

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO

DATE: 2020 April 16

ONTARIO POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health receive Report No. 017-20 re: “Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy Consultation” for information.

Key Points

- On January 30, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to provide [feedback](#) on the next five-year Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy. The deadline for submissions was March 30, 2020.
- The Health Unit had an opportunity to contribute to the development of evidence-informed programming and policy to help reduce poverty in Ontario.
- Health Unit staff prepared a response to the online service provider survey (attached [as Appendix A](#)).
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Background

Social determinants of health, such as food access, income, housing, and employment, are strongly influenced by government public policy decisions. The Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Ontario Public Health Association both have identified the involvement of public health in social determinants of health as a fundamental component of public health work. Currently, the Government of Ontario is leading a consultation process on the development of its third Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy.

In 2009, the Government of Ontario passed Bill 152, the [Poverty Reduction Act, 2009, Chapter 10, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario](#). Bill 152 requires that the government develop a poverty reduction strategy that is updated at least every five years with consultation from key stakeholders, including other levels of government, members of the private, public, and non-profit sectors, and individuals, including individuals living in poverty.

The following principles have been identified as essential to an effective and ethical poverty reduction strategy:

- Importance of all Ontarians;
- Importance of communities;
- Recognition of diversity;
- Importance of support and involvement of families;
- Respect;
- Involvement;
- Commitment and cooperation; and
- Importance of the third sector (non-profit, charitable, and volunteer organizations).

The following components would help a poverty reduction strategy be effective:

1. A specific poverty reduction target;
2. Initiatives designed to improve the economic and social conditions of persons and families living in poverty; and
3. Indicators to measure the success of the strategy that are linked to the determinants of poverty, including but not limited to income, education, health, housing, and standard of living.

The Middlesex-London Board of Health submitted a written response ([Report No. 099-13](#)) for the previous Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy consultation process in 2013.

Government of Ontario Seeks Feedback for a New Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy

On January 30, 2020, the Government of Ontario issued an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to provide [feedback](#) for the next five-year Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy. The deadline for submissions was March 30, 2020. Stakeholders could respond to an online survey, with separate surveys for individuals and for service providers and employers, and/or submit a written response.

The government was requesting feedback on:

1. Encouraging job creation and connecting people to employment;
2. Providing people with appropriate supports and services;
3. Lowering the cost of living and making life more affordable; and
4. The [current Poverty Reduction Strategy](#).

Opportunity for Action

The Health Unit's Health Equity Advisory Taskforce (HEAT) and the Healthy Living Division collaboratively prepared a response to the service provider survey (see Appendix A) based on evidence, political climate, need, impact, and recommendations from [Report No. 070-19 re: "Monitoring Food Affordability and Implications for Government Public Policy Action"](#) and the [alpha-OPHA joint response to the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy Consultation in 2017](#). The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) and the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) also submitted a joint response to the Ontario consultation; however, this submission was not yet public at the time MLHU's response was completed.

Conclusion

With its strong understanding of the importance and impact of the social determinants of health on individual, family, community, and population health, public health is well positioned to inform a provincial poverty reduction strategy. In addition to this recent submission to the Government of Ontario, MLHU will continue to identify opportunities to address health inequities, such as poverty, and to inform healthy public policy to enhance population health.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Living Division and the Office of the Chief Nursing Officer.



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