

COCHRANE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

# Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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Cochrane and Area

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# Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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## **Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results**

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### **Context**

The Town of Cochrane is approximately 20 minutes' drive west of the Calgary municipal boundary. It is a primary service centre for residents of the surrounding Western Rocky View County which reaches to the rural areas of Bragg Creek, Springbank, Bears Paw, and Westbrook. The 2013 census for the Town of Cochrane counted 18,750 residents, which is a 21% increase in population from the 2009 census. Many residents commute to Calgary and the oil patch for work. Local employment opportunities are limited, with a significant portion in the retail and service industry. The population growth has had significant impact on the community, creating considerable pressure on social, health and education services, as well as municipal services.

Cochrane Family and Community Support Services and the Western Rocky View Family and Community Resource Centre discovered the opportunity to contribute to the Alberta Government Poverty Reduction Strategy when a staff member attended a stakeholder consultation held in Calgary on October 10, 2013. With the deadline for submissions quickly approaching, the agency applied for the grant dollars to host a service provider consultation and a public/ community consultation. The grant was approved and the earliest the consultations could be hosted were October 28 and November 2.

### **Consultation Communications**

Email invitations and posters were created and distributed widely to agency and community networks. Staff members also telephoned and emailed individual service providers and other community stakeholders to promote the opportunity for input into this important provincial policy either through the consultations or through the online survey. Advertising was printed in the local newspapers to promote the public/ community consultation as well as posted on the Town of Cochrane website.

### **Participation**

The service provider consultation was held on October 28. Seventeen professionals attended representing seniors, youth, employment, mental health, early childhood education, the faith community, adult education/literacy, victim's services, primary/secondary school education/ supports, and community social services (municipal and rural).

The public / community consultation was held on November 2. Thirteen community members attended, including youth, seniors and parents/families. All represented their personal views and experiences and some also attended as advocates to speak to issues facing seniors, families or individuals living with low incomes. Due to the short period of time left before the deadline for arranging consultations, as well as resource constraints, the consultations were held in Cochrane. As a result, participation was limited to residents of Cochrane with the exception of one attendee from the Bragg Creek area. The raw data from the flip chart notes was transcribed and is attached at the end of this document.

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## Questions

The questions used to elicit input and conversation during the two consultations were those suggested by the province. They included:

- What contributes most to poverty in your community/ region? Are there factors that are unique to our being rurally situated in Cochrane or Rocky View County?
- How does poverty affect you/ your community?
- What can community groups, businesses and individuals do to help prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty? How can we reduce poverty?
- How can we remove barriers, improve inclusion and enable everyone to participate more fully in their community?

## General Themes

### What Contributes to Poverty:

Many themes emerged in both consultations regarding what contributes to poverty in our area. These reflected structural/ systemic issues as well as attitudes and beliefs. They include the following:

**Lack of or ineffective services/ supports for those living on the margins or in poverty. Current approaches do not integrate the complex contributing factors or the intergenerational nature of poverty into program design. Policy and program design efforts are made to offer some relief but not necessarily to prevent poverty.**

Although there are income supports through Alberta Works, AISH, PDD and seniors support programs, the criteria for accessing the supports are inflexible, often are not responsive to individual need or circumstances, not applied consistently and assessment processes often appear to be irrationally exclusionary and punitive. Narrow and inflexible income supports and other supports policies limit individuals' and families' agency to create sustainable long term solutions (user inability to work "with" the system to move out of poverty because of the 'all' or 'nothing' approach to supports).

**Lack of municipal planning policies that require development to support social needs of community**

Municipalities can make radical changes in their philosophy and approach to town planning and the provision of development permits. This requires vision and leadership from town council and town administration.

**Lack of affordable housing/ lack of housing generally/ vulnerability to sub-standard housing.**

Housing is at a premium here, with a significant number of people choosing to move to the community and surrounding area believing they can access more affordable housing than Calgary has to offer or to live a slower paced rural life style. The fast paced growth has created high demand for rental housing and opportunities for landlords to charge high rents or offer substandard housing to renters. This combined with a large percentage of local employment opportunities in low paying, part time retail

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and service industries has left many individuals and families unable to afford adequate housing. There is also a lack of affordable seniors housing in the community, forcing many senior residents to leave family behind in order to access housing and appropriate care elsewhere.

There is a need for a continuum of housing options including transitional housing, social housing, as well as affordable housing that meet the needs of residents across developmental stages and in transitional situations (single adults, families, seniors, youth (in transition/ homeless) and adults fleeing domestic violence).

There are unscrupulous landlords that rent unsafe spaces to tenants and because of the lack of options, tenants remain in these conditions (mold, over-crowded, non-secure, etc), or they are easily replaced by other renters. Renters need easy access to 'rights' education and a more accessible complaints process. The Town needs to set standards and enforce them.

### **Lack of public transportation within the municipality and to Calgary for specialized services, education and employment.**

Non-existent public transportation leaves those who do not drive such as youth, seniors, and adults/ families who cannot afford a vehicle challenged to meet their most basic needs such as shopping for groceries, getting their children to child care, getting to medical appointments/ obtaining prescriptions, getting to work, and getting to support, education or recreational programs that develop their skills, connections to community, enhance their health, etc.

### **Low provincial minimum wage as well as demand for workers to provide low wage services in retail and restaurant industries.**

Single as well as dual income families working in jobs with lower wages struggle to meet their basic needs. These jobs are often part time and often have limited to no additional benefits available to employees. People in these positions often need to work several jobs to meet their basic costs of living and are financially vulnerable if they, their children or another family member suffers a health crisis or other family emergency that impacts the ability of the wage earner to work for even a short period of time.

### **Problems with marketing the "Alberta Advantage" to other provinces and countries**

The types of skills required to get living wage work here is not is marketed clearly enough to other provinces and countries and a portion of those migrating to Alberta, and specifically our area, do not have the skills and experience to take advantage of the more highly skilled jobs available in Calgary or in the oil patch.

### **Lack of or limited locally available programs for those who need adult literacy supports and skills training to make them employable. Need for financial literacy training for all youth/ adults.**

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Lack of or limited programs compounded by lack of supports such as accessible child care, public transportation and social support programs make it difficult for people who do not have the necessary life and work skills to succeed in this economy/ society

In addition, a middle class, consumer life style is heavily promoted in this society and financial literacy training has not been a basic skill taught to youth or adults growing up in Alberta. Financial literacy training should be embedded in secondary school education as well as accessible to all adult Albertans.

### **Lack of affordable and accessible child care options**

Regulated and licensed childcare options in this community are limited to day time/ week day hours and are often beyond low income earners ability to pay, even with subsidies. There needs to be accessible and affordable child care options available to parents who work in the retail and service industries, as well as others who work outside of 'office hours' or attend school or skill building programs outside these hours. All levels of government as well as industry need to examine child care policies and programs from an economic as well as child development and safety perspective. Accessible and affordable child care facilitates adult student access to training programs, employee availability for work and healthy child development (facilitating future generations of economically and socially productive adults).

### **Extremely fast growing community/ lack of cohesiveness and limited access to services**

Cochrane's fast paced development and increase in population has created increased demand on all services and contributed to limited social connection within the community. The town footprint is expanding, resulting in newer housing developments being physically disconnected from the core service areas of the town, potentially increasing isolation and creating barriers to services particularly for those who do not drive.

Health and education systems are overwhelmed by the fast paced growth in population. Increased class sizes impact children's learning and those who are having trouble are more easily left behind. Children coming from homes that struggle with poverty are often challenged in school because of parental stress, and their own physical, psychological and emotional stressors. Increased class sizes make it additionally difficult for these children to keep up with the rest of the class.

### **Lack of services as well as reductions/cuts in services: education, social service supports, health care, PDD and seniors benefits such as property tax subsidy, etc.**

Social infrastructure is constantly threatened by political changes, instability or focus in funding, and lack of understanding of the need for a holistic approach to social, health and educational supports across the life span. The rhetoric of 'prevention' is often used with little vision for what integrated prevention strategies should entail in order to be successful in the long term.

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Schools are the most likely avenue for intervention into child poverty. Schools, with the support of their communities, need to be better equipped to support children living in poverty to access education and extra – curricular programs to help mitigate some of the impacts of poverty.

Lack of specialized services makes it even more difficult for families who have children with special learning or health needs. Many families are attracted to the quieter and what appears to be a more financially viable life style the rural environment offers, but the lack of services creates more financial burden on families or disadvantages those who cannot afford to access / travel to services in the city.

Issues of family violence, substance abuse and gambling make individuals and families vulnerable to poverty and poverty makes individuals and families vulnerable to these issues. Adequate funding for programs that raise awareness, educate and support counselling and other interventions when necessary are crucial to address these contributor factors.

**Need for better collaboration among government and other service providers to address gaps in services. Need for creative approaches and ability for government services to 'do things differently' than they have been done.**

Related to the above statement on the need for a holistic approach, there is also a need for true collaboration and partnership among government services, non-governmental organizations to address the complex needs of individuals and families, especially those living on the margins or in poverty. Policies and services need to be developed to address the gaps in services as well as misalignments in policy with program delivery. For example, residents and service providers identified income supports policies of Alberta Works, AISH, PDD and seniors' supports as undermining of individuals efforts to better their situations by working part time or casually, or choosing to live with roommates or develop live in partnerships (especially in the case of seniors) for fear of being penalized or cut off entirely by the program they are legitimately relying on to meet their basic needs. Truly consulting program users as well as non-governmental services to better tailor programs to meet user's needs would better support their autonomy and dignity, and for those who have the ability, help them move forward and into sustainable life circumstances.

In addition, a 'single point of entry' to programs and services as well as a 'wrap around service' model could create opportunities for more comprehensive assessment of individuals' and families' needs and improved access to services.

**People living on the margins or in poverty are invisible in this community due to the general affluence in the community as well as the assumption of affluence**

There are a significant portion of high income earners living in Cochrane and the surrounding area. This relative community affluence and the belief that most everyone is affluent contribute to a lack of awareness of the poverty or the vulnerability to poverty that does exist here. This attitude can support a 'charity' model approach to the issue when there is awareness of its existence. This is predicated on the belief that poverty is inherently about the person experiencing it, not the society or

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systems that contribute to it. With this thinking, the solution is often focused on doing 'charitable acts' for individuals or families, rather than deeply questioning what perpetuates poverty for those who live in it and what society (government, NGO and business policies and programs, communities, families and individuals) can do to change structures and systems that contribute to it.

### **There is a disconnect between decision makers and those experiencing poverty**

This observation was stated directly by one participant and was suggested by many of the consultation attendees. Several of the points already made apply here. There needs to be full and honest efforts to bring together government, non-government organizations (NGO's), businesses and community members/ system users to critically examine the policies and programs that are designed to prevent or alleviate poverty. Developing true collaboration and partnerships as well as a willingness to change the paradigm to look at systemic issues that contribute to poverty is central to making significant and lasting change.

Political and other community leaders need to advocate on behalf of those struggling with poverty. They need to familiarize themselves with the stories of poverty and articulate a vision for a community free of poverty.

### **There is a need for business leaders' involvement**

Workplace training programs, living wage commitments, and access to family friendly work environments are all contributions that business leaders can make to this issue. Employers that recognize parents may need time off to tend to sick children or parents from time to time, or that access to adequate child care supports workers to be fully engaged contributors to their work place, and that health and wellness programs are investments that pay off through low employee turn-over rates, less sick time, etc. benefit from greater commitment and performance from their staff and in the long run a positive return on their investment.

**There are varying and complex needs of ethnically and culturally diverse residents, including Aboriginal community members. Systems are often not flexible enough to meet these needs effectively. Lack of understanding of categories of immigration status as well as temporary foreign worker status makes newcomers vulnerable.**

Cochrane is near the Morley First Nations reserve. There is limited collaboration between community service providers in each area as jurisdictional and funding (systems) issues create barriers, which leaves residents with inconsistent or no access to services in Cochrane, even when similar services are not available on reserve.

In addition, there is a significant and growing immigrant population from Britain, and elsewhere, and there are a number of temporary foreign workers in the community. Services for newcomers are limited as are cultural competencies to meet the needs of diverse individuals seeking services. Business leaders, support services and the community as a whole need to better understand

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the legal and moral obligations that businesses and communities have to temporary foreign workers as well as other newcomers to this country seeking employment.

### **How poverty affects you/ your community:**

There were many themes regarding **how poverty affects you/ your community**. Those that diverged from the themes already listed above (what contributes to poverty) are listed below. Those points that were addressed in the first section's themes are not repeated here but can be found in the flip chart notes below.

**People cannot reach their potential, they cannot participate in the community/events, they cannot become full participants in community because they are focused on survival.**

Those living in poverty can be isolated from the larger community, they cannot benefit from community participation and the community loses access to the 'gifts' that they would bring as well. Their voice is 'silenced' and they are disempowered. Leadership is not impacted by their stories or their ideas for change as they cannot access leaders because of lack of time, transportation, child care, etc.

Children living in poverty often have compromised development. Poverty is often self-perpetuating and intergenerational. Children learn what they experience.

Seniors (and others) who live in isolation can be vulnerable to mental and physical health issues. Seniors who are isolated are vulnerable to fraud and other crime

"Those who have can dream, hope; those who don't have may not have the capacity to dream or hope."

**People sometimes try to find ways to 'cheat the system' such as 'under the table' work, not disclosing roommates/ partners, etc. They do this to help make ends meet and in doing so often erode and compromise their sense of values.**

This is a harmful result of systemic failure. The system inflexibility does not allow for individual efforts that may facilitate their moving out of poverty or at the very least their living with dignity and more security.

**People who benefit from low wages do not see the short or long term impact of those low wages**

Consumers benefit from low wages as these wages make products and services more affordable. Business owners who do not consider the impact of the minimum wage or part time hours on the ability of their staff members to survive on their earnings may also spend significant money on high turn-over rates, staff training, compromised service due to staff changes, etc.

### **Affects crime rates**

People living in poverty are more likely to engage in survival oriented crimes like shop lifting and other types of theft. They are also at greater risk for domestic violence and other type of violence due to

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stress. This affects the quality of life for those committing the crime and their victims as well as the overall sense of safety in the community.

### **Community loses out on the benefits of having an inclusive community.**

The lack of appropriate and effective supports to keep seniors and other low income earners in community, results in their leaving and loss of their ideas, experience, wisdom and diverse perspectives.

### **What can community groups, businesses and individuals do to help prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty?**

Again, primarily those themes that are unique to this question are recorded below; however, there are some similar themes to those already stated above but they stood out as particularly relevant to this question so were included here as well. There was significant overlap between all questions. See the flip chart notes on this question for more information.

#### **Change beliefs / attitudes**

Change the way we think, accept everyone as valuable and worthy regardless of income and class. Stop accepting minimum or below minimum wages (in the case of temporary foreign workers) as an acceptable business practice. Stop fueling minimum wage jobs, consider where you spend your money/ get your products and services.

#### **Collaborate/ view poverty as everyone's problem**

Business, government and community services need to work together to create new approaches to employment environments and social supports. Develop on the job skills training in partnership with adult literacy and post secondary programs, as well as wrap around programs for individuals and families that are facing several challenges that keep them from moving forward.

#### **Focus on Prevention**

Recognize the intergenerational nature of poverty and create programs and interventions to support families with children to interrupt the cycle. Collaboration between multiple services and systems, a holistic approach is key.

#### **Recognize that everyone has a voice/ enable all groups to participate in political processes, ensure all groups have access to vote. Ensure systems are in place to support community participation and access to services.**

Create access to transportation, information, support services, accessible opportunities for volunteering, etc.

#### **Ensure Town Council has support from community to take a leadership position on this issue.**

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Have a convenient way to get input to Council and other stakeholders from all citizens; i.e. community based suggestion boxes, as well as online/ social media tools for engagement. Hold Town Council accountable for its leadership on this issue.

### **Have more flexibility in eligibility criteria for programs, services and subsidies**

This issue has been mentioned above. Lack of flexibility is a significant barrier to people moving forward and out of poverty.

### **How can we remove barriers, improve inclusion and enable everyone to participate more fully in their community?**

Again, primarily those themes that are unique to this question are recorded below; however, there are some similar themes to those already stated. These stood out as particularly relevant to this question so were included here as well. There was significant overlap between all questions. See the flip chart notes on this question for more information.

### **Explore Public Transportation Options**

Some level of public transportation is necessary for residents of Cochrane who are unable to drive. Without public transportation, people have difficulty ensuring their basic needs are met, let alone address specialized service needs. Explore bringing services to people, having services in the core, shuttle services, etc.

### **Create access to professional training for early educators so they can recognize signs of toxic stress that are common in children living in poverty or other detrimental circumstances.**

Educators and other children service providers would benefit from increased awareness and skill building in this area. Children and their families would benefit from appropriate intervention and support.

### **Support diverse family inclusion**

Re-assess policies to take into consideration different family compositions (blended families, single parent families, parents with adult dependent children, adults with aging parents to care for, seniors, etc).

### **There needs to be more visibility for the resources that are available in Cochrane.**

Work with high traffic places like doctor's offices, Spray Lakes Family Sports Centre, schools, businesses and social media can help increase visibility.

### **Preventative programming that encourages finishing/continuing education**

Support 'stay in school' programs; create more innovative programs that address the barriers for young people to stay in school. Consider subsidies for further education (ex. Health care aid program subsidies). Create more innovative sexuality education, healthy relationship, and family planning

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courses in schools. Support existing mentorship programs through encouraging adult volunteering to these programs.

### **Work with and support Cochrane Town Council to attract and promote the development of higher income earning businesses and related employment opportunities in Cochrane.**

Service and retail industries contribute to the quality of life of Cochrane residents and the overall experience of living in the community. However, more diverse employment opportunities could increase locally available training as well as employment in the community.

### **Additional Remarks**

As mentioned in the introduction, the process for conducting these consultations was quite rushed because of the late timing of our hearing of this opportunity. Therefore, our ability to promote the consultations in a timely manner, as well as for people to attend on short notice was limited.

One respondent to our email promotion, could not make the consultation, but took the time to email us his input as well as his concerns about the process. He shared significant skepticism about the government's intention to effectively consult and alleviate poverty given the short notice he received about the consultations. He represents concerns related to services to seniors. He pointed out that there are all kinds of poverty in our community. He went on to say:

- There are several people who cannot access medical or dental help for chronic conditions because there is no coverage for many conditions; they go untreated.
- There are housing conditions that are less than healthy
- The province is dropping the seniors property tax subsidy
- Reasonable priced, supported long-term care is in very short supply
- In-home care is quite inadequate
- For younger people, a supported day care program has no prospect of being introduced
- Our minimum wage is an absolute disgrace
- The province has refused to support initiatives that would boost CPP and provide at least a semi-decent income for older people who've worked all their lives.

He went on to write "the province has little will dealing with these and other issues. Compounding the problem is the rigid insistence that the province is short of cash because of a) low royalty payments, b) the provincial flat tax ensures that a person just over the poverty line is paying as much tax proportionately as the wealthiest, c) the province is pathologically opposed to sales tax".

### **Conclusion**

We appreciated the opportunity to host the consultations and provide the government with input specific to our community, and we think, relevant to other Albertans. We trust the perspectives, experiences and ideas collected from our participants will be considered as the province moves forward on the development of the provincial poverty reduction strategy and we look forward to its release next spring.

## Appendices

### Service Provider Consultation-Flip Chart Notes-October 28

#### 1. What contributes most to poverty in your community/ region? Are there factors that are unique to our being rurally situated in Cochrane or Rocky View County?

- Expensive Housing
- Lack of Housing/ Rentals
- Lack of housing for singles, women with children, seniors
- Lack of Transportation to all city programs, services, work
- Diverse populations- near Morley (First Nations Reserve), lots of immigrants from Britain, fast growing, urban sprawl
- Lack of Cohesiveness due to sprawl, poor planning, no transportation
- Reputation of Affluence makes it hard to see those living in poverty
- Local employment opportunities are low pay unless you can get to Calgary
- Low minimum wage compared to other provinces.
- new growing community means less social networks developed, lots without extended family here.
- many are 'land rich' but 'cash poor'
- young families cannot maintain rural lifestyle due to land values
- disconnect between decision makers and those experiencing poverty
- Attracts those that are well off-they either don't know there is need or perhaps don't care
- lack of child care options-affordable/accessible
- increase in the working poor
- consistent reduction in resources to schools, health, child care
- post secondary schooling – awareness and options needed
- schools- class sizes means those having trouble are left behind
- families moving children here for rural life style but bring many needs-behavioural, health, special needs.
- need for more collaboration of services
- too much of a silo approach to solutions
- landlords taking advantage of high needs ie. Not fixing mold
- need to educate tenants – rights
- look at rental cap
- judgmental attitudes toward those in poverty
- high cost of living /choices
- message we send out about the Alberta Advantage is misleading to those from other provinces and other countries who come here
- local-lack of well paid employment opportunities
- adult literacy & skills training- increase needed

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- budget/credit management needed
- Coordination needed between the 3 levels of government to work on poverty issues-stop saying its the responsibility of someone else
- blinders on by those who have
- lack of involvement by private sector/ business
- increase awareness of issues needed
- poverty—vicious cycle that keeps feeding itself--- lack of intergenerational programming
- more resources into PREVENTION! & volunteerism
- help young people make sure they get support and don't get into the poverty cycle
- more supports at schools to make sure all can participate
- more support to ensure young people get education without living in poverty
- make career fairs accessible
- more support to integrate newcomers in all community aspects
- attitude change needed-government can't fix everything-people need to help people-volunteering
- need to ensure people have feelings of self worth- 'pay it forward'
- gambling and other addictions
- family violence
- poor interpersonal relationships
- need for improved immigration policies
  - have people educated about Alberta and rest of Canada
  - -the type of qualifications/training needed to be looked at / benefits
- employment opportunities need to be conveyed to Canadians and clearer to other countries
- more advocacy by leaders in the community on behalf of those struggling with poverty
  - stories / testimonials
- schools – need to teach more usable life skills such as budgeting, relationships, use of credit cards, saving for retirement

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### 2. How does poverty affect you/ your community?

You	Your community
<p>-People cannot reach their potential-cannot participate in community/ events-cannot become full participants in community-focused on survival (ie. Volunteering at child's school etc- very difficult)</p> <p>-health is compromised-do not have capacity to access employment, housing, nutrition, child care, education</p> <p>-vicious cycle-don't have resources to get to programs, services</p> <p>-don't have what they need to 'get out of it'- clothing they need for interviews, work, etc</p> <p>-poverty-affected by the emotional, physical, spiritual condition (lack of confidence, hope, self esteem--- legacy- children grow up in poverty- are affected and it becomes perpetuating and intergenerational- kids less likely to stay in school, drop out to help at home, etc)</p> <p>-silenced-don't participate in community, politics, etc. no voice-perpetuates-so many issues-complex- feel like not being heard</p> <p>-seniors- leads to isolation mental health issues-depression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-families – not visiting / isolation</li> <li>-vulnerable to fraud (pretend family members trying to get money from them/ taken advantage of (contractors, etc)</li> </ul> <p>-transportation-lack of accessible / affordable</p> <p>-may not have \$ to participate in volunteer activities-don't have the time/other resources such as child care or have to work extra hours to survive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-when you can't volunteer/ participate-don't feel connected or good about participating</li> </ul> <p>-when our basic needs are not met, we miss out on the opportunity to share our gifts/ potential- and community misses out on our participation/ our gifts</p> <p>-informed voice not heard-because of lack of accessibility to political arena, voting stations etc</p> <p>-those who 'have' can dream, hope</p>	<p>-under use of resources-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-lack of transportation to get to programs</li> <li>-no computer access- to learn about programs or to participate</li> <li>-not enough time to walk to programs/ Services</li> </ul> <p>-stagnates economic development of community</p> <p>-perpetuating segment of same group/ families</p> <p>-crime –out of desperation/ need</p> <p>-global level-if we don't address it-leads to ongoing and growing disparity</p> <p>-gaps continue to widen</p> <p>-stress about money can lead to contribute to family violence</p> <p>-impacts first responders/ systems that have to respond to the family violence/ domestic violence</p> <p>-provides community a challenge – faith community</p> <p>-'critical we recognize the challenge before us-and the opportunity to reach out as a community / as a collective'</p> <p>-as a tax payer-let's see our resources go to "prevention" rather than "intervention"</p> <p>-catch it before it's a problem issue</p> <p>-lack of volunteers-affected by income/ less able to participate-also we need more volunteers-more programming can happen with more volunteers</p> <p>-not enough low income housing to meet the need</p> <p>-youth-homeless/ kicked out or leave for a # of reasons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-become at risk for drug/alcohol use-</li> <li>vulnerable to exploitation and victimization</li> <li>-everyone deserves to reach their potential</li> </ul> <p>-need to remove stigma from the idea that you need 'help'</p> <p>-educate larger community on what poverty is-get community involved-hands on experience</p> <p>-for those who are not poor-they benefit from having this segment in society---Walmart / minimum wage jobs are tolerated-those who have benefits from low cost goods and services</p> <p>---part time employers are able to do this – saves on benefits</p>

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<p>-those who 'don't have' may not have the capacity to dream/ hope, etc</p> <p>-lack of ability to unionize-no voice-lack of advocacy/ ability to advocate</p> <p>-need a 'financial bridging system' to help people move from social benefits programs to emplyment/ education</p> <p>-additional needs of families who live in poverty-problem with people having to 'fit' system rather than the 'systems' being flexible enough to address <u>individual</u> needs</p> <p>-province taking away 'property tax assistance' for seniors living below the poverty line—makes seniors more vulnerable</p> <p>-people sometimes try to find ways to 'cheat the system' such as 'under the table' work, etc. to try to make ends meet—erodes sense of values to survive/causes them to compromise own values</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">-example-not disclosing roommates/partners who help pay rent, etc.</p>	<p>-problem with people having to fit the 'system' rather than the 'systems' being flexible enough to address <u>individual</u> needs</p> <p>--?would there be cost savings if systems were mre responsive to individuals and families rather than using 'one' template for all people?</p> <p>-front line workers (paid) and volunteers burn out-due to lack of system response</p> <p>-community misses out on benefits of 'inclusive' community—lack of supports to keep seniors and other low income earners here to contribute to community</p>
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### 3. What can community groups, businesses and individuals do to help prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty?

- stop human trafficking, paying newcomers below industry standards
- community programs for low income families
- changing the way we think
- changing 'beliefs'
- being accepting-everyone is valued
- educate the public – MOVEMENT
- stop fueling minimum wage jobs-eg. Stop thnking cheap is better (Walmart, MacDonalds, etc-min wage)
- collaborate, communicate, partner
- businesses can advocate for affordable housing or provide it
- volunteer
- lead by example
- donations
- recycle (clothes, furniture)
- provide subsidies
- advocate for simpler processes, forms (example AISH form)
- networking

## Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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- more life skills training and consider child care and other barriers
- apprenticeship programs for men and women
- address isolation by going to the people if they can't come to us
- be creative
- create a face for poverty instead of pretending it doesn't exist (photo contest)
- share and learn people's stories
- changing perceptions
- more collaboration between service providers
  - single point of access (hub)
  - wrap around service model
- change work place culture
- businesses giving back-community involvement
- business investing in employees-housing, childcare, etc
- business who bring workers to the country need to be accountable to their employees needs
  - change non-transferable skills/ accreditation- too complicated and difficult and expensive
- businesses who bring workers to our country need to look at the possibility of hiring local with increased wage versus providing housing etc to newcomers
- family friendly work place
- shift in attitude – awareness
- believe you have power and the ability to make change. We do have the power and responsibility
- collaborate and focus on specific needs (donations)
- prevention-teach--- donate towards prevention
- encourage youth engagement & participation
- campaigns (public service)
- the public needs to feel uncomfortable, then they will want to change
- FREE BIRTH CONTROL
- employer accountability – educate employees-retention
- respect every man, woman and child regardless of race, color, etc
- supporting each other-encouragement
- community involvement/ very important in bedroom communities
- encourage youth to work. Businesses be youth friendly and teach skills
- teach newcomers to Cochrane how to be good community members-caring and sharing
- employment programs
- engage in new ideas, different cultures, we have so much to learn
- respect and awareness-stop displaying disrespect (eg. Bad TV, housewives of orange county, etc)

## Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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### 4. How can we reduce poverty? How can we remove barriers, improve inclusion and enable everyone to participate more fully in their community?

- Transportation enables individuals and families to be more independent. It also allows opportunity to access school, work and resources
- There needs to be more visibility for the resources that are available in Cochrane.
  - Working with high traffic places like doctor's offices, Spray Lakes Family Sports Centre, schools, businesses and social media can help increase visibility.
- Increasing service provides awareness of services
- Coordination of services - Single point of access (hub)
- There needs to be a shift in community attitude and understanding of poverty and mental health in order to reduce the stigma.
  - In doing so, people may be more willing to reach out for services.
- More education – people need to be aware that there is indeed poverty in Cochrane.
  - This also applies to educating our local government
  - Putting a 'face' to poverty may help (campaign ads)
- We need to encourage small business development in Cochrane.
  - Including special benefits for small businesses ex. Tax cuts
    - This will increase employment and create a market that is competitive in their pricing
- Affordable access to programs (including subsidies)
  - This included family programing, school programing
- Preventative programing that encourage finishing/continuing education
  - Stay in school programs
  - Subsidies for further education (ex. Health care aid program subsidies)
- Family planning and healthy relationships courses in schools
- Greater access to family doctors
- Coordination of adult literacy – skills training
- Education around proper nutrition
- Subsidized dental care for lower income families
- Coordinated response to Domestic Violence
- Increasing volunteerism
- Addressing minimum wage
- Credit literacy
- Having targeted interagency meetings (at FCSS) to talk about things like poverty reduction
- Affordable access to childcare
- Municipal government needs to take ownership
- Helping children maintain their dreams through mentorship and other programing
- Expansion of primary prevention courses in schools – also through mentorship/positive role models

## **Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results**

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- Working towards poverty reduction in collaboration with other projects/ research that are happening in our community
- Community health initiative aimed at workplace culture and wellness
- Targeting community donations
- Alignment of all 3 levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal)
- Including basic life skills training in education.
  - Enhancing Career and Life Management Program (CALM) program
- Making people aware that confidentiality is ensured for those seeking services and assistance.

# Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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## Community Consultation-Flip Chart Notes-November 2

### 1. What contributes most to poverty in your community/ region? Are there factors that are unique to our being rurally situated in Cochrane or Rocky View County?

- Transportation (lack of)
- lack of day care during 'off' hours (non office hours/ evening and weekend working hours)
  - -lack of 'safe' child care options outside of 'office hours'
- lack of knowledge and true understanding about those in need in our community—myths-misconceptions-of systemic issues
- lack of education
- lack of affordable housing (real-subsidized)- lack of choice of housing
- lack of empathy
- lack of appropriate and/or safe housing
- lack of variety of job opportunities
- lack of connection between business/corporate and social communities
- social policy/ strategies that don't encourage the right action (ie. Lose benefits when seniors live together)
- lack of accessibility to child care
- municipal planning that doesn't require development to support social needs of community
- ACCESS-
  - -housing (variety of housing options) affordability- municipal planning policy
  - -transportation-accessibility to all services-doctors/ xrays/ etc. in Cochrane and in Calgary-
  - -need walk-able complete communities
  - -types (variety) of jobs
- Communications
  - info about programs/ services
  - -communicating to everyone/ what about vulnerable and/or isolated?
  - -marketing-capture all/ intended
  - -variety of ways
  - -beyond advertising
- Social well being –safety
- disconnection-youth / seniors to community
- Priorities out of = Shifting Values !!

### 2. How does poverty affect you/ your community? (Group 1)

## Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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Community	Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-increased crime</li> <li>-drop-out rates</li> <li>-addictions</li> <li>-Increased demand of social services</li> <li>-loss of potential (unrealized potential)</li> <li>-health-physical/ mental</li> <li>-pressure on family/ friends-financially, emotionally (STRESS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-impoverished thinking, poor life skills passed on generation to generation</li> <li>-lack of role models</li> <li>-poor education-less opportunity (connected to increased demand of social services)</li> <li>-isolates-vicious circle (connected to loss of potential / unrealized potential)</li> </ul>

### 2. How does poverty affect you/ your community? (Group 2)

- lead to crime-affecting everyone-cost of crime
- less social activities-less active
- people leaving community to find better life-jobs, social life, transportation, etc)
- economics-less \$ for business
  - need extra work/trying to get \$ for bills
- Stresses
  - family breakdown
  - violence
  - grandparents filling gap
- Addictions-alcohol, gambling, drugs
- quality of life – physical/ mental (body and actual living space)
- changes thought processes in brain-child brain development
- isolation
  - transportation
- inability to reach those in need
- apathy
- stigma of asking for help (feeling judged & therefore don't get help)
- reverse stigma of rich not caring
  - needs education and integration of classes /people

### 3. What can community groups, businesses and individuals do to help prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty?

- Recognize there is poverty in our community

## Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results

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- Transportation-Dial a Bus-help people access services already in place (spray lakes rec centre, fcss, etc)
  - -connecting with dealerships for shuttle services (Calgary senior services)
- communication and education
- Bicycle system-transportation for warmer months
  - -rentals/ subsidies
- making sure everyone has a voice
- enabling all groups of people to VOTE
- communicating with the business community
- making sure walkways / pathways are cleared for riders/ pedestrians
  
- How can we communicate and support council
- Creating engagement through schools
- advocating as individuals for change
- Having convenient way to get input from the community ex. Online, suggestion box in businesses and other places
- taking fatigue into account

### **4. How can we reduce poverty? How can we remove barriers, improve inclusion and enable everyone to participate more fully in their community?**

- Assessing we have all the system in place for people to access available programs and services
  - -transportation
  - -education/ early
- Training early educators to recognize the signs of children living in toxic stress
- Post secondary education
  - -programs that provide skills and education to determine future jobs that are in demand
- Blended families
  - -accessing based on primary caregiver (child tax benefit)
  - -reassessing our policies to take into consideration different family compositions (blended families/ seniors, etc)
- Having more flexibility in assessing eligibility for programs, services/ subsidies---- currently black and white =no room for judgement or assessment.
- Transportation service to increase accessibility
  - -bring services to people
  - -having services in the core
  - -shuttle services
- Education- for people that have influence on town direction – eg. Town staff
- Mentorship programs-increasing awareness

## **Alberta's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Consultation Results**

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- More higher level employment opportunities in Cochrane-Plan for:
  - -Business
  - -Municipal Government
- Have a discussion with Cochrane and Area about “what do we want this community to look like?”