

## Briefing Note - Provincial Poverty Project

### Recommendations

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) Provincial Poverty Project Planning Committee requests that:

1. Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) encourage and support Health Units to engage in advocacy efforts related to the Nutritious Food Basket and promote the municipal candidate survey among candidates.
2. Medical Officers of Health ensure that local Boards of Health are aware of the provincial and local poverty simulation events.
3. COMOH encourage and support Health Unit staff to lead their local poverty simulation event planning committee and contribute a nominal amount, estimated at \$500 per Health Unit, to the costs of the simulation event.
4. Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) partner with OSNPPH for provincial event planning (e.g., communications plan, joint marketing, media relations).
5. United Way partner with OSNPPH for local event planning (e.g., event details, invite list, event promotion) and provincial event planning (e.g. communications plan, joint marketing, media relations).

### Project Overview

The Provincial Poverty Project originated from the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) Food Security Workgroup. OSNPPH is a network of Registered Dietitians working in Public Health across Ontario. OSNPPH advocates and responds in order to advance the public health nutrition agenda. OSNPPH is playing a leadership role in coordinating the planning and evaluation of this project to build a broader social awareness and social marketing strategy to enhance the impact and reach of the local events. Through the OSNPPH network, representatives from over half of the health units in Ontario have expressed an interest in participating.

The Provincial Poverty Project includes two main initiatives occurring this fall, the Nutritious Food Basket advocacy and municipal candidate survey and the poverty simulation.

#### A). Nutritious Food Basket Advocacy and Municipal Candidate Survey

##### *Purpose*

- To increase coordination and impact of Nutritious Food Basket advocacy efforts
- To educate voters on municipal candidates' views on poverty and food related public policies

##### *Overview*

Participating Ontario health units will distribute local Nutritious Food Basket survey results and an opinion survey to municipal candidates about their support for poverty and food related public policies and programs. Survey content will include issues advocated for as part of annual advocacy efforts related to the Nutritious Food Basket. Survey results will be publically disseminated before municipal elections.

*Budget:* \$5000 to support planning and evaluation (application submitted for Heart & Stroke Spark Advocacy Grant)

*Timeframe:* September and October 2014

## B). Poverty Simulation

### *Purpose*

- To influence government officials' and service providers' attitudes toward people living in poverty and increase awareness of barriers they face resulting in long-term impacts to programming and policy decisions

Research supports that poverty simulations may increase participants' empathy, understanding and knowledge of the barriers faced by low income populations<sup>1</sup>, and increase participants' confidence in their ability to identify issues contributing to poverty and positively impact people living in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

### *Overview*

Select community service providers, government officials and media representatives will be invited to participate in local poverty simulation events occurring in communities across Ontario. As part of the event, participants will be encouraged to take a variety of follow-up actions to continue to build support for public programs and policies supporting poverty and food related issues.

In-person simulation options include “*The Last Straw!*”<sup>2</sup>, a board game appropriate for smaller events, and “*Walk the Walk*”, a more extensive simulation developed by Chatham-Kent Health Unit, Chatham-Kent Prosperity Roundtable and Food Link Chatham-Kent. Both options require participants to manage the unexpected challenges of a marginalized life and the barriers to accessing community resources.

To provide an opportunity for the general public and remote communities to become involved, an online poverty simulation will also be promoted. It is anticipated that an online simulation would add to the in-person event, not replace it, given the differences in the two experiences and the select invite list for the in-person simulation.

*Budget:* Estimated \$500 per community for 100 participants, with room rental donated and a ‘poverty’ lunch provided

*Timeframe:* November 2014

### **Next Steps**

The OSNPPH Provincial Poverty Project Planning Committee participates in monthly planning teleconferences to coordinate and discuss project planning including evaluation and communication s. Interested health units may contact Kim Leacy ([kim.leacy@mlhu.on.ca](mailto:kim.leacy@mlhu.on.ca)) or Lyndsay Davidson ([lyndsayd@chatham-kent.ca](mailto:lyndsayd@chatham-kent.ca)) for more information.

Local events will be organized by Health Units and committees of community partners (local planning committees). The project’s success and impact will be directly influenced by the strength of local and provincial partnerships. Interested Health Units are currently forming local planning committees with community partners (e.g., United Way, Food Banks, local Poverty Networks).

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<sup>1</sup> Strasser, S., Smith, M.O., Denney, D.P., Jackson, M.C., & Buckmaster, P. (2013). A poverty simulation to inform public health practice. *American Journal of Health Education*, 44, 259-264.

<sup>2</sup> Rossiter, K & Reeve, K. (2007). *The last straw!: A board game on the social determinants of health*. Available from [www.thelaststraw.ca](http://www.thelaststraw.ca).