

# MAKE POVERTY HISTORY MANITOBA



# WINNIPEG WITHOUT POVERTY CALLING ON THE CITY TO LEAD

## Winnipeg Without Poverty: Calling on the City to Lead

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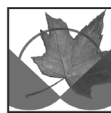
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Front and back cover: Leif Norman



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# Endorsements

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY MANITOBA received the following endorsements of this document by time of publication, but will continue to reach out to organizations to endorse. Organizations wishing to endorse, or find out more, are encouraged to contact the coalition at [chair@makepovertyhistorymb.com](mailto:chair@makepovertyhistorymb.com).

1JustCity

Abilities Manitoba

Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg

Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre of Winnipeg, Inc.

Aboriginal Youth Opportunities

ACOMI (Association of all African Communities in Manitoba)

Aki Energy

Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 1505

Andrews Street Family Centre

Art from the Heart

Assiniboine Credit Union

Association of United Ukrainian Canadians – Ukrainian Labour Temple

Barrier-Free Manitoba

Bear Clan

Braids of Strength Community Network

Broadway Seniors Resource Council

BUILD (Building Urban Industries for Local Development)

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – MB

Canadian Community Economic Development Network – Manitoba

Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba and Winnipeg

Central Neighbourhoods

Central Park Residents Association – Community Builders  
Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba  
Child Care Coalition of Manitoba  
Clunis Consulting  
CUPE-Manitoba  
Daniel McIntyre/St. Matthews Community Association  
Elmwood Community Resource Centre  
Employment and Income Assistance Advocates Network  
Epic Opportunities  
Food Matters Manitoba  
Gang Action Interagency Network (GAIN)  
Graffiti Art Programming  
Green Action Centre  
Homelessness Information Partnership Winnipeg  
Human Rights Hub  
Immigrant Integration and Farming Co-operative  
Initiative for Just Communities  
Innovative Life Options  
IRCOM (Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba)  
Islamic Social Services Association  
Jonah Community Projects  
Jonah Counselling  
Jubilee Fund  
Lived Experience Community  
Local Immigration Partnership Winnipeg  
Local Investment Toward Employment  
Macdonald Youth Services  
Main Street Project  
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre  
Manitoba Association of Community Health Centres  
Manitoba Association of Food Banks  
Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations



Manitoba Childcare Association  
Manitoba College of Social Workers  
Manitoba Federation of Labour  
Manitoba Green Retrofit  
Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities  
Manitoba Low Income Intermediary Project  
Manitoba Nurses Union  
MARL (Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties)  
MASC (Manitoba Association of Community Health)  
NEEDS Centre  
New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families, Inc.  
New Journey Housing  
North End Community Renewal Corporation  
North End Women's Centre  
North Point Douglas Women's Centre  
NorWest Co-op Community Health  
Palaver Hut  
PATH Employability Centre  
Peg City Car Co-op  
Point Douglas Residents Committee  
Pollock's Hardware Co-op  
PSAC (Public Service Alliance of Canada, Prairies Region)  
Rainbow Resource Centre  
Reconnaissance Management Consulting Group  
Red Road Lodge  
Resource Assistance for Youth  
Restorative Justice Association of Manitoba  
Returning to Spirit  
Right to Housing  
School of Social Work, Université de Saint-Boniface  
Siloam Mission  
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Spence Neighbourhood Association  
Teen Stop Jeunesse  
The Canadian Union of Public Employees, Manitoba  
The Point PowerLine – North Point Douglas Residents on Watch  
The Project Group  
Thrive Community Support Circle  
UMFM Campus Radio Inc.  
UMOJA  
United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local No. 832  
Urban and Inner City Studies, University of Winnipeg  
West Broadway Community Organization  
West Central Women’s Resource Centre  
Winnipeg Harvest  
Winnipeg Labour Council  
Wolseley Family Place  
Winnipeg Rental Network  
You Can’t Spoil A Baby  
Youth Agencies Alliance

# Executive Summary

IN APRIL 2016, EDMONTON HOSTED the Tamarack Institute's *Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead* conference. Hundreds of people from across Canada attended. They were inspired to learn that municipal political leaders are recognizing that they have a responsibility to lead the fight against poverty. While it is true that municipal governments have a limited role and limited resources, those who attended the conference learned that many municipalities across Canada are no longer willing to defer to other levels of government. A growing number of cities are in various stages of developing and implementing comprehensive municipal poverty reduction plans.

Among those in attendance at the conference were community leaders and front-line service providers from Winnipeg. They heard how Hamilton is crafting a ten-year poverty reduction strategy supported by \$50 million in funding for social housing. Toronto's budget allocated \$185 million in poverty reduction spending. Calgary is becoming a leader in making public transit affordable with a comprehensive low income bus pass program. Edmonton has advocated for an increase in the minimum wage, which the Alberta government has confirmed it will act on. When compared side-by-side with its peers, Winnipeg's poverty reduction efforts clearly lagged behind these other cities.

Winnipeg can learn from best practices in other cities that have made more significant progress in addressing poverty.

Those from Winnipeg who attended the conference came back inspired and determined: inspired by what other municipalities are doing and determined to move Winnipeg forward—determined to make “poverty reduction” a priority for our Mayor and Council.

This determination led to the development of this comprehensive community-based poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg. This is a plan we hope the City of Winnipeg will build from as it develops its own poverty reduction strategy led by the Mayor and that we can hold our public officials accountable to.

Regardless of the measure used, the most recent numbers available for capturing the number of those living in low income in Winnipeg are too high: 9.6 per cent according to the Market Basket Measure, 10.1 per cent according to the Low Income Cut Off (after tax), and 13.3 per cent according to the Low Income Measure (after tax).<sup>1</sup> Some people in Winnipeg are at greater risk of living in poverty, including: women, LGBT2SQ+ communities, youth, Indigenous people, newcomers, and people with physical and mental disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Poverty in Winnipeg tends to be geographically concentrated, with inner-city communities tending to experience higher poverty rates, but there are some pockets of poverty in communities outside of the inner city.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW DOES WINNIPEG MEASURE UP TO OTHER CITIES?

Our efforts to develop a community-based poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg began by exploring a variety of poverty reduction plans shaping up in cities across Canada to better understand the different approaches that have been taken. We interviewed community leaders in Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Calgary, and Edmonton who are involved in their respective local strategies to better understand the different processes and practices being used, what works well, and where improvements are required. Through this research, we have found that poverty reduction plans and initiatives in cities across Canada generally subscribe to three basic approaches:

1. City-led with no apparent political champion
2. Community-led with no apparent political champion
3. Mayor as champion

There are two major cities leading in the “Mayor as champion” approach: Calgary and Edmonton. One statement made by the Executive Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary was an important lesson for us as we explored the experiences of other cities: “The single most important criteria for a successful City poverty reduction strategy is having a champion at city hall. In Calgary, Mayor Nenshi is that champion.”

As a result of having political leadership, Calgary and Edmonton are making progress in important public policy areas. Each has a comprehensive poverty reduction plan that has been endorsed by City Council and is being implemented in collaboration with community through a collective impact model. The Mayors in these cities know that it is not within their power to end poverty, but they are taking responsibility where they have jurisdiction, while also providing leadership in advocating for policy change with other levels of government. For example, Edmonton has successfully advocated to the Province for an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Both Calgary and Edmonton have negotiated cost sharing with the Province to reduce the cost of transit passes for low-income riders. In terms of impact and potential impact, we describe the poverty plans and strategies in these cities as the ‘gold standard’ in poverty reduction plans, and we advocate for a similar approach in Winnipeg.

Winnipeg’s current approach is best described as community-led with no apparent political champion. Poverty reduction advocates have long called on the City of Winnipeg to create a plan, and now this community-led plan provides a concrete example of what that could look like. In the past, the City has responded to calls for a poverty reduction plan by deferring to the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC). But, the WPRC operates as an arms-length entity of the United Way Winnipeg and is guided by a steering committee membership that includes involvement from business, education, non-profit, labour, and all three levels of government. As such, the WPRC does not have the power to make municipal policy or budgetary decisions that would reduce poverty. Only the Mayor and Council have this ability, and they cannot offload these responsibilities to another entity. Municipal governments are limited in terms of how much they can do to effectively address poverty. But as we have seen in Calgary and Edmonton, there is much that the City can do when the Mayor is a champion who is willing to take leadership and advocate for changes at other levels of government, rather than defer to others to take the lead.

## CALL TO ACTION

This report outlines our call to action for the City of Winnipeg to do its part in making poverty history in Manitoba through a plan that identifies how the City will use its powers and resources to reduce poverty in Winnipeg.

Our current Mayor has spoken out publically in support of reconciliation and has embarked the City of Winnipeg upon a Journey of Reconciliation. Indigenous people are over-represented in poverty-related statistics and reconciliation will require closing the gap in social and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The City can do its part by implementing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan as a key piece of its Journey of Reconciliation.

We call on the Mayor of Winnipeg to immediately announce that the City considers poverty reduction to be a municipal priority, and that he will begin to work with City Council toward the development of a comprehensive municipal poverty reduction plan with progress indicators that have targets and timelines. Within one year, the City should produce a plan that outlines what it will do, and what it will call on other levels of government to do to improve social, economic, and health outcomes for individuals and families across the city. The recommendations in our community-based plan should inform the City's plan in order to build off of the extensive work that community has already done.

To date, the City's poverty reduction initiatives have been implemented on an ad hoc basis. But poverty is complex, with multiple and interconnected causes and consequences. It must be addressed through the simultaneous implementation of multiple actions in various areas: housing, income, recreation, crime prevention through social development, transportation, etc. The City of Winnipeg is the only Winnipeg-based entity with the resources and public policy tools to do this at a city-wide level.

An effective municipal poverty reduction plan requires the participation and cooperation of citizens, the private sector, the non-governmental sector, and municipal boards and commissions across many sectors. These stakeholders should be meaningfully engaged. But in the end, governments have the greatest power to make change that will reduce poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. Furthermore, they are the only body accountable to citizens.

Combating poverty in Winnipeg will require the coordinated efforts of all levels of government. While our recommendations focus on actions to be taken by the City, this in no way absolves other levels of governments from responsibility. The City should be held primarily accountable for the success of its own plan. Meanwhile, it should continue to advocate for an increased provincial role and work with municipalities across the country to call for an increased federal role.

We call on the City to put the appropriate structures in place to ensure the successful development and implementation of its poverty reduction plan. Among these structures should be a committee consisting of City Councillors and community members to provide recommendations to City Council regarding the development and implementation of the City's poverty reduction plan and the progress indicators with targets and timelines. The City should also ensure an inter-departmental structure is created consisting of key Directors and Officers who can coordinate and direct departmental work toward the implementation of the City's poverty reduction plan.

We call on the City to put in place accountability mechanisms that ensure the City's poverty reduction plan will be effective and credible. This should include requiring departments to imple-

ment and report annually on the use of a poverty and social exclusion lens so that City actions are evaluated for their impact on poverty reduction and social inclusion objectives. The City should also take its poverty reduction plan into account when preparing the annual budget so that consideration is given to how spending decisions affect the City's ability to implement its poverty reduction plan, and to make progress on its indicators of poverty reduction. Finally, the City should table an annual report to the community that evaluates and reports on the progress it has made in implementing its plan and achieving its poverty reduction targets.

## OUR PLAN FOR WINNIPEG: BUILDING ON WHAT WE KNOW

Our plan builds off of what the City is already doing to reduce poverty and is based on the poverty reduction priorities gathered through community-based consultations and research reports.

The development of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg requires an assessment of what the City is already doing to address poverty in order to build off of promising initiatives. We asked the City of Winnipeg to provide an inventory, which included numerous initiatives focusing on themes like recreation and leisure, housing and homelessness, and Indigenous youth. The City notes that its inventory is not representative of absolutely everything it is doing to reduce poverty or to provide initiatives geared towards citizens with lower incomes.

Some of the initiatives play a more significant role in reducing poverty and social exclusion than others. For example, the Indigenous Youth Strategy is a strategy that plays a more significant role, with its efforts to increase access to recreation and leisure opportunities and grants to community-based organizations that are working to reduce poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion. Other initiatives, such as providing access to free smoke alarms and one-time financial support to cover a utility bill, are more limited in terms of their impact on poverty. Initiatives such as the Indigenous Youth Strategy should be included and enhanced in a poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg because of their reach and potential impact.

There are many other actions that the City could be taking to reduce poverty that are missing from its inventory. They are outlined in the recommendations we provide in our plan. When compared to the package of actions taken by other municipalities with poverty reduction plans, Winnipeg's list lacks comprehensiveness and ambition. We conclude that poverty reduction initiatives will have limited impact if the City continues to develop them on an ad hoc basis, rather than through an intentional strategy that will guide planning and priorities.

Poverty reduction efforts must also be rooted in community to be effective. In the fall of 2016, Make Poverty History Manitoba convened a Steering Committee of individuals representing more than twenty community-based organizations with expertise on solutions to poverty reduction and social exclusion. This group guided the development of our community-based poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg through numerous meetings over an 18-month period.

For many years, people concerned about poverty have been consulting, researching, and proposing public policy solutions for the City of Winnipeg to implement to play its part in reducing poverty. Rather than starting from scratch, our researchers compiled the solutions that have been proposed over the years into key theme areas. These solutions were brought back to the community to prioritize and identify gaps through a series of consultations.

Five community-based consultations were held across Winnipeg, which engaged eighty-one participants. Due to limited resources, we were not able to hold consultations in all low-income

neighbourhoods. The City of Winnipeg will need to engage in a more robust consultation process that includes low-income people living in what are viewed as more affluent neighbourhoods to ensure that a Winnipeg poverty reduction plan addresses their unique needs.

In addition to holding consultation meetings, surveys were distributed through community partners asking respondents to indicate their top priorities for community action. Ninety-three surveys were returned. While effort was made to engage the Indigenous community in the consultation process, this requires further work to ensure that a Winnipeg poverty reduction plan reflects the unique circumstances of the growing Indigenous population.

The fifty recommendations in our plan are not an exhaustive list of everything the City can do, but they provide an extensive package of actions that demonstrate what it would look like to apply a poverty reduction lens to municipal initiatives in the following areas: reconciliation, income and employment, housing, urban sprawl, transportation, recreation, community and civic engagement, policing and safety, food security, public spaces, child care, health and mental health, and accessibility rights.

Our recommendations demonstrate that there is much the City of Winnipeg can do to reduce poverty and social exclusion. But provincial and federal governments have control over significant financial investments and key public policy areas that greatly impact poverty, and we need all three levels of government to step up. The City should call on the Province of Manitoba to implement the recommendations in *The View from Here 2015: Manitobans call for a renewed poverty reduction plan*. Nearly 100 community organizations endorsed this community-based provincial poverty reduction plan that identifies 50 policy recommendations that the Province of Manitoba should implement as part of a renewed provincial poverty reduction plan. It includes recommendations in areas like social and affordable housing, employment and income assistance, minimum wage, child care, post-secondary education, and mental health.

The City should also call on the Government of Canada to implement the recommendations in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) report *Ending Poverty Starts Locally: Municipal recommendations for a Canadian poverty reduction strategy*.<sup>4</sup> This document, signed off on by Winnipeg Deputy Mayor and FCM President, Jenny Gerbasi, includes 12 broad recommendations for the federal government to include in its national poverty reduction plan. It includes recommendations in areas like basic income, social and affordable housing, and funding to Indigenous organizations and initiatives.

# Why a Call to Action?

IN APRIL 2016, EDMONTON HOSTED the Tamarack Institute's *Cities Reducing Poverty: When Mayors Lead* conference. Hundreds of people from across Canada attended. They were inspired to learn that municipal political leaders are recognizing that they have a responsibility to lead the fight against poverty. While it is true that municipal governments have a limited role and limited resources, those who attended the conference learned that many municipalities across Canada are no longer willing to defer to other levels of government. A growing number of cities are in various stages of developing and implementing comprehensive municipal poverty reduction plans.

Among those in attendance at the conference were community leaders and front-line service providers from Winnipeg. They heard how Hamilton is crafting a ten year poverty reduction strategy supported by \$50 million in funding for social housing. Toronto's budget allocated \$185 million in poverty reduction spending. Calgary is becoming a leader in making public transit affordable with a comprehensive low income bus pass program. Edmonton has advocated for an increase in the minimum wage, which the Alberta government has confirmed it will act on. When compared side-by-side with its peers, Winnipeg's poverty reduction efforts clearly lagged behind these other cities. Winnipeg can learn from best practices in other cities that have made more significant progress in addressing poverty.

Those from Winnipeg who attended the conference came back inspired and determined: inspired by what other municipalities are doing and determined to move Winnipeg forward—determined to make “poverty reduction” a priority for our Mayor and Council.

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# Our Context: Poverty in Winnipeg

WE DON'T NEED TO LOOK AT DATA to know that people are living in poverty throughout Winnipeg. It can be seen on our streets, in the makeshift houses people create for themselves, or in the daily lineups outside our shelter services. It can also be seen in our under-resourced community agencies who are unable to adequately serve everyone that comes in for support to access basic needs like food, housing, transportation, and mental health services, as well as training and employment opportunities.

However, data can help paint a more accurate picture of the state of poverty in Winnipeg. Statistics Canada provides a few different measures of low income, which give a sense of how many people are living in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Each one measures low income or poverty in a different way. Regardless of the measure used, the most recent numbers available are too high:

Number and per centage of people in Winnipeg living in poverty in 2016:<sup>6i</sup>

- 77,000 (9.6 per cent)—according to the Market Basket Measure
- 81,000 (10.1 per cent)—according to the Low Income Cut Off (after tax)
- 107,000 (13.3 per cent)—according to the Low Income Measure (after tax)

A look back at these three measures of low income over the last 20 years does not reveal a conclusive trend. The Market Basket Measure and the Low Income Cut Off (after tax) indicate that poverty rates have been on a downward trend while the Low Income Measure (after tax) suggests an upward trend.<sup>7</sup> Regardless, in a society as wealthy as ours no level of poverty is acceptable.

It's not just the number of people living in poverty that is concerning, but also the depth of poverty. People living in poverty in Winnipeg have incomes that are more than 32 per cent below commonly-used poverty lines.<sup>8</sup>

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i This data is based on the Canadian Income Survey (CIS). The quality of the data is based on the coefficient of variation (CV) and number of observations. The data provided ranges between a C and D rating where C is good (CV between 4% and 8%) and D is acceptable (CV between 8% and 16%).

## WHO IS POOR?

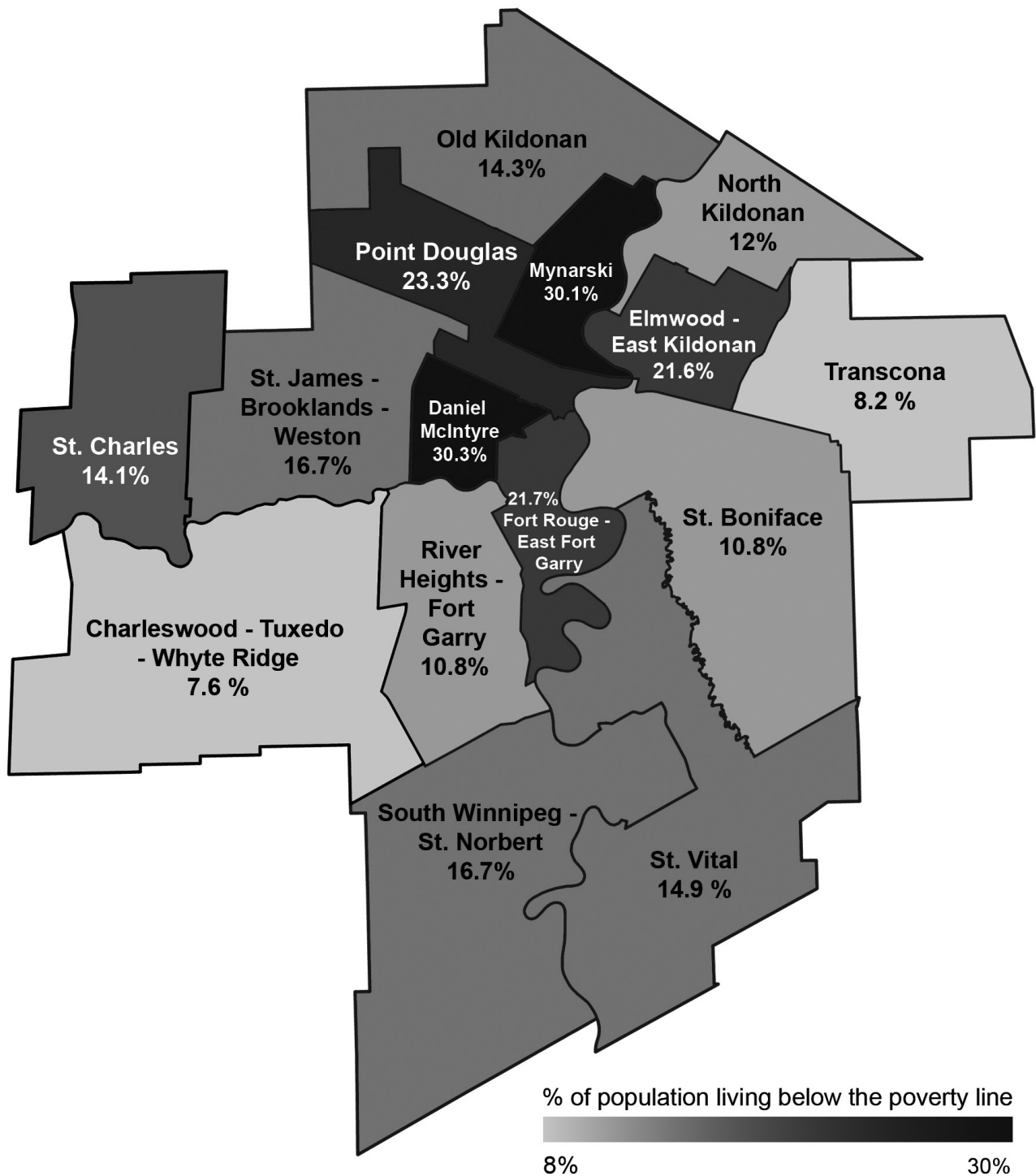
Some people in Winnipeg are at greater risk of living in poverty.<sup>9</sup> For example:

- There are 54,000 women living in poverty compared to 53,000 men. Men living in poverty tend to experience deeper poverty compared to women.
- There is a lack of poverty-related data for Winnipeg's LGBT2SQ+ communities, but the 2015 Winnipeg Street Census revealed that 23 per cent of youth experiencing homelessness identified as LGBT2SQ+.<sup>10</sup> These communities are at higher risk of poverty and homelessness due to increased levels of family conflict, substance use, mental health disorders, and discrimination that prevents access to housing, employment, health, and social services.<sup>11 12 13</sup>
- 18.7 per cent of all children (under eighteen years), or 30,000 children, in Winnipeg are in poverty.
- More than half of all children in female lone-parent families live in poverty.
- 25.8 per cent of all single adults live in poverty.
- 11.1 per cent of seniors live in poverty. Poverty rates among this growing demographic have been on the rise since reaching a low of 2.9 per cent in 1994.

Indigenous people, newcomers, and people with physical and mental disabilities are also at greater risk of living in poverty:<sup>14</sup>

- 35.1 per cent of Indigenous people live in poverty compared to 14.3 per cent of non-Indigenous people. This gap can be attributed in part to Canada's history of damaging colonial policies and continued systemic oppression, which deeply entrench inter-generational poverty in some Indigenous families, and lower educational attainment, earnings, and employment rates among the Indigenous population compared to the non-Indigenous population.
- 19.2 per cent of all immigrants and 32.4 per cent of immigrants who arrived in the last five years live in poverty, compared to 15.5 per cent of non-immigrants. This gap can be attributed in part to poorer labour market outcomes for more recent immigrants compared to Canadian-born residents, despite having relatively stronger educational outcomes. Many newcomers experience difficulty integrating into the labour market due to lack Canadian work experience, lack of English or French language skills, and challenges with the transferability of their qualifications.
- Newcomers in Winnipeg do better after they have settled. Winnipeg has the lowest rate of chronic poverty (i.e. living in poverty for five consecutive years) among immigrants who have been in Canada between five and 20 years of any major city: 5.1 per cent compared to a national average of 12.3 per cent.<sup>15</sup>
- 20.6 per cent of people with physical and/or mental disabilities live in poverty compared to 15.5 per cent of people without physical and/or mental disabilities.<sup>16</sup> People with disabilities experience lower educational attainment and labour force participation rates compared to people without disabilities. Barriers include inaccessible education and training programs, systemic discrimination, and workplaces that fail to accommodate their needs.

**Figure 1: Per centage of Population Living Below the Poverty Line by Ward  
(Based on Low Income Measure After-Tax)**



**Source:** Winnipeg Neighbourhood Profiles based on 2011 Census on custom geographies. City of Winnipeg.

It is important to note that the demographics experiencing higher rates of poverty may have multiple and intersecting identities. For example, a person with a mental disability may also identify as a member of another community that is at greater risk for poverty (e.g. she may also be an Indigenous woman). Poverty is experienced uniquely at these intersections—this woman is disadvantaged by sexism, racism, and ableism. Public policy solutions need to consider and address the unique needs of people with multiple and intersecting identities.

Poverty in Winnipeg is also geographically concentrated, with Winnipeg's inner-city communities tending to experience higher poverty rates.<sup>17</sup> For example:

- 30.3 per cent of residents in the Daniel McIntyre ward lived in poverty
- 30.1 per cent of residents in the Mynarski ward lived in poverty
- 7.6 per cent of residents in the Charleswood-Tuxedo ward lived in poverty
- 8.2 per cent of residents in the Transcona ward lived in poverty

A 2015 report outlining changes in poverty and other related indicators in Winnipeg's inner city reveals that some gains have been made over time as a result of local community efforts combined with public investment.<sup>18</sup> However, the report also reveals that many poverty-related problems remain, as do disparities between inner city and non-inner city neighbourhoods. For example:

- Inner-city households are twice as likely to experience overcrowding compared to non-inner city households.
- The proportion of inner-city adults with less than a high school diploma is double the proportion in the non-inner city.
- Inner-city households have \$61.35 of income for every \$100 dollars of income in the non-inner city.

It is important to note that poverty is not just an inner-city issue. There are pockets of deep poverty located within other areas of Winnipeg that are widely viewed as affluent. For example, 13.1 per cent of people in the St. Vital community area lived in poverty.<sup>19</sup> The neighbourhood of Lavallee, which is located within the St. Vital community area, reports 42.1 per cent of people living in poverty.<sup>20</sup> The perception of affluence across the broader community area can mask the issue of poverty that exists within these communities, and can make it difficult to draw resources into the community to address poverty. Actions taken as part of a Winnipeg poverty reduction plan must reach all people living in poverty no matter where they live in our city.

Many people living in poverty are on Manitoba's Employment and Income Assistance program, but there's a concerning number of people who work and don't earn enough income to live above the poverty line—7.1 per cent of people in Winnipeg are working poor.<sup>21</sup> Despite regular increases to the minimum wage between 1999 and 2015, people depending on full-time minimum wage work earn an income below the poverty line.

## OTHER INDICATORS OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

People living with low incomes often struggle to meet their basic needs and are more likely to experience homelessness and food insecurity.

According to the Winnipeg Street Census 2015, there were at least 1,400 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg on the night of October 25, 2015.<sup>22</sup> This figure vastly underestimates the actual number of people experiencing homelessness as it does not include people in institutional settings (e.g. prisons, emergency placements through Child and Family Services (CFS), hotel stays for flood victims) or the 'hidden homeless' (those living temporarily with friends, family, or strangers). Of the 1,400:

- More than 70 per cent identified as Indigenous
- Approximately two thirds were men and one third were women
- Just over 10 per cent were part of the LGBTQ community overall
- Nearly one quarter were under the age of 30

The most recent report on food bank use in Winnipeg revealed that 42,595 people accessed food banks in March 2017 alone.<sup>23</sup> Another report on food insecurity across Canada showed that 11.5 per cent of Winnipeg households experienced food insecurity in 2011/12.<sup>24</sup>

Poverty also creates conditions that can lead to involvement with CFS.<sup>25</sup> According to the CFS Division in the Province of Manitoba, there were 6,435 Winnipeg children and youth aged 0–18 in care in August 2017.<sup>26</sup> Approximately 500 youth exit CFS annually without essential life skills and largely unprepared to live independently as an adult.<sup>27</sup> Children who grow up in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school and have a greater likelihood of suffering from mental illness, chronic unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration.<sup>28</sup>

# Approaches and Lessons Learned

THE 2014 VIBRANT COMMUNITIES CANADA, *Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies Across Canada: A Summary Report of Emerging Principles and Practices* provides a useful guide when developing a meaningful and effective poverty reduction plan. The report outlines 13 “lessons” for municipalities wanting to develop a poverty reduction plan:<sup>29</sup>

1. Think comprehensively about tackling the root causes of poverty.
2. Consider how best to frame and communicate the vision and narrative of the strategy.
3. Strategies often stem from political impetus or in response to a widely publicized local poverty report.
4. The Collective Impact Model is the most popular approach to poverty reduction.
5. There are pros and cons to City-led poverty reduction initiatives.
6. The municipal government acts as a convener and advocate, with both substantive and process oriented roles to play.
7. Almost every strategy has engaged in multi-sector collaboration and created a coordinating entity to monitor and sustain progress over time.
8. It is crucial to gather the right people around the table.
9. Achieving meaningful sustained representation from those with lived experience and the private sector is challenging.
10. Poverty is commonly targeted through systemic policy program changes.
11. Consider how best to manage competing interests, expectations and timelines.
12. Identify common indicators to measure progress.
13. Building strong cross-sector partnerships and heightened public awareness are the most common accomplishments.

Our research shows that consideration of these lessons, and the level of involvement of elected officials, especially the Mayor, varies across the country. Further, we found that the impact of City poverty reduction efforts largely depends on the approach that is taken when plans are developed and implemented.

## THREE GENERAL APPROACHES TO POVERTY REDUCTION

There are a variety of poverty reduction plans shaping up in cities across Canada. Some are in the early stages of development while other cities have been actively implementing their plans for several years. Some plans are more effective than others and as a result are having a greater impact on the lives of individuals and families living in poverty. Some strategies are more focused on public policy and systems change, while others look to the community for solutions and stay out of the public policy debate.

In an effort to better understand what cities are doing, we looked at different approaches across Canada. We began by reviewing the Vibrant Communities report of emerging principles and practices.<sup>30</sup> We also interviewed community leaders in Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Calgary, and Edmonton with knowledge of the local strategies to better understand the different processes and practices, what works well, and where improvements are required.

Through this research we have found that poverty reduction plans and initiatives in cities across Canada generally subscribe to three basic approaches:

1. City-led with no apparent political champion
2. Community-led with no apparent political champion
3. Mayor as champion

The following provides examples and our assessment of each of these approaches in practice.

### City-Led With No Apparent Political Champion

The City of Toronto is an example of a municipal government that has a poverty reduction strategy that is best described as bureaucracy led. Although *TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*<sup>31</sup> has the support of Council, it appears not to have a political champion. Unlike the Mayors of Calgary and Edmonton, who have made poverty their priorities, Toronto Mayor John Tory chose to appoint the Deputy Mayor as the lead on poverty reduction.

The Toronto plan outlines six areas of focus including housing stability, service access, transit equity, food access, quality jobs, livable wages, and systemic change. *TO Prosperity* contains 17 recommendations. Each recommendation is linked to a set of actions to be carried out over a four-year period. Combined, these recommendations and actions comprise the 2015–2018 Term Action Plan. Implementation of *TO Prosperity* is facilitated through the Social Development, Finance & Administration Division and Employment and Social Services. The 2016 Work Plan outlined which city division was to oversee each initiative and how each initiative corresponds to a recommendation and action from the strategy.

The strategy was implemented in 2015 so the jury is still out on how effective it will be, but Torontonians now have a means to measure the City's progress on poverty reduction. The 2016

progress report and 2017 action plan was tabled in the fall of 2016. The 2017 operating budget allocated \$185 million in municipal funds toward poverty reduction initiatives.

Community advocates for poverty reduction that we spoke with in Toronto indicated that they were pleased that the City had developed a plan, however they also spoke of its limitations. One active member of Toronto's anti-poverty community said that groups such as the Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto continue to call on the City and other levels of government to implement "a broader range of social programs related to poverty and a commitment to community that focuses more on the municipal spending strategy." Another noted the lack of targets as a concern:

*"Overall, people were satisfied with the strategy. However, they have not set concrete targets for progress. They didn't include any specific funding commitments. How much they are going to invest in housing, for example. You need to measure progress by the number of the people living in subsidized housing etc. Simply "improve access to housing", what does it mean? How can you hold the government accountable just by that? Grass-root organisations are disappointed because, initially, the City wanted to make poverty reduction a top priority, however it seems like now it's no longer a priority anymore. Especially knowing they didn't invest enough in new and extended social programs in budget 2016."*

Although Toronto's strategy includes a commitment to "Drive Systemic Change: Create a more accountable and participatory government, where reducing poverty and inequality is an integral part of day-to-day business", community activists remain sceptical. One community activist we spoke with said:

*"As a policy process it was a success, also in terms of aligning some of the existing City objectives and being more intentional about how they relate to poverty. [However] when all is said and done, the capacity of that policy to move the budget process in the City and affect it in a way that would really reallocate resources significantly to poverty reduction was minimal, I would say."*

When asked how Toronto might move forward more effectively, one community leader inferred a need for a champion at city hall:

*"Politically, at the moment there isn't enough of a momentum to justify or advance greater public control over economic resources, and then reallocate those into strategies, both government directed and community directed, that would affect redistribution of wealth and opportunity."*

This call for the City to advocate for broader systems change is echoed as non-negotiable in a community-driven poverty reduction plan titled, *Toward a Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto*. It states:

*"... the biggest contributors to poverty can be found in economic and social policies that shape our economy and much of our way of life, we know that significant headway will only be made through substantive changes at a system-wide level."<sup>32</sup>*

On a positive note, anti-poverty advocates are pleased that the strategy has at least put poverty reduction on the political radar. They describe it as a first step that will require further work and political leadership to move it forward.



## Community-Led With No Apparent Political Champion

The second approach to poverty reduction is where the plan is developed and led by community groups working on poverty issues at the ground level. In some cities, community organizations have stepped up to fill gaps in leadership created by inaction on the part of city governments, as we are doing here in Winnipeg through this community-based poverty reduction plan. Although such plans are able to present innovative policies, the community sector's lack of mandate and resources may hinder their implementation. Outcomes depend on the degree to which city government is willing to follow up on the recommendations proposed. Community-led efforts vary from city to city, with different levels of government participation.

### Toronto

While Toronto's plan is now city led, it began in the community. Prior to the implementation of *TO Prosperity*, community organizations in Toronto developed *Toward a Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto*.<sup>33</sup> This was a joint initiative between the Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto and Social Planning Toronto. Released in 2013, the strategy is described as:

*"... a clear roadmap that the City of Toronto can use—in partnership with other governments, community, business, labour, education and other sectors—to end present high levels of poverty in the city and create a path toward solid growth and prosperity."*<sup>34</sup>

Similar to the process we are undertaking through this document, *Toward a Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto* was developed by community organizations to encourage the City of Toronto to develop a poverty reduction plan. The City of Toronto responded with *TO Prosperity*, and while the city plan is far less ambitious, anti-poverty activists say it is "a good first step".

### Saint John

In Saint John, New Brunswick municipal poverty reduction efforts were initiated by, and continue to be led by, the business community. The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) is the host of Vibrant Communities Saint John (VCSJ). VCSJ does not have a comprehensive plan, but it brings key stakeholders together to address issues in four priority areas. These include: neighbourhood revitalization and housing, children and youth, workforce participation, and single parents. These priorities appear to have been identified by BCAPI members. In a 2013 report VCSJ is described as having:

*"...supported a coordinated approach to poverty reduction in our region since 2004. Its multi-sectoral Leadership Roundtable brings together members from the five Priority Neighbourhoods, three levels of government, the business community, and non-profit organizations. VCSJ also supports the provincial poverty reduction strategy, Overcoming Poverty Together, as one of twelve multi-sectoral community inclusion networks within the province."*<sup>35</sup>

This model has had some success focusing on small neighbourhood level initiatives and it appears as though VCSJ has had more success than other communities in actively engaging the business community. This is likely because the business community leads efforts to identify priority areas and actions.

Governments participate by looking across departments and at other levels of government to determine how they can support VCSJ initiatives. However, when asked about the role of systems change and advocacy in areas such as wages and other public policy matters related to poverty,

a representative from BCAPI said that the group focuses on areas where they can agree and as such, they tend not to weigh in on significant policy matters where it is difficult to get agreement. So, while BCAPI recognizes the limitations of charitable approaches to poverty reduction, they fail to extend this analysis to the need for significant policy change in areas such as labour legislation including wages, or in other critical policy areas such as childcare and public housing.

## Hamilton

Hamilton is often described as a best practice model in community-led poverty reduction. The Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction is a community-based initiative that actively engages in dialogue, calling for significant policy changes to address poverty. What's interesting about Hamilton is that business has also played a leading role, but unlike the case of Saint John, this has not deterred the group from advocating for policy changes that are sometimes not embraced by the business community. For example, the Roundtable is actively involved in advocating for living wage policies and increases to income for individuals and families who rely on government assistance.

In 2016 Hamilton City Council passed a motion put forward by Mayor Fred Eisenberger to invest \$50 million toward poverty reduction. The investment will be allocated toward improving the city's social housing supply as well as direct support for low-income families. The City of Hamilton is also crafting a 10-year integrated poverty reduction plan and although a living wage policy has not gained majority support on Council, the Mayor has personally committed to the idea of a living wage. So, while the Hamilton Roundtable is community-led, there has been significant 'buy in' with a current Mayor acting as somewhat of a champion.

## Mayor as Champion

*"The single most important criteria for a successful City poverty reduction strategy is having a champion at city hall. In Calgary, Mayor Nenshi is that champion."*

The above statement made by Executive Director of Vibrant Communities Calgary was arguably the single most important lesson for us as we explored the experiences of other cities. It was a reminder of why the topic of focus of the 2016 Tamarack Institute conference was "when Mayors lead."

There are two major cities leading in this approach. As a result of having political leadership, these cities are making progress in important public policy areas. Each has a comprehensive poverty reduction plan that has been endorsed by City Council and is being implemented in collaboration with community. In terms of impact and potential impact, we describe the poverty plans and strategies in these cities as the 'gold standard' in poverty reduction plans, and we advocate for a similar approach in Winnipeg.

## Calgary

When running for Mayor of Calgary in 2010, Naheed Nenshi noted that Calgarians wanted their Mayor to do something about poverty. In 2011, the newly elected Mayor Nenshi convinced his Council colleagues to allocate \$200,000 from the City's innovation fund toward the creation of The Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPRI), a joint initiative created by The City of Calgary and United Way of Calgary and Area. Its plan was "to develop a community-driven poverty reduction strategy."<sup>36</sup> The *Enough For All* strategy was unanimously approved by City Council and

United Way's Board of Directors in 2013. In 2015, Vibrant Communities Calgary officially became the host organization of the strategy. *Enough for All* is described as "a collaborative community effort involving diverse stakeholders coming together to address the root causes of poverty in Calgary," however the Mayor's leadership has been critical.

While it is common for municipal leaders to defer to other levels of government when it comes to poverty, early on Mayor Nenshi defended the idea of the City taking a more significant role in poverty reduction. In response to questions about the City's role in a context that leaves municipal governments with minimal fiscal and policy powers, Nenshi responded by saying: "The buck must stop here. It must stop with all of us."<sup>37</sup>

The Executive Director of Vibrant Communities Canada acknowledges that there is much more that needs to be done, and all levels of government need to be on board, but having Mayor Nenshi as a champion has given Calgary some momentum. *Enough for All* "aims to reduce poverty in Calgary by 50 per cent by 2023."<sup>38</sup>

Acting as the 'backbone' organization, Vibrant Communities Calgary is tasked with guiding the vision and strategy, building public awareness, supporting aligned activities, advancing policy, mobilizing funding, and developing and reporting on shared measures. The United Way and The City of Calgary are each providing \$500,000 annually for four years, ending in December 2018. In 2016, Vibrant Communities Canada released its first Report to the Community, highlighting the achievements made to date.

## Edmonton

City of Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson has made poverty reduction a priority since being elected in 2013. The *EndPoverty Edmonton* strategy is a bold initiative developed through engagement with thousands of Edmontonians through 2014 and 2015.<sup>39</sup> It begins with a review of research that makes both an economic and human rights case for ending poverty. It outlines specific actions the City of Edmonton will take for each of its twenty-eight priority areas, and further highlights six game changers as critical places to start: These include "elimination of racism; livable incomes; affordable housing; accessible and affordable transit; affordable and quality child care; access to mental health services, and addictions support."<sup>40</sup>

The Edmonton plan also makes a strong case for poverty reduction in the spirit of "true reconciliation" aligned with the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Like Winnipeg, Edmonton has a large Indigenous population with a high number of Indigenous people living in poverty. *EndPoverty Edmonton* acknowledges this injustice, and commits to "make systemic changes to better reflect the needs, interests and culture of Aboriginal people."

The City of Edmonton has since begun to implement the priorities outlined in its plan. For example, it now provides free transit passes for at-risk youth, and has recently partnered with the Province of Alberta to cost-share a low-income transit pass. The City has also advocated for an increase in the minimum wage, which the Alberta government has confirmed it will act on.

The impetus for the City of Edmonton's poverty reduction strategy came from community groups prior to the 2013 municipal election. The Executive Director of Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) said:

*"there were a group of us that got together, again mostly service providers, some funders, and said we should be coming up with some sort of a strategy for the city of, well, for Edmonton to, to look at ending poverty."*

Championed by a newly elected Mayor, The End Poverty Edmonton Task Force was formed. The ESPC Director went on to say:

*“The city financially supported the community movement in the development of a plan. Then the task force itself was established under the mayor’s direction and then they picked their task force members, they carried over our work and, and so and sort of that’s how they got to the, the final strategy document and now moving forward with the action plan.”*

Following extensive consultation, *EndPoverty Edmonton* was released in 2015. Its implementation will be led through the United Way Alberta Capital Region. The City of Edmonton will continue to play a key catalytic role through investment and involvement in implementation in this first 5 years. The City’s role will now shift to that of champion and advocate, partner and investor. The broader vision of *EndPoverty Edmonton* is to build a movement by engaging everyday Edmontonians in the conversation about poverty and what can be done about it.

Calgary and Edmonton are examples of cities where Mayors are taking an active role in initiating poverty reduction strategies, taking responsibility where they have jurisdiction, but also providing leadership in advocating for policy change with other levels of government. These cities know that it isn’t entirely within their power to end poverty, but they also know that there is much they can do and they have the power to mobilize and advocate for policy change at the provincial and federal level. They provide examples of the approach that we would like to see taken by Winnipeg’s Mayor.

# How Does Winnipeg Measure Up?

WINNIPEG'S APPROACH IS BEST DESCRIBED as 'community-led with no apparent political champion.' Poverty reduction advocates have long called on the City of Winnipeg to create a comprehensive poverty reduction plan. This community-led report provides a concrete example of what that could look like.

The City does not currently have a plan, although it has a number of initiatives that could fit within one. Mention was made of developing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan in the City's 2010 *SpeakUp* Winnipeg process, and brief mention of poverty was included in the *Our Winnipeg* Plan approved by City Council in 2011.<sup>41</sup> However, there has been no mention of a city-led poverty reduction plan in recent years.

The City has appointed senior staff to participate on the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC) and until 2013 it had provided the organization with financial support. An initiative of United Way Winnipeg, the WPRC is a cross-sectoral table involving more than 35 senior leaders from a variety of disciplines, including: business, the three levels of government, labour, health, education, faith, and not-for-profit organizations. Employing a collective-impact approach, the WPRC states that it works to address the underlying causes of poverty by building and capitalizing on community strength.

In contrast to the broader focus of collective impact tables overseeing implementation of the multiple recommendations and actions associated with Calgary's *Enough for All* initiative and Edmonton's *EndPoverty Edmonton* effort, the WPRC states that its approach has been to engage all sectors in the development of a Framework for Action, and then take a "deep dive" on one or more poverty reduction related priority/issue at a time. Following an early focus on a long term strategy for ending homelessness, the WPRC's current work centres on income, and more specifically, youth employment through an Indigenous lens.

The City's support for the work of the WPRC must be seen as only one piece of a comprehensive City of Winnipeg poverty reduction plan. The WPRC operates as an arms-length entity of the United Way. As such, the WPRC does not have the power to make municipal policy or budgetary decisions that would reduce poverty. Only the Mayor and Council have this ability and they cannot offload these responsibilities to another entity.

We are calling on the City to identify itself as the lead organization responsible for working with all sectors to reduce poverty in Winnipeg. The City must take the lead in creating and implementing a comprehensive plan that identifies all the actions it will take to reduce poverty. Poverty is complex, with multiple and interconnected causes and consequences. It must be addressed through a comprehensive strategy where multiple actions are implemented in various areas (e.g. housing, income, transportation, etc.) simultaneously. The City of Winnipeg is the only Winnipeg-based entity with the resources and public policy tools to do this.

## WHO'S ACCOUNTABLE?

In the end, governments have the greatest power to make change that will reduce poverty, inequality and social exclusion. This does not mean that other sectors (non-profit, business, labour, etc.) or multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the WPRC, do not have a role. The more people we can bring to the table to make poverty reduction a priority, the more likely we are to succeed. But the most critical role is that of government, as they are the only body accountable to citizens. Significant poverty reduction is achievable, but it will require all levels of government to work together and commit to comprehensive plans.

In the following section we outline our call to action for the City of Winnipeg to do its part in making poverty history in Manitoba.

# Community Call to Action—We Need Our Mayor to Lead on Poverty Reduction

WE ARE CALLING FOR A POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY led by the Mayor and that we can hold our public officials accountable to.

It is widely understood that government policies can either help or hinder individuals living in poverty. Reducing poverty requires a shift in government policies designed to mitigate the inequitable effects of a market system that creates inequality. Serving to improve the lives of citizens is the primary reason that governments exist. Public policy decisions related to taxation levels, minimum wage, and welfare rates continue to be contested, and positions taken are ideologically driven. Nevertheless, the more equitable outcomes in jurisdictions where policies aim toward greater redistribution demonstrate that public policy matters a great deal.<sup>42</sup>

Various poverty reduction plans we reviewed acknowledge the important role of government policy. Cities where Mayors have taken leadership roles and advocated for changes at other levels of government have been most effective. For example, Edmonton has successfully advocated to the Province for an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Both Calgary and Edmonton have negotiated cost sharing with the Province to reduce the cost of transit passes for low-income riders.

Other cities that have municipal plans, albeit with more limited political leadership, are also showing some progress. Toronto has announced its plans to integrate performance indicators that align with the Ontario government's poverty reduction strategy. Toronto's strategy also notes that the City will "continue to work proactively with other orders of government to make the case that an inclusive Toronto is an essential ingredient for a prosperous Ontario and Canada," and to ensure that there is sufficient funding to make it happen.<sup>43</sup> Vancouver's *Healthy City for All* strategy includes a poverty component, which includes targets that cannot be achieved without government action at all levels.

Past attempts to engage the City of Winnipeg in leading poverty reduction efforts have been met with deferral to the WPRC and other levels of government. Municipal governments are limited in terms of how much they can do to effectively address poverty. But as we have seen in Calgary and Edmonton, there is much the City can do when the Mayor is a champion who is willing to take leadership and advocate for changes at other levels of government, rather than defer to others to take the lead.

A comprehensive review of other poverty reduction plans and consultation with community members leads us, first and foremost, to call on the Mayor to champion a municipal poverty reduction plan with progress indicators that have targets and timelines. This plan must outline what the City can do, what it cannot do, and what it will call on other levels of government to do to improve social, economic and health outcomes for individuals and families across the city.

Our current Mayor has spoken out publically in support of reconciliation and has embarked the City of Winnipeg upon a Journey of Reconciliation. Indigenous people are over-represented in poverty-related statistics and reconciliation will require closing the gap in socio-economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The City can do its part by implementing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan as a key piece of its Journey of Reconciliation.

This will require the City of Winnipeg to apply a poverty reduction and social inclusion lens to all municipal initiatives (e.g. tax and fee structures, policies, bylaws, programs, budgets, planning) to minimize their negative impacts and maximize their positive impacts on low-income households. Additionally, the City must take an intersectional approach to its work to ensure that municipal initiatives create equity across all dimensions of identity (e.g. race, age, sexual orientation, gender, ability), and do not unintentionally harm anyone. The recommendations in our plan include a few examples that demonstrate how an intersectional approach can be applied. To facilitate the implementation of an intersectional approach, we call on the City to mandate anti-oppression training for all city staff.

## A PLAN FOR WINNIPEG: BUILDING ON WHAT WE KNOW

### What the City of Winnipeg is Already Doing

The development of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg requires an assessment of what the City is already doing to address poverty and an attempt to build off of promising initiatives. We asked the City of Winnipeg to provide us with an inventory. It provided the following list, which we have divided up into thematic areas. The City notes that this list is not representative of absolutely everything it is doing to reduce poverty or to provide initiatives geared towards citizens with lower incomes.

#### Recreation and Leisure

- Over 3,000 free Winnipeg Public Library programs and a social worker at the Millennium Library
- The City of Winnipeg's Priceless Fun guide
- Free recreation facility passes and Leisure Guide program registration for users under the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) measure of poverty



- Grant funding for sports programming in inner city neighbourhoods, including the North End Youth Free Boxing Program

The initiatives listed above no doubt provide citizens with increased access to recreation, leisure, and library services. However, community consultations have revealed that many barriers remain. For example, grant funding to community-based organizations delivering recreation programming has not kept up with inflation and does not cover the costs of some critical program expenses.

### **Housing and Homelessness**

- Grant funding for the Downtown Winnipeg BLZ's Community Homeless Assistance Team program
- A \$150,000 grant for basic infrastructure for End Homelessness Winnipeg
- Grant funding for basic infrastructure for Here and Now: Winnipeg's Plan to End Youth Homelessness
- Grant funding for the Main Street Project
- Administration of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy
- Staff support through information and meetings with neighbourhood associations in the inner city to address housing standards, including rooming houses

It is important that the City provides financial and staff support to some of the organizations that are working to address homelessness in Winnipeg, as noted above. However, community consultations revealed that the City could be playing a much stronger role in addressing and preventing homelessness. This includes using its own planning and regulatory tools to contribute to development of affordable housing in Winnipeg.

### **Indigenous Youth**

- The Indigenous Youth Strategy:
  - Funding to support community-based organizations to provide employment development programs for Indigenous youth
  - Work placement opportunities
  - Internships
  - City of Winnipeg employment training programs
  - Career Weeks
  - Driver license training program
  - Funding for organizations to provide free recreation opportunities
  - Scholarships
  - Youth financial supports
  - Next Step Award

The Indigenous Youth Strategy is well received by the community for supporting community-based programming, post-secondary education, and employment development opportunities for Indigenous youth. Community groups have been calling on the City of Winnipeg for several years to increase funding for this important initiative that helps to address and prevent poverty among our Indigenous youth.

### Miscellaneous

- The Mayor created a steering committee comprising of local leaders in Winnipeg who are dedicated to finding the best way to remove barriers preventing low income families and children from accessing the Canada Learning Bond
- Grant funding to Age and Opportunity, Winnipeg Harvest, Andrews Street Family Centre, Immigrant Centre, Mediation Services, and the United Way of Winnipeg
- Free supply and installation of smoke alarms for any vulnerable citizens identified through the At Risk Referral and EPIC programs
- Assistance to qualifying low-income customers that are experiencing financial difficulties and are unable to pay their utility bill. The City estimates that this H2O Help to Others program could benefit over 300 families per year
- The Chief of Police, Danny Smyth, and Staff Sergeant Bob Christmas sit on the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council. Other City staff sit on the Board of End Homelessness Winnipeg and Immigration Partnership Winnipeg
- Social enterprises (e.g. businesses that hire people with barriers to employment) are listed on the City's Request for Qualification list for minor building repairs
- All clothing tenders issued through Materials Management include an unfair labour practice clause which guards against child and forced labour

Some of the initiatives listed above play a more significant role in reducing poverty and social exclusion than others. For example, the Indigenous Youth Strategy, efforts to increase access to recreation and leisure opportunities, and grants to community-based organizations that are working to reduce poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion should be included and enhanced in a poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg. Other initiatives, such as providing access to free smoke alarms and one-time financial support to cover a utility bill, are more limited in terms of their impact on poverty.

There are many other actions that the City could be taking to reduce poverty that are missing from the above list. They are outlined in the recommendations we provide further below. When compared to the package of actions taken by other municipalities with poverty reduction plans, Winnipeg's list lacks comprehensiveness and ambition. Poverty reduction initiatives will have limited impact if the City continues to develop them on an ad hoc basis, rather than through an intentional strategy that will guide planning and priorities.

### Community Priorities

Poverty reduction efforts must begin with the community to be effective. In the fall of 2016, Make Poverty History Manitoba convened a Steering Committee of individuals representing more than 20 community-based organizations with expertise on solutions to poverty reduction and

social exclusion. This group guided the development of our community-based poverty reduction plan for Winnipeg through numerous meetings over an 18-month period. Our plan builds off of what the City is already doing and is based on the poverty reduction priorities gathered through existing community-based consultations and research reports.

For many years, people concerned about poverty have been consulting, researching, and proposing public policy solutions for the City of Winnipeg to implement to play its part in reducing poverty. Rather than starting from scratch, our researchers compiled the solutions that have been proposed over the years into key theme areas. These solutions were brought back to the community to prioritize and identify gaps through a series of consultations.

Five community-based consultations were held across Winnipeg—at the downtown Millennium Library, the Selkirk/Power Park on Selkirk Avenue, the Murdo Scribe Centre on Selkirk Avenue, the Charleswood Library, and the Pembina Trails Library. In total, 81 participants were engaged in these conversations. In addition to holding consultation meetings, surveys were distributed through community partners asking respondents to indicate their top priorities for community action. In total, 93 surveys were completed and returned. While effort was made to engage the Indigenous community in the consultation process, this requires further work to ensure that a Winnipeg poverty reduction plan reflects the unique circumstances of the growing Indigenous population.

Housing, transportation, and civic and community engagement were identified as critical theme areas for the City to act within to reduce poverty. Participant comments often blended across more than one priority area, further emphasizing the need for a comprehensive plan. For example, in discussing housing, the need for childcare, green space, and accessible transportation were also noted. Participants also commented on areas that did not fall within the jurisdiction of the municipal government, suggesting that part of the role of the City should be to advocate to other levels of government for policy change. For example, insufficient financial supports for housing was noted as a key issue to address.

The following recommendations in our plan are not an exhaustive list of everything the City can do, but they provide an extensive package of actions that demonstrate what it would look like to apply a poverty reduction lens to municipal initiatives.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Reconciliation and Indigenous People

While Mayor Bowman designated 2016 as the year of reconciliation, he has not yet made the link between reconciliation and poverty reduction, as has been done by Edmonton's Mayor. Like Winnipeg, Edmonton has a large Indigenous population with a high number of Indigenous people living in poverty. Indigenous people live throughout Winnipeg and thrive in their communities, but there is a concentration of Indigenous people living in the inner city and an overrepresentation of Indigenous people in poverty-related statistics. Indigenous people who migrate to Winnipeg from northern, remote, and First Nations communities are not always able to access the supports and services they need, and many end up living in poverty.<sup>44</sup>

Reconciliation requires our governments to bridge the socio-economic divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action report provides a clear outline of what must be done.

The City's website summarizes the work it has done around five of the TRC's Calls to Action relating to municipalities.<sup>45</sup> This work has been led by the City's Indigenous Relations Division, which was created in 2013. Call to Action #57 calls on all levels of government "to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations."<sup>46</sup>

The City of Winnipeg has responded by developing "Indigenous Awareness" training sessions. The City website states that 3,456 City employees have participated in the two mandatory training sessions that have been developed, and that the City has a goal to train 10,000 employees by 2018/19.<sup>47</sup> These trainings include topics like Indigenous History and Timelines, Residential School Impacts and Legacy, Traditional and Contemporary Role of Indigenous Women, and Indigenous World View of Culture, Ceremonies and Medicines. The training "provides participants with an introduction to Indigenous people, culture, history and worldview....(and) build(s) awareness and understanding of Indigenous people."<sup>48</sup>

This training is important, but it is not enough to fulfill Call to Action #57, which also says: "*This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.*" The City must go beyond educating staff around the history of Indigenous peoples and ensure staff have the skills to recognize, analyze, and dismantle racism in the institutions and systems they work within, as well as in individual attitudes and behaviours. Training should be ongoing, practical, and evolving in consultation with members of the Indigenous community.

The City must also recognize and support community-based initiatives that align with the TRC Calls to Action. This support should come in the form of equitable funding, as well as in the form of meaningful relationships. Winnipeg is home to a great number of Indigenous-led non-profit organizations, many of which have been engaging in reconciliation for decades. But many experience funding inequities when compared to non-Indigenous organizations, and some have noted the City's failure to adequately engage with them, even during the "year of reconciliation."<sup>49</sup> The City must build meaningful relationships with these groups and include Indigenous communities in municipal processes.

The City's website states that, "The 2016 declaration for the Year of Reconciliation is just the first step for the City of Winnipeg's Journey to Reconciliation,"<sup>50</sup> and that "A longer term plan is currently being developed that will guide the City of Winnipeg's Journey to Reconciliation."<sup>51</sup> Indeed reconciliation must be ongoing and reflected in all that the City does. However, that longer term plan has yet to be revealed.

In 2017 City Council adopted Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord, which is intended to express and guide a shared commitment to the "Journey of Reconciliation" in Winnipeg.<sup>52</sup> Signatories accept an ongoing responsibility to annually report on "the success of their commitment to reconciliation and their future goals."<sup>53</sup> The Accord was created by the Mayor's Indigenous Advisory Circle in consultation with community. It states a number of high-level commitments of the City of Winnipeg including: building an ongoing process of reconciliation based on mutually respectful partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, advancing reconciliation efforts, and participating in acts of reconciliation and celebration. There are a number of specific actions the City could be taking as part of its Journey of Reconciliation that also fit within the context of a poverty reduction plan.

## We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:

- A. Fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #57 by providing anti-racism training that teaches the skills to recognize, analyze, and dismantle systemic and individual racism.
- B. Ensure the City of Winnipeg’s operating grant application process prioritizes funding for Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving community-based organizations that are focused on poverty reduction, social inclusion, cultural reclamation, and healing.
- C. Engage with Indigenous community-based organizations, grassroots groups, and residents on how the City can build meaningful partnerships and relationships to support Indigenous inclusion in municipal processes as well as community efforts to implement the TRC Calls to Action and the UNDRIP. This engagement should feed into the City’s own implementation process for the TRC Calls to Action.
- D. Increase funding for Oshki Anishinabe Nigaaniwak—the City of Winnipeg’s Indigenous Youth Strategy—to develop existing and new programs for Indigenous youth, including employment programs. Grants to existing programs should be increased by 10 per cent and then indexed to inflation.
- E. Partner with northern, remote, and First Nations Communities and other levels of government to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy for supporting Indigenous people who migrate to Winnipeg.

## 2. Income and Employment

The connection between income and poverty is clear. All Winnipeggers should have access to an income that enables them to meet all of their basic needs and to participate fully in their community and in the economy. The vast majority will access income from wages earned at work. But minimum wage work doesn’t pay enough to lift people above the poverty line. According to the Low Income Measure, a single mother of one working full-time at minimum wage lives with a total income (including wages, federal benefits such as Canada Child Benefit, and provincial Rent Assist) that is more than \$4,000 (or 12 per cent) below the poverty line.<sup>54</sup> Some jobseekers facing multiple barriers need access to comprehensive supports to succeed in training and employment, but programs that offer these supports are often insufficiently funded to meet the need. Others who can only work limited hours, or who cannot work at all, often depend on Manitoba’s Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program to access income. But a single person with a disability on EIA lives with an income that is 33 per cent below the poverty line.<sup>55</sup>

There are limitations to what the City can do to address these issues as the provincial government is responsible for setting the minimum wage and for setting EIA rates. However, the City can play a role in improving income and employment outcomes for Winnipeggers with its own hiring, compensation, and purchasing practices.

Public sector employment provides good jobs with incomes, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement. Building on the Indigenous Youth Strategy, the City should make a more concerted effort to employ individuals from under-represented groups including Indigenous people, visible minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and youth. The City should also ensure that its employees and contracted service workers are paid a living wage—the hourly wage rate at which

a household can meet its basic needs, based on the actual costs of living in a specific community. According to accepted national living wage standards, the 2016–17 family living wage for Winnipeg is \$14.54/hour.<sup>56</sup>

The City loses control over the working conditions of employees that provide City services when these services are outsourced, as has been done with waste removal. Outsourcing has led to low wages and precarious work, which exacerbates poverty. By bringing these jobs back in house, the City can reverse this trend and take leadership to ensure that all City service areas create supportive training and employment opportunities for low-income people facing multiple barriers to employment.

Winnipeg has many non-profit social enterprises with a mandate to hire, train, and provide wrap-around supports for people facing multiple barriers to employment (e.g. people with justice system involvement, people with developmental disabilities, and unemployed/underemployed Indigenous peoples). The City and its arms-length entities purchase significant amounts of goods and services that could be provided by these social enterprises. The City should shift existing purchasing where possible to social enterprises to support jobs for people facing barriers.

The City's Indigenous Youth Strategy includes partnerships with community organizations and civic departments to support culturally appropriate employment development programs for Indigenous youth. Indigenous youth are over-represented among those living in poverty and social exclusion, and this targeted initiative provides important opportunities to reverse this trend. Building on this successful initiative, the City should partner with newcomer-serving agencies to develop a Newcomer Youth Strategy that would provide similar opportunities to youth from Winnipeg's growing newcomer population. Finally, funding should be provided for community-based employment development programs that work with low-income and socially excluded youth who are not targeted through the Indigenous and newcomer strategies.

#### **We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

The application of a gender lens to this recommendation could involve asking questions like: Could Human Resource practices include flexible hours to accommodate for child care needs? Could the City provide child care for its staff? Does the City have a domestic violence policy?

- A. Establish an Employment Equity Policy with government-wide targets for representation of youth and equity-seeking groups (e.g. women, Indigenous people, visible minorities, persons with disabilities, and youth) within all levels of the civil service.
- B. Adopt a living wage policy that would commit to:
  - i. Paying direct employees a living wage according to accepted national living wage standards and in partnership with key community stakeholders.
  - ii. Working with local living wage advocates to determine which City contracted and subcontracted services must be paid a living wage. Following this process, ensure future contracts in those service areas include a legally binding clause requiring contracted service workers, including those working for subcontracted companies, to be paid the living wage for Winnipeg.
- C. Maximize the City's potential to create good jobs that reduce poverty by:
  - i. Bringing waste removal back in house, reducing the City's reliance on private contractors for snow clearing, and maintaining public ownership of existing City services.
  - ii. Implementing training and hiring practices within all City service areas to create jobs for low-income people facing multiple barriers to employment.

- D. Ensure that the City of Winnipeg and its arms-length entities (e.g. the Winnipeg Police Service) use purchasing to support social and economic benefits (e.g. job and training opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment). This can be accomplished by purchasing directly from non-profit social enterprises, or by using Community Benefit Clauses in appropriate tenders.
- E. Fund existing and new community-based employment programs for youth from other underrepresented demographics that are not currently supported through the Indigenous Youth Strategy, ensuring that services are continued beyond securing a job and youth are supported in maintaining employment.
- F. Create a Newcomer Youth Strategy based on the Indigenous Youth Strategy model to provide employment opportunities for newcomer youth.

### 3. Housing

Without housing there are few pathways out of poverty. The City of Winnipeg’s twenty-five year plan, *OurWinnipeg*, states: “Housing is a cornerstone of healthy communities and of a strong city; it is a basic need and is central to our quality of life.”<sup>57</sup> However, a lack of affordable and social housing in Winnipeg means too many struggle to keep a safe and stable roof over their heads. Many people live in homes that are in poor condition and suffer the health effects of poor quality or crowded housing. Across Winnipeg, almost 30 per cent of all renters are in core housing need, meaning they live in inadequate, unsuitable housing and/or spend more than thirty per cent of their income on housing.<sup>58</sup> Just over eight per cent of Winnipeggers live in homes in need of major repairs; for Indigenous Winnipeggers it is over 50 per cent.<sup>59</sup>

Homelessness may be the most egregious example of housing need. The Winnipeg Street Census 2015 reports that at least 1,400 people in Winnipeg experience homelessness on a given day, and 26.5 per cent of all people experiencing homelessness were youth between the ages of 16–19.<sup>60</sup> The actual number is likely much higher as this figure doesn’t capture the majority of those experiencing hidden homelessness. A number of plans to address homelessness have been developed through community collaboration including: *The Plan to End Homelessness Winnipeg*; *The Rooming House Action Plan*; *Here and Now: The Winnipeg Plan to End Youth Homelessness*; and the forthcoming gender based strategy to end homelessness. These plans have implications for municipal policy and funding, and the City should ensure it is contributing toward their implementation. The City also provides funding to a few initiatives that address homelessness such as the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ’s Community Homeless Assistance Team program, End Homelessness Winnipeg, and the Main Street Project. But efforts to address homelessness will only go so far without an adequate supply of affordable and social housing. Our recommendations below demonstrate that there is much the City can do to help build up supply. Many of them are consistent with the recommendations put forward by End Homelessness Winnipeg. Increasing the supply and quality of affordable and social housing would also profoundly improve the quality of life for those experiencing poverty and help provide the stability required to escape it.

Unlike some other Canadian municipalities, the City of Winnipeg plays no direct role in managing or developing affordable and social housing. The City has senior staff and City Council representation on the board of the autonomous Winnipeg Housing and Rehabilitation Corporation (WHRC), which develops, renovates, owns, and manages affordable housing primarily in Winnipeg’s inner city. The City should provide the WHRC with a stronger mandate and increased resources to bring

Affordable and social housing are not the same thing. In Manitoba:

Social housing is available on a rent-gear-to-income basis making it available to families with low incomes. Rents are capped at a level of 28 per cent of household income.

Affordable housing is available to individuals and families with moderate incomes, not eligible for social housing. The Province of Manitoba defines affordable housing as housing

multiple levels of government together to initiate and coordinate the funding of the development of new affordable and social housing options throughout Winnipeg.

The City updated its broad Housing Policy in 2013, and approved an implementation plan in 2014, which includes developing an affordable housing strategy in its list of activities. Three years later, few of the activities in the implementation plan have been completed. The City should work with the WHRC to develop a comprehensive affordable and social housing strategy and provide the financial resources to implement it.

Most of the City's recent affordable housing activity has been through an annual investment of \$1 million in the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve (HRIR). This funds some housing activities, primarily the housing improvement programs, of some of the community-based Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations located in low-income neighbourhoods. The administrative costs of these programs have been low, and the improvements to inner-city neighbourhoods include increased housing values and significant reductions in vacant and boarded properties. But the HRIR's size, scope, and purpose is not adequate to address other community priorities and needs such as providing access to tenant supports.

The City has also used Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in the downtown to support some residential rental projects that include a portion of affordable housing, providing developers with an up-front grant equal to the increased property taxes due to the heightened value of the property. Currently, the City is looking at expanding the TIF program outside of downtown. These are important initiatives, but the City has access to many more tools to help lower the cost and increase the speed of developing affordable and social housing options.

The Federal government announced an historic investment in housing through a National Housing Strategy, released in fall 2017. The City should bring all of its potential tools to bear on leveraging this investment to the greatest extent possible. This includes direct funding, through mechanisms like the HRIR, as well as planning and regulatory tools. For example, the Province of Manitoba's Bill 7 allows for inclusionary zoning, a regulation requiring a minimum percentage of affordable housing in a new development to qualify for a development permit. The City should also ensure policies are in place to support the use of regulatory tools that reduce the cost of development, through waiving development fees or requirements, or accelerating the development approval process. These can increase the viability of affordable and social housing developments. The City and the WHRC, through the previously mentioned affordable housing strategy, should ensure non-profit housing developers can access these and other regulatory tools to increase the number of affordable and social housing units built in Winnipeg.

While supporting new supply of affordable and social housing, the City should also help preserve the existing stock through demolition and conversion control policies. Winnipeg's rental vacancy rates have been increasing, but vacancies in affordable units remain low. Ongoing condominium conversions and development-related demolitions threaten to further reduce their availability. Winnipeg's rooming house supply is also steadily declining, but safe and quality rooming houses play a critical role in providing affordable homes for people living in poverty. While it is not known how many rooming houses there are in the city, estimates have ranged between 615–845. With an average of ten units per building, they are home to approximately 7,000 of Winnipeg's poorest residents. The City must develop a strategy to preserve and improve licensed rooming houses throughout Winnipeg as part of its comprehensive affordable housing plan.



**We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Implement the City's Housing Policy and Implementation Plan by 2019.
- B. Provide safe, accessible, and quality housing options that meet the needs of all demographics along the full continuum including emergency shelter beds, transitional and supportive housing, as well as social and affordable rental housing by:
  - i. Implementing the following planning, regulatory, and funding tools and resources: expanded and consistently available development fee waivers, land banking and donations, pre-zoning land for affordable housing, alternative development standards, Tax Increment Financing that prioritizes affordable housing, reduced property taxes for affordable housing developments, inclusionary zoning, hands on support from planners, expedited permit processes, and federal funding.
  - ii. Empowering the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation with increased resources and a mandate to bring together all levels of government to initiate and coordinate the funding of the development of new affordable and social housing options using the tools and resources identified above.
- C. Implement demolition and conversion control policies to assist in preserving the existing stock of affordable and social housing including rooming houses and single room occupancy housing. This should include:
  - i. Requiring developers to compensate for the costs of displaced households, charging developers a fee when affordable and social housing is demolished, or requiring developers to construct the same number of affordable and social units elsewhere in the community.
  - ii. Regulating the conversion of rental stock to condominiums when vacancy rates fall below 4 per cent.
- D. Continue to fund the Housing Rehabilitation and Investment Reserve and develop a regular and transparent process for reviewing and adjusting its size, scope, and purpose to ensure it adequately meets housing needs in Winnipeg.
- E. Work with stakeholders to create a strategy to preserve and improve licensed rooming houses. This strategy should include:
  - i. Maintaining an ongoing count of licensed rooming houses in order to respond to changes in supply.
  - ii. Funding to programs that improve the physical integrity of rooming houses and tenant health and well-being.
  - iii. Resources and learning opportunities on operating rooming houses and sustaining tenancies, offered at all points of contact with rooming house providers and tenants.
  - iv. Enabling unlicensed buildings to be licensed where zoning and reasonable health and safety standards are met by collaborating with Manitoba's Office of the Fire Commission to amend building codes governing converted residential dwellings so that the unique qualities of rooming houses are accounted for and existing units protected.

The application of a youth lens to this recommendation would recognize that youth require different types of emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing, and rental housing compared to adults. This would include providing unique supports and transitional help that meet the unique needs of youth.

## 4. Urban Sprawl

“Disincentives for further sprawl and incentives for compact growth in the heart of the city are essential in avoiding further isolation for the poorest living within the core of our city”  
(from the United Way of Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council: A Plan to Reduce Poverty in Winnipeg Jan 2007)

Winnipeg, like most North American cities, has always been a city geographically divided by income. Income maps of Winnipeg clearly demonstrate that, with some exceptions, people living with low incomes are concentrated in Winnipeg’s inner city<sup>61</sup> or in older neighbourhoods established before the 1960s. Since the 1960s, suburban development has tended to create residential neighbourhoods that are automobile dependent and that provide little to no housing that’s affordable to low-income people. Research on urban development has demonstrated that this type of development reduces the quality of life for those living there,<sup>62</sup> and generally creates a less affordable lifestyle.

Suburban development also costs municipalities more than higher density, mixed use (i.e. both residential and commercial) development in terms of investments in and maintenance of roads, green space, sewer pipes, busses, and other amenities. These higher costs therefore pull municipal resources away from inner-city neighbourhoods. The most costly example of this is road development; suburban communities cost the City more in terms of street maintenance (both local and regional) because they are automobile dependent. People living in Winnipeg’s inner city are twice as likely to bike to work as those outside of the inner city, three times as likely to walk to work, and twice as likely to take public transportation.<sup>63</sup> A study in Vancouver on full-cost accounting (taking into account all public and private investment) found that for every \$1 an individual spends using a bicycle to travel from point A to point B, society pays \$0.08. For every \$1 an individual spends on driving, society pays \$9.20.<sup>64</sup>

Denser development with more mixed uses, even in existing suburbs, will encourage people to use different transportation options and reduce municipal costs over the long term compared to more suburban development. The City has implemented impact charges as an attempt to charge new development for some of the cost of residential and commercial growth, however the design of these charges assumes all development costs the City the same amount, regardless of location, and fails to create an incentive to develop in downtown and existing suburbs. Prioritizing densification and new growth in these areas will make Winnipeg more livable and affordable to maintain. It will also reduce the gap between wealthier suburban neighbourhoods and low-income inner-city neighbourhoods, fostering greater equalities in quality of life and opportunities. In all of its development and land use decisions, the City should consider the potential benefits and costs to low-income individuals, families, and communities.

### We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:

- A. Address the negative impacts of urban sprawl on inner-city poverty and urban inequality by prioritizing densification and new growth through infill in Winnipeg’s downtown and in existing suburbs.

## 5. Transportation

Travel offers the means to reach essential opportunities such as jobs, education, shops, and friends, and has a positive effect on our quality of life. Many of us take travel to such essential opportunities for granted, but where streets are not walkable or bike friendly, or where transit is non-existent or unreliable, travel may be dependent on access to a motorized vehicle, which is often out of reach to those in poverty. For some, the cost of owning and operating a vehicle must be traded off against the cost of other essentials such as housing, food, recreation, and social occasions.

Without access to a car, people are dependent on the affordability, availability, and schedules of transit to get to and from their destinations. Seniors, low-income people, youth, and persons with disabilities who cannot drive often rely on Winnipeg's public transit system. However, with ongoing increases to Winnipeg Transit fares, including a recent 25 cent hike, public transportation is becoming inaccessible to people with very low and fixed incomes. A low-income bus pass program, similar to those that have been implemented in various other Canadian municipalities, would go a long way. People who use public transit as their main form of transportation also require buses with sufficient cargo space to accommodate items like groceries, strollers, and mobility devices, but this is not always available.

The inadequate number of buses in service during off peak hours makes it difficult for those who depend on public transportation for shift work. Winnipeg's bus fleet has seen a net increase of ten vehicles over 25 years, which compromises the availability and frequency of our public transportation system at any hour. Winnipeg City Council adopted a motion in July 2017 that Winnipeg Transit consider a proposed network of bus routes to provide frequent service. In addition to expanding the bus fleet, this network would help improve bus service by ensuring that dense routes, such as in the downtown and surrounding areas, have buses operating to achieve a consistent frequency (e.g. every ten minutes) for the majority of the day and to a lesser extent on weekends. This, combined with a low-income bus pass program, would help improve access to the many social supports and services that are located in the downtown and surrounding areas.

Those who rely on Handi-Transit often experience poor, unreliable, and sometimes unsafe service and onerous rules. The consequences go beyond inconvenience, and include lost job opportunities, missed appointments, and isolation. Many people living with intellectual disabilities do not qualify for using Handi-Transit, even though they may be in great need of its services. Unlike other areas of public transportation, Handi-Transit lacks a proper governance and accountability framework for the delivery of its services, resulting in little opportunity for user input that would ensure changing policies and practices meet their needs and reflect appropriate standards. Handi-Transit must be considered an integral part of Winnipeg's overall transit policy to ensure equitable access to mobility for seniors and people living with physical and intellectual disabilities.

There are a number of community-based organizations that provide essential transportation services for low-income people whose transportation needs are not met by Winnipeg Transit and Handi-Transit services (e.g. seniors and persons with disabilities). For example, some organizations provide low-cost escorted door through door transportation options for low-income seniors. The City of Winnipeg should support these programs that are filling the gaps in Winnipeg's transportation services.

Those without access to a car may also depend on or simply prefer safe walkable sidewalks and streets or a safe, comfortable and connected bike network for travel. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods are often the very areas of the city that are the least walkable or bicycle-friendly. By improving the walkability and bikeability of these neighbourhoods, as well as the downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods that need to be traversed to reach jobs, educational and recreational opportunities, and other services, the City can help reduce the cost burden of transportation on those that can least afford it.

#### **We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop a coherent governance framework and accountability mechanism for Handi-Transit services and ensure that the service is adequately funded to provide safe, courteous, and reliable transportation for people

with physical and intellectual disabilities while eliminating barriers to achieving equitable access to mobility in Winnipeg.

The application of a newcomer lens to this recommendation could involve recognizing that newcomer families are often much larger than Canadian-born families. This could be addressed by ensuring that the City's low-income transit pass program offers a family pass that would ensure affordability for larger families.

- B. Implement a low-income transit pass program while ensuring that these and all Winnipeg Transit policies and programs run parallel to Handi-Transit.
- C. Increase the frequency, reliability, and utility of transit services, including during off peak transit hours, in low-income neighbourhoods with highest transit dependency by:
  - i. Incrementally increasing the bus fleet by at least 200 and supporting increased operating costs of those buses.
  - ii. Developing a frequent service transit network as set out in the Winnipeg City Council motion on Transit Route Planning on June 21, 2017 to ensure that dense routes, such as in the downtown and surrounding areas, have buses operating to achieve a consistent frequency instead of operating to schedule.
- D. Implementing route designs and accessible bus designs to facilitate access to food and household goods, health and social services, recreation, libraries, child care, education, and employment opportunities.
- E. Prioritize funding for implementing the equity and accessibility elements of the City's Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies in the Downtown and surrounding mature areas, as well as in neighbourhoods that are home to a high density of historically underserved populations with relatively low access to walking and cycling facilities.
- F. Increase funding for the development of community-based bike shops in low-income neighbourhoods to ensure that everyone who wants one has access to a working bicycle and the training to maintain it.

## 6. Recreation

Recreation is the freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.<sup>65</sup> Recreation improves one's quality of life in the short term, but it's also an investment in a healthy society for tomorrow. Accessible, high quality recreation for everyone including children, youth, families, and seniors:

- Provides people with the chance to have fun, learn new skills, and build friendships;
- Improves self-esteem, performance in school/work, and relationships with family and friends;
- Promotes self-expression, transforming frustration into creative and productive action;
- Exposes individuals to positive role models;
- Prevents or reduces disease, violent behaviour, smoking, and substance abuse;<sup>66</sup>
- Creates opportunities for social inclusion and establishing a sense of community.

Many people can't afford the registration fees or equipment costs associated with enrolling their children or themselves in recreation such as sports, yoga classes, art classes, or cooking classes. The City of Winnipeg releases a seasonal *Priceless Fun* guide which identifies free programs offered

through community centres and other City-owned facilities. However, these programs often do not meet community needs or desires, and come with barriers to participation such as pre-registration. The City can play a role in reducing cost-related barriers that prevent people from having choice when it comes to accessing recreation opportunities.

Community-based organizations play a critical role in the delivery of recreation in our city. These organizations are able to build meaningful relationships with their participants when they offer a safe space with trusted and trained staff. Deeper connections with participants enable community organizations to identify other needs related to the individual or their family and serve as an access point for additional supports and services. Many community-based organizations are not able to stay open on weekends or past 8 p.m. on weeknights due to budget constraints and subsequent staffing limitations. Additionally, there are only three 24-hour safe spaces for youth in Winnipeg, two of which only operate on weekends and school holidays. These limited resources leave gaps in services for those who require access to recreation and supports outside of traditional working hours. In addition, inner-city neighbourhoods are among few other neighbourhoods throughout Winnipeg that do not have a designated seniors recreation facility. The City could support the development of a new facility or support seniors-specific programming in existing facilities in inner-city communities. When resourced effectively with long-term funding, community-based organizations can offer a wide variety of non-charging programs, supports, and services for individuals of all ages in the immediate neighbourhoods and at times that work for the community.

In 2012, the *Winnipeg Community Sport Policy* was released (an update from the City of Winnipeg Sport Policy established in 1983).<sup>67</sup> The City of Winnipeg developed the new policy in collaboration with community stakeholders between 2009 and 2011 in order to provide a basis for the planning, development, and delivery of sport and recreation programs and activities in Winnipeg. It consists of six policy statements with accompanying policy priorities. One of the policy statements reads, “The partners will collaborate in conducting a review of the extent to which sport and recreation facilities meet the current and future needs of participants and developing athletes by establishing a plan for facility access, improvement and new construction.”<sup>68</sup> This positive step forward demonstrates that the City recognizes its role and understanding of the need to work in partnership with community to coordinate the delivery of sport and recreation. However, the policy frequently points to the creation of more plans, and does not identify who is accountable for implementing changes. More focus and effort is needed to put the identified policy priorities into action, while taking into consideration a broader definition of recreation that includes all citizens rather than just athletes.

Recreation is viewed as a non-essential service in the city of Winnipeg and it is challenging to quantify the benefits individuals and communities reap from it. As a result it has been targeted when budget cuts need to be made. We suggest the following recommendations in order to increase accessibility to high quality recreational pursuits for all Winnipeggers, particularly those who are living below the poverty line.

**We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Eliminate all barriers related to registration fees and equipment costs that prevent participation in leisure guide activities. As an initial step, simplify the fee subsidy application and promote its availability along with other subsidy initiatives to individual and organizational stakeholders.
- B. Increase grants by 10 per cent to non-charging community-based organizations that deliver recreation (e.g. arts, sports, music) programming, and index future increases to inflation. Grants should include staffing as an eligible expense. Additional targeted

funding should be made available to organizations in low-income areas to ensure their programming can remain free and accessible.

- C. Provide community-based organizations delivering recreation programming with sufficient resources, including staffing dollars, to stay open in the evening, on weekends, and/or as a 24-hour safe space. These organizations need to be equipped with staff and program dollars so that they can help build a sense of identity and belonging and provide opportunities for mentorship, cultural reclamation, and healing.
- D. Implement and resource a new collaborative approach to recreation planning in partnership with community to ensure:
  - i. Consistent and effective outcomes related to facility use; program delivery and quality; as well as staff supervision, standards, and remuneration.
  - ii. The city does not duplicate programs and instead supports established community-based organizations that deliver recreation programming.

## 7. Community and Civic Engagement

Civic and community engagement activities such as volunteering, neighbourhood actions, and voting or other political actions allow individuals to feel connected to their communities, build relationships, develop skills, and exercise their power to affect social change around issues that impact them. However, people experiencing poverty and social exclusion often face multiple barriers to participating in civic and community engagement activities.

Winnipeg's neighbourhood renewal corporations (NRCs) receive provincial government funding to engage low-income communities in developing five-year neighbourhood revitalization plans based on locally identified needs and opportunities. Based on those plans, NRCs coordinate and implement community-driven neighbourhood revitalization initiatives in areas that overlap with *OurWinnipeg* priorities including safety and crime prevention, housing, environmental sustainability, food security, recreation, diversity, and inclusion. The City should support NRCs in creating community engagement opportunities for local residents and acknowledge that these organizations are well situated to take a lead role in implementing *OurWinnipeg* in their surrounding neighbourhoods.

Municipal government is the level of government that most directly affects the day-to-day lives of Winnipeggers. However, only 50.23 per cent of eligible voters (the highest rate of voter turnout ever) exercised their right to determine how and by whom they would be governed in the 2014 municipal election.<sup>69</sup> Voter turnout in inner-city wards was lower than in more affluent wards. For example, just 36 per cent of Mynarski residents and only 39 per cent of Point Douglas residents voted, compared to 57 per cent of River Heights-Fort Garry residents.<sup>70</sup> In the 2015 federal election, grassroots Indigenous organizations ran an Indigenous Rock the Vote campaign. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg also coordinated a 'get the vote out' campaign in inner-city neighbourhoods. Potential voters were informed and encouraged to vote through the combination of simple and plain language voting guides, voter registration sessions, and information sheets on issues of interest to those concerned about poverty. A 10 to 20 per cent increase in voter turnout in the targeted ridings suggests that more people will participate in the election process when they are supported and empowered. This helps ensure that elected officials hear from more diverse constituencies and become better able to meet their needs.

On average, 12,000 newcomers settle in Winnipeg.<sup>71</sup> Most find jobs, pay taxes, and contribute to the community through volunteerism. However, newcomers without citizenship have little say in how the City is run as they are unable to vote in municipal elections. Newcomers can face numerous barriers to acquiring citizenship and it is a costly and lengthy process requiring several years. Other cities are looking into enacting a policy that allows all adults to vote in municipal elections based on a residency requirement rather than citizenship. Toronto, Halifax, and Saint John have all voted to allow permanent residents to vote in municipal elections and are waiting for provincial approval. Earlier opportunities to engage in the political process can help newcomers more quickly acquire a sense of belonging and integrate into Canadian society, paving a smoother path toward citizenship.

Elections should not be the only opportunity for citizens to influence municipal government systems. Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups were first established in the 1970s as required structures that provided avenues for citizen participation and power in municipal government decision-making. Resident Advisory Groups were very active in the 1970s but over time their presence and powers have been intentionally diminished and their existence is no longer a municipal requirement.<sup>72</sup> Community Committees are also no longer required, but the City has maintained five (there were originally 13) with limited powers and accessibility. Meetings used to be held in neighbourhoods, which can be more accessible and less intimidating than City Hall, where meetings currently take place. The City should re-establish and empower these structures throughout the City and ensure they are accessible to residents, especially those who have been marginalized from participation, to enhance local decision making power over areas such as local land use, services, and capital and operating budgets. The City should also ensure that its consultation processes (e.g. Speak Up Winnipeg) are accessible to people living with low incomes and experiencing social exclusion.

Undocumented individuals are people who live in Canada whose immigration status is unknown or unofficial. The vast majority arrive in Canada through proper channels but have temporarily lost their permits (work, student, visiting etc.) due to systemic barriers. Undocumented individuals living in Winnipeg may choose not to access public and community-based services for fear of deportation if asked about their immigration status. This increases their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation and puts them at greater risk of poverty and poor health.<sup>73</sup> Migrante, a migrant workers' rights organization, has heard anecdotal evidence that undocumented workers will avoid going to the police with concerns, which could ultimately impact everyone's safety. Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver are among municipal jurisdictions that have responded by adopting access without fear policies. For example, Toronto's policy explicitly instructs all city staff to not inquire about citizenship and Toronto has publicly declared itself to be a 'sanctuary city'—a city that provides municipal services without fear of detection, detention, or deportation.

**We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Provide core funding to Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations to support community-led efforts toward implementing *OurWinnipeg*.
- B. Fund an outreach program to encourage voter participation in inner-city and low-income neighbourhoods.
- C. Allow adult newcomers to vote in municipal elections based on a residency requirement and not citizenship.

The application of an Indigenous lens to this recommendation could involve the City ensuring that its outreach program includes efforts to target Indigenous organizations and organizations that primarily serve Indigenous people.

- D. Re-establish and empower inclusive and accessible Community Committees and Resident Advisory Groups to enhance access to information and facilitate citizen participation in municipal government.
- E. Adopt an access without fear policy for undocumented individuals so they can access all City services without fear of reporting or deportation.

## 8. Policing and Safety

There is a connection between high levels of incarceration and poverty in Canada. Latest data show that approximately 75 per cent of those incarcerated lack a grade twelve education.<sup>74</sup> As many as 80 per cent of incarcerated women are in prison for poverty-related crimes.<sup>75</sup> Data such as these led former Senator Hugh Segal to conclude that: “If crime abatement is the goal then it is up to all Canadians and their governments to get tough on poverty.”<sup>76</sup> Governments must address the root causes and social preconditions that lead to involvement in the justice system and impact our safety.

Indigenous people, with higher rates of poverty due to systemic and social conditions, are over-represented in the justice and child welfare systems. For example, Indigenous people make up 68 per cent of Manitobans in custody and only 17 per cent of the province’s total population.<sup>77</sup> Manitoba has about 11,000 children in care, of which approximately 90 per cent are Indigenous.<sup>78</sup> There is also a link between involvement in the child welfare system and incarceration. Manitoba Justice figures show that of the 2,317 youth incarcerated between August 2016 and October 2017, 1,433 were in government care.<sup>79</sup>

Between 12,000 and 16,000 newcomers arrive in Manitoba every year with approximately 85 per cent settling in Winnipeg.<sup>80</sup> While most thrive, many do not. Some arrive severely traumatized while others fall victim to the same racialized poverty that Indigenous people face. There is a perception of bias in our justice system as one study cited by the Winnipeg Citizen Equity Committee found that 31 per cent of Nigerian newcomers did not agree with the statement “police treat all ethnic groups fairly”.<sup>81</sup> With Canada’s growing newcomer population, the federally sentenced visible minority offender population increased by 40 per cent between 2008 and 2012.<sup>82</sup>

One of the results of the racialized poverty these groups face is the rise in street gang activity, particularly among youth. Decades of progressive public policies and supportive community programs has been eroded by funding cuts and by approaches to addressing gangs that are not evidence-based. Manitoba has one of the highest youth incarceration rates across Canada, but this does nothing to resolve the ongoing challenge of youth participation in street gangs. Winnipeg’s Gang Action Interagency Network, through collaboration and consultation, developed a plan to address gang involvement by building on existing prevention, intervention, and suppression resources while identifying gaps that need to be filled.<sup>83</sup> City support for this plan would demonstrate innovation in addressing what has too long been a chronic problem in Winnipeg.

While the current conditions are challenging, there is an opportunity. The current federal government is looking at significantly overhauling the justice system. The previous federal government’s Victims of Crime Bill of Rights includes the right to information on alternatives such as restorative justice. The former NDP provincial government created the Restorative Justice Act in response and the current provincial government is looking to implement restorative justice practices. Winnipeg’s large and growing Indigenous and newcomer populations, both with rich histories and traditions in restorative justice, provide a unique opportunity to begin a shift away from



the failed ‘tough on crime’ approach to one that is supportive and community-based, and that emphasizes both accountability and healing. Manitoba Justice data show that in July 2017 non-custodial sentences such as conditional and probation sentences have recidivism rates of 5 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, while custodial sentences were significantly higher, at 33 per cent.<sup>84</sup> Policies that will enable Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) members to divert individuals into appropriate community programs rather than into custody must be formalized and embedded in training and practice.

A true focus on crime prevention through social development could be embedded throughout the WPS by replacing the Winnipeg Police Board with a Winnipeg Community Safety Board. This Board would oversee the WPS and would have an expanded mandate to prioritize resources for innovative and ultimately less expensive initiatives that focus on prevention and intervention, and thereby improve community safety. Incarceration is costly. For example, The Ontario Centre for Addiction and Mental Health calculates that it costs about \$300 to incarcerate someone for one night while a bed in affordable and supportive housing only costs \$38.50.<sup>85</sup>

In the interim, the WPS is well trained and equipped to fulfill the suppression role of law enforcement. But, its role in prevention and intervention has fluctuated, depending largely on whether or not individual members are inclined and trained to prioritize this approach. The City can strengthen the WPS’s role in prevention and intervention by mandating the Winnipeg Police Board and Service to develop training that emphasizes cultural awareness, de-escalation techniques, addressing unintentional bias, and education on the social conditions that contribute to people becoming involved in the justice system.

This training will also enable WPS members to make better use of their discretionary powers to ensure that the WPS is not taking actions that unintentionally exacerbate poverty. One example of this being the case came in enforcing the bylaw that states: “no person shall, during the period 10:00 hours to 22:00 hours of any day, sit or lie upon a sidewalk, or upon a blanket, chair, stool or any other object placed upon the sidewalk” which led to a homeless man being fined for loitering while trying to sell his art on the street without a permit.<sup>86</sup> The permit would have cost \$300 with an additional fee for insurance. People experiencing homelessness often accumulate fines as a result of being ticketed for minor infractions such as loitering and jaywalking, and have no ability to pay. This impacts their credit scores and opportunities to acquire a driver’s license, creating additional barriers to accessing housing and employment. Formalized and enforced internal policies that enable WPS members to make greater use of discretionary powers can help address this issue.

#### **We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Replace the Winnipeg Police Board with a Winnipeg Community Safety Board that has an expanded mandate to oversee the Winnipeg Police Service and other safety-focused initiatives, as well as prioritize resources for expanding and improving initiatives that focus on prevention. This Board’s voting membership must represent the diverse community it serves (e.g. women, LGBT2SQ+, visible minorities, Indigenous) and should include both an Indigenous and Newcomer Safety Advisory Council.
- B. Until a Winnipeg Community Safety Board is established, mandate the Winnipeg Police Board and Service to work with community-based organizations to develop and strengthen mandatory training that emphasizes cultural awareness, de-escalation techniques, address unintentional bias, and provide education on the social conditions that contribute to people becoming involved in the justice system.

- C. Until a Winnipeg Community Safety Board is established, mandate the Winnipeg Police Board and Service to work with community-based organizations to formalize policies that enable members to make greater use of their discretionary powers to:
  - i. Divert individuals into appropriate community programs rather than into custody.
  - ii. Ensure that low-income people are not fined for actions where there is no significant threat to public safety.
- D. Publically endorse the Gang Action Interagency Network's *Bridging the Gaps: Solutions to Winnipeg Gangs*, a framework for a Winnipeg-based strategy to prevent gang involvement and facilitate gang exits, and provide financial and human resources to support its implementation.
- E. Advocate for and support the creation of 24-hour safe spaces in neighbourhoods based on community-identified need.

## 9. Food Security

Physical and economic access to food are essential to food security, economic stability, and social inclusion. While the majority of people in Winnipeg are food secure in a strict economic sense, many lack sufficient resources to regularly eat an adequately nutritious diet:

- A 2016 study suggests that over 120,000 people in Winnipeg live in areas where sufficiently nutritious food is either unavailable or unaffordable. More than two-thirds of these areas are in the inner city.<sup>87</sup>
- Nearly 64,000 Manitobans accessed food banks in 2017.<sup>88</sup>

People living with low incomes are more likely to experience food insecurity, and those who are disproportionately affected by poverty and social exclusion are also more likely to experience food insecurity:

- In Canada, the rate of food insecurity among those on social assistance is eleven times higher than the national average, and nearly one-third of households on social assistance are severely food-insecure.<sup>89</sup>
- Indigenous households are more than twice as likely as the average Canadian household to experience food insecurity.<sup>90</sup>
- Recent immigrants experience much higher levels of food insecurity than the average household.<sup>91</sup>

Manitobans want their governments to take action to reduce food insecurity. During consultations for Manitoba's provincial poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy, Manitobans ranked food security as the second most important area in which government should be investing to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion, after housing.<sup>92</sup> Solutions must go beyond the much needed short-term, charitable approaches and include investments that help families to acquire enough resources and capacity to become food-secure, ultimately eliminating the need for food banks.

All levels of government must act. Municipal governments can play a key role in facilitating and planning for food secure communities and developing enabling regulatory structures. In 2013,

it was found that at least 64 local and regional municipalities were engaged in food policy work across Canada.<sup>93</sup>

Through municipal food councils and comprehensive food strategies, municipalities enhance food security, create economic opportunities, and invest in successful community-based food initiatives, such as community gardens, good food clubs, community food hubs, and community kitchens.

On February 22, 2016, Winnipeg City Council approved the formation of the Winnipeg Food Council to advise the Mayor and Council on food system related issues, support the work of the community on food issues, and enhance local food security through multi-sectoral coordination. This structure provides an excellent opportunity for the City to develop and implement a Winnipeg Food Policy that will reduce food insecurity among Winnipeg's low-income and socially excluded population.

#### **We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Mandate and fund the Winnipeg Food Council to develop and implement a Winnipeg Food Policy that includes:
  - i. Monitoring food security in Winnipeg.
  - ii. Conducting a food policy scan that systematically reviews municipal policies and policy gaps that impact economic and physical access to healthy food and culturally-relevant diets.
  - iii. Conducting simultaneous food assessments for each ward to identify local assets for, and barriers (social, environmental and economic) to, accessing healthy food and culturally-relevant diets.
  - iv. Actions for addressing the unique barriers faced by Indigenous people, newcomers, refugees, women, seniors, youth, people with disabilities and low-income people in accessing healthy food and culturally-relevant diets.
  - v. Establishing community food facilitators in each municipal ward to engage residents in community-based food initiatives aimed at increased food access and food skills.
  - vi. Reforming zoning bylaws and/or tax structures in a way that removes barriers to green grocers, small-scale, and direct farm marketing of foods in underserved neighbourhoods and along bus routes.

## **10. Public Spaces**

Everyone should have access to greenspace nearby, regardless of where they live in our city. Greenspace helps provide clean air, good health, recreation opportunities, and overall enhanced quality of life. Improving access to greenspace for people experiencing poverty in particular, can help reduce social exclusion, provide recreation opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach, and diminish health inequities between different socio-economic groups. However, access to greenspace varies widely across Winnipeg, and City wards with less greenspace tend to also have lower average incomes.<sup>94/95</sup> Land development and urban sprawl continue to take over our greenspace and put increased pressures on what remains.

The City must take steps to preserve and enhance greenspace through a comprehensive plan. Toronto, Edmonton and Halifax have all adopted multi-year urban parks and forest management plans. An accompanying document to *Our Winnipeg*—the City’s official development plan—calls for a City of Winnipeg Parks, Places and Open Spaces Sustainable Management Plan to “recognize and preserve Winnipeg’s parks, greenspaces and riverbanks as green oasis in our urban setting.”<sup>96</sup> But the City has not yet developed a greenspace plan.

Some of Winnipeg’s Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs), located in Winnipeg’s low-income communities, have engaged local residents in developing and implementing their own green plans to improve existing greenspace and create new greenspace in their neighbourhoods. The City of Winnipeg should support neighbourhood-based efforts like these to enhance access to greenspace in communities where it tends to be more limited.

An inclusive and equitable city ensures everyone has access and proximity to the benefits of city investments in our public spaces. With constrained resources at the municipal level, the City of Winnipeg has increasingly partnered with the private sector to care for (in the case of Assiniboine Park) or create public spaces or amenities. Portage Place mall, the Forks, downtown’s walkway system, and the soon to be completed True North Square are examples of these partnerships, where the private sector owns and/or maintains space that has received substantial public investment. While there may be financial benefits for both the private and public sector in these partnerships, there are real concerns that such spaces are less accessible to people considered to be ‘undesirable’ to commercial activities. Specifically, this affects racialized people and people who are experiencing homelessness. The City must ensure that growth and development fosters the social inclusion of all residents.

Public restrooms and water fountains are essential public health infrastructure. Their absence can create sanitary and safety hazards in public spaces. Lack of fresh water, especially in hotter months, can create serious health risks for people experiencing homelessness who can’t afford to purchase bottled water. Other Canadian cities are rebuilding their sanitary infrastructure. Montreal announced twelve public toilets to be installed in its downtown core. Vancouver has nine self-flushing toilets downtown and a further ninety-four in city parks. Edmonton also has a public toilet program. Winnipeg should follow suit making restrooms and water facilities accessible downtown and in other high-density areas.

The application of a gender lens could involve ensuring that public restrooms are all-gender restrooms so that these public spaces are inclusive of all-gender identities. In this way, the City can help reduce the instances of heterosexism and transphobia that LGBT2SQ+ individuals experience.

**We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Develop and implement a multi-year master greenspace plan to preserve, protect, and enhance Winnipeg’s park lands, greenspaces, natural areas and connecting corridors and ensure they are accessible, inclusive to all, and safe year round.
- B. Partner with Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations to determine how the City can support community-designed plans to protect, maintain, and improve local parks and greenspaces.
- C. Ensure that privately-owned spaces receiving public funding, and public spaces that are privately maintained/managed, are inclusive and accessible to the public year-round.
- D. Fund the creation of public restrooms and water fountains in high-density neighbourhoods.

## 11. Early Learning and Child Care

High quality early learning and child care programs generate life-long benefits for children like higher rates of school success and better health outcomes.<sup>97</sup> They also enable parents to access training and employment opportunities, which are key pathways out of poverty. Every dollar spent on licensed child care in Manitoba returns \$1.38 to the Winnipeg economy through increased participation in the workforce and higher tax revenues, among other factors.<sup>98</sup> However, there are not enough child care spaces in Winnipeg to meet the need.

A 2016 Probe Research poll surveyed 3,100 parents using child care. Two thirds (62 per cent) reported having to wait for a space, ranging between 14–15 months. Long waits hinder parents' ability to work or attend school, with 41 per cent delaying a return to work, 30 per cent turning down a job, and 24 per cent turning down an educational opportunity because they lacked child care. Women are most likely to limit their participation in the labour market when childcare is unavailable, resulting in reduced life-time earnings and higher rates of poverty.<sup>100</sup> As of April 2017, 14,099 of the 16,878 names on the central child care waiting list were from Winnipeg, representing 83.5 per cent of the names of children waiting for a licensed space.<sup>101</sup>

Compared to the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg is more limited in its ability to meet Winnipeg's need for child care. The Province has the authority to establish legislation and regulations that cover child care standards, licensing, and monitoring. It also has the power to provide financial benefits that support the creation of new child care spaces and reduce the costs of accessing child care. While there is no legislated municipal role for child care in Manitoba, the City can and should play a role. There is municipal action on child care in other provinces where cities have no mandated authority on child care, such as Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Municipalities in these provinces play a role in planning for child care, undertake land inventories of sites that could be used for child care, and incorporate childcare into community plans, zoning bylaws, and other City regulations.

In Winnipeg, the City supports child care by enabling some child care programs to be situated in City-owned buildings in exchange for rent, by deferring taxes on some child care programs, by not levying property taxes on non-profit child care centres, and by not requiring licensed home-based child care programs to acquire a business license from the City. Also, child care facilities can apply to the City's Community Incentives Grant program for funding to put toward capital asset improvements or purchases. These are welcome initiatives, but there is more that the City can do to improve the availability, accessibility, and affordability of non-profit childcare. Child care is not integrated into City planning: *OurWinnipeg*, the City's 25-year development plan makes no mention of child care. From an overarching perspective, Manitoba's lack of coordination, communication, and collaboration in child care planning has contributed to inadequate, insufficient and inequitable child care services within Winnipeg. Key stakeholders must come together to meet the child care needs of children and families living in Winnipeg.

### We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:

- A. Co-create with the Province a Childcare Planning Committee with all three levels of government and other key stakeholders including representatives of child care, business, labour, women, Francophone, newcomer, Indigenous, disability, and LGBT2SQ+ communities.
- B. Improve the availability, accessibility, and affordability of culturally-appropriate non-profit childcare by:

- i. Incorporating childcare into development/community plans.
- ii. Allowing density, height or other bonuses to be offered to developers for providing on-site childcare spaces.
- iii. Undertaking land inventories of sites that could be reasonably used for childcare.
- iv. Providing low/fixed rent spaces in municipal buildings along with building and facility maintenance.

## 12. Health and Mental Health

Significant health, mental health, and well-being gaps exist within Winnipeg. People with lower incomes are more likely to die at an earlier age and from preventable causes than people with higher incomes. Those who are more likely to live in poverty, such as women, children, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and racialized communities, are also at greater risk of poor health.

- Babies born to the wealthiest 20 per cent of Winnipeggers are expected to live about 8 to 10 years longer than those born to the least well off.<sup>102</sup>
- There is a more than 17 year difference in female life expectancy and 15 year difference in male life expectancy between Winnipeg’s lowest and highest income neighborhoods.<sup>103</sup>

We often think of health as an individual matter and an outcome of choices or willpower. Yet, data and research show that life circumstances affect how much control individuals have over their lives and the way their bodies respond.<sup>104</sup> There is a clear relationship between economic and social circumstances (e.g. income, education, where one lives, experiences in early childhood) and health status.<sup>105</sup> The physical and emotional responses to stress arising from living in poverty impact health at the cellular level.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, people facing poverty and social exclusion experience worse health outcomes because they have less access to the power, opportunities, and resources that determine our health.<sup>107</sup>

Federal and provincial government policy significantly influence health outcomes. However, opportunities for health and well-being begin in our communities—where we live, learn, work and play—and many key factors that determine the health of an urban community are determined at the municipal government level. Some examples are access to affordable public transportation, safe walking and bike infrastructure, access to affordable, healthy food, as well as leading crime prevention through social development efforts.<sup>108</sup> By implementing the recommendations in this plan the City will fundamentally shift the social determinants of health to reduce health gaps.

We call upon the City to intentionally develop municipal policies using tools that help ensure decisions contribute to health and well-being goals and close health gaps experienced by people living in poverty. People experiencing poverty and social exclusion also often experience mental illness, addictions, trauma and/or oppression.<sup>109/110</sup> The City can ensure that staff delivering programs and services are trained and resourced to appropriately meet the needs of these populations.

People who experience poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, sexism, racism and colonialism and other social and historical factors live with high levels of stress. These stressors are linked to problematic substance use, HIV infection, and entry into street-level drug and sex trades.<sup>111</sup> Currently our systems (e.g. child protection and social assistance) primarily respond by enforcing rules and consequences, which often only causes further harm. For example, a mother experi-

ences domestic violence and her child is apprehended. She loses her family social assistance and child tax benefit, which causes her to lose her home. She is thrown into a cycle of homelessness, removed from her social networks, and continues to face safety issues, which creates barriers to reunification. Her child grows up in the child protection system, which increases her chances of living in poverty as an adult. An alternative response could be for our systems to take a harm reduction approach. In this example, child protection and social assistance systems would instead work together to create a case plan that meets the families' safety, housing, and income needs. This would ensure the family is supported while making the changes needed to address violence in the home, while avoiding the need for another child to go into care. By publicly endorsing Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's Position Statement on Harm Reduction and aligning municipal programs, facilities, and professional development opportunities with harm reduction principles, the City would demonstrate its support for an approach that minimizes harm and strengthens the health of the population.

We all have a part in improving the health, economic, and social circumstances of all citizens in our city. By embarking on these recommendations, the City can position itself as a leader in health and social development.

#### **We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Engage all levels and organizations of the health system in decisions that impact health and well-being outcomes by:
  - i. Collaboratively identifying indicators of health and well-being that the City can monitor and influence, as well as gaps in health and well-being outcomes experienced by people living in poverty.
  - ii. Collaboratively conducting equity-focused health impact assessments on City initiatives to ensure progress toward closing identified gaps in health and well-being outcomes.
- B. Ensure front-line city staff have the resources and capacity to refer community members to appropriate healthcare, mental health, and addictions services.
- C. Provide training for all city staff in mental health first aid, addictions specialization, destigmatization, trauma-informed care, and anti-oppressive health promotion practices, with priority given to training first responders (e.g. police, paramedics, firefighters) and program/facility staff.
- D. Publically endorse the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's Position Statement on Harm Reduction, and align municipal programs, facilities, and professional development opportunities with harm reduction principles.

### **13. Accessibility Rights**

Canadians with disabilities under the age of 65 are about twice as likely to live in poverty compared to those without disabilities, and struggle to access basic needs like healthy food, safe housing, transportation, and medications.<sup>112</sup> This includes people who identify as having any difficulty hearing, seeing, communicating, walking, climbing stairs, bending, learning or doing any similar activities. It also includes people who identify as having a physical condition, mental condition or

health problem that reduces the amount or kind of activity they can do at home, school, work, or in other activities (e.g., transportation, leisure).

Most Manitobans with a disability are able to work but face barriers such as inaccessible education and training programs, systemic discrimination, and workplaces that fail to accommodate their needs, all of which contribute to lower educational attainment and labour force participation rates.<sup>113</sup> Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, not only as a result of barriers created in education facilities and workplaces, but also because of barriers in other service areas. This can prevent persons with disabilities from taking advantage of recreation opportunities, doing their own grocery shopping, using public transportation, and living safely and comfortably in their own homes and communities.

When accessibility rights are not protected, people with disabilities are prevented from reaching their full social and economic potential. The Province of Manitoba introduced The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) in 2013 requiring the progressive removal of existing barriers for persons with disabilities, and preventing the creation of new ones. The Province will develop accessibility standards with respect to customer service, information and communication, transportation, employment and the built environment. Compliance with the new law affects virtually all organizations in Manitoba, including the City of Winnipeg, which has an opportunity to lead by example. The customer service standard came into effect in November 2015 and the City of Winnipeg was given two years to meet its obligations related to the standard and ensure that all people have the same opportunity to access goods and services provided by the City of Winnipeg.

The AMA also required the City of Winnipeg to develop a comprehensive plan that outlines the measures it has taken and will take to identify, prevent, and remove barriers that disable people. This includes barriers related to false assumptions, the way that information is communicated, policies or procedures that exclude some people, and physical barriers related to the built environment. The plan's purpose is to ensure an accessibility lens is applied to the City's policies, practices, and procedures. The City completed its two-year Accessibility Plan in 2016, which includes an action plan that intends to ultimately remove all barriers to accessibility.<sup>114</sup>

**We Call on the City of Winnipeg to:**

- A. Champion accessibility rights by playing a robust leadership role in fulfilling and exceeding the City of Winnipeg's obligations related to the Province of Manitoba's Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA).
- B. Remove barriers to accessibility by implementing the Action Plan laid out in the City of Winnipeg's 2016–2018 Accessibility Plan within that timeframe.



# Advocating to Other Levels of Government

AS DEMONSTRATED IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS listed above, there is much that the City of Winnipeg can do to reduce poverty and social exclusion. But provincial and federal governments have control over significant financial investments and key public policy areas that greatly impact poverty, and we need all three levels of government to step up. Our review of poverty reduction efforts in other Canadian municipalities revealed that some Cities are not just taking action in areas they are responsible for, they are also calling on other levels of government to do their part. We need the City of Winnipeg to do the same.

Nearly 100 community organizations endorsed *The View from Here 2015: Manitobans Call for a Renewed Poverty Reduction Plan*. This community-based poverty reduction plan identifies 50 policy recommendations that the Province of Manitoba should implement as part of a renewed provincial poverty reduction plan. In July 2017 the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) published *Ending Poverty Starts Locally: Municipal Recommendations for a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy* on behalf of its 2,000 member municipalities. This document, signed off on by Winnipeg Deputy Mayor and FCM President, Jenny Gerbasi, includes 12 broad recommendations for the federal government to include in its national poverty reduction plan.<sup>115</sup>

The City of Winnipeg should call on the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada to implement the recommendations in these reports. We provide a sample of these recommendations below that relate to policy areas within which provincial and federal governments are better equipped to impact poverty, when compared to municipal governments.

Sample of recommendations that the City of Winnipeg can make to the Province of Manitoba:

- Increase the supply of safe and accessible, rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing by a minimum of 300 newly built units each year for five years and invest at least \$118 million annually to meet the need for capital repairs and maintenance in public housing units.
- Replace EIA's basic allowance with a new benefit that lifts all Manitobans up to or above the poverty line when combined with other existing benefits.

- Incrementally increase the minimum wage per hour to the Low-Income Cut Off— Before Tax (LICO-BT) for a one parent, one child household by 2020, and index annually to the LICO-BT.
- Add 12,000 new licensed and funded non-profit child care spaces while also investing resources to ensure existing spaces are sufficiently funded to fairly compensate and retain Early Childhood Educators and to enable the delivery of sustainable community-based and culturally-relevant early learning and child care programming.
- Immediately establish a timeline for transitioning provincial student loans into provincial student grants.
- Ensure primary mental health services are a fundamental component of a comprehensive health system by increasing the proportion of the health budget that is allocated to expenditures on mental health and by expanding the types of mental health services covered by the public healthcare system.

Sample of recommendations that the City of Winnipeg can make to the Government of Canada:

- Investigate and develop options for how a basic income guarantee could be delivered in Canada.
- Prioritize social and affordable housing repair and construction at funding levels reflective of the need.
- Support low-income Indigenous individuals and families by providing long-term, flexible funding to Indigenous organizations, support for the renovation and construction of community and cultural spaces, and support for culturally appropriate programs and services.

The City of Winnipeg should also study national community-based poverty reduction plans like *Dignity for All: A National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada* and Campaign 2000's 2017 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada—*A Poverty-Free Canada Requires Federal Leadership*.<sup>116/117</sup> The recommendations in these plans have received wide support across the country and should inform the City of Winnipeg's poverty reduction advocacy strategy to the federal government.

# Next Steps

POVERTY REDUCTION ADVOCATES ARE ANXIOUS to see the City of Winnipeg get going on the development of a comprehensive municipal poverty reduction plan. We outline some concrete next steps that can be taken below.

## POLITICAL WILL — MAYOR AS CHAMPION

We call on the Mayor of Winnipeg to immediately announce that the City considers poverty reduction to be a municipal priority, and that he will begin to work with City Council toward the development of a comprehensive municipal poverty reduction plan with progress indicators that have targets and timelines.

An effective municipal poverty reduction plan requires the participation and cooperation of citizens, the private sector, the non-governmental sector, and municipal boards and commissions across many sectors. These stakeholders should be meaningfully engaged. Furthermore, combating poverty in Winnipeg will require the coordinated efforts of all levels of government. While our recommendations focus on actions to be taken by the City, this in no way absolves other levels of governments from responsibility. In many of the areas outlined, the City has been left with major challenges because the Provincial and Federal Governments have either shirked their responsibilities or refused to step up to the plate to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We recognize that all levels of government have a role to play. But we call on the City to do its part through a plan that identifies how the City will use its powers and resources to reduce poverty in Winnipeg. The city should be held primarily accountable for the success of its own plan. Meanwhile it should continue to advocate for an increased provincial role and work with municipalities across the country to call for an increased federal role.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN AND PROGRESS INDICATORS

We call on Winnipeg's City Council to immediately pass a motion that would create a Task Force mandated to develop the City's poverty reduction plan. This Task Force should consist of relevant stakeholders, including people with lived experience of poverty as well as community leaders who work directly with them.

One of the first steps of the Task Force would be to identify measurable indicators that will be used to evaluate progress toward reducing poverty in Winnipeg, and to attach targets and timelines to those indicators. Targets and timelines provide a tool for monitoring the impact that the plan is having on poverty and for measuring progress. This will allow the City to go beyond simply observing trends in indicators and ensure annual reporting is meaningful and useful. Targets and timelines also provide a framework within which strategic thinking and action can emerge as the plan is developed.

Once indicators with targets and timelines are identified, work can then begin to outline a strategic roadmap of actions that will be taken over a specific timeframe to achieve the identified targets. The City must know where it is going in order to determine the best way to get there. Within one year, the task force should produce an action plan that outlines what the City can do, what it cannot do, and what it will call on other levels of government to do to improve social and economic outcomes for individuals and families across the city.

The recommendations in this community-based plan should inform the City's plan in order to build off of the extensive work that community has already done. Doing so will also ensure that the City's plan takes a much needed comprehensive approach that brings together multiple policy and program interventions. This is because our recommendations recognize poverty in the context of the social determinants of health—the economic and social conditions that shape the health of individuals and communities. The social determinants of health include: Aboriginal status, early life, education, employment and working conditions, food security, gender, health-care services, housing, income and its distribution, social exclusion, social safety net, unemployment, and employment security.<sup>118</sup> By analyzing solutions to poverty through a social determinants of health lens our plan addresses the many complex and interrelated causes of poverty and social exclusion. The City's plan should do the same. This will allow the City to take an approach that moves beyond isolated poverty reduction initiatives that are implemented on an ad hoc basis.

Our recommendations also recognize the following key points the City should ensure are addressed in its plan:

- Exclusionary and discriminatory practices are causers of poverty, as are insufficient and inaccessible public supports and services like housing, transportation, recreation, and food security.
- Certain groups are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion and must be made a priority. Indigenous people have a special place in Manitoban society, and the City's plan needs to be interpreted and applied specifically to reflect their circumstances.
- Poverty is often spatialized with clear concentrations of poverty in specific Winnipeg neighborhoods. This requires a plan that ensures action is focused on the most vulnerable neighbourhoods.

## ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

The City of Winnipeg must put the appropriate structures in place to ensure the successful development and implementation of its poverty reduction plan. Among these structures should be a committee consisting of City Councillors and community members to provide recommendations to City Council regarding the development and implementation of the City's poverty reduction plan and the progress indicators with targets and timelines. This committee would also guide the work of the Task Force mandated to develop the plan, and receive reports from the Task Force.

The City should also ensure an inter-departmental structure is created consisting of key Directors and Officers who can coordinate and direct departmental work toward the implementation of the City's poverty reduction plan. Communication and collaboration across municipal departments is essential to ensuring a coordinated plan where all are working towards the achievement of common goals. It can expose gaps and prevent unnecessary duplication in policy and programming and create new opportunities for departments to work together on initiatives where they may not otherwise.

City departments should implement and report annually on the use of a poverty and social exclusion lens. This will ensure that City actions are evaluated for their impact on poverty reduction and social inclusion objectives. It will also provide policymakers with the information needed to revise existing City actions and design new actions to have the intended impact on poverty reduction and social inclusion.

The City should take its poverty reduction plan into account when preparing the annual budget so that consideration is given to how spending decisions affect the City's ability to implement its poverty reduction plan and to make progress on its indicators of poverty reduction. The city should also table an annual report that evaluates and reports on the progress it has made in implementing its plan and achieving its poverty reduction targets. This is an essential component of putting an accountability mechanism in place to ensure the City's poverty reduction plan will be effective and credible.

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