and institutions, in order to create broader shared prosperity within the City. On the other hand, some strategies have chosen not to highlight 'poverty', but rather to emphasize shared wealth/opportunity or social renewal, in order to make the issue more publicly palatable. This was the case in Montreal's social economy approach, which focused on community-based sustainable development and collective wealth. Likewise, the next iteration of Saint John's strategy is calling itself a 'social renewal' plan, with the vision of creating 'a strong community working together to improve the quality of life for all citizens.'

3. Strategies often stem from political impetus or in response to a widely publicized local poverty report.

Strong mayoral support pushed the issue to the forefront of City thinking in Calgary, Edmonton and Kingston. On the other hand, a major reason the Ottawa Poverty Reduction Strategy was discontinued was due to the lack of continued political support past a single political cycle. Given the newly elected mayor's strong push for addressing housing and homelessness, the PRS was transitioned into a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2011.

4. The Collective Impact Model is the most popular approach to poverty reduction.

Of the municipalities in this report, Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2009-2011) was the only one that did not explicitly reference this framework. It has been reported that this model is most appropriate given its minimal design specifications and place-based adaptability.

5. There are pros and cons to City-led poverty reduction initiatives.

City-led strategies tend to have more resources and staff time to commit to developing a comprehensive poverty response, and the municipality is a powerful force for getting influential and unconventional players to the table. However, strategies that are internal to the City are more vulnerable to political changes and sometimes struggle with getting community buy-in.

²² Toronto Community Foundation. 2013. *Vital Signs Report*. <https://tcf.ca/torontos-vital-signs-report>

6. The municipal government acts as a convener and advocate, with both substantive and process-oriented roles to play.

Municipal governments are pivotal to facilitating multi-sector collaboration. In most cases, although the City may own the strategic framework, the collaborative leadership bodies are stand-alone projects outside the purview of the City's direct control. The City's role in these bodies varies case by case. Municipal governments also play a crucial role in actively advocating for local awareness of poverty issues and for policy changes at the provincial and federal levels.

Strategic priorities typically revolve around the municipal mandate, in areas such as affordable housing, transportation, recreation, community infrastructure and corporate modelling through the city's own employment practices. Furthermore, the municipal government often takes on the 'convener' role, to catalyze the leadership roundtable and commit resources to initial consultations and strategy development.²³ Once the strategy has been approved and the leadership table begins to assert itself, the convener generally steps back to enable others to take the lead.

7. Almost every strategy has engaged in multi-sector collaboration and created a coordinating entity to monitor and sustain progress over time.

Across the board, efforts are made to integrate a variety of actors into poverty reduction efforts. These may include leaders of the non-profit sector, business community, government, academia and citizens with lived experience. A convening body/steering committee is often formed to ensure accountability among multiple stakeholders.

8. It is crucial to get the right people around the table.

Multi-sector leadership tables with prominent and influential leaders are more likely to galvanize public support and community buy-in. In comparison, leadership tables comprised exclusively of government staff and community agency representatives tend to face more difficulty in building momentum for their work.

9. Achieving meaningful/sustained representation from those with lived experience & the private sector is challenging.

Strategies with the strongest business sector involvement have used influential business leaders to champion the work within their own networks. Common ways to engage those with lived experience are through speakers' bureaus and targeted efforts to lower barriers to participation (i.e. strategic meeting times/locations, dedicated working groups, leadership/training programs, transportation stipends, etc). A number of poverty reduction initiatives have included the voice of lived experience in response to community criticisms of not being inclusive enough in the governance structure. This was the case in Hamilton, where citizens with lived experience now comprise half of the 80-member leadership roundtable.

10. Poverty is commonly targeted through systemic policy and program changes.

The broad focus of most municipal strategies is to *reduce* poverty, with efforts to *alleviate* and *mitigate* its impacts as secondary goals. As such, the main focus is often on systemic program and policy shifts, which prioritize the interrelated root causes of poverty, rather than treating its symptoms alone.

11. Consider how best to manage competing interests, expectations and timelines.

In many cases (Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Niagara Region, Saint John, etc.), the development of the poverty reduction strategy and its consultation process spanned over a year, and involved broad cross-sector consultations. For example, in the case of Calgary, the consultation process incorporated over 200 participants in 16 multi-sector working groups. However, it is important to balance the need for broad consultation with developing tangible, focused and achievable goals and priorities.

12. Identify common indicators to measure progress.

The sporadic reporting of success indicators across the board demonstrates the difficulty that many poverty reduction plans are facing in measuring and conveying the progress of their efforts. The longest-running strategies have shown that change is slow, and it is often difficult to ascertain exactly what role an individual organization or initiative may have played in producing any incremental outcome. Furthermore, in some cases the choice of measurement tools can inadvertently impact the types of activities that organizations choose to pursue, by implicitly encouraging them to undertake initiatives with easily measurable outcomes such as lunch programs and training workshops. Therefore, municipalities should exercise care when selecting indicators, and rely on the common practices of existing initiatives.

²³ This has notably been the case in Niagara Region, where the multi-sector Niagara Poverty Reduction Network recently delinked itself from the government-led Niagara Prosperity Initiative and is now a standalone poverty reduction initiative in its own right.

13. Building strong cross-sector partnerships and heightened public awareness are the most common accomplishments.

Despite varying contexts, priorities and strategy design, these two themes emerged in the interviews of every municipality in this report. However, Hamilton and Saint John have also highlighted reductions in poverty levels which they attribute to local efforts.