



Poverty Free Saskatchewan
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February 8, 2021

Community Wellness Committee
City of Regina
2476 Victoria Avenue
Regina, SK Canada
S4P 3C8

Dear Community Wellness Committee members:

The text for a presentation to the Community Wellness Committee on Wednesday February 10, 2021 is included with this letter.

Our delegation will include: Brian Banks, Peter Gilmer, Paul Gingrich and Joanne Havelock.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock

On behalf of
Poverty Free Saskatchewan

POVERTY FREE SASKATCHEWAN

PRESENTATION TO CITY OF REGINA COMMUNITY WELLNESS COMMITTEE

Wednesday February 10, 2021

About Poverty Free Saskatchewan

PFS is a network of individuals and organizations that has been working to eliminate poverty in the province since 2009. PFS recognizes and supports many individuals, businesses and community organizations who strive to alleviate the harmful effects of poverty and address its root causes.

Poverty has serious societal and financial consequences. The Poverty Costs campaign estimated annual spin off costs of poverty to be \$3.8 billion in Saskatchewan, about five per cent of the province's gross domestic product.

PFS strategies to eliminate poverty have been developed over the years through research and a multi-community consultation and have been communicated to the public and government.

Poverty Elimination Strategies

The guiding principles underpinning PFS's poverty elimination strategy are:

- A focus on vulnerable groups;
- Community involvement through meaningful engagement processes to hear from all vulnerable groups and include them in planning and implementing strategies and programs;
- Government accountability mechanisms that are clearly set out in an Act to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatchewan; and,
- Targets and timelines for achievement and performance indicators to be met in eliminating poverty and the impacts of poverty

We congratulate the City of Regina Mayor and Councillors in deciding to address the living situations of people in Regina and forming the Community Wellness Committee, and on moving today on the adoption of your Committee's terms of reference.

In your work ahead you will be conducting research, doing consultations, forming plans and taking action.

Poverty Free Saskatchewan offers to share our research and experience to assist the Community Wellness Committee.

In PFS's research we have identified 6 key areas for addressing poverty.

- 1) Housing access and affordability
- 2) Income security for vulnerable groups
- 3) Education, training and early childhood learning and development
- 4) Enabling and rewarding work and participation in our communities
- 5) Improving access to and quality of services for low income people
- 6) Promoting health and preventing illness.

City of Regina Initiatives

In its work the Community Wellness Committee will be identifying many areas of action. While your Committee's research is just beginning, PFS would like to help out at the beginning by offering the following recommendations for actions to include in City plans.

1. Because shelter costs are the largest percentage of family expenses and homelessness is a growing problem, an expanded social housing program is needed. The City could provide the \$2 million previously requested for the Regina Plan to End Homelessness. Licencing and inspection for rental units would improve housing quality. Water rates could be reduced for low income households. Housing availability is an ongoing concern, but right now, it is housing affordability that is the problem, because rates for provincial social assistance programs and the SAID program are too low – the City and others can make efforts to influence improvement at the provincial level.
2. Food insecurity is worsening as a result of the pandemic. We urge the City to increase its support to community-based organizations involved in food distribution programs.

3. The City should reconsider adopting a Living Wage Policy for the City of Regina as an employer or contractor. We encourage the City of Regina to become a Living Wage employer itself. This would set a good example for employers in the city to pay a decent wage to their employees, thus reducing the number of low income persons and families.
4. Discounted passes for transit and paratransit are key to enabling mobility and the program should be expanded and discounted further.
5. More resources should be provided to programs such as The Regina Intersectoral Program (TRIP), particularly the at-risk family and youth program.

Resources

At our website www.povertyfreesask.ca you can find: our founding document, ***Let's Do Something about Poverty***; our way forward, ***Strategies to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatchewan***; our consultations with people in Saskatchewan, ***Communities Respond***; and updated statistics about poverty. We have also reviewed the Saskatchewan government's poverty reduction initiatives and its budgets 2016, 2017 and 2020.

Another resource is the Tamarack Institute that has enabled many cities develop poverty reduction plans in the past decade. The City of Regina could access this resource. www.tamarackcommunity.ca/#practices Tamarack has now partnered with the British Columbia government who is providing \$5 million to BC municipal governments to assist them implementing poverty reduction plans, mainly food insecurity and housing. However, some municipalities were able to get funding to develop their first poverty reduction plan.

Conclusion

In 1971 the independent study, *The Real Poverty Report*, posed the question, "What are the consequences for a society that claims to have a democratic system, enjoys trappings of wealth and economic power spectacularly beyond the reach of most nations in the world, but allows one-fifth of its population to live and die in a cycle of unrelieved misery?" In 2021 this question for the most part is still highly relevant. Despite some advances in the past 50 years, poverty still negatively affects a large number of people.

Working together with many partners, such as the City of Regina, we can eliminate poverty.