

GUELPH & WELLINGTON TASK FORCE FOR POVERTY ELIMINATION



2015 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY & 2016 ACTION PLAN

ABOUT US

VISION

Poverty will be eliminated in Guelph and Wellington.

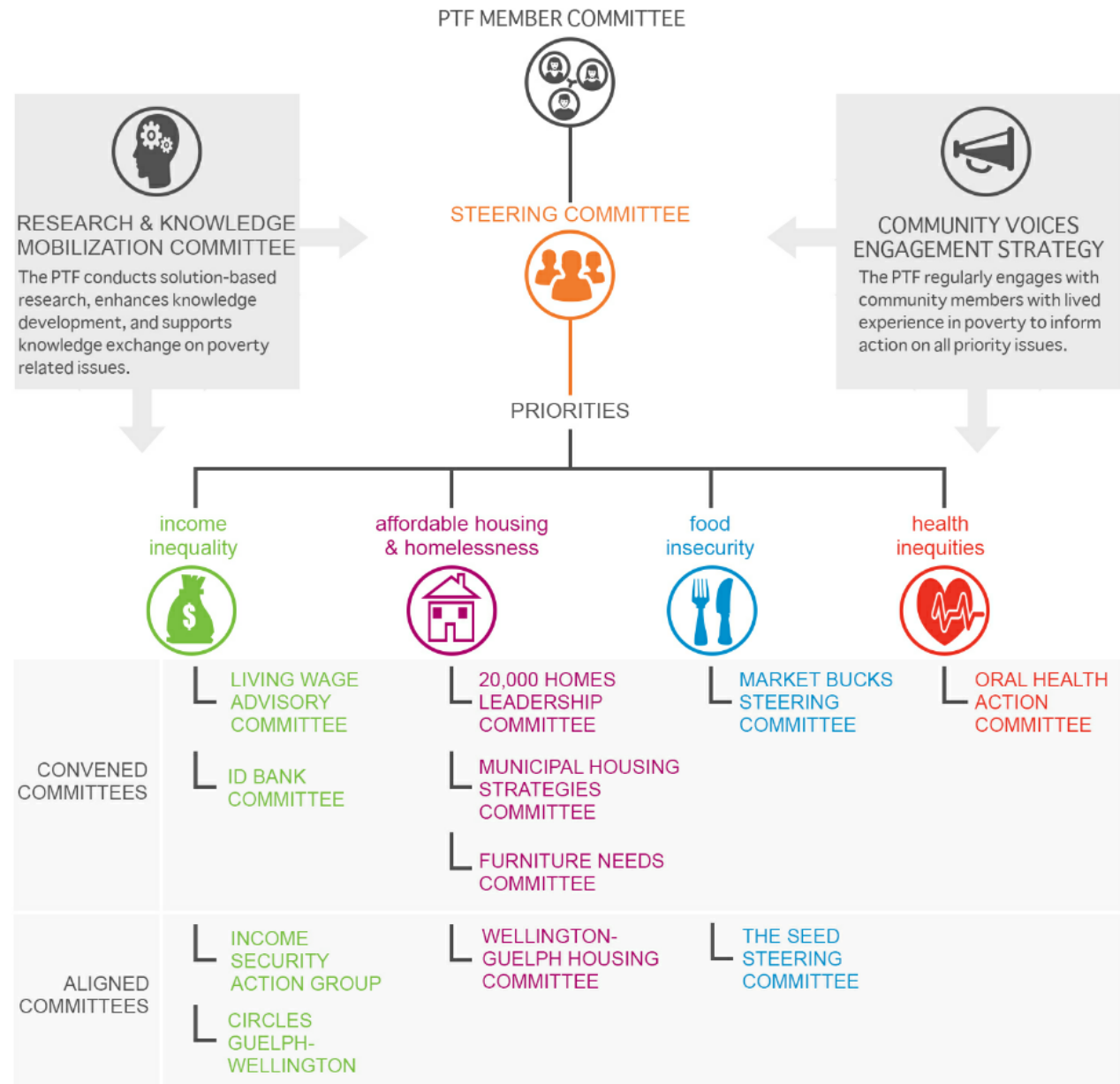
MISSION

To work collaboratively, informed by diverse voices of experience, to take local action and advocate for system and policy change to address the root causes of poverty.

PATHWAYS

1. Collaboration & Partnership
2. Strategic Communications
3. Leadership
4. Research & Strategic Communications

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK



PRIORITY AREA

affordable housing & homelessness

GOAL

Everyone in Guelph & Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe, and affordable place to call home.

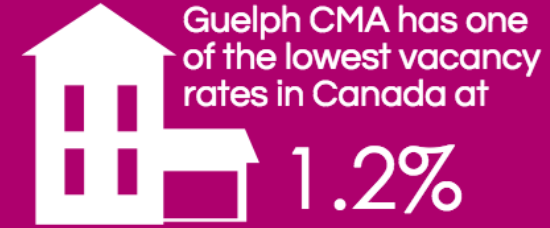
ACTIONS

- ✓ Provided input, monitored, and supported the development and/or implementation of municipal housing strategies and plans.
- ✓ Raised awareness about the need for supportive housing by co-hosting a community forum.
- ✓ Improved service coordination among low- and no-cost furniture providers.
- ✓ Advocated for a National Housing Strategy, Ontario Housing Benefit, updates to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

IMPACTS

- City of Guelph invests \$100,000 in Affordable Housing Reserve Fund
- County of Wellington increases funding to Salvation Army Community & Family Services to provide mattresses to low-income families and individuals
- Over 35 individuals attend supportive housing forum co-hosted with Wellington-Guelph Housing Committee (WGHC)
- Updated No- and Low-Cost Furniture & Household Goods Guide distributed to over 500 community members and organizations
- Joint submission with County of Wellington & WGHC provided to Government of Ontario on Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update

FACTS



1 in every 5 renter households is spending 50% or more of their income on rent, putting them at serious risk of homelessness.

On a single night in April 2015, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Guelph and Wellington was



2016 ACTION PLAN

Co-lead the Guelph & Wellington 20,000 Homes Campaign with the County of Wellington to end homelessness in our community.

Provide input, monitor, and support the development and/or implementation of municipal housing strategies and plans.

Increase access to no- and low-cost furniture for low-income families and individuals.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: ADVOCACY

Many families and individuals in our community struggle to find and maintain safe, appropriate and affordable housing. The Poverty Task Force (PTF) has worked hard to champion and give voice to those challenges by advocating to policy- and decision-makers. In 2015, the PTF responded to the [County of Wellington's 10-year Housing & Homelessness Plan Annual Report](#), calling on the need for more focused efforts to end homelessness. A few months later, the County of Wellington and the PTF signed an agreement to co-lead a community effort to end homelessness as part of a national campaign, [20,000 Homes](#).

The PTF also regularly participated in opportunities to inform the development of the [City of Guelph's Affordable Housing Strategy](#). During City budget deliberations, the PTF called on the City to invest in the [Affordable Housing Reserve Fund](#), resulting in a commitment of \$100,000.

In addition to advocating at the municipal level, the PTF also made calls to the provincial and federal governments to increase funding and improve strategies. During the federal election, the PTF called on local candidates to commit to a [National Housing Strategy, including investments to maintain and create new affordable housing](#).

At the provincial level, the PTF provided a joint submission with the County of Wellington and the Wellington-Guelph Housing Committee as part of the province's update to the [Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy](#).

Advocating for system and policy change is embedded within the mission of the PTF. We believe it is important to use our collective voice to hold policy- and decision-makers accountable and to encourage the implementation of evidence-based solutions. We will continue to advocate until our goal is realized and everyone in our community can find and maintain a safe, appropriate, and affordable [place to call home](#).

PRIORITY AREA

income inequality

GOAL

Everyone in Guelph & Wellington has the income, resources, and opportunities to fully participate in the community.

ACTIONS

- ✓ Supported the development of Guelph and Wellington as a living wage community.
- ✓ Co-hosted income security workshops with front-line service providers and volunteers.
- ✓ Supported Circles Guelph-Wellington to engage the community and provide energy and resources to the Circles initiative.
- ✓ Advocated for a National Poverty Reduction Strategy.

IMPACTS

- A Living Wage Advisory Committee is formed and the Guelph & Wellington Living Wage Employer Recognition Program is introduced with 11 employers signing on during National Living Wage Week.
- Over 60 individuals attend two income security workshops to increase awareness and understanding of income programs and financial literacy.
- Circles Guelph-Wellington receives \$138,800 from Local Poverty Reduction fund to support evaluation efforts.
- Awareness is raised about the need for a National Poverty Reduction Strategy among local candidates and voters during the 2015 Federal Election.

FACTS



Overall, the number of individuals living below the Low-Income Measure is

11%

The median total family annual income for all low-income family types in Guelph is



\$12,650



The percentage of working poor individuals among the working age population in the Guelph CMA

5%

2016

ACTION PLAN

Increase the number of employers signing on to the Guelph & Wellington Living Wage Employer Recognition Program.

Participate in the development of provincial and national living wage programs.

Work with partners to establish an ID Bank for vulnerable community members.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: LIVING WAGE

A living wage is defined as "the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs, once government transfers have been added to the family's income and deductions have been subtracted" (CCPA). First calculated in 2013, the Poverty Task Force (PTF) has played a critical role in nurturing dialogue and building community understanding and support for the living wage over the past two years.

In 2015, the PTF asked business leaders from Guelph and Wellington to join a **Living Wage Advisory Committee**. The committee provided important feedback into an updated living wage calculation. In October 2015, the PTF released "**A Living Wage for Guelph & Wellington: 2015 Update**" and announced that the living wage for our community is **\$16.50/hour**.

In November 2015, during National Living Wage Week, the Living Wage Advisory Committee and the Poverty Task Force launched the **Guelph & Wellington Living Wage Employer Recognition Program**. Living Wage Employers recognized that paying a living wage constitutes a critical investment in the long-term prosperity of the economy by fostering a dedicated, skilled, and healthy workplace. The Living Wage Employer Program recognizes and celebrates employers that pay their direct and indirect employees a living wage.

There are 11 employers that have signed on as early adopters of the program, representing over 1250 employees making at least a living wage.

PRIORITY AREA

food insecurity

GOAL

Everyone in Guelph & Wellington has access to affordable and healthy food in a dignified manner.

ACTIONS

- ✓ Supported collaborative initiatives in our community that aim to meet the short- and long-term needs of food insecure families and individuals, including The Seed and the Emergency Food Providers Network.
- ✓ Supported the development of innovative solutions to food insecurity in Wellington County.
- ✓ Provided leadership and support to the Guelph Community Food Drive.

IMPACTS

- The Guelph Community Food Drive collects over 25,000 lbs. of food for 12 small- to medium-sized emergency food providers.
- The Market Bucks Pilot Project is launched in partnership with the County of Wellington, Township of Wellington North, and the Mount Forest Farmers Market. Thirty-two Ontario Works clients used Market Bucks vouchers to access fresh produce and local food.
- The Emergency Food Providers Network is convened monthly by the PTF to share information and work together to identify solutions to common challenges.
- The vision of The Seed Community Food Hub gains momentum and a cold storage and distribution site is explored.

FACTS



The prevalence of food insecurity in Guelph is

16.4%

During the month of March 2014, the number of individuals that used a food bank in Guelph and Wellington were:



4861



In 2015, the cost of a monthly Nutritious Food Basket for a family of four was:

\$907.79

2016 ACTION PLAN

Pursue and support opportunities to expand the Market Bucks Project.

Complete a full evaluation of the Market Bucks Pilot Project.

Evaluate The Pod - a cold storage and distribution pilot project of The Seed.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: MARKET BUCKS

From 2010 - 2013 the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination worked in partnership with emergency food providers and clients, as well as key community stakeholders, to address challenges within the local emergency food system. This included two extensive research projects with the support of the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop at the University of Guelph.

In 2013, the Poverty Task Force (PTF) endorsed a set of recommendations based on this research, which aimed to tackle the significant barriers that exist for those accessing and providing emergency food assistance. Out of these recommendations the [PTF came together with Township of Wellington North, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, and the County of Wellington Ontario Works office](#) to develop a pilot project to provide Ontario Works clients residing in the immediate Mount Forest area with increased access to the Wellington North Farmers' Market.

The program is called [Market Bucks](#). The pilot program ran during the summer of 2015 and allowed consumers to purchase products from farmers' market vendors using vouchers. Market Bucks were distributed to social assistance recipients (100% funded). To reduce the possibility of stigma attached to the use of the Market Bucks, and ensure that vendors cannot identify the source of the vouchers, they were also sold at full price to any interested party or individual.

Early evaluation results show that the program [improved health and wellbeing](#) of low-income community members, by increasing access to fresh food at the farmer's market. In addition, the program evaluation demonstrates the impact the program had in building strong communities. The program encouraged relationship building among vendors and participants, increased community inclusion, and supported the local economy.

PRIORITY AREA

health inequities

GOAL

Everyone in Guelph & Wellington has access to affordable health services.

ACTIONS

- ✓ Released the results of the Oral Health Survey in a report examining the barriers faced by low-income adults in accessing oral health services.
- ✓ Co-hosted a community forum with the Oral Health Action Committee to release the final oral health report and explore how our community can work together to address oral health needs of low-income adults.
- ✓ Worked with partners across the country to advocate for a National Pharmacare Plan.

IMPACTS

- "Barriers to Accessing Oral Health for Low-Income Adults in Guelph" is released and distributed to over 500 community members.
- Over 65 individuals attend the Oral Health Forum, co-hosted with the Oral Health Action Committee.
- A knowledge mobilization strategy is implemented by the Oral Health Action Committee to increase awareness of the oral health research findings.
- Awareness is raised about the need for a National Pharmacare Plan among local candidates and voters during the 2015 Federal Election.

FACTS



The percentage of low-income adult survey respondents from Guelph reported that they can't afford regular oral health care is: **80%**

The percentage of total health care spending in Canada that is attributable to poor health outcomes as the result of low-income



20%



1 in 10 Canadians report that they cannot afford to take their medications as prescribed.

2016 ACTION PLAN

Co-host the Ontario Oral Health Alliance 2016 Symposium with the Oral Health Action Committee.

Increase awareness of barriers to accessing oral health care for adults in Guelph.

Further explore action to support a National Pharmacare Plan.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: ORAL HEALTH REPORT

Oral health status and access to oral health services has long been identified as a challenge for low-income adults in Guelph & Wellington by community members, service providers, and health professionals. Concerns and frustrations over the lack of adequate supports and calls for action were stressed during local community consultations, as well as advocacy efforts.

Over the past two years, the PTF, in partnership with the **Oral Health Action Committee** designed and implemented an oral health survey to better identify local oral health needs among low-income adults, aside from anecdotal reports. Over 400 surveys were collected, and in May 2015, the PTF and OHAC released a final report, "**Barriers to Accessing Oral Health Care for Low-Income Adults in Guelph.**"

The report was released at an **Oral Health Forum** to more than 65 attendees. Findings from the report were presented, along with a number of recommendations to improve the oral health status of low-income community members. Keynote speaker Dr. Carlos Quiñonez shared his thoughts on how to reduce the oral health and dental care gap between the rich and the poor in Ontario.

In an effort to ensure the findings and recommendations from the report reached a number of target audiences, the OHAC developed a **knowledge mobilization strategy**. The Kmb strategy has supported discussions with Members of Provincial Parliament, as well as coverage in local newspapers, radio programs, and television shows.

PRIORITY AREA

research & knowledge mobilization

2015 ACTIONS

- ✓ Updated the Living Wage calculation
- ✓ Evaluated Wellington-Guelph Housing Committee
- ✓ Evaluated the Advance Your Voice Speakers Bureau
- ✓ Developed Knowledge Mobilization strategy for Oral Health Report
- ✓ Completed Phase 2 of PTF Retrospective Evaluation

2016 ACTION PLANS

- Finalize PTF Retrospective Evaluation
- Community snapshot: Working Poor
- Evaluate The Pod
- Support evaluation of Circles Guelph-Wellington
- Finalize evaluation of Market Bucks Pilot

PRIORITY AREA

community voices

2015 ACTIONS

- ✓ Hosted a focus group on oral health care for low income community members
- ✓ Held a community conversation on alternative financial services
- ✓ Carried out voter outreach to increase participation in the Federal Election
- ✓ Provided input and feedback on the work of the Poverty Task Force

2016 ACTION PLANS

- Host Big View meetings with Circles Guelph-Wellington
- Regularly identify opportunities to engage community members with lived experience
- Develop Phase 2 of Advance Your Voice Speakers Bureau

AD-HOC COMMITTEE

federal election

2015 ACTIONS

- ✓ Fact sheet series on key poverty issues, including potential solutions, resources to learn more, and ways to get involved were distributed to over 1000 community members, as well as local candidates.
- ✓ Op-ed series in Guelph Mercury increase awareness of key poverty issues
- ✓ Online survey distributed asking local candidates to state their position on specific poverty-related issues. Responses were posted to PTF website and distributed to over 500 community members.
- ✓ Political platform comparison on key issues helps inform voters on political party positions.
- ✓ Voter outreach with vulnerable community members and advocacy to the Local Returning Officer results in increased voting among low-income community members.

AD-HOC COMMITTEE

alternative financial services

2015 ACTIONS

- ✓ PTF hosts two community conversations on alternative financial services - one with social and health service providers, and one with low-income community members.
- ✓ PTF advocacy resulted in the provincial government hosting a consultation in Guelph on consumer financial protection.
- ✓ An official submission is provided to the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services highlighting feedback and recommendations from the community conversations.

PTF MEMBER COMMITTEE

PTF Co-chairs

Gail Hoekstra, Executive Director,
Welcome In Drop-In Centre

David Thornley, Executive Director, Guelph
Community Health Centre

Lisa Needham, Public Health Nutritionist,
Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health

Stuart Beumer, Director - Ontario
Works, County of Wellington

Debbie Bentley Lauzon, Executive Director,
Wyndham House

Hon. Liz Sandals, MPP-Guelph

PTF Members

Andrea Roberts, Director - Child & Family
Health, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public
Health

Debra Nicolson-Elwell, Pastoral Team
Leader, First Baptist Church

Lorri Sauve, Program Director, Shelldale
Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Andrew Seagram, Coordinator -
Community Use of Schools Program,
Upper Grand District School Board

Elsa Mann, Team Leader - Outreach
Program, Mount Forest Family Health
Team

Meg Penstone, Manager - Financial Health
& Literacy, Family Counselling & Support
Services for Guelph-Wellington

Andrea Webber, Directing Coordinator,
The Seed

Erin Harvey, Director of Service, Family &
Children's Services of Guelph & Wellington
County

Ron MacKinnon, Executive Director,
Community Resource Centre of North &
Centre Wellington

Barb McPhee, Community Member

Evelyn Herron, Community Member

Sarah Haanstra, Toward Common Ground

Barb Swartzentruber, Senior Policy
Advisor and Intergovernmental Affairs,
City of Guelph

George Kelly, Chair, Guelph Wellington
Coalition for Social Justice

Sarah Scanlon, Organizational
Coordinator, OPIRG Guelph

Beth Leith, Community Member

Jane Londerville, Wellington-Guelph
Housing Committee

Shakiba Shayani, Community Investments
Manager, United Way Guelph Wellington
Dufferin

Brenda McGinnis, Constituency Assistant,
MPP Liz Sandals

June Hofland, City Councillor, City of
Guelph

Sly Castaldi, Executive Director, Women in
Crisis

Brendan Johnson, Executive Director,
Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition

Karen Kamphuis, Executive Director,
Lakeside HOPE House

Terry O'Connor, Guelph and District Labour
Council

Cate Welsh, Staff Sergeant, Guelph Police
Service

Karen Kawakami, Social Services Policy
and Program Liaison, City of Guelph

Tina Brophey, Community Member

Colin McVicker, Program Director,
Sanguen Health Centre

Kari Simpson, Executive Director, East
Wellington Community Services

Warren Dodd, PhD Candidate, University
of Guelph

Ken Harvey, Manager of Employment
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