



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of
Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: Update on “Increasing Prosperity for Families Living in Poverty”

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- As noted in COM 53-2008 Regional Council authorized staff to reinvest the cost savings in social assistance of \$900,000 in 2008 and \$1.5 million afterward toward increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty.
- Community Services staff entered into an agreement with the Business Education Council (BEC) who acts as the secretariat for investments as well as the convenor for the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee (NPIAC)
- In order to guide strategic investment and capacity building, Community Services staff developed neighbourhood profiles identifying the assets and risk factors within each of Niagara’s 74 neighbourhoods.
- A Request for Proposals issued in May has resulted in neighbourhood investments which respond to the recommendations found in the “*Legacy of Poverty? Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region*”. These recommendations were: decrease poverty through advocacy; ensure appropriate and flexible supports which address the broader determinants of health for adults living in poverty; mitigate the negative effects of low income on children and youth through programs and services; and monitor progress.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As noted in COM 53-2008 Regional Council authorized staff to reinvest the cost savings in social assistance of \$900,000 in 2008 and \$1.5 million afterward toward increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty. These savings resulted from the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit which removed children from the social assistance budget. To date, a total of \$2,038,358 has been reinvested in 2008 and 2009 prosperity projects.

PURPOSE

This report has been prepared to provide an update to Committee and Council regarding the reinvestment of social assistance cost savings toward increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty.

BACKGROUND

In September 2008 (COM 53-2008) Regional Council authorized staff to reinvest cost savings as a result of the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) of \$900,000 for 2008 and \$1.5 million afterward toward increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty. Through the results of the Niagara Region Council Planning Session which occurred in June 2008, Community Services staff were directed to work with an established community agency that would act as the secretariat for the initiative and would also establish an advisory committee to oversee the implementation of the prosperity strategies. Through COM 53-2008, staff were to invest in seven specific strategies for 2008. These were:

1. Breakfast programs;
2. Back to school/Winter clothing funding for children;
3. Completion of an integrated inventory of services offered to parents through the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and family resources;
4. \$100/month gift card to grocery store for Sole Support Parents (SSP) on Social Assistance with earnings for up to 12 months;
5. Good Food Box – creating a link with local farmers to provide nutritious food;
6. Emergency Energy Fund – to assist with individuals who are facing disconnection of gas or hydro; and
7. Free bus passes for youth (high school) to increase participation in the community

In November 2008 Community Services contracted with the BEC to provide the operational management of the funding for the prosperity projects. The role of BEC also included the role of “convener” who would establish and chair the advisory committee, liaise with businesses and work to increase collaboration regarding the Niagara prosperity initiatives.

REPORT

Poverty reduction plans are being made in communities across Canada and Ontario. Each community plan varies in execution, parties involved, and funding allocation; however, all of them share some similarities in their methods. In each community, analysis is being completed on the current status of poverty, groups of individuals are joining together to oversee poverty reduction plans and the voice of people living in poverty is being heard. Ontario’s plan “*Breaking the Cycle – Ontario’s Poverty Reduction*

*Strategy*¹ speaks to the work being done, “There are numerous examples of how communities across Ontario have come together. They have effectively broken down existing barriers and gotten down to work on their own...Strong communities can be an extremely positive influence on the health and economic prospects of the people who live in them.”

As authorized by Council, Community Services staff has worked to meet three primary objectives related to increasing prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty. These objectives were to establish a community based advisory committee, to invest in the seven strategies developed at the Niagara Region’s Council Planning Session and to invest \$1.5 million in increasing prosperity for neighbourhoods in need of attention across the region. Details regarding the progress of these objectives are detailed below:

Establish a community based advisory committee –
Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee (NPIAC)

In March, the BEC and Community Services invited individuals representing communities across Niagara, including non-profits, government, education, community leaders, the private sector, neighbourhood representatives and other stakeholders to begin discussion regarding an advisory committee. The group met again in April and May and have established Terms of Reference² and agreed to the following objectives:

1. To guide and direct investment on identified initiatives to alleviate poverty in all neighbourhoods across the Niagara region.
2. To advocate for change that will reduce and prevent poverty in the community.
3. To develop and enhance a collaborative relationship between stakeholders.
4. Engage people living in poverty in meaningful ways to ensure that investments reflect need and accrued tangible, measurable improvements to those residents.

Councillor Shirley Cordiner and Mayor Dave Augustyn are members of this committee and membership to the committee is open and fluid. The collaboration between private, voluntary, and public sectors is focused on leveraging existing resources and developing new resources that will address poverty at a neighbourhood level across Niagara. The NPIAC also maintains a critical link with Niagara businesses represented at the Committee by the Chair of the BEC Business Caucus. The Caucus is actively participating in neighbourhood projects and dedicated to reducing poverty across Niagara.

Invest in the Seven Strategies Developed at the Niagara Region’s Council Planning Session

In November 2008, Community Services entered into a contract with the BEC to assist in the allocation of the seven Prosperity Strategies that were developed at the Niagara Region’s Council Planning Session in June 2008. In total \$845,946 has been allocated to the seven Prosperity Strategies. The following table provides information on the status of each of these strategies.

¹ Hon Deb Matthews (2008) *Breaking the Cycle – Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 19

² Terms of Reference are included as Appendix 1

STRATEGY	COMMUNITY	ALLOCATION	AGENCY	STATUS
Promotion of Benefits of Breakfast Programs for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	\$5,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niagara Nutrition Partners (NNP) 	Two schools that have new Breakfast Programs will provide information about the impact that the program has on children's learning. This information will be developed into promotion material used to garner support and resources.
\$100 Grocery Cards to Sole Support Parents who are working and are in receipt of Social Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niagara Falls Port Colborne St. Catharines Welland Thorold West Lincoln 	\$418,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project SHARE Port Cares Bethlehem Projects of Niagara Welland Heritage Council And Multicultural Centre Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold Niagara College, Welland Campus 	Implementation of these projects is scheduled to begin in July 2009
Good Food Boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welland 	\$65,660	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gateway 	Distribution of Good Food Boxes is scheduled to begin in August 2009
Bus passes for youth of low income families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	\$72,695	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Raft Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold AFSSN Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines/Multicultural Centre Welland Heritage Council And Multicultural Centre 	Implementation of these projects is scheduled to begin in July 2009
Inventory of family resource services available to parents through the Ontario Early Years Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	\$15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Niagara Early Community Child Care Development Centre (ECCDC) 	Early Years Niagara representatives from the Hub committee have met with Information Niagara to review present OEYC content and the feasibility of a complete Parent Directory. Expectation is that this directory will be available online and in hard copy for identified neighbourhoods by October 2009.
Emergency Energy funds to individuals facing heat/utility disconnection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	\$70,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold Community Care of West Niagara Grimsby Benevolent Hope Centre Port Cares Project SHARE West Lincoln Community Care 	Funding was allocated to agencies across Niagara and fully expended as of June 2009.
Back to School or Winter Clothing funding for children of low income families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional 	\$199,591	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project SHARE Hope Centre Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold COPE 	In November of 2008 over 2,000 children in low income families received new winter clothing.

Increasing Prosperity for Neighbourhoods in Need of Attention – 2009 Investments

Two broad criteria were established to guide the RFP process for investment of 2009 funds. Projects were to address at least one of the four recommendations from the 2007 report “*A Legacy of Poverty*”³ and were to be implemented in a neighbourhood that requires attention. The Neighbourhood Mapping Tool⁴ was developed to assist RFP proponents. The neighbourhoods used for the Tool were identified through work done by the Niagara Region Ontario Early Years Data Analysis Coordinator, who in 2006, facilitated community sessions across the twelve municipalities in Niagara. At these sessions, participants reviewed poster-sized maps of their municipalities and discussed neighbourhood areas until a group consensus on boundaries was reached. In total, 74 neighbourhoods across Niagara were identified. Community Services staff worked with GIS services to develop neighbourhood profiles identifying the assets and risk factors within each community.

The profiles contain general population information and also highlight four main indicators and corresponding neighbourhood assets as follows:

Indicator	Assets
Population – total population, number of lone parent households, % of children aged 0-14, % of children received a childcare subsidy in December 2008.	Licensed child care centres, Ontario Early Years Centres, Childcare Resources Centres, Libraries
Health – low birth weight; high risk Parkyn Screen scores; pregnancy and death rates;	Hospitals, dentists, family physicians, specialists/paediatricians
Income – LICO (Low Income Cut Off), Unemployment rates, and people in receipt of Government Transfer payments;	Employment search agencies, banks
Housing – number of tenant occupied dwellings, average rent, and number of tenants spending 30% or more of their income on rent; and	Niagara Regional Housing buildings, Hostels
Education – Early Development Instrument (EDI) which measures senior kindergarten children’s readiness to learn in five general domains (physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge), and the number of people aged 25-64 without a high school education.	Colleges, Universities, Adult Literacy Programs, High Schools, Elementary Schools, School Food Programs

³ <http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/saeo/reports/pdf/PovertyReport.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.becon.org/images/pdf/niagara%20neighbourhood%20profiles%20and%20mapping.pdf>

Information regarding the Neighbourhood Mapping Tool is as follows:

Number of neighbourhoods in the municipality

Municipality

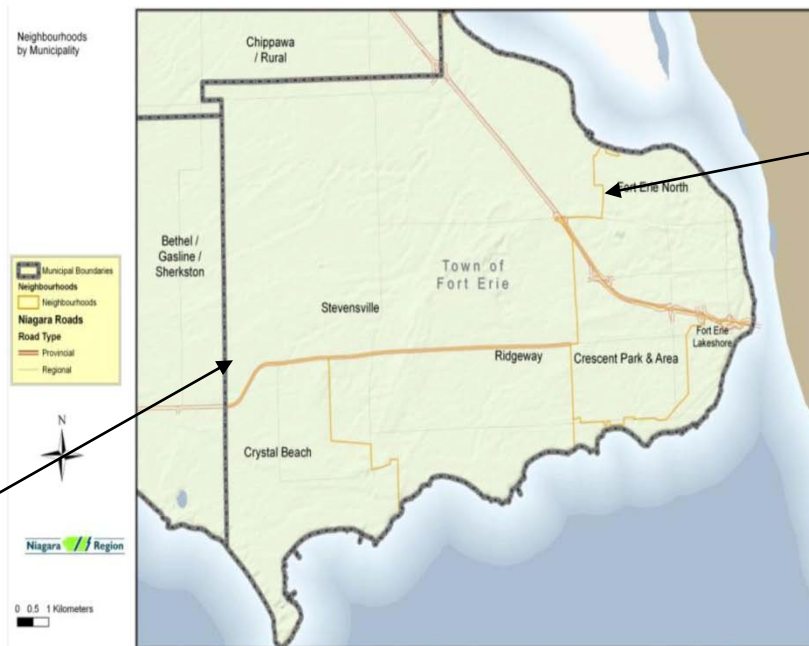
Fort Erie		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Neighbourhoods		EDI	HS	LICO	U	RENT	LBW	Parkyn
FE 2	Crystal Beach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓
FE 4	Fort Erie North	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
FE 6	Fort Erie Lakeshore	✓			✓		✓	✓
FE 1	Stevensville	✓					✓	
FE 3	Ridgeway							
FE 5	Crescent Park & Area							

Municipal Averages		
1 EDI	Early Development Indicator	< 33.9%
2 HS	25-64 without high school education	> 15.0%
3 LICO	Low Income Cut-Off	< 7.5%
4 U	Unemployment	< 6.7%
5 RENT	Spending 30% or More of Income on Ren	< 45.1%
6 LBW	Low Birth Weight for live births (Rate/100)	< 3.4
Parkyn	% High Risk Parkyn Score	< 19.6%

✓ Means it is in need of attention

Municipal averages

7 indicators



Neighbourhood boundaries

Municipal boundaries

Municipality: **Thorold** Neighbourhood Name: **Thorold South / Allanburg / Port Robinson East** Community assets that respond to information in the indicators: **TH1**

General population data

Indicators

Community Resources

4 pillar indicators: health, income, housing and education

Inventory at the municipal and neighbourhood levels

Identified in need of attention when neighbourhood indicator varies from municipal average

Neighbourhood Map

Neighbourhood	%	Neighbourhood Attention	Municipality	Neighbourhood	%	Neighbourhood Attention	Municipality
CHILDREN'S RESOURCES:							
Child Neighbourhood Population	3,210			Child Neighbourhood Population	18,224		
Sole Support Parents (SSP)	14.6%			Licensed Child Care Centres	0	5	
Percentage of Children Aged 0-12 Who Received a Child Care Subsidy in December 2008	7.4%			Ontario Early Years Centres	0	1	
Children (Age 0-14)	640			Childcare Resource Centres	0	0	
HEALTH FACTORS:							
Low Birth Weight for Livebirths (Rate/100)	6.7	YES	4.6	Libraries	1	2	
% High Risk Parkyn Score	22.4%	YES	17.6%	HEALTH FACTORS:			
Pregnancy Rate (Rate/1000)	26.8		39	Hospitals	0	0	
Deaths (Rate/10000)	58.6		81.4	Dentist Offices	0	12	
Percentage Population 65 and Over	10%		14.4%	Family Physicians	0	9	
INCOME:							
WCO - Total Persons in Private Households (After Tax in 2005)	6%	NO	7.0%	Physician/ Specialist/ Pediatrician	0	1	
Unemployed	4.6%	NO	5.4%	Grocery Stores	0	1	
Composition of family income - Government Transfer Payments %	11.4%		22%	Foodbanks	0	1	
SHELTER COSTS:							
Tenant-occupied Dwellings	13.4%		19.7%	INCOME:			
Average Gross Rent	\$696		\$708	Employment Search Agencies	1	2	
Tenant-occupied Households Spending 30% or More of Income on Rent	34.4%	NO	44.9%	Banks	0	4	
EDUCATION:							
EDI - Percentage of Vulnerable Children Without Completed Highschool Education (Ages 25-64) (%)	19.6%	YES	14.9%	AFFORDABLE HOUSING:			
EDUCATION:							
Adult and Literacy Programs	0	1		Niagara Regional Housing Building Complexes	2	3	
High Schools	0	2		Hostels	0	0	
Elementary Schools	2	8		OTHER:			
School Food Programs	1	8		Places of Worship	1	13	
OTHER:							
Police Stations	0	0		Fire Department	2	4	
Fire Department	2	4		Seniors Community Facilities	0	0	
Seniors Community Facilities	0	0		Long-Term Care Facilities	0	0	
Long-Term Care Facilities	0	0		Private Retirement Homes	0	1	
Private Retirement Homes	0	1		Private Nursing Homes	0	0	
Private Nursing Homes	0	0		Private Homes for the Aged	0	0	
Private Homes for the Aged	0	0					

Statistics Canada. 2006. Semi-Custom Profile of Selected Geographic Areas in Niagara Region, 2006 Census (table). Semi-Custom Electronic Profiles. Ottawa, November 17. Note: Beyond 20/20.
 Early Development Instrument (EDI) results 2006, Understanding the Early Years. Additional referencing information at end of document. 70

NEIGHBOURHOOD PROFILES - NIAGARA REGION

It was important to include the resources available within each neighbourhood as this information will help highlight where services exist and draw out where services are missing in neighbourhoods in need of attention.

2009 Request for Proposals

The BEC and Community Services staff developed an RFP process to allocate the \$1.5 million funding approved for investment in 2009. This process was reviewed at a NPIAC meeting and in May 2009 the RFP was issued with a closing date of May 27th. A sub-group from the NPIAC was established to review the proposals and in June 2009 the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Proposal Review Committee, consisting of five individuals representing the community, service agencies, social planning, business and government met to review the RFPs submitted and make recommendations for funding to Community Services. In total, 45 submissions were received from 25 agencies across Niagara. Proposals were evaluated based on their appropriate response to one of the four recommendations in the “Legacy of Poverty” report and how projects would increase prosperity in neighbourhoods identified in need of attention.

Through COM 04-2008, Community Services proposed allocation of funding focused in each of the four recommendations found in the “A Legacy of Poverty” report. The chart below compares the Proposed Investment to the actual 2009 Investment. Proposals regarding advocacy were not submitted however the work of the NPIAC will address advocacy as a strategy to increase prosperity for Niagara families living in poverty.

Recommendation	Proposed Investment	2009 Investment
1. Advocacy	5%	0%
2. Adult Support based on Social determinants of health	40%	50%
3. Children and Youth Services	50%	47%
4. Monitor	5%	3%

All of the approved projects respond to needs in neighbourhoods that have been identified through the Neighbourhood Mapping Tool. Several articles have already been featured in local newspapers regarding these investments.⁵ Details of the investment are as follows:

Municipality	Neighbourhood	Project	Agency
Fort Erie	Fort Erie North	Summer Camp	Fort Erie Public Library
		Good Food Box Program	Bridges Community Health Centre
Lincoln	North Beamsville	Five Neighbourhoods Project	United Way of St. Catharines & District

⁵ Appendix 2 – Contains recent media coverage regarding the Prosperity Initiatives

Municipality	Neighbourhood	Project	Agency
Niagara Falls	Drummond/ Victoria Elgin	- \$100 Grocery Gift Card - Winter Clothing Gift Card - Back to School Gift Card - Child Visitation Packages - \$20 Laundry Voucher - Personal Needs Products - Shoe/Boot Project	Project SHARE
		- Immigrant Youth in Poverty- Bus Passes	Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines/ Multicultural Centre
	All Neighbourhoods	- Grocery Store Gift Card	YWCA Niagara Region
Pelham	North Fonthill	- Food Assistance Vouchers	Pelham Cares
Port Colborne	Three Bridges Sugarloaf	- Grocery Store Gift Cards - Back to School/Winter Clothing	Port Cares
		- Community Garden	Community Living
	Three Bridges Sugarloaf Crystal Beach	- Good Food Box Program	Bridges Community Health Centre
St.Catharines	Downtown The Haig Queenston Old Western Hill Merritton Carlton/ Bunting Fairview Facer	- Grocery Store Gift Cards	Bethlehem Projects of Niagara
		- Backpacks for Kids	United Way of St. Catharines & District
		- Neighbourhood Transitional Supports	Start Me Up Niagara
		- Bus Passes for Youth - Grocery Store Gift Cards - Back to School / Winter Clothing	Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold
	Downtown Old Western Hill Merritton	- Five Neighbourhoods Project	United Way of St. Catharines & District
	Downtown	- Immigrant Youth in Poverty- Bus Passes	Folk Arts Council of St. Catharines/ Multicultural Centre
	Fairview	- Summer School Programs	District School Board of Niagara
	All Neighbourhoods	- Grocery Store Gift Cards	YWCA Niagara Region
Thorold	Thorold Proper	- Bus Passes for Youth - Grocery Store Gift Cards - Back to School / Winter Clothing	Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold
		- Five Neighbourhoods Project	United Way of St. Catharines & District
Wainfleet		- Community Garden	Community Living

Municipality	Neighbourhood	Project	Agency
Welland	Cordage West Main Market Square Ontario Road /Dain City Eastdale	-Grocery Store Gift Cards -Bus Passes for Youth	Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre
	Welland South	- Welland Neighbourhood Project	United Way of South Niagara
	South Pelham	- Community Garden	Wellspring Community Church
	Market Square Eastdale	- Summer School Programs	District School Board of Niagara
	All Neighbourhoods	- Grocery Store Gift Cards	YWCA Niagara Region
West Lincoln	Gainsborough South Grimsby Caistor	-Bus Passes for Youth -Grocery Store Gift Cards -Back to School / Winter Clothing	Community Care of St.Catharines & Thorold
Regional	All Neighbourhoods	- Bus Passes	The RAFT
		- Bus Passes	Adolescent's Family Support Services of Niagara
		- Talk 2 One	Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold
		- Project Evaluation Process	Latis Research Consultants

A total of \$1,192,412 will be invested in 34 projects delivered by 20 agencies across Niagara. Approximately 11 projects requesting \$707,848 were rejected by the review committee as they did not meet the eligibility criteria. In order to monitor the impact on neighbourhood prosperity, agencies will use a standard reporting mechanism to report outcomes to Community Services.

One of the key principles outlined in the report “Breaking the Cycle – Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy” is “*Engagement: All Ontarians, especially people living in poverty*”⁶. Throughout Niagara, communities are meeting and focusing on poverty reduction and prosperity building. The BEC and Community Services staff continue to share information from the Neighbourhood Mapping Tool and Niagara Region Council’s investment in increasing prosperity at the neighbourhood level. Community engagement will continue and a questionnaire is being developed to help inform investments for 2010 in neighbourhoods that require attention across Niagara. The community engagement results will be incorporated in the approval criteria for the next request for proposals tentatively scheduled to occur in November 2009 for 2010 funding. The \$361,642 remaining from the 2008 and 2009 allocations will be used to fund these future investments.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix 1 Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee Terms of Reference - Spring 2009

Appendix 2 articles that were featured in local newspapers

This report was prepared by Marc Todd, Manager and Sarah Pennisi, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities.

⁶ Hon Deb Matthews (2008) *Breaking the Cycle – Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 5

Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee
Terms of Reference
Spring 2009

PREAMBLE:

The Prosperity Initiatives are intended to increase prosperity among residents of the Niagara Region who reside in targeted neighborhoods and communities.

The Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee (Breaking the Cycle) provides leadership in sharing ideas, resources and information services to leverage, collaborate and maximize the effectiveness of investments and initiatives directed to address Poverty in Niagara.

The Business Education Council of Niagara (BEC) provides the Prosperity Initiative Advisory Committee with infrastructure support, acting as secretariat and by bringing together stakeholders, enhancing partnership and collaboration. The services of the BEC are contracted by Niagara Region/Community and Social Services.

VISION:

All Niagara residents live above the poverty line.

MISSION:

A collaboration between private, voluntary and public sectors to leverage existing resources and to develop new resources to address poverty at the neighbourhood level across Niagara.

VALUES:

Collaborative Flexible Inclusive Innovative Integrity Proactive Responsive

GOALS:

1. To guide and direct investment on identified initiatives to alleviate poverty in all neighbourhoods across the Niagara Region.
2. To advocate for change that will reduce and prevent poverty in the community.
3. To develop and enhance a collaborative relationship between stakeholders.
4. To engage people living in poverty in meaningful ways to ensure that investments reflect need and accrued tangible, measurable improvements to those residents.

MEMBERSHIP:

The Advisory Committee will be broadly representative of the communities of Niagara, non-profits, government, education, community leaders, the private sector, neighbourhood representatives and other stakeholders. Core representation will be maintained by:

Advisory Committee Quorum: To proceed with an Advisory Committee meeting, eleven (11) members must be present. Of the eleven members, one must be a Co-Chair or Vice-Chair.

Standing Committees: The Advisory Committee will establish permanent committees, with specific terms of reference, to support the work of the Advisory Committee and bring recommendations forward to the Advisory Committee for consideration and approval.

Working Groups: As required, the Advisory Committee will establish ad hoc groups, with a clearly defined purpose and timeline, to carry out specific tasks or projects.

MEMBERSHIP/ STRUCTURE (COMMUNITY PARTNERS):

- Government, non profit, low-income and business sectors
- Education, research, health and faith sectors
- Neighbourhood representatives

CHAIR/CO-CHAIR:

Two Co-Chairs, Chair and/or Vice Chair will be among the members of the committee in September of each year. These positions may be held by the incumbent for the duration of their tenure on the committee so long as the Advisory Council confirms their appointments annually.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS:

The Advisory Committee meets monthly, September to June, based on an agenda established by the Co-Chairs and/or Vice-Chair, to conduct business consistent with the vision and mandate of the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee. Additional meetings may be called at the discretion of the Co-Chair / Vice-Chair.

DECISION-MAKING, CONFLICT OF INTEREST, AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION –COUNCIL & NETWORKS

Decision Making: Decisions will be achieved by consensus of the members present at the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee meeting.

Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest is any situation in which a member of the Niagara Prosperity Initiatives Advisory Committee, either for himself/herself or some other person(s), attempts to promote a private or personal interest that results or appears to result in the following:

- Interference with the objective exercise of his/her duties as a member of the Advisory Committee;
- A gain or advantage by virtue of his/her position on the Advisory Committee; and/or
- Some advantage for an organization with which the member is directly involved as a director, member, partner, shareholder, staff member, or has a financial interest.

Dispute Resolution: In the event that a dispute arises the members will attempt to negotiate the matter including involvement from other Network members or a skilled facilitator/mediator as appropriate.



Partners on board for Good Food Box

Niagara This Week
Thu Jul 2 2009
Page: 01
Section: Welland
Byline: MICHAEL SPECK STAFF
Column: 6

The Good Food Box program is moving ahead with more partnerships and a little seed money.

The Business Education Council, secretariats of the Region's **Niagara** Prosperity Initiatives program, got things moving by donating \$35,000 to the program to hire a part-time employee for Good Food Box for the next two years.

That position will be filled by the city's Market Square coordinator Bernice Booth. Also on board is Gateway Residential and Support Services executive director John Osczytko, who will coordinate the program, and the Seaway Mall, which is donating space for the organizing of food.

Good Food Box, a program that helps the less-fortunate and less-able get access to healthy, locally grown produce, ran previously in **Niagara** in the 1990s but as the client list grew to include more than 700 families, it became unsustainable, said Welland Mayor Damian Goulbourne.

That's why the regional government's help in securing the funding to hire a dedicated employee for the program is pivotal, Goulbourne said.

"Without that staff resource, it wasn't sustainable," Goulbourne said.

Other grants for the program include a \$2,000 grant from public health, and a proposal to the Trillium Foundation was submitted July 1 for about \$40,000. The money, being applied for on behalf of Gateway, will be for a cold storage at Market Square to store produce for the program.

Welland City Council got behind the initiative recently by agreeing to lease the space for the freezer unit to Gateway for \$1 a year for the next five years, plus additional funds for utilities.

Gateway, an organization dedicated to assisting people with mental disabilities and other challenges, took the lead because many of its clients don't have the money or capability to purchase locally grown, healthy food, said Osczytko.

The food gets delivered during the middle of the month, at which time many people living in **poverty** are running short on cash and groceries.

"Good Food Box is about making healthy choices," he said. "If you're on a fixed income, you're not always buying fruits and vegetables."

When the program is launched in August, the incoming food will be sorted and distributed at the Seaway Mall. Michael Belcastro, mall president, called Good Food Box "a great initiative for the mall to get behind" because of its central location and appeal to all of **Niagara**. "The exposure will be great," Belcastro said.

Since the August launch comes before a cold storage is available, food will be quickly distributed from the mall by volunteers. As well as fruit and vegetables, the boxes will also contain recipes.

Seven community agencies have signed on to become distribution centres and compile client lists, said Goulbourne, including Hope Centre, the Open Arms Mission and the Rose City Seniors Activity Centre. Good Food Box is running as a two-year pilot in **Niagara** and if successful, will spread throughout **Niagara**.

Rick Merritt, of the BEC, said the Good Food Box was a perfect fit for the region's \$1.5-million prosperity program.

"We're hoping these initiatives will create more partnerships, more collaborations," Merritt said.

As well as battling **poverty**, Good Food Box is also in conjunction with the Region's Local Food Action Plan, said Goulbourne, as it increases access to local food.

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Two-for-one bus passes for youth

Niagara This Week
Thu Jul 2 2009
Page: 01
Section: Welland
Column: 6

To help students enjoy all the city has to offer this summer, Welland Transit is offering a two-for-one monthly bus pass promotion for July and August.

If city youth buy a bus pass for the month of July, they'll also receive a monthly bus pass for August at no additional charge. The program is designed to stimulate youth ridership during the summer months as well as promoting public transit and helping students enjoy the community, said transit manager Alfred Stockwell.

When school breaks for the warmer weather, student ridership "drops dramatically," Stockwell said. A successful summer two-for-one initiative has been underway for several years in St. Catharines, and when it was presented to the city's transit advisory committee, it received full support.

"It is a good initiative," Stockwell said. "It simulates youth to go out."

For the program to be revenue-neutral, the city just needs to sell double the monthly passes it sold last year, when only 19 monthly passes were sold throughout the entire summer, putting a measly \$1,121 into the city's coffers.

The two-for-one promotion is also being made available to city youth who otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford it, through the Business Education Council's Prosperity Initiatives, a **poverty** reduction program funded by **Niagara's** regional government.