

2. TASK FORCE ON POVERTY REPORT

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AS AMENDED

That Council approve the following:

1. That Departments submit reports with programs and strategies to enact the recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty (Interim) Report, including costs and financial sources, to the Community Services Committee, with coordination by the Social Services Department.
2. That the Social Services Department organize strategic advocacy efforts including meetings with MPs and Provincial Ministers to move forward with advocacy recommendations requiring action by the provincial government.

DOCUMENTATION:

1. Commissioner, Social Services Department report dated 22 June 99 is immediately attached.
2. Extract of Draft Minute, Community Services Committee of 8 July 99 follows the report, and includes a record of all votes.
3. "People First: Creating Hope Through Change," Task Force on Poverty in the Region of Ottawa-Carleton, Interim Report, July 1999, has been issued separately and is on file with the Regional Clerk.

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
 Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 22 June 1999

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services Department

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

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

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

PURPOSE

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

DISCUSSION

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

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

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

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

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christine Gorman
Catherine Latham

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

Barbara Bareham
Bob Busby
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Ann Cook
Wendy Croome
Claude Crustin
Nicole Danis
Suzanne Doerge

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

Origin of the Task Force on Poverty

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

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

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

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

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

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

Employment/Income Security

Adequacy of Social Assistance Rates

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

Independent Development Accounts (IDA'S)

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

Micro Investment Funds

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

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

Technology Learning Centres

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

Job Training and Economic Development

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

Essential Health and Social Supports (EHSS)

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

Education

School Bus Transportation

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

Housing

More affordable Housing for people living in poverty

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

Community Programs

Access for Everyone to Resources

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

Unused Recreational Family Subsidy

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

Child Care

Choosing Unlicensed Care

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

More Licensed Care

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

24 Hours Flexible Services

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

In-home Licensed and Subsidized Night Care

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

Transportation**Universal Access to Transit Services**

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

Subsidized Bus Passes

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

Emergency Ticket Program

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

Single Tickets

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

Telephone, Hydro and Gas

Telephone, Hydro (and gas) - Essential Services

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

Security Deposit

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

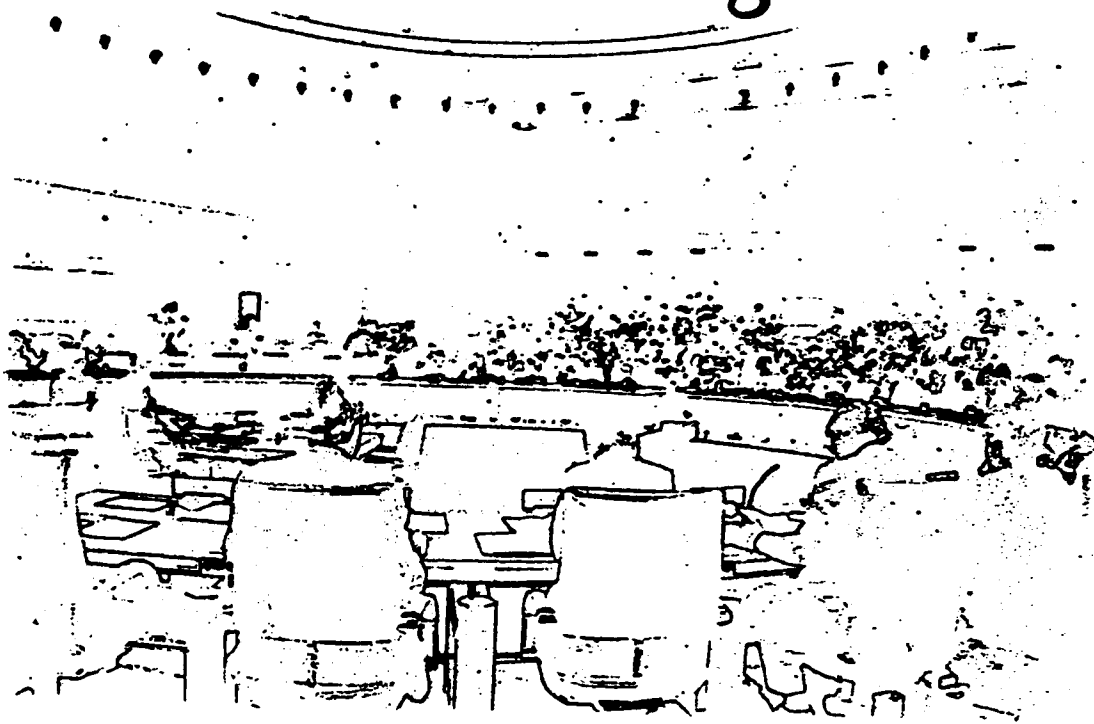
Sensitivity Training

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

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

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

PEOPLE FIRST:
*Creating Hope Through
Change*



TASK FORCE ON POVERTY
In the
Region of Ottawa-Carleton
INTERIM REPORT
July 1999

Community Services Committee Agenda 8 July 1999
Reference Item 2

Extract of Draft Minute
Community Services Committee
8 July 1999

TASK FORCE ON POVERTY REPORT

- Social Services Commissioner's report and Executive Summary dated 24 Jun99
- Interim Report, "People First: Creating Hope Through Change", July 1999, issued

The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Poverty, Mr. Cliff Gazee and Ms. Jocelyne St Jean, presented their Interim Report, dated July 1999. The report makes recommendations for implementation in the following topic areas: Employment/Income Security, Education, Child Care and Transportation and these were outlined by Mr. Gazee and Ms. St Jean.

Mr. Gazee acknowledged the contributions of the Committee and Council, the Organizing Committee of The People's Hearings/Les gens d'abord, community developers and others who participated in the work of the Task Force. Ms. St Jean called the Task Force an exciting process that united people living in poverty with those who are working to develop policies to assist them. Mr. Gazee noted that the recommendations presented have no financial implications and that a final report will be presented in December 1999.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, thanked all the participants, noting the Task Force was an attempt to involve those in the community and something that has given hope to many persons living in poverty. In reply to a question from Councillor D. Holmes, Mr. Gazee confirmed the final report will also contain recommendations for consideration.

Committee discussion focused on the cost implications associated with the Task Force's interim recommendations. The Social Services Commissioner, Mr. D. Stewart, indicated one reason the report is before Committee is for staff to receive direction. He pointed out that addressing some of the concerns expressed has begun through other forums such as the Community Action Plan on Homelessness and the Regional Chair's Task Force on Employment.

The Committee heard from Nicholas Patterson, an Economist, who indicated there is an abundance of housing and many rooming houses available to persons on low incomes. In addition, there already exists an extensive network providing broad access to computers, assistance with job searches, preparation of résumés and similar activities. Mr. Patterson posited the focus should be on the atrocious state of affordable housing which is under-financed. He stated that the housing stock requires \$5 to 10 million in capital improvements and approximately \$1 million to assist with operating costs. He said that many persons living in shelters are victims of inadequate supervision caused by funding cuts and the attendant abuses and that he was prepared to provide additional details in support of this contention.

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Ms. Connie Woloschuk, speaking in her capacity as Co-Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness, spoke in support of the Task Force's interim report. She noted she had been pleased to see the wide range of recommendations contained therein and she indicated she intends to be actively involved in their implementation, under regional staff's coordination. Ms. Woloschuk said she was aware of the stresses and strains of poverty, and she had appreciated participating in the work of such a wide, knowledgeable group of individuals. She added that a report such as this one, coming from sometime clients of social agencies, illustrates they are fully contributing members of society.

Councillor D. Holmes presented a Motion calling for work to begin on cost implications related to the Task Force recommendations and for reports to be brought back to the respective Standing Committee(s) responsible for implementation. She pointed out that staff are already at work in the area of housing, and other regional departments will need to become involved in measure to bring about the implementation of those under their respective jurisdictions.

Councillor A. Loney, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Transit Commission, indicated that problems related to single bus ticket sales may be addressed by using vending machines, and the Transit Services Committee will be looking into this matter. Councillor Loney pointed out his overall concern with the report rests with the need for the Department to assess where Council will get value for investment and he cautioned against taking over the obligations of other levels of government.

Commissioner Stewart said the Department has not prioritized the recommendations, however staff can begin to do so if directed by the Committee. He pointed out that some measures depend on the cooperation of the Province, but he was not optimistic about this being forthcoming. Others are underway, and staff believe they can have an update report ready by the first Committee meeting in October.

Councillor C. Doucet said part of the Committee's process will be to determine which recommendations can and which ones cannot be implemented before the Task Force's Final Report is submitted. He posited this in itself will be a form of prioritization.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen suggested staff discuss prioritizing the recommendations with Task Force members. She said it would be important to ascertain what the primary source of funding would be and it might be easier to make decisions if this information were known. She proposed the following Motion:

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8 July 1999

That staff review, with input from the Task Force, the recommendations in The People First report, with a list prioritizing the recommendations and that this report come back to the Community Services Committee at the first meeting in October.

Speaking to her Motion, Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen pointed out that, in a perfect world, there would be no need to prioritize. She posited that having the community work with staff, and asking for a report back, maintains control in the Committee's hands.

Councillor D. Beamish said he would prefer more general comments on the entire group of recommendations to assist the Committee with prioritizing them. Councillor H. Kreling posited Councillor Holmes' Motion directs staff to look into this matter and the Committee will need to decide in which of the areas it wants to move forward.

Chair Munter pointed out the Committee needs to discover how to implement the recommendations that will address the problems faced by, and identified by, poor people, and not engage in more "bureaucratise". He noted that, while some initiatives are underway, others are beyond the control of Regional Council. In areas such as child care and eligibility requirements, the Region is able to assist, but Council will need to be honest about those measures it will not be able to implement.

Councillor Beamish asked to what extent staff were involved in writing the report and how Commissioner Stewart recommends the Committee deal with the report today. Mr. Stewart indicated staff's role was to provide expertise and to make suggestions on other initiatives for the purpose of continuity. With respect to the Motions before Committee, Mr. Stewart stated both require that staff review all the recommendations and comment on their short-term implementation, but one calls on staff to prioritize while the other calls for reports back to other Standing Committees, with the attendant loss of control by the Department. He said he would have expected the Department bring the report back to Committee with cost implications and implementation strategies.

Councillor Doucet put forward the following Motion:

- (a) That staff bring forward a report which assigns costs and available resources to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty.**
- (b) That staff put together an advocacy strategy for those recommendations relating to provincial actions required**

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Replying to a question from Councillor Holmes, Mr. Stewart said he saw the Department coordinating all the activities, since the lion's share of the recommendations lies within this budget. After further discussion, both Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen and Councillor Doucet withdrew their Motions.

The Committee then considered the following:

Moved by D. Holmes

1. **That Departments submit reports with programs and strategies to enact the recommendations of the Task Force on Poverty Interim Report, including costs and financial sources, to the Community Services Committee, with coordination by the Social Services Department.**
2. **That the Social Services Department organize strategic advocacy efforts including meetings with MPs and Provincial Ministers to move forward with advocacy recommendations requiring action by the provincial government.**

CARRIED, as amended