

## Poverty Reduction Summit

May 6 to 8, 2015 Ottawa, ON

No Place for Poverty organizer Suzette Montreuil has attended the *Poverty Reduction Summit: Every City, Province and Territory Working Together* this week. More than 360 delegates gathered in Ottawa to combine efforts to reduce poverty across the country by strengthening communication and increasing the alignment of activities and amplify the success of each community, province and territory's poverty reduction strategy.

Following are Suzette's notes from the events:

### **Day 1: Opening the Learning Community and Framing the Discussion**

Paul Born, President Tamarack Institute

People from everywhere in Canada, 47 from Cities Reducing Poverty network

- Affirm what you know
- Build a common language – way for people from different backgrounds to learn from each other
- Highlight emerging knowledge, skills and resources
- Build a supportive community
- Regenerate a sense of energy, mission, and purpose

3.5 million people living in poverty

Alan Broadbent – chair of Caledon Institute of Social Policy

- Rising tide of interest
- Opportunity to strategize
- Does poverty matter? Not everyone thinks so but conference does. Price we pay in health, justice and social cohesion and to people who live in poverty, always being on the edge. Confidence shaken every day. People don't choose to be poor. Employers who don't pay a living wage, break ups, loss of jobs. Society chooses poverty, constructed by economic and social policy. Which rights we support, which we ignore. How we fund instruments of poverty reduction. If we built it, we can also tear it down. Believe in human dignity, and share economic prosperity.
- Made progress at various times with govts of various sorts. Created supports for farmers, unemployed, parents and children, people with disabilities, CPP, Old Age security. Most programs are designed and work well and work at scale, indexed to inflation. Comprise a significant percentage of federal budget, less so of provincial. Best when income tested.
- OAS and GIS made big decrease in seniors poverty. Child tax benefit helped but poorly designed, not income tested. All are underfunded. Target for child is \$5,700 but funded at \$3600. CPP payments inadequate for seniors. Proper funding would help tear down poverty.
- Some say we can't afford to fund, he says nonsense. We are a rich country. We squander private and public money. Criminal justice system, military provision. \$120,000 per youth in jail.

- Don't attend to what we have, we neglect and let quality of work deteriorate, like public transit and affordable housing. Very important issues for Canada. Affect productivity and social justice, support people engaging in community.
- Optimistic still. Senate reports on key issues facing Canada. "The poor do not choose poverty. It is at once their affliction and our national shame." (a senator)
- NGOs have played a big part, Occupy Wall Street
- Discussing discrepancy not the same as reducing poverty but important still.
- Challenge: Make sure we focus on big things and get these right. When provinces/cities develop poverty reduction strategies, most people live in cities, cities poverty reduction strategies should use their political strength: paying people adequately for living wage, most cities do this because their employees are unionized, need to include contracts (London in UK is one)
- Getting employers to change their practice is important. Help employers to get good at hiring with living wage, employer gets loyalty and effort
- Affordable housing: cities don't have enough resources on their own, Mayors have many contacts. Need to use these. Need to bring this back into public dossier. Same for transit. Must insist on good design of strategies.
- Political leadership needs to focus on next doable thing. Need to contain practical steps of things that need to be done. One step at a time goal towards goals but need to be relentless for the long term.
- Can reach our goal by meeting on common ground. Focus on what we agree on not what we don't. Common ground between living and minimum wage is better salaries.
- Easy to identify problems, need to identify solutions.
- Need to share data, take as a strategy to help each other succeed. Don't need to sap our energy arguing with each other.

Stephen Huddart, President of McConnell Family Foundation (one of Canada's largest private foundation)

- Election in Alberta a sign of change.
- Truth and reconciliation will issue its report. First Nations people have too high a representation in poverty. Continued legacy. Urgent and immediate need.
- Full participation of aboriginal communities is required. Winnipeg doing a lot.
- John Wilson McConnell: created foundation in depression. Born to Irish immigrants (1870). Promise of free land that attracted them, but systematically displacing aboriginal people of their land. McConnell family tried farming on shield but difficult, came to Toronto – urban poor. Attended school and Ontario schools were world class. So became wealthy eventually. Started in dry goods trading company, took night courses in business. Tithing as of first check. Had a concern for less fortunate.  
20<sup>th</sup> century a period of several crises – depression, war efforts, forced governments to contribute to leveling the playing field and creating common resources. McConnell created a trust, didn't want profits to go into company. Aboriginal people being placed on reservations created economic growth for other people. Before inherited capital generated more income than economic growth but 20<sup>th</sup> Century helped people get out of poverty. We

are coming to an end of this period. What kind of economy do we want with environmental limits that we face? Economic growth greater than return on capital. Robust economy with return greater than return on capital. Dominant model of economic growth threatening life of us all. Uniting different sectors will help us more than working alone.

1. Poverty sucks life out of people in community – health, participation.
2. Breaking a promise to children, limits them
3. Aboriginal reconciliation demands economic reconciliation. Education is key as is early childhood development. Children as young as 4 can start with Learning Bond. Helps to build confidence in child. But less than 30% start this.  
[www.smartsaver.org](http://www.smartsaver.org)
4. Intergenerational equity: Canadian students have average debt loads of over \$25,000. Is this the best we can do? Not acceptable. Older people had cheaper tuitions and available jobs. Need a better deal for our youth. New generation is extraordinarily invested in changing world.
5. Challenge of growing inequality has to be addressed. Wall Street bonuses in 2014 were doubled in total earnings of 1 million americans who work full time at minimum wage.
6. Prevention is key to solving poverty. 20% goes to treating conditions that can be prevented. Canada needs an action plan. If we allocate public spending, we can reduce crush on public spending. Early intervention book noted. **Smarter social systems that address poverty at its roots.** 10,000 children in foster care. Social cost of taking a child away from family instead of helping them support child (e.g. condition of house)
7. **Every problem related to poverty is an opportunity to help economy: e.g.** Homecare, green energy retrofits, gainful contribution to community, every problem an opportunity to start a business. Entrepreneurs can help see opportunity.
8. **Need to measure social productivity:** Education outcomes, life enjoyment, employment and underemployment, community vital signs. Helps us to target our efforts. How can we reduce drag that poverty brings? To be a society that thrives, need to track.
9. **All solutions have to be driven locally and systemically:** need this kind of work to transform and create opportunity.

#### **CEO of Trillium Foundation**

- Launched a new strategy on what they fund: communities that active and inspired, and where people are prosperous; deliberate in their actions; contributed to national coalition building; using food to build community
- Seeking to invest in clear outcomes that will make a difference; recognize need for investment over time and for innovation; collective and multi-stakeholder initiatives; multi-pronged approach the only to effect real change
- Canadian index of well-being: (something other than GDP) they picked 12 indicators and will invest with these

- Living standards linked to other domains, like employment, ability to engage in community, use of time, children's education; declined by 12% since ?
- Increase income security - support initiatives that knowledge and promote economic security; systemic solutions at community level; finding ways of cumulative impact of our efforts

## Reducing Poverty Together: Every City, Province, and Territory

### Deb Matthews, Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction Strategy, Deputy Premier, Government of Ontario.

- Evidence based policy to achieve measurable change
- Tipping in our history of our fight against poverty; momentum is building across Canada; moving from talking about and advocating that someone solve to we all have a part to play and moving away from protecting our own turf; real question is what is change for people impacted?
- Increasing understanding that **we are all better off when those with least are better off**
- Ontario strategy:
  - newly elected Liberal government formed a women's caucus (grandmothers are in charge!), didn't want to focus on child poverty but realized it wasn't getting the attention it needed; created a plan and took to larger caucus; **June Cladwood: when you are a witness to an injustice, you are a participant to the injustice; the only decision you have to make is how to participate.**
  - Need to break cycle of poverty so focused on children; had to say no to some initiatives but focused on kids and it made a measurable difference. Brought in Ontario Child benefit. Full day junior and senior kindergarten. Renewed strategy mandated by Poverty Act (every 5 years has to be reviewed).
  - Identified indicators and need to report back annually to assembly. Made progress on all 8. From 68 to 84% graduation rate now.
  - Lifted 47,000 kids out of poverty and prevented thousands from falling into poverty.
  - Raised minimum wage (\$19,000 to \$34,000 per year for full time work at minimum wage)
  - Second version done: Realizing our potential. Build on success and focus on kids but expanding. 4 pillars: kids, employment and income security, end homelessness, using evidence to guide decision making.
  - Using evidence to guide decision making: Fred visited emergency more than 250 times in one year while being homeless and more often with police. Then he got housed. Year after, 2 visits to ER and no encounters with police. We can afford to get rid of homelessness. Integrated community driven process.
  - Introduced local poverty reduction fund: \$50 million for community driven initiatives.
  - Challenging communities to develop partnerships with unlikely partners! Every project needs to have a third party evaluation.
  - Government can't do it alone but it can't step back either, we need the federal government! (ie federal budget made its priority helping out the rich)
  - Need to ask candidates in next election: what are you going to do about poverty? (even if most disadvantaged are the least likely to vote)

## Mayor Don Iveson, City of Edmonton

- 55,000 follow him on Tweeter
- Ending poverty is not science fiction!
- Local government means the most to people and they notice if you are doing it or not
- Also have limited resources and therefore need to be creative and solutions focused
- Provincial and federal governments have leavers but municipal govts make a difference
- Business leaders are now talking about this as something achievable and desirable
- Benefits are massive regardless of your perspective: saving money in healthcare, best strategy to save health care is poverty reduction; reducing incarceration; Alberta estimates \$7 billion loss of income from poverty. Smart taxation. How can we ensure sustainability of public services? Seeing leadership in cities; need to think intergenerational (even if you lose the next election)
- Definite fiscal interest in housing. Need to preserve existing stock of social housing for those who need it and help others through living wage, child care, etc.
- Specific benefits to businesses: reduce social disorder so business function better; would be good for their business and help individuals; greater participation in labour supply; employers turning more towards programs that help people who are disadvantaged. How can we support entrepreneurs? If people are earning more, they will spend more money and pay more taxes.
- Most importantly, we will have dignity for all. This is essentially a Canadian way of thinking though we have not always acted this way. Even Alberta in its early history of solidarity of early farmers before hydrocarbons discovered.
- **University will not be a reserve for elite, but an institution for the whole people.**
- Wants to do the same, a **city for all people**
- Created a poverty elimination task force. Had been in a five year housing project (80% housing first works). Has challenged them as 2000 become homeless even though 3000 housed).
- Want to eliminate poverty over a generation: Anglican Bishop of Edmonton. 20 people from across a number of sectors.
- Vision is to come up with a 10 year plan. Series of tables. Aboriginal is one of them. Information/research round table.
- Most important principle is it had **to be informed by lived experience of people living in poverty.**
- Defines poverty as more than economic: lack of economic, social and cultural resources that give a quality of life that sustains full and meaningful participation in community
- Cree definition talks more about social deprivation than monetary
- Next step was to identify focal areas: 7 chosen: economic security, early childhood intervention, education community well-being, health and wellness, justice and democratic participation, housing and transportation
- One lens to view is social determinants of health
- Most transformative learning is link of poverty to trauma; learned a lot from Truth and Reconciliation commission; led to many initiatives to restore relationship with First Nations
- Sought to reach out and understand lived experience of First Nations people
- Worked with other cities like Winnipeg, Regina
- Treaties seen as “divorce” by government but like “marriage” by First Nations (sharing over time)

- Higher stats on a number of measures for First Nations (poverty, disappearance)
- Survey found 94% of Edmontonians thought eliminating poverty good and 86% thought it was doable
- Poverty is solvable. (used puzzle box to show)
- Giant flood hit Edmonton in 1950s. Water went up 42 feet, 2000 people homeless. No one argues about whose jurisdiction it was. They all got involved.
- “Charity is good, justice is better.”

## Day 2:

Living Wage for Families Campaign: Work should lift you out of poverty, not keep you there

- Had a day yesterday to talk about various living wage campaign
- Definition: wage that allows people to participate in community
- Evidence based calculation that allows participation; not just subsistence but involvement
- Concept around since 1990s in Baltimore; United Kingdom very involved, over 1500 employers
- Fairly new in Canada, started in B.C., then Ontario (Waterloo, Ottawa), growing in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Yukon and Yellowknife.
- Based on assumption if you work full time you should earn enough to move yourself out of poverty
- Differs a lot from minimum wage as it has a different standard
- There is a business case for employers
- Win-win-win: for employees, employers and community

Diana – Metro Vancouver

- On building a coalition
  - Who are we?
  - First call (child and youth advocacy coalition) and CCPA
  - CCPA had some funds for studying; learned that 1/3 of families in poverty had at least one parent working full time; labour unions saw contracting out and going from living wage to not living wage and how to involve workers into solution
  - Conversation on living wage expanded and Living Wage Canada formed to help with communication
  - 2 adults working full time, one child in child care, one in school and after school program
  - Living Wage is \$20 in Metro Vancouver; minimum is \$10
  - Organizational structure: advisory committee; campaign organizer, municipal campaign subcommittee, employee recognition subcommittee, calculation/research subcommittee and emerging communities subcommittee
  - Get some funding from Vancity and labour
  - Government has a responsibility and it uses minimum wage and employers have an opportunity and they can use living wage
  - Calculation is only part of work of campaign; need to have an end goal and should focus on bringing on employers (trying to influence supply chain)
  -

What has the City of Vancouver done to address low-wage poverty?

- Included the living wage as part of A Healthy City for All: Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025
- All Mayoral candidates and Adrienne Carr from the Green Party made commitments a living wage policy at the Metro Vancouver Alliance's Accountability Forum held prior to the Municipal election in October of 2014
- Have commitments but not timeline; goal for campaign is to get a timeline
- Developed a "adopt a councilor" approach; they will congratulate city councillors on their incredible commitment to addressing low-wage poverty by including the living wage as part of its "making ends meet and working well"
- Started with info sessions; asked partners to meet with city councilors; sessions helped to empower them
- Support their members in telling a councilor on why a municipal living wage policy would be important to them
- Participate in follow up and be ready to share their experience with other members of their organization or union and the Living Wage for Families Campaign
- Why coalition: strength, helps with legitimacy, increases analysis with different perspective
- Challenges of coalition: funding, turf issues, poor links to low-wage workers; perceived or actual costs of working together outweigh benefits

What made their campaign successful:

- Different timelines for decision making
- Diversity of groups and roles
- Campaign goal which allows members to build their organizational capacity to achieve their own individual goals
- Build our capacity to maintain pressure throughout the implementation process
- Strengthens our relationships

Framework for calculating

- National from CCPA
- Living wage calculation is very evidenced based
- Housing, food, childcare, transportation, recreation costs, internet/phone, medical and dental costs (if employer doesn't already pay it)
- Costs that are not included: debt repayment, home ownership, savings for retirement or education

Greg: Waterloo region Living Wage

- Program manager with Mennonites
- First time they failed; started with regional council because they had not met with all councilors before; had calculated on 5 types of family but said you have to decide on one for employers (in retrospect decided they had planted seeds)

- June 2013, he went to a poverty summit and heard about Canadian framework and identified a local employer in Waterloo. Was part of a poverty reduction strategy. Formed a cause specific coalition to work on living wage only
- Released calculation in October 2014 as \$16/hr (CCPA helped them calculate); lower than before because of investments by Ontario government like childcare subsidy.
- Asked participants to get their organizations to try
- Employers started to approach them.
- **5 levels of employer recognition:**
  - **Friend: committed to determine how many employees paid a living wage**
  - **Supporter: all full-time employees paid a living wage**
  - **Partner: all full and part-time employees**
  - **Leader: full-time, part-time and students or contractors**
  - **Champion: full-time, part-time, students and contractors**
- Living Wage week: first week in November: They were trying for 10 and now up to 13 at different levels; they give out wage certificate
- Put employers on website, letters, decals but not using a lot as not a lot of storefront operations; need to create value of recognition; always in newsletter; employers can do it for themselves as well

#### **Catherine Ludgate from Vancity Credit Union**

- Still early in Canada and various ways of doing it
- Release calculations every spring after May Day
- Vancity next largest credit union (Caisse Populaire largest)
- Supported idea before they became living wage employers until progressive leader (Tamara Ruben?)
- Took two years to make it so; 2500 staff but 1400 contracted out; couldn't manage that many contracts;
- Paid all employees and asked all contractors that were larger (1/4 million or more) to be living wage employers; 90% of what they contracted out
- Real change will come when we get at low wage workers not counted
- Approach to suppliers, security and maintenance: gave them a certificate or added a side premium to pay them a living wage or discontinued with them if possible
- **Poverty is a carcinogen**
- Cancer society decided to become a living wage employer
- Big economic return: less worker loss, more productive, less theft (figuratively or not), better promotion because employees are proud (their banner to carry)
- While procurement department was checking into this, they had different conversations with suppliers, they started looking at different topics and had deeper conversations with them; stripped off bunch of stuff that were not meaningful anymore
- Ended up saving \$2million per year through enhanced procurement (had been purchasing stuff they didn't need like extras Iphone carriers as example that are not necessary)
- Great company to be in
- A Living Wage Road Map for larger employers on Vancity website

## **What about living wage versus public policy initiative (welfare wall and disincentives to work)?**

- As living wage increased in Vancouver, they no longer qualified for income based subsidies that were available so this was considered in calculating wage; created need for discussion on public policy (income splitting versus child care funding); had very specific conversation about limitations of public policy;
- Ontario Child Benefit replacing social assistance; they do get Canada Child Tax Benefit;
- Need to reach out to other levels of governments;
- Voluntary program that is a very poor substitute to good public policy
- Look for sophisticated large employer who can calculate employer benefits

### **Questions:**

- What about employers that don't have value of living wage already? How do we engage customers of those employers? Any studies on this?
  - United Kingdom has some studies. Did a poll of British voters, majority said they would pay more if living wage employer. They also used a name and shame approach successfully.
  - Because voluntary currently, most employers have value basis so need to work with minimum wage campaigns as well and decrease myths around it. Also need to build a greater number of living wage employers. The Pitch forks are coming book (need to have our workers have enough money to buy what we produce); durable local businesses give more back economically than multi-nationals ever will;
  - Living wage is to Walmart what kryptonite was to superman. The more employers that do it, the more pressure they will feel.
- What is connection between minimum wage and living wage campaigns?
  - Increases number of people talking about what is enough to live well. Need to make it easier to unionize. Good to be able to say that minimum wage is still not at level of living wage and we can present other point of view to media especially when wage increased.
- What about scaling for age?
  - Vancouver discussed if living wage would meet need of one parent to raise a child? It would not, but for purpose of employers, they only present one wage as it easier for them to determine if possible. Can't have companies decide what type of workers are more affordable to employ. Still important to talk about reality of work for different people.

[www.Livingwagecanada.ca](http://www.Livingwagecanada.ca)

## **Municipal policies that reduce poverty**

### **Rock Carleton – FCM**

- Run a program that bring local community and aboriginal governments/agencies together
- Previously if municipal governments said they did poverty reduction, they thought they would be left alone to do it

- Social safety net has changed radically in Canada; welfare state conceived in 50-60s, policies and programs and cash in hand; mid 1990s, shifted to provinces losing \$7 billion in transfer, so much less cash in hand
- Municipalities left to deliver a lot of services; eg. Vancouver puts \$22 million into property for housing because it has to

#### **Varley Wiseman – Medicine Hat, Child and Youth worker, works for city**

- Major events – man on the moon, black president in US and NDP elected in Alberta
- Direct services they offer but also partners and brokers
- Council aspirations: residence proclaim city a good place to live and play, stronger through services and enjoy environment
- Social wellness is one priority: safe community that values diversity and supports through services
- Started poverty reduction roundtable 4 years ago June 2011; during next one a few organizations put themselves together and did some research – Moving from Charity to Investment Reducing the Cost of Poverty in Medicine Hat
- 6 key priorities: living wage, affordable housing, affordable and accessible transit, recreation, food security; successful completion of high school
- Recreation should not be limited by socioeconomic status; kids do better with better access
- Free: 20 playgrounds, 4 outdoor water parks, 92 km of walking trails, park outside of City with man-made lake, offers free transit to lake
- Fund a number of programs through their family program (FCSF - Alberta helps to fund 80 cents/dollar)  
Half goes to seniors programs like community centers, \$70 per year gives you full access to everything. Roving gym program – aimed at early childhood but open to older children (get ball rolling and plant seed then hope an NGO will take it over)
- Number of partnerships who sponsor free public events like free swims and free skates (about 10% of population attended) – YWCA, Kinsmen
- Subsidized summer camp run by YWCA; getting better at getting word out, 82% learned something new about themselves, 76% learned a new skill
- Get Active Program: YMCA and couple of economically challenged schools; provides clothes needed; story of benefit it gave to a young boy, recreation can help create a different path
- Housing First: small community so capacity to create synergies; YWCA can provide service to Housing First clients and help them integrate into community
- Gear Up Sports – used equipment made available
- Need to do more work with cultural/artistic activities

#### **Mike Bulthuis – Ottawa Alliance to End Homelessness**

- Alliance: Non-profit, inspire action to form a community wide movement
- City plays role of local service manager; consolidates package and delivers funding

- Homelessness services in Ottawa – support what they are doing and leverage more as well as creating broad community movement; City has a clear and focused approach with people in shelters for long period of time, long term users take up 50% of shelter beds
- Use Housing First approach for these clients
- Their work is to support and inspire; does report card every year on level of homelessness and no. of use of shelters and average length of stay as well as no. of new affordable housing units
- Average length of stay is increasing especially with families
- Housing Answer campaign: Govt of Ontario 10 year campaign to offload responsibility to municipalities;
- Asked in last election to have program continued and another \$2million provided
- Ottawa one of three communities to pilot involvement of community in national campaign (20,000 Homes for Ottawa campaign)
- Did an assessment survey with trained volunteers – 75% chronically homeless, 65% homeless for a year; episodic 16%; average of 2 visits to emergency per month, also interactions with police;
- From research, city committed to 250 housing allowance but need to find other sources – Broadening the Base; govt still has central role but how to make best use of resources in community
- Hope to create 1500 new units over next 5 years; link existing resources and create new ones, welcome new bodies around table

#### **Randalin Pellerin – Guelph/Wellington Poverty Elimination**

- **4 priorities: Income inequality, affordable housing, food insecurity, oral health care**
- Plan to increase public transit cost; pulled together a community group; did research on public transit and best practices; looked at results and checked in with population impacted
- 3 things asked for: not until new transit center open, not until holidays over and affordable transit pass
- Met with council about what program would look like; ready with info on eligibility and what it should look like
- Proposal for two year project: 50% off monthly bus pass, eligibility determined by low income cut off; only had to apply once a year. City hired a consultant to evaluate program: how it is used and how to improve. Looked at groups that didn't apply
- 17% made use of program; more consistent were middle aged and older adults, allowed more spending on food and housing as well as use more frequently
- Affordable bus pass became a permanent program with City
- Looking at making link between ABP and affordable recreation pass

#### **Questions:**

- **How can small communities do this? No financial incentive to do this.**
  - FCM has a rural forum. Feeds into discussion. Pushes for carve outs for smaller communities. Building Canada Fund – uses too high a number (100,000) and FCM lobbies to lower it.
- **Students taken care off with subsidized program linked to school but could apply during summer if they stayed around.**

### **Day 3:**

Continuing our learning

Event resources on [www.vibrantcommunities.ca](http://www.vibrantcommunities.ca)

Post event email coming soon

Cities Connect monthly newsletter

Webinars

Coaching

### **Laura – person with a lived experience and Canada Without Poverty VP**

How do you tell the difference between being really included and being a token measure?

- What do human rights have to do with inclusion?
- Can't argue that as a human being, I am deserving of food, shelter and clothing
- At its base, this is what human rights are talking about
- Including people in discussions and decisions means they have the same rights
- We stand beside them as they pick their paths, we shouldn't be determining what paths people choose, we need to stand beside them

### **Dignity for All Plan for Poverty Reduction**

- Developed by two person staff
- Can participate in their hash tag at [www.dignityforall.ca](http://www.dignityforall.ca)

### **Thinking Forward – The Next Five Years**

**Dana Robbins, VP and Regional Publisher, Metroland Media (was with Hamilton Spectator)**

### **Doing the Right Thing Together**

**Quote on cover of Hamilton Spectator on the back of a blank front page: "There are 96,000 people in Hamilton that live in poverty. Their stories don't often make the cover of the newspaper, we need to change that." Oct 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Check out Code Red Hamilton**

- Of the many sins that can be laid at poverty's door, the worse is that nagging fear that everything can be taken from you.
- Gap between rich and poor has only grown in last 4 decades
- More than 1 million Canadian children live in poverty and learn that world is mostly indifferent to them and that they could lose everything
- Canadians of every political stripe now identify income inequality as a priority issue (85%)
- Canadians think we were on a journey of building a just society and still in our DNA
- (Steve Hoost) Hamilton Spectator also published periodic reports on poverty called Code Red

- Single largest issue confronting Hamilton and as a corporate citizen, beginning to address it
- We are undermined in our efforts by a dichotomy, contrary headwinds: dirth of Canadian who have experienced poverty first hand and the second is the abundance of people who have
- Most have only known only affluence and therefore we are not rooted in personal knowledge of poverty; dominance of middle class
- What is missed is discussion of difference of middle class today as compared to prior generations;
- In prior generations, many worked their way up to middle class but always worried about losing job
- Today, many are born into middle class and have never wanted for anything.
- Canada is a caring culture but is not informed of the precariousness of our situation (but for the grace of God falling into poverty)
- Poverty is a foreign landscape to them, like a lunar landscape even for good thoughtful people
- They feel sympathy for the poor but lacks emotional traction; sympathy is dangerous and marginalizes
- We need empathy not sympathy, it prompts action and change
- An empathetic country if a powerful tool in our battle against poverty

Lack of personal experience is as great an obstacle:

- Distorts their understanding of poverty in contemporary society
- Misplaced confidence that they understand dynamics and impacts of poverty
- Their experience does not reflect with poverty today. It is a poverty that is corrosive and marginalizing.
- Why is it worse? Increasing polarization of society – before you grew up shoulder to shoulder and had social interaction (e.g. invited to their birthday party), now the world of poor people is much smaller because of increase in personal wealth and affluence and therefore less contact
- Not talking about 1% but about middle class, those who sustain trendy restaurants and drive real estate prices and don't blink in the face of \$5 lattes
- This makes poverty more corrosive. When abundance rejoices, it makes poverty worse and ultimately weakens the fabric of our society.
- **“If you are in the hope business, you will never go out of business.” “No one changes until we are backed into a corner.” How do we convince our nation that poverty has driven us into a corner? It is beyond the Canadian pale.**
- Suggests we might ask what is the relationship between health and income? Steve took 400,000 health records and mapped against Hamilton neighborhood. 21 year gap between Hamilton poorest and richest neighborhood. 65 for poorest. 7 neighborhoods have higher incidence of low weight babies that sub-Saharan Africa. One neighborhood had 1,300 ER visits for 1000, most had 100. 10 highest rates of mental health emergencies in same neighborhood. CT0050 neighborhood ranked last and scored very low on most criteria. 5 minutes from his office. This type of neighborhood exists in every city.
- This study allowed us to change our argument and start talking about health. Health is an issue that Canadians understand as we have a broad consensus on health. Never met a Canadian that

thought any sector should have poorer health and rival conditions in third world. Another plague, not AIDS or Ebola but poverty.

## **Sherri Torjman, VP, President of Caledon Institute of Social Policy – Reclaiming our Humanity – Together**

### **Poverty and Poetry**

- Need to touch people's heart and help them develop empathy
- 25 years ago, we would to eradication of child poverty, haven't achieved this but now have a greater income inequality and the rich are moving into their own worlds (e.g. priority lines)
- We know how to reduce poverty and have a wonderful body of practice
- Poverty consists is complex problem and intervention requires 3 building blocks
  - **Adequate and stable housing** – need to invest in supply but problem is there are not enough and it takes a lot of resources; need to make sure people have enough to pay rent so they have a place to live right now; Saskatchewan doing this, New Brunswick, Ontario looking at it. Also need to create communities around people.
  - **Competence through adequate education and training:** Look at your plan and make sure this piece is there; early childhood first place to start, not just child care spaces but childhood development and wellbeing; another component is to ensure youth graduate from high school; serious problem with level of graduation in aboriginal population; federal gov't needs to step up to the plate for failure; next component is skills training; not just having skills but networks of support around people and transportation to job, clothes and tools required, think more systemically. Cities have a role to play here; New York is training local people to work for business through an in-house training centre.
  - **Income security:** What can we all do together for this? **City needs to be an exemplary employer. Profound community wealth in city that we need to tap. Cities spend a lot in investing in various projects. Need to use contracts they have to build in community benefits. Contractor must train and must hire people who are unemployed or underemployed. Not just part time jobs but jobs with decent pay, associated benefits and safe work.**
    - Two major streams: **income replacement** for loss of work and basic income for people with disabilities (500,000 on welfare because of disability); proposing basic income program and associated health benefits for people with disabilities
    - **Income supplement for low income families:** child tax benefit and working income benefit but not working well as so low. Lots of work to be done in this section. Living wage plays a part here too.
    - **Reducing costs:** e.g. for transit and recreation costs. Vancouver gives "one pass" to anyone who receives national child tax benefit so no demeaning interview; challenge for everyone to check recreation subsidy and how it is administered

**Possible tools to use and "add poetry":**

## **Design for “Voices, Soul and Dignity”**

- We Are Cities: Invitation to host a roundtable
- App: Making your neighborhood better
- Using art as a tool
- Real listening to peoples’ concerns
- Need to promote stories and make sure peoples aspirations are heard and seen (e.g. project called Paint Jamaica – What would you like to see: peace, education and self-worth); Spaces for Peace – architects designed spaces that were safe
- Design for Dignity: shouldn’t be able to spot from far away where social housing is, message given is that they are not worth it
- “After decades of social and political failure a new generation that has revitalized architecture and urban design in order to tackle persistent poverty and inequality.”
- Also small house design for affordability

### **Exercise of ‘cover story’:**

- Identify what is the headline?
- Where there quotes that resonated with you?
- Think about images that you may carry with you?
- 45 minutes to do this and then post cover stories around room