

Hungry for Action: How Municipal Government Can Reduce Poverty

A collaborative initiative led by
Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health
Food Security Workgroup

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Public Health Workgroup

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Introduction

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) Food Security Workgroup collaborated with other provincial and local partners to undertake a Provincial Poverty Project called Hungry for Action. The purpose of this project is to build awareness and support among local decision makers for healthy public policy that will foster reduced poverty and food insecurity in municipalities in Ontario. The Southwest Registered Dietitians in Public Health Workgroup successfully applied for a Heart and Stroke Foundation Spark Advocacy Grant on behalf of all project partners to support the project.

The Provincial Poverty Project includes two main phases: a municipal candidate survey and poverty simulation. This report focuses on the first phase – the municipal candidate survey.

The deliverables for this phase of the project, as funded by the Heart and Stroke Foundation grant, include:

- Literature review of evidence and/or best practices regarding the actions municipalities can take to impact poverty rates
- Development of a municipal candidate survey, including a cover letter and any other required supplementary materials
- Recommendations regarding an evaluation plan for the municipal candidate survey
- Recommendations related to informing the survey strategy (for example: how to work with and influence municipalities)

This report summarizes the key findings from the literature review, provides a draft municipal candidate survey, makes recommendations about the indicators to include in an evaluation plan of the municipal candidate survey, and provides tips about how to influence the development of public policy at the municipal level.

Literature Review

The purpose of a literature review is to discover and highlight what's been written on a topic, and to analyze and synthesize the information about key themes or issues on this topic. This literature review explored:

- The role of municipalities in poverty reduction
- Examples of poverty reduction actions taken by municipalities
- Working with and influencing municipalities

A Background Report compiling the results of the literature review has been developed. This report provides detailed information in the above three areas. In order to complete this literature review, over 90 sources were reviewed. The review was completed when no new information was being identified in the search. The majority of the sources reviewed were Canadian, with a primary focus on Ontario, where information was available. The primary focus was Ontario, as the municipal context is different in other provinces across Canada and in other countries. Some examples were provided from other jurisdictions to highlight interesting/unique examples of actions being taken by municipalities in the area of poverty reduction.

The Background Report provides a cross section of examples of actions being taken by municipal government in the area of poverty reduction. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all actions being undertaken in every municipality.

This section of the summary report highlights the key findings from the literature review, which then provide the basis for the questions to be included in the municipal candidate survey.

The Role of Municipalities in Poverty Reduction

Municipal poverty reduction strategies are still fairly emergent in Canada, with a large number of communities only starting to focus on this topic in the last five to eight years. Urban municipalities are further along than rural communities, with many rural areas just starting to establish roundtables and beginning to discuss an approach to poverty reduction. Due to the emergent nature of this area, evaluation and evidence-informed practice is slim. Evaluation has been conducted only on those initiatives that have been in existence the longest – discounted transit passes and tax programs.

In terms of municipal responses to poverty, they must involve a combined effort of municipal driven public policy, programs and initiatives, and a collaboration of efforts with community stakeholders. As noted by Sherri Torjman of the Caledon Institute of Social Policy in her report entitled, *"Poverty Policy,"*

"A comprehensive poverty strategy must be composed of a set of core public policies related to affordable housing, early childhood development, education and

training, income security, and social infrastructure. It must also recognize and should provide support for the wide range of efforts in communities that are making critical contributions through their collaborative efforts, innovative interventions and policy impact. At the end of the day, a robust poverty strategy combines public policy and place-based interventions to create a powerful combination of government and community in the fight against poverty”

(Source: <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/720ENG.pdf>, page 29).

Local governments have many of the levers to support basic needs, ensure inclusion and promote learning for all, and can use public policy, programs and initiatives to accomplish this. They have a broad based social infrastructure in the form of affordable housing, emergency shelters, subsidized child care, recreation, transit and libraries, with many municipal facilities, programs and services. According to the report, “*The Social Role of Local Government*,” there are a number of key roles that local governments can play in overall poverty reduction. These are:

- Exemplary employer (training and employment practices)
 - Service provider (child care, social assistance, public health, arts, recreation)
 - Investor (provide funds to community programs and processes)
 - Leader and champion for community based poverty reduction initiatives
 - Provider of information and data (to help stimulate new thinking and ideas)
 - Convener of and partner with various sectors (municipalities are well positioned to build effective local partnerships among individuals, communities and governments)
- (Source: http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/the_social_role_of_local_government.pdf).

Local government must also be involved in a community approach to poverty reduction and is a crucial sector in comprehensive community initiatives. In many communities, municipal government is involved in broader community initiatives to reduce poverty, such as poverty roundtables. These tables bring together municipal representatives with local stakeholders to develop comprehensive responses to poverty.

There are a number of priority areas in which municipal governments can contribute to community poverty reduction strategies. These include:

- *Leader or Co-Leader* - municipal led strategy (Example: Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy is a strategy that is led by the regional government)
- *Participant* - municipality participates in a community strategy (Example: Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is a community led initiative and the municipality is a participant on the roundtable)
- *Funder* - municipality as a funder of poverty reduction initiatives (Example: The Region of Niagara provides funding to the Niagara Prosperity Initiative to support poverty reduction and prevention activities)

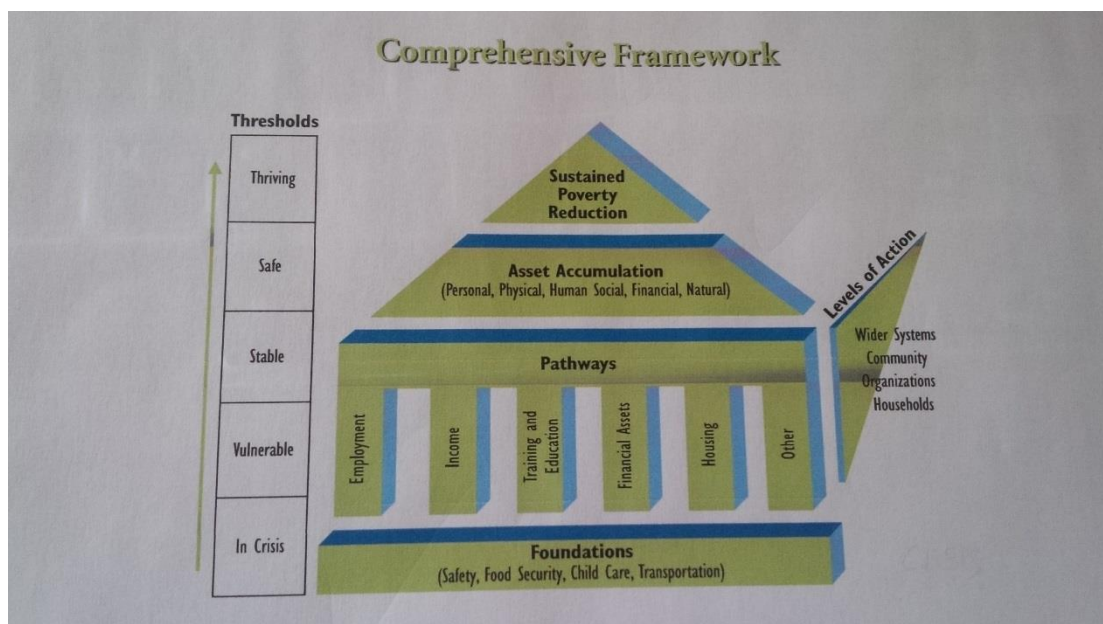
Municipal governments have the ability to “use their policy levers and leadership position to create environments where people enjoy a high quality of life, innovation thrives and a robust social infrastructure leads to economic and social benefits for all residents” (Source: *Creating Shared Prosperity: cities that lead, succeed*, <http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/creating20shared20prosperity.compressed2.pdf>).

Examples of Poverty Reduction Actions Taken By Municipalities

While exploring the examples of poverty reduction actions taken by municipalities, the examples related primarily to ten different topic areas. The topic areas which emerged from the review of examples include:

1. Affordable Transportation
 2. Poverty Reduction Tables/Community Poverty Agenda
 3. Corporate Poverty Agenda
 4. Affordable Housing
 5. Food Security
 6. Recreation
 7. Precarious Employment
 8. Early Childhood
 9. Social Awareness and Engagement
 10. Efforts to Influence Public Policy at the Provincial and Federal Levels of Government
- Based on the literature review, it appears that these are common areas in which municipalities are involved in taking action to reduce poverty in their communities.

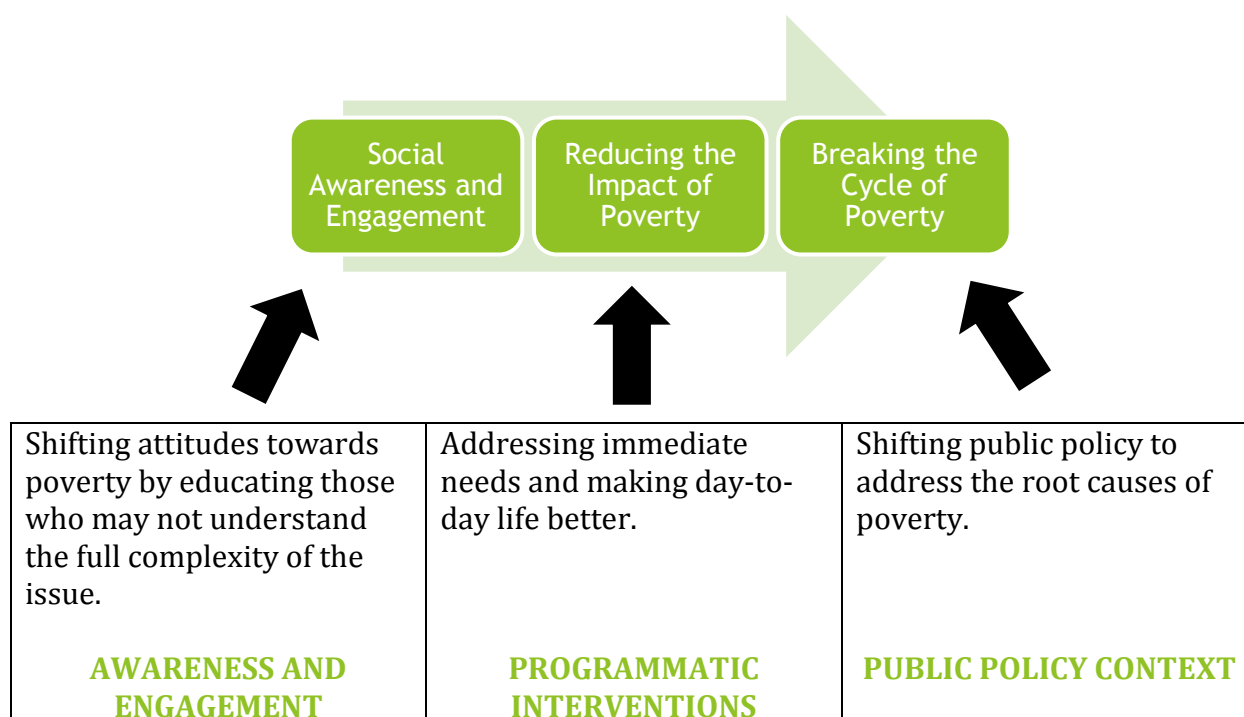
A number of frameworks can be used to group the actions taken by municipalities, including by topic area (as above and in the Background Report). Vibrant Communities Canada and the Tamarack Institute developed a comprehensive framework for poverty reduction. This framework categorizes the 147 most common strategies for reducing poverty into a schematic (see figure below) (Source: http://tamarackcommunity.ca/downloads/vc/Poverty_Reduction_GL_042209.pdf).



This framework shows that there are foundational strategies that help to move people out of crisis, but in the absence of additional interventions, people may slip back into crisis. It suggests that a broad range of strategies need to be implemented at a number of different levels to build up the range of assets needed so that people can thrive.

London's Child and Youth Network Ending Poverty Priority classifies its strategies in three ways (Source: <http://londoncyn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Ending-Poverty-2012-2015-DRAFT-Workplan.pdf> - see visual below for more details):

1. Social Awareness and Engagement
2. Reducing the Impact of Poverty
3. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty



For the purposes of this project, these three areas were used as a framework to better understand the actions municipalities are taking in the area of poverty reduction.

Social Awareness and Engagement

Many local communities have employed social awareness and engagement strategies to help shift attitudes towards poverty by educating those who may not understand the full complexity of the issue. These strategies range from social media campaigns, to surveying the public about issues important to them, to awareness raising campaigns on specific topics related to poverty, to business engagement initiatives.

One of the key supports to this area of social awareness and engagement is Vibrant Communities Canada (www.vibrantcanada.ca). This is a pan Canadian collaborative of cities and provinces working to reduce poverty. It is a connected learning community of more than 28 cities and provides opportunities for information and resource sharing, and dialogue. 14 Ontario cities were a part of this initiative at the time of this report: Halton, Hamilton, Huron County, Kingston, Leeds and Grenville, London, Niagara, Oxford County, Peel, Peterborough, Simcoe, Thunder Bay, Waterloo, and Windsor-Essex County.

See pages 45 to 48 of the Background Report for a complete listing of strategies identified through the literature review in the area of Social Awareness and Engagement.

Reducing the Impact of Poverty

Programmatic interventions are the most common strategies employed by municipalities in the area of poverty reduction. These strategies address people's immediate needs and make day-to-day life better, but do not address the root causes of poverty. According to the literature review, the most common strategies employed by municipal governments include (for a complete listing of strategies identified through the literature review see the Background Report):

Action/Strategy	Examples of Municipalities taking Action in this Area	Link to Background Report
Affordable Transit Pass Program Providing discounted bus passes for those people living with low income. Note: The Social Return on Investment has been demonstrated for these programs	Abbotsford, Calgary, Guelph, Hamilton, Region of Peel, Windsor-Essex County, York Region	Pages 5 to 11
Internal Policies and Practices Role modeling, as an employer, measures to be taken to improve employment practices	Kitchener, Region of Waterloo	Pages 16 to 17
Affordable Housing Programs and Strategies There are a variety of programs offered to make housing more affordable, including: financing of the purchase of homes, building grants, rent supplement, and emergency maintenance funds. The Housing First approach to homelessness is a key trend in this area	Edmonton, Greater Vancouver, Hamilton, Saskatoon, Surrey, Windsor-Essex County	Pages 17 to 22

Action/Strategy	Examples of Municipalities taking Action in this Area	Link to Background Report
Food Programs Food programs can be found in many municipalities. The types of food programs profiled in the literature review include: good food boxes, bulk fresh produce, mobile food markets, student nutrition programs, community gardens, voucher programs, collective kitchens, couponing programs, virtual supermarket, retailer initiative. Note: Evaluations have been conducted for the voucher programs and have shown the effectiveness of these types of programs	Baltimore City, Chatham-Kent, City of New Orleans, District of Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, London, Toronto, Windsor, Windsor-Essex County,	Pages 22 to 32
Access to Municipal Recreation Strategies/Programs Providing free or discounted access to municipal recreation facilities and discounted recreation program fees	Edmonton, Kingston, Ottawa, Revelstoke, Surrey, Vancouver, Windsor-Essex County	Pages 32 to 36
Tax Programs Offering clinics that provide low income earners with access to information and application forms for benefits and subsidies to which they are entitled Note: These programs have been evaluated and show strong evidence of helping residents put tax dollars back in their pockets	Brant County, Brantford, Waterloo Region	Page 40
Essential Skills Training Providing on the job training and mentoring based on skills required by employers	Halifax, Saint John, Saint John's	Pages 41 to 42
Post-Secondary Strategies Providing information to parents about/helping them access the Canada Learning Bond	Halton Region, Region of Peel	Page 44
OneLIST, OneHSN Providing centralized intake for licensed child care centres	Brantford, Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton, London, Region of Niagara, Region of Waterloo, Windsor-Essex County	Page 45

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

A number of municipalities have used their policy levers to implement public policy at the local level that assists with the reduction of poverty. Some of the main actions being taken by Ontario municipalities in this regard include (for a complete listing of strategies identified through the literature review see the Background Report):

Action/Strategy	Examples of Municipalities taking Action in this Area	Link to Background Report
Community Poverty Agenda/Poverty Reduction Tables Local decision making tables are being created across Canada to help set a guiding vision for community efforts and its associated strategic plan. These tables are usually composed of diverse sectors, including business, government, voluntary organizations and people living in poverty. Together, they contribute a wealth of ideas, resources and practical solutions. One key role of these tables is to figure out how to integrate the multiple pieces that typically are set up to tackle a complex problem like poverty	Halton Region, Hamilton, Huron County, Kingston, Leeds & Grenville, London, Niagara, Oxford County, Peterborough, Region of Peel, Region of Waterloo, Simcoe County, Thunder Bay, Windsor-Essex County	Pages 11 to 16
Food Policy Councils Food Policy Councils are developing across Canada to support and integrate an increasing number of community food initiatives and encourage the development of policy that supports a food system that is both just and sustainable	Calgary, Edmonton, Grand Prairie, Guelph-Wellington, Haliburton Highlands, Halton, Kamloops, Kaslo, North Thompson Valley, Ottawa, Quesnel, Rainy River Valley, Saskatoon, Shushwap, South Okanagan, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Vancouver, Waterloo Region, Windsor-Essex County, Winnipeg	Pages 22 to 23
Food Charter A Food Charter is a statement of values, principles, and priorities for a just and sustainable food system that will promote health and food security for all. The primary role of a Food Charter is to act as a guide to foster the development	Guelph-Wellington, Halton Region, Hamilton, Kawartha Lakes, Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington, London, Prince Albert, Region of Durham, Region of Peel, Saskatoon, Simcoe County,	Pages 23 to 24

Action/Strategy	Examples of Municipalities taking Action in this Area	Link to Background Report
of municipal food related planning, policy, and program development that can encourage a healthy food system	Sudbury, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria Capital Region, Waterloo Region, Windsor-Essex County	
Living Wage Campaigns A Living Wage Campaign involves establishing a community-based living wage committee, calculating a living wage for your community, and establishing a communication strategy and campaign	Guelph-Wellington, Halton, Hamilton, Kingston, Peterborough and Toronto have all calculated their living wage amount. Brantford, Ottawa, Waterloo, and Windsor are emerging communities.	Pages 36 to 37
Municipal Living Wage Policy Municipal living wage bylaws ensure that City workers, as well as contracted staff, are paid enough to meet basic, locally calculated, family living expenses. Living wage bylaws apply only to City employees and contractors, but they set an important local benchmark that other employers can follow	Esquimalt , New Westminster (none in Ontario)	Pages 38 to 39
Microloans Providing small loans to individuals to help them increase their income through self-employment	London	Page 37
Efforts to Influence Public Policy at the Provincial and Federal Levels of Government Conducting community consultations and making submissions to the Provincial government in a number of policy areas, including: Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy, minimum wage, termination of Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit, Social Assistance Review	Brantford, Leeds & Grenville, London, Niagara	Pages 48 to 49

Every municipality needs a mix of strategies from across all three levels of the framework. Attitudes about poverty need to be shifted while, at the same time, addressing the needs of those currently living in poverty. But without focusing on changing public policy and breaking the cycle, the root causes of poverty will never be addressed.

Although actions are being taken by municipalities across these ten different areas and at all three levels of the framework, the actions where the current evidence is strongest and the initiatives which may be most beneficial to local communities in terms of poverty reduction are:

- Affordable Transit Pass Programs
- Tax Clinics/Programs
- Community Poverty Agenda/Poverty Reduction Tables
- Living Wage Campaigns

The municipal candidate survey will focus, primarily, on these four items.

Working With and Influencing Municipalities

In order to help inform the municipal candidate survey strategy, the literature review also included a brief exploration of tips and suggestions for working with and influencing municipalities. Information found that may be helpful in developing the municipal candidate survey strategy include:

- Personalize the survey to your area. Put a greater emphasis on key local concerns
- Do your research
- Do not assume knowledge. Elected officials are often less knowledgeable about the issue you are passionate about
- Don't try to provide all your knowledge. Stick to a "one pager." Provide concise information
- Engage online
- Be vocal but positive during elections
- Sustain your effort. Real change requires sustained effort (many letters and many meetings)
- Use media relations. Politicians watch the media closely, so this is an indirect way to reach government officials and policy makers
- Use public outreach and education as a strategy
- Work through partnerships and collaborations

See pages 50 to 52 of the Background Report for more detailed information on this topic.

Municipal Candidate Survey

Based on the literature review a draft municipal candidate survey has been developed (see Attachment A). This draft includes general information questions and core questions that are recommended to be used in all communities administering the survey. Additional optional questions are also provided.

As per initial discussions with the project lead and the project description, the questions were developed based on the following guidelines:

- The survey should be short (10-13 questions) and include mainly close-ended questions
- Questions must be informed by the literature review and factors motivating municipal politicians
- Include supplementary materials for the candidate for each question (rationale and link to existing online resources for further information)
- Consider the ease of showing the survey results on a website

A draft cover letter for the survey has also been developed (see Attachment B). The content of this cover letter reflects the legal advice provided to the Middlesex-London Health Unit from Lerner's LLP in regards to framing the survey context and purpose.

In order to assist with the educational/awareness raising component of this initiative, a supplementary information sheet has been developed (see Attachment C) which can be sent to municipal candidates along with the survey and cover letter.

Evaluation Plan for the Municipal Candidate Survey

A number of indicators can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the municipal candidate survey strategy. The following table provides a set of potential indicators and a draft set of performance measures for the strategy. The final set of performance measures will need to be determined by the project committee, based on what success would look like to them.

Indicator	Draft Performance Measure
# of Ontario communities participating in the strategy	18 Ontario communities participated in the strategy
% of candidates completing the survey	50% of municipal election candidates completed the survey
# of visits to the website	18,000 (18 communities x 1,000 visits per community)
# of page views on the website	TBD
Amount of time spent on the website	TBD
# of social media "tags" ¹	1,000

¹ Note: The hashtag for consideration is #REALissueONT.

Attachment A: Municipal Candidate Survey

Instructions to Local Communities

- Customize the survey (i.e., question preambles, answer options, cover letter, supplemental information page) based on your local context
- It is recommended to use all the general information and core questions and then select any questions you want to include from the optional questions
- Additional questions may also be added
- Each question has instructions on how to format the question for an online survey (ie., “Survey set up”)

Questions for the Municipal Candidate Survey

A. General Information

1. Please enter the survey code emailed to you.

[Survey set up: Include this question if you are assigning individual codes to each candidate to verify answers are from the candidate and allow public promotion of survey link to candidates. Set up question as a single textbox.]

2. What is your name?

Survey set up: Single textbox

3. In what ward are you running in this municipal election?

- ☐ *[Insert ward name]*
- ☐ *[Insert ward name]*
- ☐ *[Insert ward name]*
- ☐ I'm not running in a ward (Mayoral candidate)

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer – insert ward list for your community)

4. What role/position are you running for in this election?

[Survey set up: Include this question if you are surveying more than just mayoral and councilor candidates (e.g., trustees). List all options and set up question as a multiple choice question allowing one answer to be selected.]

B. Core Questions

1. How would you best define poverty? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Lacking the resources to meet one's physical needs for survival (e.g., lacking shelter, food and clothing)
- ☐ Lacking the resources to fully participate in social and recreational opportunities in the community
- ☐ Lacking enough resources to be self-sufficient
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other (please specify in the box below)

Other:

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Survey set up: Multiple choice (multiple answers and set up a box for other comments)

2. Local groups are coming together across Canada to develop comprehensive approaches to poverty reduction and help guide community efforts. These groups (sometimes called coalitions or committees) are usually composed of diverse sectors, including business, government, voluntary organizations and people living in poverty. At least 14 municipalities in Ontario have poverty reduction coalitions, including: Halton, Hamilton, Huron County, Kingston, Leeds and Grenville, London, Niagara, Oxford County, Peel, Peterborough, Simcoe County, Thunder Bay, Waterloo, and Windsor-Essex County.

a) Did you know [*insert community name*] has/does not have [*use wording based on your local context*] the/a poverty reduction coalition [*insert name*]?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

Note: If your community does not have a poverty reduction coalition ask b) as a follow up question.

b) Do you think [*insert community name*] needs a poverty reduction coalition?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

3. Often one of the first priorities of poverty reduction coalitions is to develop a local poverty reduction strategy to help shape local priorities and provide measurable objectives. At least 10 municipalities in Ontario have local poverty reduction strategies, including: Halton, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Niagara, Peel, Peterborough, Thunder Bay, Waterloo, and Windsor-Essex County.

a) Did you know [*insert community name*] has/does not have [*use wording based on your local context*] a poverty reduction strategy [*insert link to strategy if available online*]?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

Note: If your community does not have a poverty reduction strategy ask b) as a follow up question.

b) Do you think [*insert community name*] needs a poverty reduction strategy?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

4. There are a number of key roles municipal government could play in overall poverty reduction. Read each of the statements below and tell us whether or not you think [*insert municipal government name*] should be playing that role.

Role of Municipal Government in Poverty Reduction	Yes	No	Don't Know
Connector of organizations and partners from various sectors to work together on poverty reduction			
Exemplary employer, including implementing employment practices that reduce poverty and providing a living wage to internal staff and outsourced services			
Investor in community programs and processes that support poverty reduction			
Leader and champion for community based poverty reduction initiatives, including raising community awareness about poverty and advocating to the federal and provincial levels of government			
Provider of services that reduce poverty, such as child care, social assistance, arts and recreation			

Survey set up: Matrix of choices (only one answer per row)

5. Municipal governments across Canada are taking steps to assist in poverty reduction:

- **Affordable housing** strategies identify the ways in which the municipality will assist with housing affordability
- **Affordable transit** programs and services increase people's ability to participate in employment, attend important medical and other appointments, and participate fully in community life
- **Food charters** are statements of values, principles, and priorities that guide municipal food related planning, policy, and programs
- **Food policy councils** support a variety of community food initiatives and promote a healthy sustainable and accessible food system for all
- **Housing First Policy** is an approach to ending homelessness that involves giving people direct access to permanent housing, along with the services they need and want to maintain it
- **Living wage campaigns** are community-based initiatives that calculate the amount a family needs to meet basic expenses, such as housing, child care, food and transportation and supports measures to ensure they can be met
- **Municipal living wage** policy ensure that municipal workers, as well as contracted staff, are paid enough to meet basic family living expenses
- **Sports, recreation and other leisure** activity access promotes inclusion and are associated with an enhanced quality of life through gaining new skills and improved physical and psychological well-being

If elected, would you support the implementation of any of these public policies and programs in [*insert community name*]? Please select one response for each item below.

Municipal Public Policies and Programs	Yes	No	Don't Know
Affordable housing strategy			
Affordable transit programs and services			
Food charter			
Food policy council			
Housing First Policy			
Living wage campaign			
Municipal living wage policy			
Discounted supplies for municipal recreation, arts and culture programs			
Discounted registration for municipal recreation, arts and culture programs			
Financial assistance to youth to cover the cost of non-municipal recreation program fees, equipment and/or transportation			
Free admission to municipal recreation facilities			

Survey set up: Matrix of choices (only one answer per row)

6. If elected, would you support poverty reduction in [*insert community name*]?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

7. If you would support poverty reduction in [*insert community name*], please provide at least two specific examples or actions of support you would take.

Survey set up: Comment/essay box

8. Please select up to three issues you would be committed to championing, if elected.
Select #1 for your first choice, #2 for your second choice and #3 for your third choice.

	#1	#2	#3
Affordable child care is available for all families			
Affordable public transit is available for all individuals			
Extensive and affordable library services are available			
Extensive and affordable recreation programs are available for all individuals			
Free income tax clinics are available to families who need them			
People on low-income have access to subsidies to live in private market rental properties			
People who are homeless get housed as quickly as possible			
Portion of all new housing developments is dedicated to subsidized housing for those living on low-income			
The number of people living in poverty is reduced			
The overall health of our community improves			
The right to live in a food secure community with dignified access to sufficient, affordable, healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate food is obtained by all			

Survey set up: Matrix of choices (only one answer per row)

9. In your opinion, rate each of the following on their responsibility to reduce poverty.
Please select one response for each item below.

	No Responsibility	Some Responsibility	A Lot of Responsibility	Don't Know
Charitable Organizations and Not-for-Profits				
General Public <u>not</u> Living in Poverty				
General Public Living in Poverty				
Private Business				
Municipal Government				
Provincial Government				
Federal Government				

Survey set up: Matrix of choices (only one answer per row)

C. Optional Questions

1. Nutrition-related diseases (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers) cost [*insert community name*] and Ontario millions annually. Low income residents can't afford to eat a healthy diet, once housing and other essential bills are paid. What would you do, if elected, to help ensure that everyone in [*insert community name*] is able to afford a healthy diet?

Survey set up: Comment/essay box

2. A lack of affordable, reliable, public transportation and access to other transportation options is directly linked to poverty. High transit costs limit people's ability to participate in employment, prevents them from attending important medical and other appointments, as well as from participating fully in community life.

If elected, would you support developing affordable transportation options for the rural parts of [*insert community name*]?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

3. [*insert community name*] has an affordable housing reserve fund. The fund was developed to help create additional affordable housing units. Municipal Council in the past has used some of the reserve funds to lower property tax increases.

Should the Reserve Fund solely be used for affordable housing purposes?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

4. Over a number of years, the Province of Ontario has been uploading Ontario Works caseload costs. This is saving the municipality money.

Do you believe the municipal savings from Ontario Works caseload costs being uploaded to the Province should be reinvested in municipal poverty reduction initiatives?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Survey set up: Multiple choice (only one answer)

5. Children in low-income families have significantly more psychosocial difficulties than other children, including more mental and physical health problems, academic troubles and behavioural issues. Quality early childhood interventions have been shown to improve performance in school, lessen the learning risks associated with low income and enhance parents' childrearing and coping skills.

Please select up to three areas municipal government should be involved in the early years. Select #1 for your first choice, #2 for your second choice and #3 for your third choice.

	#1	#2	#3
Advocacy to the Provincial and Federal levels of government for the development of supportive public policy			
Educating parents/caregivers about available subsidies and programs (e.g., tax benefits, Canada Learning Bond)			
Financial assistance for child care			
Funding of community programs and services that support early child development			
Leading and/or participating in the development of a community plan for children and youth			
Providing affordable recreation, arts and culture programs and services			
Providing centralized intake to licensed child care centres			

Survey set up: Matrix of choices (only one answer per row)

Attachment B: Cover Letter for the Municipal Candidate Survey

Re. Hungry for Action Municipal Candidate Survey

September 15, 2014

*[Insert Hungry for Action
community logo]*

Dear Municipal Candidate,

[Insert local information to introduce your group] is part of a larger initiative coordinated by the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health called Hungry for Action. We would like to know your thoughts about the role of municipal government in poverty reduction through a *[insert number]* question survey. This survey has been endorsed by *[insert any local endorsements]*.

Participation is voluntary. Your response will be posted at *[insert website]*, identified with your name for public review. There will be no commentary or analysis of the answers. If you choose not to complete the survey, your name will be listed with “no response”. *[Insert other ways that your local group is promoting/sharing the responses to the survey to encourage candidates to complete it]*.

Poverty negatively impacts health and the ability to create a healthy, vibrant community. The fact that some people in *[insert community name]* cannot afford basic needs, including nutritious and sufficient food is a real concern. The purpose of Hungry for Action is to build awareness and support among local decision makers for healthy public policy that will foster reduced poverty and food insecurity in municipalities across Ontario.

The video “Let's Start a Conversation about Health and Not Talk about Health Care at All” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=QboVEEJPNX0) makes the strong connection between poverty and health. This survey is intended to bring awareness to determinants of health, such as income and social status, with the objective of reducing health inequities.

Please respond **by September 26, 2014**. To access the survey, please click the link below.

[insert info about candidate code, if using] *[insert survey link]*

We hope that your participation in this survey serves as a starting point to an ongoing conversation about poverty in *[insert community name]*. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

[insert name of the group distributing the survey]

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Attachment C: Supplementary Information for Municipal Candidates

Visit the resources below for more information on the following topics:

Topics	Resources
Early childhood programs and poverty	Research paper: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/720ENG.pdf
Food charters	Research compilation from Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee: www.dropbox.com/sh/jak1lyovordw9ou/I05mkXp9Dw?n=140969920
Food policy councils	Briefing note: www.ncchpp.ca/docs/FoodPolicyCouncils-ConseilsPolitiqueAlimentaire_EN.pdf
Health is about more than health care	Video: “Let’s Start a Conversation about Health and Not Talk about Health Care at All” (6 min) www.youtube.com/watch?v=QboVEEJPNX0
Living wage campaigns	Website: www.livingwagecanada.ca
Low-income transit pass and social return on investment	Case study: vibrantcanada.ca/resource-library/transportation/fair-fares-calgarys-social-return-investment
Municipal government and poverty reduction	Research paper: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/553820495.pdf
Municipal living wage policy	Policy update: vibrantcanada.ca/files/municipal_living_wage_101_summer_2011.pdf
Poverty coalitions	Website: www.vibrantcanada.ca