

The Poverty Crisis 2005

Report on the Peoples' Hearings II
Held December 2004 to April 2005

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Poverty Issues Advisory Committee
With the assistance of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa

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Executive Summary

In late 2004 the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee of the City of Ottawa (PIAC) undertook a consultation with low income residents in Ottawa called “The Listening Forums: People’s Hearings II”. This consultation process had the objectives of identifying the most pressing problems of those living in poverty and their proposed solutions, and served as an opportunity for participants to comment and offer recommendations on the City of Ottawa’s Draft Community & Protective Services Department’s Proposed Strategic Planning Framework.

The process included:

- Three public forums, called “The Listening Forums: People’s Hearings II”, totaling a participation of 78 people
- 9 focus groups with target populations with total participation of 60 people
- 95 responses to a survey.

An effort was made to include participation from low income Aboriginal residents in Ottawa, but this was not successful. This is a gap in the consultation process and in the findings of this report, as Ottawa’s Aboriginal residents experience disproportionately high rates of poverty and homelessness. Further, their experiences of poverty and their needs are distinct.

Funding for the initiative was generously provided by the City of Ottawa. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa assisted the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee in the consultation process and in the preparation of this report.

Findings

There was a remarkable degree of common ground expressed by participants with respect to the difficulties they face while living on a low income or on no income. The following are common issues identified through the forums, focus groups and survey responses.

- a) Inadequate Income to Meet Basic Needs, including access to safe, affordable housing, adequate and nutritious food, clothing and laundry, health services and transportation.
- b) Social Inclusion, including access to recreation and cultural activities, community participation, and information.

Overall Reaction to the Draft Community and Protective Services Priorities

Participants were asked to give their initial reactions to the draft Community and Protective Services priorities. The majority of participants felt that basic needs must first be addressed, and then participation in the draft priorities could be achieved. Rural residents felt strongly that they were not included in the priorities.

Discussion of the Specific Draft Community and Protective Services Priorities

a) Community Capacity Building: Homelessness

Although participants were pleased that homelessness was identified as a priority issue, participants were very clear that what is needed to address homelessness is more affordable housing, supports (including funds) to get people from homelessness into the housing, as well as support services to help individuals remain housed. There were many specific suggestions made on how the City could address homelessness. Participants also emphasized that high utility costs are a growing part of their affordability problem. Rural residents identified particular challenges concerning the lack of affordable housing outside the urban and suburban centres. Many participants identified disrepair in housing as a serious problem. Finally, participants in many discussion groups, including people experiencing homelessness, were concerned about the conditions faced by homeless people in the shelters and on the streets.

b) Children's Agenda

Participants in the Listening Forums and focus groups identified the Children's Agenda as a very important strategy. They were very concerned about the number of families living in poverty, and noted the importance of addressing the impact of poverty on children as a key preventive strategy with respect to healthy development.

Overwhelmingly participants identified that the key to this strategy is for parents to have adequate income to provide for their children through decently paid jobs or government transfers which reflect the true cost of living. Many participants were distressed that the Children's Agenda does not make mention of the National Child Benefit being deducted from the social assistance cheques. Many participants and groups identified the tremendous need for more subsidized childcare and for more flexibility in childcare services. Increasing access to childcare services was the most commonly identified service which should be addressed within this priority. Many suggested explicitly identifying supports to parents as part of the Children's Agenda. Many participants discussed the importance of more recreational and cultural opportunities for children and youth of all ages, and therefore were pleased with the priorities addressing a Physical Activity Strategy and access to culture. There was high concern that the draft priorities, and particularly the Children's Agenda, do not include anything for youth. Participants were very concerned about the health and development of teenagers in particular, and felt there was clearly a need for their issues to be explicitly included in the Children's Agenda. The highest concern was with respect to mental health concerns, including depression and suicide. Francophone participants were very concerned about the shortage of French services for children, youth and families, including Francophone daycare spaces. Participants identified that actions to support families that have child with a disability need to be added to this priority. Many also feel the priority does not include an importance placed on the development of and access to culturally sensitive and ethnic-run childcares and community programs. Rural residents had a particular concern that the priority does not take into account the geographic locations and distance between rural and urban areas.

c) Working City

In general, there was very high support for a serious focus on improving opportunities for meaningful employment. There was a very strong recommendation that the priority focus on the creation of and access to jobs at liveable wages, that is, wages which enable the worker to meet the real cost of living in Ottawa.

Some participants were concerned that the priority does not clearly recognize that some people will not be able to support themselves through work, particularly some people with serious disabilities. There is a need for more clarity on the City's position with respect to stay at home parents, particularly when one of the target groups within this priority is sole support parents. Participants identified the importance of including a basic needs strategy in order for this priority to be successful. The priority should include a focus on training connected to real jobs. The Working City priority would need to include an action plan to reduce on the current obstacles to getting employment for people on social assistance.

Many participants felt that having target groups was good, however it should not be to the detriment of other population groups. In particular, many were concerned that people currently working at low wage jobs often do not have access to any supports or opportunities for training. Many thought it was important to have youth as a target group. The Working City Strategy should include a targeted rural strategy, developed in co-operation with rural representatives, and co-ordinated with other departments of the City and the Rural Economic Development Plan. Participants with disabilities also were unanimous in feeling completely excluded from the Working City priority. There were numerous suggestions to increase support for small business development and community economic development, particularly for people marginalized from the workforce.

d) Physical Activity Strategy

The majority of participants felt that a physical activity strategy is important and could reduce possible costly health problems. Better access to recreation subsidies was a recurring theme, and participants offered a variety of suggestions to improve the current subsidy structure. Better information about the subsidies would be a good starting point for this strategy.

Several participants of the focus group for people with disabilities also felt excluded from this priority. Rural residents voiced in unison their dissatisfaction with this priority. Many community organizations offering recreation were identified as very important services with which the City should collaborate for a Physical Activity strategy.

e) Successful Aging

Many agreed that this priority is important. However, the priority needs to include policies to support optimal health among seniors, specifically low income seniors. Participants strongly felt that an affordable transportation plan must be included in the

strategy. Rural residents strongly felt that a plan specifically for senior rural residents must be put in place. Safe, affordable housing for seniors was a very major theme. There is a tremendous shortage of affordable housing. Furthermore, many seniors who had subsidized housing were concerned about poor safety and security in their housing complex.

Many felt that the “Successful Aging” strategy must include a plan to reach out to isolated seniors and provide opportunities for them to be involved with others. Low income seniors and seniors with disabilities face even greater challenges than others. As well, participants from ethnic minority groups stressed the need for the priority to include culturally sensitive services, particularly for immigrant seniors who may have limited knowledge of the English and French languages or of existing services.

f) Neighbourhood Planning

Many participants felt it would be very important for the City to focus on getting people involved in the neighbourhood planning process and offering more opportunities for residents to speak up for and participate in change. Consultations should seek direct input from low-income or middle wage earners. Participants with physical disabilities agreed that much planning is needed in order to make the City accessible. Rural residents felt the City is not knowledgeable of rural issues, the rural way of living or the specific needs of rural residents. “One size fits all” planning structures which use population numbers and density as the criteria for assessing the need for services do not work for rural areas.

A huge quality of life issue for low income people related to neighbourhood planning is the trend to remove or restrict public amenities in community spaces (such as water fountains, benches for sitting, public washrooms etc.). This is particularly an issue for people who experience homelessness, seniors, and low income people in general using the downtown core. Neighbourhood planning should make communities (esp. the downtown core) more inclusive of people who don’t have money.

Participants recommended that better information on what is available in communities would be a good starting point to get people thinking about community plans.

g) Access to Culture & Community and Cultural Investment

Most low income individuals felt that access to culture and cultural investments is an issue of social inclusion. The majority of participants were happy to see the priority include plans to expand the Fee Assistance Subsidy Program and to do outreach. The priority must include an equal investment in all cultures. Access to cultural activities was deemed as a very important priority to senior participants. Individuals with physical disabilities shared their dissatisfaction that the priority did not include a provision that all buildings in the city be accessible to all residents.

h) Literate and Learning Community

Some participants felt this is an important priority. For Francophone participants, this strategy was particularly important. English and French language training for unilingual residents and immigrants who request it was seen as very important in increasing employability, given the number of jobs requiring bilingualism. More ESL and FSL classes, at more advanced levels, would also be important. Computer literacy must also be part of this priority as it is a skill necessary in today's technological workforce. The importance of the libraries was raised in many of the groups, as they are free to residents and support learning among adults and children.

i) Emergency Management Program

Some participants noted that low income people may be affected differently by major emergencies, than other residents.

Recommendations

There are fourteen main recommendations, and 84 supplementary recommendations flowing from the input received from low income residents.

1. Add a priority called "Meet Basic Needs and Reduce the Impact of Poverty"
2. Include "Improve Access to Information" as part of the Community and Protective Services Priorities
3. Completely re-focus the priority "Community Capacity to End and Prevent Homelessness" on creating affordable housing and providing concrete supports for eviction prevention
4. Work with the Transportation Department and relevant Advisory Committees to enhance access to public transportation as a key implementation strategy of the Community and Protective Services priorities
5. Focus the "Working City" Priority on Access to Employment at Livable Wages
6. Change "The Children's Agenda" to "The Families' Agenda"
7. Increase the focus on access to recreation services and facilities in the Physical Activity Strategy
8. Focus on concrete supports to meet core needs within the Successful Aging Strategy
9. Work with community organizations and representatives to engage Aboriginal residents in the development and implementation of the Community and Protective Services priorities, in recognition of the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal poverty and homelessness.
10. Implement Structures Which Enable Meaningful Community Participation in Community Planning
11. Include in the Cultural Investment Strategy increased access to cultural opportunities for low income residents
12. Work through Community Agencies to implement the "Literate and Learning Community" Priority

13. Ensure the Priorities are adequately resourced, and the implementation and impact are measured and monitored
14. Incorporate into the Emergency Plan a recognition that comprehensive coverage of the needs of low income residents is different from the needs of the general population, in many emergency situations

A. Introduction

In late 2004 the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee of the City of Ottawa (PIAC) undertook a consultation with low income residents in Ottawa called “The Listening Forums: People’s Hearings II”. The purpose of the consultation was to

- Identify the most pressing problems of people living in poverty
- Ask people living in poverty to identify solutions to their problems
- Consult with people living in poverty on the draft priorities of the City of Ottawa’s Community and Protective Services, and
- Bring forward recommendations to the City on the Community and Protective Services Draft Priorities and other issues, which reflected the input received from Ottawa residents living in poverty.

The project followed on the very successful People’s Hearings process which was held from 1998 – 2000. In that process, low income residents provided extensive feedback on their most pressing issues and proposed actions to address their challenges. This process led to the Task Force on Poverty, the Public Participation Program, the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee, the Ottawa Action on Poverty, as well as many initiatives in the City and the community.

Subsequent to the Peoples’ Hearings, throughout the Ottawa 20/20 Planning Process, the City confirmed its’ commitment to create an inclusive city in which all residents share in the City’s economic prosperity. However, with almost 24,000 families and over 11,700 seniors living below the poverty line¹ in Ottawa at the time of the last census², and the income gap in the City continuing to increase even in times of economic growth, there was a pressing need for a clear strategy to address this serious problem.

The People’s Hearings II (The Listening Forums) of 2005 provides an update of the reality faced by Ottawa residents living in poverty and recommends actions to address today’s challenges. With the City’s Community and Protective Services developing a set of draft priorities to guide the department’s work over the next three to five years, there was a strategic opportunity to gather feedback and implement effective strategies to address poverty, based on the input from low income individuals.

This report is an overview of the feedback provided within “The People’s Hearings II (The Listening Forums)” including extensive consultation on the draft Community and Protective Services priorities. The information is based on three methods of consultation:

- Input from 78 participants in three public forums, specifically Dec. 2 / 04 at Lakeside Gardens, Dec. 9 / 04 at Orleans United Church, and Dec. 11 at McNabb Community Centre. Participants attended in response to general public outreach and represented a broad cross section of low income people,. They participated in full-group and small-group discussions. These public forums were called “The Listening Forums”.

¹ Some participants in the process reported having no income.

² Social Planning Council of Ottawa. Incomes in Ottawa: Sources, Levels, and Adequacy 1995 – 2000. Ottawa: SPCO, December 2003, pg.16.

- Feedback from 60 people in a series of nine focus groups held January to April 2005. The following population groups were consulted in the focus groups:
 - Immigrants
 - Rural residents
 - Seniors
 - Single parents
 - People with disabilities
 - Women
 - Francophones
 - Low income working people
 - Youth
- Responses to a survey developed by the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee. Low income individuals participating in the Listening Forums and focus groups were asked to complete the survey to provide additional feedback. 95 participants filled out the survey and represent a good cross section of people experiencing poverty in Ottawa. (Please see Appendices B and C.)

An effort was made to include participation from low income Aboriginal residents in Ottawa, but this was not successful. This is a gap in the consultation process and in the findings of this report, as Ottawa's Aboriginal residents experience disproportionately high rates of poverty and homelessness. Further, their experiences of poverty and their needs are distinct.

Funding for the initiative was generously provided by the City of Ottawa. The Social Planning Council of Ottawa assisted the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee in the consultation process and in the preparation of this report.

B. Common Issues

There was a remarkable degree of common ground expressed by participants with respect to the difficulties they face while living on a low income or on no income. The following are common issues identified through the forums, focus groups and survey responses.

a) Inadequate Income to Meet Basic Needs

I can't afford luxuries like food and transportation.

Survey respondent

Overwhelmingly, the most common problem identified by participants was not having enough income to meet their basic needs. Whether working full-time, part-time or receiving government transfer payments, the majority of participants identified they could not afford housing costs, adequate food, clothing, transportation and health costs.

Government transfer payments (including social assistance, seniors pensions, disability pensions or employment insurance) are not adequate to meet the increasing cost of living.

Most participants with children who receive social assistance payments identified the deduction of the National Child Benefit Supplement as a policy which made it harder for them to meet their children's needs.

While getting a job used to be a way out of poverty, in today's economy many jobs do not provide enough income to keep people out of poverty. Working people identified low wages, not having enough hours of work or layoffs as a major difficulty. Participants in the Listening Forums, the focus groups and the survey were in strong support of all levels of government increasing access to stable jobs as a major poverty reduction initiative, so long as those jobs were at livable wages which would allow them to meet the real costs of living in Ottawa.

We go without many things that are considered every day normal things to others

Survey respondent

i) Access to Safe, Affordable Housing

Overwhelmingly, participants were concerned with the shortage of safe, clean and affordable housing. Many participants reported paying more than 50% of their annual income on housing and utilities. Some senior participants shared how they have had to live in housing complexes or apartment building where they often felt their personal security was at risk, because the rent was subsidized. Parents shared stories of the poorly maintained rental units where they live with their children. Individuals with disabilities reported having to cope with inappropriate housing in which the design did not meet their physical needs, as few fully accessible units are available. Immigrants reported how many large families have no choice but to live in small over-crowded apartments as large apartments are too expensive. Rural residents identified that some low income rural residents are living in housing which is in extremely poor repair and may be without heat.

Many participants identified in the discussion groups and on the survey that they did not have the means to pay for heat, hydro or other utilities. This is a growing concern as utility costs increase on the one hand, and are removed from the services included in many rental arrangements on the other hand. This problem was identified by urban and rural low income residents. Additionally, rural residents not served by Ottawa Hydro were concerned that they seemed to be bearing a disproportionate percentage of the hydro debt, in relation to their urban counterparts. Participants identified a need for the City and the Province to intervene to provide some assistance with rising utility costs.

ii) Access to Adequate and Nutritious Food

Participants reported having to sacrifice in order to pay for their housing and utilities, often foregoing on adequate and nutritious food and snacks for themselves or even their children. Parents reported going without food near the end of the month so their children could eat. They shared a variety of strategies for meeting their food needs, as well as their frustration in not being able to afford healthy food choices, particularly fruits,

vegetables and protein. As other living costs continue to go up and low incomes stay the same, low income residents must rely more and more on community organizations, school feeding programs and charities such as the food banks to provide basic food.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are the hardest to get. I just can't afford them, and I'm diabetic so I need them. If the government could assist social agencies to have more fresh food it would be great. They are just too dear for us to buy.

Focus group participant

You get your groceries once a month and by the end of the month the fridge is empty. But the kids eat three times a day, every day. And you can't buy fruit for the whole month. From the food banks you get the same macaroni and cheese. You can't feed your kids "mac and cheese" all the time.

Focus group participant

I must use my credit card in order to pay for my groceries. Eventually it catches up to you.

Focus group participant

iii) Access to Transportation

Please, if you only make one recommendation, please recommend a subsidized bus pass.

Listening Forum Participant

Access to free or subsidized transportation is a huge need. It is essential for people looking for or keeping work. As well, we can't access what is available because we can't afford to get to it.

Listening Forum Participant

The need for more affordable transportation was an issue shared by all participants. Most participants were certain that if transportation were more affordable it would result in lower costs in many other areas of the City budget, as low income people could more effectively deal with many of their own issues. Lack of transportation affects all low income residents and their ability to access the workforce, maintain good health, and be included in activities and community life. For all participants it was first an affordability issue. For some, particularly people with disabilities and senior residents, it is also an issue of accessibility and reliability. The high cost of public transportation and Para Transpo often results in residents, especially those living in rural areas, foregoing other basic needs in order to access transportation. In rural areas with no public transportation the challenge to find affordable transportation is even harder.

iv) Access to Suitable Clothing and the Means to Do Laundry

Participants identified the difficulty of getting appropriate clothes and of having the resources to keep them clean. Of particular concern were the challenges of keeping growing children appropriately clothed through different seasons, and having clothes suitable for job interviews or work.

Francophones from ethnic minority groups brought up the need for information on Canadian culture for new immigrants upon arrival in the country. For example, they suggested many people may not be aware of what is appropriate attire for the seasons, and this may affect how they present themselves at job interviews, how they take care of their children, and how they are perceived by others.

When you go to buy a winter jacket, you don't know which material is warm enough... and when you send your kids to school you don't know that you are expected to pack daily treats and snacks in their lunches.

Focus group participant

For many people, particularly people who were homeless or in rooming houses, access to laundry facilities continued to be a challenge.

v) Access to Health Care, Health Services and Resources for Healthy Lifestyles

A major theme was the negative impact which poverty was having on the health of low income residents. Participants reported they have difficulty getting safe housing in good repair or nutritious food. They cannot afford over-the-counter medications, and some prescription medications are not covered even if they have a drug plan (for example, some allergy medicines). Seniors and people with disabilities shared added concerns of more costly health needs which they had no money to address. Many aids to daily living which they need are not available through government programs like the Assistive Devices Program.

Dental health and access to dental services were also identified as being a serious concern. The majority of individuals who participated in the forums and focus groups shared their concern with the fact that the subsidized dental services do not do preventive work, only emergency extractions. This was identified as a serious issue for individuals trying to remain healthy, and those trying to access the job market with teeth that are in poor condition. It was also a concern for parents, who would like to ensure proper dental health for their children.

I used to have perfect teeth. I brush my teeth and take care of them, but when I got pregnant I got cavities. The only thing they will do is pull your teeth but I would like to keep my teeth. It would be nice at least to go once a year to get my teeth cleaned and have a check-up. Because we are single mothers and poor we shouldn't be made to suffer the loss of our teeth. We should be able to eat.

Focus group participant

Stress was a huge issue for people, leading often to depression or other mental health difficulties. Participants shared how difficult it is to cope when they “come up short every month”, to tell their children constantly that they can’t have things that other children have, to worry about arrears and unpaid bills, and to struggle to put food on the table for their children.

It’s a very nice country but the stress is killing us.

Focus group participant

b) Social Inclusion

i) Access to recreation and cultural activities

It’s quality of life as well as being able to be alive. We talk a lot about inclusion and participation. Are you able to be involved in your community or are you left out because you can’t afford to participate in things?

Focus Group Participant

For the majority of participants, recreation and cultural activities were considered a luxury. Recreational activities are often the first thing to get cut when individuals try to make ends meet. Many shared they cannot even participate in free activities organized by community centres as they may not have access to transportation. For individuals with disabilities, physical access to buildings continues to be a challenge and an obstacle to full participation in activities.

ii) Community Participation and Discriminatory Attitudes

In general, participants were frustrated at the increasing number and level of user fees for community services.

Every time there is a user fee put on or increased, you exclude low income people.

Listening Forum participant

Many participants expressed a concern over the removal or restriction of public amenities (e.g. water fountains, benches for sitting, washrooms, etc.) in community areas. This is particularly an issue for people who experience homelessness, seniors, and other low income people using the downtown core. Many shared the feeling of being treated as unworthy, mistrusted, and lacking intelligence.

Many individuals feel stigmatized with the social assistance process and having to share a great deal of private information with a government worker. This is particularly the case with immigrant participants who shared that they will not go and apply for assistance because the process is very invasive and it is not in their culture or way of doing things to reveal much personal information. Others shared stories of receiving poor service from their income assistance case workers; such as workers not returning phone calls, being

offensive, regularly losing documents, or denying them benefits to which the individual was entitled.

When you apply for subsidy or help it is very invasive. In any situation where you are getting money from the government you have to deal with self-esteem. You have to balance if you want to give up your self-esteem or not.

Focus group participant

What's different for immigrant women is the cultural shame to apply for welfare.

Focus group participant

There's a stigma being in housing. People treat you differently if they know you live there.

Focus group participant

c) Access to information

Inadequate knowledge of City services and how to access those services was mentioned in many groups. Rural groups reported this as an important issue since their client service centre is only open one day a week. Participants were frustrated at being directed to consult the internet to find the needed information, as many low income residents do not have a computer or internet access. Further, rural residents may not easily access library computers due to distance. Many of the senior participants were not aware of potential financial assistance through Essential Health and Social Services. Participants in many groups were unaware of the subsidy available for recreational activities. Participants shared that immigrants and new Canadians who have language barriers also find it very difficult to access information on City services or have their needs understood.

I lost everything and went to the shelter. I should have been able to get Community Start-up Benefits but the worker said, "We are not an insurance company". I have never seen the sheet on what people are entitled to.

Focus group participant

The workers won't tell you what you are entitled to. You have to find out yourself and ask. And even then they may say no. And you have to go back again and again to try to get it. The system shouldn't work like that.

Focus group participant

Is there a strategy behind the strategy? How does the City plan to reach the immigrants, families, etc.? Right now it is not easy for them to have access to the City and not easy for them to know what's there.

Focus Group Participant

C. Overall Reaction to the Draft Community and Protective Services Priorities

Participants were asked to give their initial reactions to the draft Community and Protective Services priorities. (Please see Appendix D). The majority of participants were very concerned that there is no mention of poverty or seeking to end poverty, and the concerns of low income individuals are not reflected. Most felt that basic needs must first be addressed, and then participation in the draft priorities could be achieved. There is a need for a long term vision in order to reduce systemic poverty issues.

These priorities would be nice – if basic needs were already dealt with.

Listening Forum participant

Focus on the basics like food, rent and money in people’s pockets. The rest is “gravy”.

Community Forum Participant

When so many departments were joined into one department it is predictable that the concerns of low income people are not reflected in the priorities. These priorities are bland with respect to the needs of low income people because the department does not have that focus.

Listening Forum Participant

Survey responses also reflected this concern for a focus on basics. In response to the question, “*What is the most important thing the City could do to improve the situation for low income people in Ottawa?*”, the overwhelming response was “*...to help increase incomes and meet basic needs of housing, food, clothing, and transportation*”.³

Rural residents felt strongly that they were not included in the priorities. They identified the draft priorities as an urban plan which does not take into consideration the special needs, circumstances and realities of rural life. Currently, the infrastructure needed to put the priorities into place does not exist in the rural areas in the way it does in the urban areas. There is a need for the priorities to be modified to reflect a strategy responsive to and realistic for rural areas.

There was a general consensus among participants that the priorities are closely related to each other and would need to be implemented as a package. A significant number of participants felt it is critical that the CPS priorities be intimately connected to and consistent with the directions and activities undertaken within other City planning processes (such as the Official Plan, the Transportation Plan, the Economic Plan, the Municipal Accessibility Plan and the Annual Budget). A common concern was that the priorities were vague, not action oriented, and not measurable. A key missing element is an explanation of how resources will be allocated to these priorities and how progress will be monitored.

³ Paraphrased.

D. Discussion Of The Specific Draft Priority Strategies

Participants in the Listening Forums and focus groups were asked for their comments and suggestions on the draft Community and Protective Services priorities.⁴ Their comments are summarized below.

As well, through a specific ranking exercise in the Listening Forums and through the discussions at the focus groups, the consultation provides some direction on the relative importance of the various priorities to low income residents. The priorities are listed in this section in the general order of their importance to participants overall. Obviously certain priorities were more significant to some groups than to others. Once again, the perceived importance reflects the high concern for basic needs.

a) Community Capacity Building: Homelessness

It would save money for the system if people were stabilized in their housing.

Listening Forum participant

Although participants were pleased that homelessness was identified as a priority issue, the overwhelming response to this priority was that it had the least tangible substance of all the strategies. All groups felt that it was fundamentally flawed as it does not include the creation of more affordable housing as its' main focus. The shortage of suitable, affordable housing was a primary issue raised by every discussion group. As well, it was identified on the survey as the biggest challenge which low income people face by a majority of respondents.

Participants were very clear that what is needed to address homelessness is more affordable housing, supports (including funds) to get people from homelessness into the housing, as well as support services to help individuals remain housed. Several groups said they would like to see specific targets with respect to the number of new subsidized and supportive units.

I am astounded that there is no mention of affordable housing.

Listening Forum participant

Shelters are not the best solution. In many cases the person could be given a bit of money for rent or food and they would not end up homeless. It would be a lot cheaper than sending them to the shelter.

Listening Forum participant

⁴ The priorities "Staff Investment" and "Public Education: Safety and Safe Behaviour" were not discussed in this process as they did not resonate with the concerns of the participants. Further, each set of participants focussed on those issues more relevant to them, and therefore, not all priorities were discussed in every focus group or Listening Forum discussion group.

Participants in several groups thought the inventory was of questionable value, except with respect to the identification of available low rent housing. Many also expressed a concern with the creation of a toolkit. To many it appeared to be a poor use of resources and would be an activity better suited for a charitable organisation to undertake rather than the City.

Some participants questioned the need for distinct plans to address homelessness for different population groups. Others felt this was a good strategy as different groups have different needs. Many participants stated that the current “Community Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness” is quite adequate, but has not been fully implemented.

Through the consultation there were many specific suggestions made on how the City could address homelessness and specifically, how to make this priority strategy relevant for low income residents including those experiencing homelessness. There was a clear consensus that the strategy must include an action plan to increase the supply of owned and rented affordable housing including supportive housing, to make rent subsidies more available, and to increase supports to avoid evictions. The following specific strategies or targets were suggested to be included in the implementation of this priority

- As homelessness is directly related to low incomes, increase government transfer incomes to reflect the real cost of living and advocate for higher minimum wages
- Prioritize financial help to cover rent, utilities and mortgage payments for low income residents
- Increase the availability of rent subsidies, in social housing and for people on the waiting list for social housing
- Reduce the average length of time on the social housing waiting list to no more than two years
- Support rent controls and / or a rent freeze.
- Create more supportive housing and supports in existing housing, particularly for people with mental health issues or people with developmental disabilities
- Provide more capital and operating money to create affordable housing and work with community groups and the private sector to leverage additional capital and operating funds
- Create policies and supports to encourage more affordable home ownership, particularly in the suburbs
- Preserve existing affordable housing – stop conversions and demolitions
- Encourage rent-to-own, co-operative housing, bachelorettes, and other cost effective models
- Encourage apartments in houses through policy and financial incentives
- Entice corporations and private donors to get involved in creating affordable housing
- Convert unused buildings to affordable housing
- Develop a plan to increase the supply of affordable housing which is accessible to people with a range of disabilities

Participants also emphasized that high utility costs are a growing part of their affordability problem. Many pay over 30% of their income in rent or mortgage costs and

pay utilities on top of that, up to several hundred dollars per month in winter months. Many talked of living in housing without heat or losing their housing because they could not afford rent and utilities. A priority strategy to address homelessness would need to include a strategy to help low income residents with growing utility charges.

Rural residents identified particular challenges concerning the lack of affordable housing outside the urban and suburban centres. Seniors on fixed incomes and other low income residents are often forced to leave their community to move to the urban areas, because there is no affordable housing available. The “Homelessness” priority should include a strategy to create affordable housing in rural communities. Part of this strategy would require re-visiting by-laws which limit the ability of rural residents to create affordable housing. (For example, participants shared that landowners are no longer able to sever land and build a house for a family member. Also, certain practices existing in urban centres are not applied in rural areas, such as waiving the development charges for the construction of affordable housing.)

Many participants identified disrepair in housing as a serious problem, and in some cases a contributing cause of homelessness. They encouraged the City to enforce maintenance standards in the City. In particular, there was a great deal of concern about the state of disrepair in some of the social housing buildings. The City needs to prioritize bringing its’ existing affordable housing stock up to minimum repair standards.

Several participants recommended the City include in this priority a strategy to address the NIMBY syndrome (“Not In My Back Yard”), as well as an advocacy strategy to encourage senior levels of government to fund affordable housing.

Finally, participants in many discussion groups, including people experiencing homelessness, were concerned about the conditions faced by homeless people in the shelters and on the streets. In particular, there was concern with respect to overcrowding, safety, and security of personal possessions. There was frustration that people are required to move from one shelter to another, and that they must “run around too much” to meet their basic needs. Participants shared that the personal needs allowances are very low, and do not provide enough income for people to meet even the most basic of needs. Access to financial support to move out of the shelter into housing can be difficult, in particular, with many people having difficulty getting the Community Start-up Allowance. As well, people were concerned with a trend to “clean up the streets”. This is resulting in homeless people being moved on from public areas and having to go to places that are even less safe for them. The “Homelessness” priority should include an action plan to improve the conditions in the shelters and on the streets for homeless people.

b) Children’s Agenda

Participants in the Listening Forums and focus groups identified the Children’s Agenda as a very important strategy. They were very concerned about the number of families living in poverty, and noted the importance of addressing the impact of poverty on

children as a key preventive strategy with respect to healthy development. Research is clear on the long term social and financial costs of not addressing child poverty.

Poverty leads to family disintegration.

Listening Forum Participant

Many participants in several groups fundamentally objected to this being defined as a “Children’s Agenda” rather than “A Family Agenda”. As children do not live on their own, many felt that the priority must explicitly include help for parents in a way which supports rather than erodes the integrity of the family.

Overwhelmingly participants identified that the key to this strategy is for parents to have adequate income to provide for their children through decently paid jobs or government transfers which reflect the true cost of living. If families have proper stability in income and housing, many of the other things fall into place. The implementation of this strategy must lead to an improved financial situation for families, whether they choose to stay home to raise their children or work outside the home. They felt the priority lacked a plan that would allow parents to earn adequate income or to be able to access adequate income in order to support their children. Participants proposed that to be effective, this priority must include a strategy to support families in the meeting of their basic needs for income, housing, food, clothing, transportation and health costs. Many participants were distressed that the Children’s Agenda does not make mention of the National Child Benefit being deducted from the social assistance cheques nor the inadequacy of social assistance payments. Specific recommendations from participants included ending the deduction of the National Child Benefit from families’ social assistance cheques, raising social assistance rates to the 1995 levels, increasing family incomes through the “Working City” priority, increasing access to affordable housing and rent subsidies, providing help to get nutritious food, and advocacy for increases in government transfer rates.

Most of us breastfeed but we don’t have food for ourselves. We have to make the food last for the kids to the end of the month.

Focus group participant

Many participants and groups identified the tremendous need for more subsidized childcare and for more flexibility in childcare services. Increasing access to childcare services was the most commonly identified service which should be addressed within this priority.

I was here fifteen days and I had a full time job at a fast food place. Now I am a full time mom. I get \$725 on Employment Insurance and my rent is \$725. I have nothing to live on. I can’t cover a babysitter. I tried many places for daycare and they say “You have to register before the baby is born. Now you have to wait 2 years”. I didn’t know that. So I can’t help myself. I would go to work or to school but no daycare is responding. I know several other people needing childcare and they are

on waiting lists too, for children under 1 year. So they are stuck at home, too. Because we can't get daycare we can't help ourselves.

Focus group participant

It's hard to be a single parent with the daycare situation. There is a long waiting list and even though we are on the list you have to wait 2 or 3 years. And in that time the kids are growing. By the time we get infant daycare, the kids are no longer infants. There is no daycare for kids over ten, but we cannot leave them alone.

Focus Group Participant

In particular, there was strong support for the Children's Agenda to address the following needs with respect to childcare:

- More subsidized spaces, particularly for infants
- More licensed spaces
- More flexibility in the hours childcare is available to reflect the reality of today's work hours (shift work, night work etc.)
- Availability of childcare for part time workers
- More Francophone childcare
- Low cost occasional childcare for appointments or interviews, as many low income people do not have connections with neighbours, friends or family members who can do this for them
- More culturally diverse childcare services
- More childcare in rural areas, appropriate to the realities of rural living such as the seasonal flow of work and the normal working hours on a farm
- Improved safety in childcare services
- Childcare for children over ten
- A policy to allow a parent to stay home with an infant but keep their childcare for older children in the family
- More childcare for children who have a disability

Many suggested explicitly identifying supports to parents as part of the Children's Agenda.

There should be a parent support plan. The kids will not make it without healthy parents

Listening Forum Participant

Supports to parents would include supports for parents of all ages of children, from unborn children to teenagers. Parents need better information on what is available to them and their children and need people to talk to for support and advice. Also, participants felt prevention programs for pregnant women, in terms of nutrition and access to medical and social services should be included in the priority as a means to ensure healthy babies and mothers. Long working hours are a big concern, with many parents not seeing their children enough because of the need to work long hours to provide for them. This should be considered in the "Working City" priority. Parents of

children with a disability need more support in order to meet the needs of all of their children, including those without disabilities. As well, participants identified the need for more supports for parents with disabilities (for example, more hours of homecare, housekeeping, or home management supports) in order for them to meet their children's needs. It is very important that existing community services be supported through this priority, as they were mentioned as an important resource for families. Community houses, family services and recreation were mentioned frequently as very important.

Many participants discussed the importance of more recreational and cultural opportunities for children and youth of all ages, and therefore were pleased with the priorities addressing a Physical Activity Strategy and access to culture. With school hours ending mid-afternoon, there is a pressing need for clubs, groups, and recreational activities of all types for young people. However, even with subsidies, the cost of such activities, and related expenses such as transportation, are beyond the means of many families. Most participants recommended changes to the subsidy system or elimination of the user fees. In general, participants were pleased with the City's parks and playgrounds, and felt they were important resources to maintain to address the social needs of young people. Homework clubs were mentioned in many groups as very important for children and youth.

People were pleased that the priorities included working with the schools on several issues. They felt many of the problems to which the priorities were responding could be improved by simply returning the funds to the education system which have been taken out over the past several years. As well, they identified a need for better strategies with respect to improving the school experience, such as the implications of the busing schedules, better access to recreation (sports and clubs) etc. on the school property, school feeding programs (breakfast, snack and lunch programs), lunch activities reviewed so that low income students don't feel left out, better supports around pizza days etc. to reduce social exclusion, and supports outside school so kids can excel at school (homework clubs etc.). They felt there were opportunities for the City and the school boards to work with corporations and community groups on these issues. These issues also relate to the "Literate and Learning Community" priority.

Across the board there was high concern that the draft priorities, and particularly the Children's Agenda, do not include anything for youth. Participants were very concerned about the health and development of teenagers in particular, and felt there was clearly a need for their issues to be explicitly included in the Children's Agenda. The highest concern was with respect to mental health concerns, including depression and suicide. Participants recommended the "Children's Agenda" priority should include:

- more mental health supports
- a strategy to create more community programs and services (recreation etc.) for teens
- assistance for parents of teens
- supports to encourage teens to complete their schooling
- better programs for the transition from school to work

- creation of employment opportunities for youth, with particular attention to the shortage of work opportunities in the rural areas
- better supports for youth interested in the trades
- meaningful opportunities to involve youth in community planning
- enhanced programs for “at-risk” youth, and
- more social workers to work with street engaged youth.

Kids have depression, they don't see their parents because they are always working. There is youth suicide. Kids are stressed. They don't know who they are, what they want to do. It is a huge problem.

Listening Forum Participant

Francophone participants were very concerned about the shortage of French services for children, youth and families. In particular, there is a crisis with respect to the shortage of Francophone daycare spaces.

Participants identified that actions to support families that have child with a disability need to be added to this priority. Currently families with a child with a disability must struggle on a daily basis just to receive basic services and assistance. Since the number of persons with disabilities is growing in this City, participants feel it is the City's duty to support these families. French families face even greater challenges in meeting the needs of their children with disabilities due to a shortage of appropriate services. There is also a need for better community education with respect to accommodating children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Recent immigrants and parents from ethnic minority groups felt that the Children's Agenda neglects to include support to recent immigrants and ethnic minority groups. Several of the recent immigrants shared that they find it difficult to access information on subsidized childcare (some did not even know about the existence of subsidized childcare). Many also feel the priority does not include an importance placed on the development of and access to culturally sensitive and ethnic-run childcares and community programs.

Rural residents had a particular concern that the priority does not take into account the geographic locations and distance between rural and urban areas. There are few services for children in the rural areas, and in particular, many rural residents must drive into the urban or suburban centres in order to access childcare. They were further concerned that current planning processes for services tend to be based on numbers or density. Unless a different criteria is used, the rural areas will never “meet the test” of a critical need for more services.

Some participants felt it would be beneficial to encourage inter-generational activities, by linking the Children's Agenda and the Successful Aging Strategy. Finally, the needs of children and youth in care were noted. The Children's Agenda should include some targeted strategies to increase supports available to these children, as they commonly do not have the same natural supports around them as other children and youth.

c) Working City

In general, in the Listening Forums, the focus groups, and through the survey, there was very high support for a serious focus on improving opportunities for meaningful employment. However, there was a strong sense that the priority as worded did not adequately recognize that having a job no longer necessarily means getting out of poverty. A significant portion of the participants were currently working or had been working and were still living in poverty.

I am working but it isn't saving me from poverty.

Focus Group Participant

There was a very strong recommendation to the City that this priority must state that the priority is focussing on the creation of and access to jobs at livable wages, that is, wages which enable the worker to meet the real cost of living in Ottawa. Some participants were concerned with a trend over the last several years in which working conditions have been deteriorating and low income people are being pressured into filling these marginal jobs. The priority should include a clear strategy to support a livable wage policy in the City, to advocate for minimum wage rates which reflect the cost of living, to support reasonable working hours and conditions, and to encourage the development of viable and stable employment in the City.

Some participants were also concerned that the priority does not clearly recognize that some people will not be able to support themselves through work, particularly some people with serious disabilities. Further, many expressed a concern that this push to get people into work does not respect the legitimate choice of a parent to stay home to raise his or her children. This is particularly concerning when one of the target groups within this priority is sole support parents. There is a need for more clarity on the City's position with respect to stay at home parents, for concrete supports to make this choice possible, and to advocate to senior levels of government for better family policies to support parents who stay at home and who work outside the home.

Participants identified the importance of including a basic needs strategy in order for this priority to be successful. Some supports are currently available, but many low income people fall between the cracks. Low income residents face tremendous challenges in getting and keeping work if they do not have stable housing, adequate food, appropriate clothing, and a phone. For individuals with children, suitable childcare is absolutely essential, including childcare when their children are sick. Overwhelmingly participants identified the need for subsidized transportation as a key strategy to enable them to get and keep work. In several focus groups participants identified the need for dental care as a factor in getting and keeping work.

You need to have decent teeth to get a job, particularly if you will be working with the public. No employer is going to hire you if you look like Gumby.

Focus group participant

I was working full-time but my heat was costing \$200 a month. I asked social assistance to help but they said they couldn't. I ended up in the shelter. I lost everything – my job, my daycare....

Focus group participant

Participants in most of the discussion groups highlighted that the priority should include a focus on training connected to real jobs. As well, many survey respondents indicated that the most important thing the City could do to help improve their situation is offer more job training opportunities linked directly to job placement opportunities. This would lead to an improved access to the job market. Many focus group participants shared that currently, there are little job opportunities in the areas in which training is offered. Many had successfully completed a training course only to find there was no job available at the end. This leaves them feeling discouraged. Participants identified a number of improvements to training options, which could be implemented through this priority:

- Provide a full range of training options to all residents who need it, rather than specific target groups. Currently many people fall through the cracks, particularly people currently working at low wage jobs who would like to improve their situation
- Allow more flexibility in training, for example, small amounts of upgrading rather than extensive courses where appropriate
- Increase the availability of community based access to English and French language training for unilingual residents and for immigrants who request it, as not being bilingual is a very big employment barrier in Ottawa
- Provide training for core job requirements like WHMIS training, computer literacy, etc.
- Allow people to take additional or different training if the first training does not work out. For example, many were given training for high tech jobs but could not get work after the crash of the industry.

The City has a major responsibility to have flexible plans to support employment. If plan A doesn't work, have plan B so the people aren't stuck. Have more than one option for employment. People have an obligation to look for work but the City has to have plans so they are prepared too. We do what's possible to get out of poverty but when there are no more chances, we are still in poverty. I took a long training course with a whole group. Just when we finished the high tech sector crashed. No one who completed the course got a job. But we could not get help to get training for other work. It was like we were being blamed for the crash of the high tech companies.

Focus group participant

There was considerable discussion on the current obstacles to getting employment for people on social assistance. Many participants felt the current system maintained them in poverty due to the small amount of income they could earn while on income assistance programs and the fact that rent in social housing goes up as soon as they earn extra income. To be effective, the Working City priority would need to include an action plan

to reduce these obstacles to employment. If there isn't a plan to help individuals as they leave income assistance programs, such as continued access to health and drug benefits, the priority will not bring on changes. Participants made the following recommendations, some of which the City could implement and some of which would require advocacy to the Province:

- Offer better supports for the transition period between OW/ODSP and work, i.e. access to transportation, drug card, etc.
- The community placement and support program should offer more support, optional cash, and optional loans
- Increase supports so that basic needs are met while people are looking for work, including transportation costs
- Allow people to retain more of their earnings as the STEP provisions are too restrictive
- Ensure that participants in the volunteer program are getting useful skills
- Reduce the administrative problems (over-payments, etc.) which appear to increase when a person is working and on OW / ODSP, as this becomes a disincentive

Participants were pleased that the priority recognized that different population groups face unique obstacles and have various employment needs. Many participants felt that having target groups was good, however it should not be to the detriment of other population groups (such as people with disabilities). Services should not be for one particular group only. All who are trying to access a better income should have access to training, workshops and employment opportunities. In particular, many were concerned that people currently working at low wage jobs often do not have access to any supports or opportunities for training.

Many thought it was important to have youth as a target group, particularly rural residents, as they see there are limited employment opportunities for youth in rural areas. Participants believe the City should provide better opportunities for youth to get work experiences, especially those who leave school and continue to support work exchange programs or volunteering opportunities where they can make connections, get experience, acquire work values etc. Also, without access to education, participants did not believe the priority will help the youth and young adults who are unemployed and poorly skilled into decent employment. Without education, individuals will remain in low wage jobs.

Sole support parents shared that listing them as a target group in the Working City priority is a good start. Participants shared that this priority must be intimately linked with the Children's Agenda as access to adequate childcare is essential for entering the workforce, particularly for single parents. As well, they need childcare when their children are sick since they cannot bring them to their regular childcare. While the full year of maternity leave is a positive policy, many cannot afford to stay home for the full year. Given this, participants highlighted the need for childcare for infants.

We need to support the poor working families to make ends meet, otherwise welfare becomes their only choice

Survey respondent

Recent immigrants strongly felt that identifying them as a target group is an important step in ensuring inclusion. However, the suggested that the City needs to provide more help to professional immigrants to enable them to get their internationally acquired diplomas and experience recognized. Recent immigrants also felt that the Working City priority must be linked with the literacy priority, specifically for individuals who have no knowledge of the English language. Since new immigrants may not have the networking connections, the City must help them establish in order to increase their odds of finding employment, particularly after training. Some participants identified the need for better ESL and FSL training, particularly at higher levels and with respect to specific technical language. As part of this strategy, the City should include an advocacy strategy to encourage policy changes at senior levels of government on key issues affecting the ability of immigrants to get and keep adequate employment.

We go to lots of places and they say we are not qualified because we are immigrants. As soon as we go through the door they know who we are and they won't hire us. There needs to be a matchmaker, otherwise it wastes the government's money.

Focus group participant

Rural participants felt fundamentally excluded from the Working City priority, as it does not include a rural employment diversification plan. Many family run farms are going bankrupt and there are few other employment options in the rural areas. Residents were very concerned that harmonized City by-laws are creating serious obstacles to rural economic strategies such as agri-tourism events. For example, new fees, water regulations, harmonized zoning by-laws etc. make it difficult for rural people to create new commercial operations or even to offer their land for community uses like recreation. The Working City Strategy should include a targeted rural strategy, developed in co-operation with rural representatives, and be co-ordinated with other departments of the City and the Rural Economic Development Plan.

Farmers are land rich, and cash poor

Focus group participant

Participants with disabilities also were unanimous in feeling completely excluded from the Working City priority. Individuals shared that they face much prejudice and discrimination from employers, and there is very little consideration or adaptation for people with disabilities. They were also concerned with the fact that programs that help individuals with disabilities to get into the work force are being cut or dismantled. Francophone participants were particularly concerned by the lack of attention brought to individuals with learning and developmental disabilities. Many have 'hidden' disabilities and face much prejudice by employers as they are seen as being incapable of completing a task, when all they many need is a longer training period

There were numerous suggestions to increase support for small business development and community economic development, particularly for people marginalized from the workforce. As participants see it, a small business is good for the economy and the

diversity of the community. They encouraged the City to support small business development in the same way it supports major economic sectors.

Finally, two groups recommended ending the contracting out of City jobs. They were concerned that when the city contracts out someone's job, they may be hired back into the work force through an agency in which they receive only a portion of their original income, and little or no benefits. They felt this was part of the downgrading of working conditions in the City and should be stopped.

d) Physical Activity Strategy

Regarding recreation and culture, that's a big issue because people with low income feel left out. Sometimes we have to stay in the corner waiting for something to come up because we can't afford to participate. It is upsetting because as a single parent, you get through as an adult, but it's difficult for the kids. It's really difficult.

Focus Group Participant

The majority of participants felt that a physical activity strategy is important and could reduce possible costly health problems. Particularly in light of the growing obesity rates among the youth, young people need a place to go to get exercise and have the opportunity to get involved in varied activities. However, without free access to sports complexes and fitness facilities, low income residents are excluded from this strategy. Better access to recreation subsidies was a recurring theme, and participants offered a variety of suggestions to improve the current subsidy structure. Some participants shared they cannot access the subsidy since they cannot afford to pay their portion of the fee. Participants would like to see the program allow fixed payments over time. Also, without access to affordable transportation, many are not able to enjoy subsidized recreational activities.

They say there are subsidies, but you have to pay part. It is a lot of money. The price for something was \$250. I was going to have to pay 25% so it wasn't possible

Listening Forum Participant

It is noteworthy that a very substantial portion of participants had never heard of the recreation subsidies. Better information about the subsidies would be a good starting point for this strategy. Many participants reported that many low income neighbourhoods don't have recreation or community centres nearby. Some had the impression that community and recreation centres found in low income neighbourhoods don't necessarily offer as many services or activities as centres in higher income areas.

Many participants voiced that the walking initiative is not relevant to them, stating that many low income individuals must already walk many kilometres a day since they cannot afford public transportation. Seniors and residents with physical disabilities also questioned the relevance of a walking initiative since sidewalks are often poorly maintained in the winter. Many senior participants wished they could participate in free

mall-walking activities, however, the cost of transportation does not permit them to access the shopping malls.

I really need a bus pass, and if I had that I could be more active. I can go into the mall and walk, even in winter. Because of my health, it's important for me to walk in a mall because they have heat in winter and air conditioning in the summer. I can't afford the pass though. A lot of us fall through the cracks.

Focus group participant

Several participants of the focus group for people with disabilities also felt excluded from this priority. Many shared that even if they could financially afford access to fitness facilities, very few offer programs tailored for or providing accommodations for people with disabilities.

Rural residents voiced in unison their dissatisfaction with this priority. Since there are few to no fitness or recreational facilities in rural areas, there are few options for organized physical activity. Further, harmonized City by-laws, brought in by amalgamation, have reduced the ability of farmers to offer their land as sport fields to groups. Many felt the walking initiative is not relevant to them in rural areas.

Many community organizations offering recreation were identified as very important services with which the City should collaborate for a Physical Activity strategy.

e) Successful Aging

I am afraid of what will happen to me. Soon I will start getting a pension. How will I pay for my drugs? I need orthopaedic inserts — who will pay for that? Soon I will need a special bench for the bathtub. I won't be able to afford that. Then there's eye exams, hearing exams and trips to the dentist. I get worried they are not giving people enough preventative help.

Focus group participant

Many agreed that this priority is important. However, the priority needs to include policies to support optimal health among seniors, specifically low income seniors who may be on costly prescription medication or require home care.

Participants strongly felt that an affordable transportation plan must be included in the strategy as access to transportation is an issue for low income seniors who live on a limited pension. Transportation is essential in reducing isolation and exclusion by allowing seniors access to services such as medical, social, and grocery stores, as well as cultural and physical activities.

Rural residents strongly felt that a plan specifically for senior rural residents must be put in place. Senior rural residents are particularly susceptible to isolation as they may not have a support system or transportation, nor are there many services which they can

access. Also, due to the limited affordable housing in rural areas, many rural low income seniors must move into urban areas. In the past, families would sever the land and build a second home for retired parents, but due to amalgamation and new by-laws, this practice is no longer acceptable.

Safe, affordable housing for seniors was a very major theme. There is a tremendous shortage of affordable housing. Furthermore, many seniors who had subsidized housing were concerned about poor safety and security in their housing complex.

I am quite happy in my place but we do have some drug pushers and it's causing problems for other seniors so that's something that has to be addressed so we can live in safety.

Focus group participant

I am talking to so many over-55's that can't find a place to live they can afford. They are working poor and are on the list for government housing.

Focus group participant

Many felt that the “Successful Aging” strategy must include a plan to reach out to isolated seniors and provide opportunities for them to be involved with others. Low income seniors and seniors with disabilities face even greater challenges than others. As well, participants from ethnic minority groups stressed the need for the priority to include culturally sensitive services, particularly for immigrant seniors who may have limited knowledge of the English and French languages or of existing services.

f) Neighbourhood Planning

Many participants felt it would be very important for the City to focus on getting people involved in the neighbourhood planning process and offering more opportunities for residents to speak up for and participate in change. Participants agreed that the City has a role in engaging and motivating the community to problem-solve for itself. Consultations should seek direct input from low-income or middle wage earners. Some suggested that some participatory consultation models used in third world countries could benefit community planning in Ottawa. Effective processes would require bringing planning to the people, rather than the people to the planning, i.e. putting in place very accessible processes. Many participants expressed cynicism regarding this priority and the City's interest in public participation.

Participants with physical disabilities all agreed that much planning is needed in order to make the City accessible, especially for individuals in wheelchairs and those walking with canes.

Rural residents unanimously shared how they feel excluded from the “Neighbourhood Planning” priority. Many felt the City is not knowledgeable of rural issues, the rural way of living or the specific needs of rural residents. Rural participants shared that

amalgamation has brought on policies and by-laws (e.g. fees, by-laws and licensing to build barns, severance of land, etc.) that hinder them from taken care of themselves and their families. Rural residents also face a shortage of services, a problem which is compounded by the lack of public transportation. Further, “one size fits all” planning structures which use population numbers and density as the criteria for assessing the need for services do not work for rural areas.

Amalgamation has brought on policies, by-laws and fees that are driving people out of rural areas because they no longer can afford to live there.

Focus group participant

A huge quality of life issue for low income people related to neighbourhood planning is the trend to remove or restrict public amenities in community spaces (such as water fountains, benches for sitting, public washrooms etc.). This is particularly an issue for people who experience homelessness, seniors, and low income people in general using the downtown core. Neighbourhood planning should make communities (esp. the downtown core) more inclusive of people who don't have money. In some cases low income people, particularly people who are homeless are pressured to leave public spaces and community areas.

Participants recommended that better information on what is available in communities would be a good starting point to get people thinking about community plans.

g) Access to Culture⁵ & Community and Cultural Investment

Increasing culture is a good thing, but it would be important for that money to go to individual artists in the community. We sometimes have some really good artists working in our community but they never get any money. When we support them through the community they get a name but not money. For some artists it would make a big difference to get direct support.

Focus group participant

Most low income individuals felt that access to culture and cultural investments is an issue of social inclusion and that social exclusion is what sets them apart from other community members. The majority of participants were happy to see the priority include plans to expand the Fee Assistance Subsidy Program and to do outreach, as many participants were not even aware of the existence of this program.

Rural residents shared that the priority must include an equal investment in all cultures. The city should accord the same financial support to agriculture as it does to urban culture. According to participants, cultural investment must also be about showing rural areas' culture, craftsmanship, and artists. Many rural residents also shared their concern about the under use of rural area City client centres, and suggested they could also be

⁵ The draft priority with respect to culture and cultural investment relates to culture in the sense of arts, culture and heritage activities.

used as cultural and recreational facilities. Rural residents felt that artisans do not have the same opportunities to showcase their workmanship as urban artists do.

Recent immigrant participants felt that this was an important priority, however it must specify increasing access to ethnic culture and ethnic cultural investment. All cultures and activities must be valued. By investing in ethnic cultural programs and arts, participants felt residents would be educated on other cultures in the City.

Access to cultural activities was deemed as a very important priority to senior participants. According to many, cultural activities can help reduce isolation of some seniors. However, since many seniors live on a limited pension, activities must be made affordable. Participating seniors would like to see that the subsidized activities be varied (access to the Tulip Festival, the NAC, community centre activities, etc.)

Individuals with physical disabilities shared their dissatisfaction that the priority did not include a provision that all buildings in the city be accessible to all residents.

h) Literate and Learning Community

Some participants felt this is an important priority as many in the community cannot read or write at adequate levels. For Francophone participants, this strategy was particularly important since history and statistics demonstrate that the low income and elderly Francophone population has a high degree of illiteracy.

English and French language training for unilingual residents and immigrants who request it was seen as very important in increasing employability, given the number of jobs requiring bilingualism. More ESL and FSL classes, at more advanced levels, would also be important. Recent immigrant participants shared that there is an easy access to English courses, however access to French courses is very difficult.

Many participants shared that computer literacy must also be part of this priority as it is a skill necessary in today's technological workforce. Some participants suggested that as part of this strategy, old computers could be recycled for community centres or for low income families, to enhance computer literacy. It would be important to keep the Millennium Learning Centres and similar facilities open.

The importance of the libraries was raised in many of the groups, as they are free to residents and support learning among adults and children. Rural residents added that the priority must include improved access to libraries through outreach, such as with the use of bookmobiles, particularly since rural residents without vehicles have difficulty accessing libraries due to the geographic distances and lack of public transportation.

This initiative should be integrated to the Children's Agenda, since addressing illiteracy at a young age would be a good preventative strategy.

i) Emergency Management Program

An emergency plan for people in poverty is different. Have a plan for people who have emergencies.

Focus group participant

Some participants noted that low income people may be affected differently by major emergencies, than other residents. For example, in the ice storm, the loss of food caused by loss of electricity was a catastrophe for many.

E. Recommendations

Based on the input received in The Peoples' Hearings II, the following recommendations are made to bring the draft Community and Protective Services priorities closer in line with the reality and needs of low income residents including people with no income. Further, the recommendations are consistent with the direction in the Ottawa 20/20 planning process, which recognizes that preventive approaches to social issues are normally more cost effective than other strategies.

The recommendations flow from the input received from low income residents. The fourteen recommendations are listed in the order which broadly reflects the highest concerns identified by participants in the Peoples' Hearings II, beginning with an unequivocal focus on meeting basic needs. The details under each recommendation are not listed in any particular order of priority.

1) Add a priority called "Meet Basic Needs and Reduce the Impact of Poverty"

- a) Increase social assistance rates at least to 1995 levels
- b) Re-imburse families the amount of the National Child Benefit Supplement which is deducted from their social assistance cheque
- c) Increase opportunities for work at livable wages, i.e. wages adequate to support oneself and one's family
- d) Maintain and enhance the Essential Health and Social Services Program
- e) Put in place a plan of action to improve access by low income residents to adequate nutritious food, particularly fruits, vegetables and protein
- f) Support community organizations which assist residents to meet basic needs including access to housing, food, clothing, laundry facilities and transportation
- g) Enhance and maintain preventive and maintenance dental care for families and individuals, and specifically re-instate such care for adults
- h) Put in place a plan of action to increase access by low income residents to health services including community and preventive mental health supports, access to tests, over-the-counter medications, aids to daily living (such as grab bars in washrooms), and access to health practitioners

2) Include “Improve Access to Information” as part of the Community and Protective Services Priorities

- a) Improve access to information on social assistance entitlements including community start-up benefits, special diet allowances, etc.
- b) Improve access to information on recreation programs and subsidies
- c) Facilitate better information on services for seniors (from all levels of government)
- d) Improve access to information on available dental and health services
- e) Create an outreach plan through the agencies to reach harder to reach populations
- f) Increase the ability of the City to provide information by phone, rather than internet
- g) Increase the availability of information in alternative formats

3) Completely re-focus the priority “Community Capacity to End and Prevent Homelessness” on creating affordable housing and providing concrete supports for eviction prevention

- a) Build more affordable housing
- b) Prioritize strategies and actions which leverage or provide capital and operating funds for organizations to create affordable housing including supportive housing and housing accessible to people with disabilities.
- c) Develop an affordable housing strategy specifically for rural areas including
 - i) A plan to create affordable housing for individuals and families, including seniors
 - ii) Community and Protective Services and the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee work with other departments in the City, particularly the Planning Department, to allow severance of lots from farm properties to create affordable housing for family members.
- d) Maintain and increase support services to help tenants keep their housing, including rent supports such as the rent bank and supports to assist people with psychiatric or developmental disabilities to keep their housing
- e) Community and Protective Services and the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee develop a comprehensive response to energy assistance for low income residents
- f) Enforce property standards in rental housing. Increase resources for maintenance in Ottawa’s social housing stock
- g) Improve conditions within the shelters including ventilation, issues of crowding, personal safety, security of possessions and storage, and frequency of moves between shelters
- h) Improve access to the Community Start-Up Benefit
- i) Advocate for increased incomes
- j) Include in the Community Planning Strategy an action plan to ensure the needs of homeless people are accommodated in downtown areas.

- 4) Work with the Transportation Department and relevant Advisory Committees to enhance access to public transportation as a key implementation strategy of the Community and Protective Services priorities**
- a) Create a subsidized bus pass for low income residents, comparable to the seniors bus pass
 - b) Provide an education program designed to enhance staff sensitivity to the needs of seniors and people with disabilities using the transit system
 - c) Provide an education program designed to improve the public's sensitivity to the needs of seniors and people with disabilities using the transit system
 - d) Assess impact of service levels and policies on people with disabilities and seniors
 - e) Work with rural representatives to improve access to transportation for low income residents in rural areas, including but not limited to a reduction of the cost of Para Transpo trips to and from rural areas for health related appointments
 - f) Promote OC Transpo's Family Pass Day
- 5) Focus the "Working City" Priority on Access to Employment at Livable Wages**
- a) In addition to the target groups identified in this priority, add "women" and "people with disabilities" as target groups
 - b) Enhance services to create a distinct link for individuals between their training and specific jobs available in the community
 - c) Create a more flexible training infrastructure to respond to changes in the economy (such as the collapse of an economic sector), in program silos (to serve people who fall between the cracks including working poor), and in individual circumstances (such as a poor aptitude for a particular course)
 - d) Create additional supports for meeting basic needs for people working at low wage jobs
 - e) Include an action plan to increase employment opportunities in rural areas for adults and youth, including
 - i) Work with rural representatives to identify and remedy harmonized by-laws which are negatively impacting job creation and farming incomes in rural areas
 - ii) Allocate increased resources for the Rural Economic Development Strategy
 - f) Support community economic development initiatives (including support for small business development) that would improve the economic situation of people marginalized from the workforce including recent immigrants, individuals with disabilities, women, youth, rural residents and people who are not literate
 - g) Increase access to free or low cost community based English and French language training for unilingual residents and immigrants who request it, in recognition of the importance of bilingualism in getting a job
 - h) Maintain and enhance supports for the recognition of internationally acquired credentials, including fast-tracking people with credentials which fill current skill shortages (such as medical professionals and scientists)
 - i) Undertake a community education initiative to reduce discriminatory attitudes in the workplace against people with disabilities and immigrants

- j) Implement increased access to subsidized childcare as an integral part of this strategy, including access to childcare for sick children
 - k) Create a program of flexible financial and personal supports to meet a variety of small contingencies for people seeking work or trying to maintain work (such as payment of a licensing fee)
 - l) Co-ordinate implementation of this priority with the Talent Plan, the Economic Development Plan and the Rural Economic Development Plan
 - m) Confirm in the priority that the City supports the right of parents to choose to stay home to raise their children or to work outside the home
 - n) Monitor and address the impact of implementation of this initiative on the other priorities, especially the Children's Agenda and the Community Capacity Building On Homelessness Agenda and ensure that it does not result in a deterioration in quality of life for low income participants
- 6) Change "The Children's Agenda" to "The Families' Agenda"**
- a) Create an action plan to provide families with the means to meet the basic needs of their family (food, housing, clothing health and dental care and transportation) whether they choose to stay at home to raise their children or to work outside the home
 - b) Recognize in this priority the legitimate right of parents to choose to stay at home to raise their children or to work outside the home
 - c) Prioritize increasing the availability of subsidized, licensed childcare spaces, including
 - i) Set targets to increase the number of subsidies and subsidized spaces
 - ii) Create more childcare spaces for children under 2
 - iii) Support licensed childcare and include a plan to ensure safety standards are met by childcare providers
 - iv) Establish policies to enable more flexibility in childcare hours and access to subsidies, to reflect the realities of today's workforce and rural life
 - v) Create more affordable respite / occasional childcare for appointments and interviews
 - vi) Meet the pressing need for Francophone childcare spaces
 - vii) Increase the availability of culturally appropriate childcare related to the demographics of the City
 - viii) Expand childcare subsidies to include children up to age 12
 - d) Include more programs for children over 6 and their families including after school programs, homework clubs and affordable or free recreation
 - e) Include more programs for teens and their families including after school programs, homework clubs and affordable or free recreation
 - f) Maintain and enhance free community and social supports for teens and their families, including mental health supports and suicide prevention
 - g) Include a targeted action plan to accommodate the distinct needs of rural families, which recognizes the challenge of travelling to activities
 - h) The City advocate to senior levels of government for improved policies and incomes for parents who choose to stay at home to raise their children as well as parents who choose to work outside the home

7) Increase the focus on access to recreation services and facilities in the Physical Activity Strategy

- a) Include in this priority an action plan to increase access to and use of recreation programs and facilities, including
 - i) More accessible recreation for people with disabilities and seniors
 - ii) Supports for transportation to enable participation
 - iii) Supports for childcare so parents with young children can participate in recreation
 - iv) Development of partnerships with other recreation stakeholders in the City including school boards and private recreation facilities
 - v) A targeted action plan to increase access to recreation in rural areas, using strategies suited to rural areas, including enabling local residents to make space available for recreation if they wish (e.g. a field for soccer)
- b) Maintain and enhance subsidies for recreation services, including
 - i) Better advertising about recreation subsidies including the possibility of 100% subsidy
 - ii) Community and Protective Services, the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee and the Health, Recreation and Social Services Committee investigate alternate subsidy structures to identify possible improvements to Ottawa's subsidy system (such as an "All Facilities" pass or paying the fee over a period of time)
 - iii) Increase portability of recreation subsidies to include non-City programs
- c) Community and Protective Services work with the Real Property and Asset Management Branch to increase accessibility of City recreation facilities

8) Focus on concrete supports to meet core needs within the Successful Aging Strategy

- a) Add an action plan to provide seniors with the means to meet their basic needs, specifically
 - i) Access to nutritious food appropriate to their age, health and dietary needs
 - ii) Access to safe, affordable housing including increased support services to help senior tenants keep appropriate housing
 - iii) Access to suitable clothing including such things as elastic stockings, orthopaedic supports, incontinence supplies
 - iv) Access to health and dental care including denture care
 - v) Affordable, accessible transportation
 - vi) Better access to aids to daily living such as grab bars in the bathroom
- b) Maintain and increase support to community agencies who assist seniors to meet basic needs and to stay in their own homes, including homecare, friendly visiting etc.
- c) Increase the supply of affordable housing for seniors in rural and urban areas
- d) Develop an action plan to support successful aging in rural areas, including strategies to support seniors to continue to live in their own community
- e) Develop an action plan to address the distinct needs of immigrant seniors
- f) Improve safety and security in subsidized seniors housing

- g) Increase access to information by working more effectively with community organizations to reach seniors
- h) Increase supports for essential home repairs for low income senior homeowners, including better information about the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

9) Work with community organizations and representatives to engage Aboriginal residents in the development and implementation of the Community and Protective Services priorities, in recognition of the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal poverty and homelessness.

10) Implement Structures Which Enable Meaningful Community Participation in Community Planning

- a) Create a participation strategy to involve low income people in community planning processes, including in social housing neighbourhoods
- b) Particularly in downtown areas, create community plans which include the needs of homeless residents, including
 - i) Ensuring public amenities in public spaces, such as park benches, drinking fountains etc.
 - ii) Developing inclusive strategies which recognize the rights of people who are homeless to be in public and community spaces
- c) Ensure that community plans have been assessed in relation to their impact on marginalized groups, including low income residents and people with disabilities
- d) Work with rural representatives to create a planning process for rural areas which addresses the distinct nature of rural communities, including resource allocation models which do not rely on population numbers / density
- e) Include a community education strategy to increase inclusive approaches and address discriminatory attitudes in community planning, including increasing understanding of the reality of living in poverty
- f) Recognize voluntary sector organizations which support local residents as a key element in any community plan

11) Include in the Cultural Investment Strategy increased access to cultural opportunities for low income residents⁶

- a) Create an action plan to enable low income residents to participate in cultural activities, including
 - i) Implement a subsidy process to enable low income residents to participate in cultural activities and increase portability of cultural subsidies to include non-City programs
 - ii) Community and Protective Services encourage private enterprises to make their cultural services available (e.g. dance schools, free tickets from the NAC, etc.) at a subsidized or free rate and publicize these opportunities through the City
 - iii) Improve access to information about free / subsidized opportunities to participate in cultural activities

⁶ The Draft Priorities in relation to culture deal with culture in the sense of arts, culture and heritage.

- b) Community and Protective Services work with the Real Property and Asset Management Branch to increase accessibility of City cultural facilities
- c) Maximize use of existing infrastructure in rural areas, by allowing community cultural groups to use the facilities
- d) Provide funding directly to local artists / cultural workers

12) Work through Community Agencies to implement the “Literate and Learning Community” Priority

- a) Ensure availability of literacy programs in French, in recognition of the historically higher levels of illiteracy in the French community
- b) Increase access to free or low cost community based English and French language training for unilingual residents and immigrants, in recognition of the importance of bilingualism in getting a job (also listed under “A Working City”)
- c) Provide free after-school learning supports to children and youth (e.g. homework clubs, one-on-one help, etc.)
- d) Maintain and enhance community programs which support computer literacy and access to computers
- e) Expand mobile library services in rural areas
- f) Work with community organizations and other levels of government to address gaps in the availability of ESL and FSL courses, and to increase opportunities for advanced ESL and FSL including courses for targeted technical knowledge

13) Ensure the Priorities are adequately resourced, and the implementation and impact are measured and monitored

- a) In recognition that preventive strategies are more cost effective than remedial strategies, allocate adequate resources to the priorities in order that they can be effectively implemented
- b) Establish measurable indicators for each priority
- c) Establish an annual review of the implementation and impact of these priorities to ensure the strategy improves the living conditions and quality of life of low income residents
- d) Co-ordinate with other City departments, the Ottawa 20/20 plans, the Municipal Accessibility Plan and the annual budget process to address overlapping issues, to maximize effectiveness, and to ensure consistency of direction

14) Incorporate into the Emergency Plan a recognition that comprehensive coverage of the needs of low income residents is different from the needs of the general population, in many emergency situations

Appendix A Summary of The Consultation Process

This consultation process had the objectives of identifying the most pressing problems of those living in poverty and their proposed solutions, and served as an opportunity for participants to comment and offer recommendations on the City of Ottawa's Draft Community & Protective Services Department's Proposed Strategic Planning Framework. Specifically the process included:

- Three public forums, called "The Listening Forums: People's Hearings II", held in December 2004, totaling a participation of 78 people. Participants were from a broad cross section of low income people, who attended in response to general public outreach, i.e. they self-selected to attend. Forum participants discussed the key poverty issues among the full group and were divided into small discussion groups of no more than 10 people to discuss the draft Community and Protective Services priorities.
- 9 focus groups with target populations were organized between January and March 2005 with total participation of 60 people. Participants discussed the key issues affecting them and their recommendations for solutions. As well, they discussed the Community and Protective Services draft priorities which were most relevant for them. Participants in the focus groups were from the following demographic groups :
 - Low income parents
 - Young single parents
 - Low income women
 - Ethnic minority community members
 - Recent immigrants
 - Rural residents
 - Low income working people
 - Francophones
 - Seniors
- Low income individuals participating in both the public forums and focus groups were asked to fill out a survey developed by the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee. The objective was to collect demographic information of participants in the process, such as age, marital status, etc. as well as what they struggle with, how they respond to those struggles, and how the City can help improve their low

income situation. A total of 95 surveys were completed.⁷ Survey respondents were from a broad section of low income residents.

- Three meetings with the Listening Forum's Sub-Committee (consisting of four members of the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee) to review the draft findings and recommendations
- A meeting with members of the Poverty Issues Advisory Committee to review and approve draft recommendations

It is to be noted that a weakness in the methodology is the absence of members of First Nations and Aboriginal groups in the process. Their input was not specifically identified within "The Listening Forums: People's Hearings II" and the organizers were not successful in arranging a target population focus group.

⁷ The surveys were designed to be anonymous. A few participants objected to this and felt the surveys should ask for people's names.

Appendix B Questionnaire

Questionnaire The Listening Forums: People's Hearings II

1. What is your biggest day – to day problem as a low income person?
2. What do you do to deal with this problem?
3. What is the main cause of this problem?
4. How could this problem be solved?
5. Who could help solve this problem?
6. What other day-to-day problems do you have as a low income person?
7. What services or programs do you currently use to improve your life?
8. Are there services or programs which you have tried to use but cannot get access to?
9. What is the most important thing that helps you deal with living in poverty?
10. What is the most important thing the City could do to improve the situation for low income people in Ottawa?

Please tell us a little bit about yourself :

Male _____ Female _____

15 – 19 _____ 19 – 25 _____ 25 – 45 _____ 45 – 65 _____ 65 or older _____

Single, widowed, separated or divorced _____ Married or common-law _____

Living Situation :

No children living with you _____
 Number of children under 5 living with you _____
 Number of children 6-12 living with you _____
 Number of children 13 and over living with you _____

Living alone _____
 Living with family members _____
 Living with people who are not family members _____

Employment :

Working Full time _____ Working Part time _____
 Self-employed _____ Unemployed _____
 A student _____ Not working, unemployed or a student (for
 example retired, a stay-at-home parent, etc.) _____

What are your main sources of income :

Payments from the government (Ontario Works, Seniors pension etc.) _____
 Employment _____
 Self-employment earnings _____
 Other. Please specify _____

Do you :

Rent your housing _____
 Is your rent subsidized? Yes _____ No _____
 Own your home _____
 Live in a group home or facility _____
 Have no place of your own to live? _____

Do you have a disability or illness which significantly affects your life?
 Yes _____ No _____

Do you define yourself as a member of a visible minority group?
 Yes _____ No _____

Do you define yourself as a member of an Aboriginal group / First Nation?
 Yes _____ No _____

Were you : Born in Canada _____ Born outside Canada _____

Are you : A Canadian Citizen _____ A landed immigrant _____ Other _____

Is your main language : English _____ French _____ Not English or French _____

Postal Code _____

What is your total household income in a year?

0 - \$10,000 _____
 \$10,000 - \$20,000 _____
 \$20,000 - \$30,000 _____
 \$30,000 - \$40,000 _____
 Over \$40,000 _____

Appendix C Questionnaire Analysis

The following is an analysis of the characteristics of people who responded, through 95 surveys. The analysis gives an understanding of the particular situation of those who participated in the consultation process. A more thorough analysis of the responses was completed, relating characteristics to issues and solutions, and is included in the text of the report.

Gender

- 71% of respondents were women
- 29% of respondents were men

Age Groups and Gender

Women

- 2% of respondents were between the ages of 15 to 19 years old
- 17% of respondents were between the ages of 20 to 24 years old
- 45% of respondents were between the ages of 25 to 44 years old
- 23% of respondents were between the ages of 45 to 64 years old
- 13% of respondents were between the ages of 65 years old and over

Men

- 11% of respondents were between the ages of 15 to 19 years old
- 0% of respondents were between the ages of 20 to 24 years old
- 33% of respondents were between the ages of 25 to 44 years old
- 50% of respondents were between the ages of 45 to 64 years old
- 6% of respondents were between the ages of 65 years old and over

Disability

- 48% of respondents indicated having a disability or an illness which significantly affects their life

Ethnic minority

- 45% of respondents identified as being a member of a visible minority group
- 3% of respondents defined themselves as being a member of an Aboriginal group or First Nation
- 60% of respondents indicated being Canadian born

Citizenship

- 68% of respondents indicated being Canadian Citizens
- 25% were landed immigrants
- 7% of respondents indicated 'other'

Official language

- 60% of respondents indicated having English as the main language spoken
- 26% of respondents indicated having French as the main spoken language

- 11% of respondents indicated having neither French nor English as the main spoken language
- 3% of respondents indicated having both French and English as the main spoken language

Current Living Situation

- 56% of respondents live alone
- 38% of respondents indicated living with family members
- 6% of respondents indicated living with people who are not family members

Marital Status

- 79% of respondents indicated being single, widowed, separated or divorced
- 21% of respondents indicated being as married or common-law

Marital Status and Gender

Women

- 79% of female respondents indicated being single, widowed, separated or divorce
- 21% of female respondents indicated being as married or common-law

Men

- 85% of male respondents indicated being single, widowed, separated or divorce
- 15% of male respondents indicated being as married or common-law

Living Situation – With or Without Children

- 45% of respondents indicated not having children living with them
- 19% of respondents indicated having children under the age of 5 living with them
- 6% of respondents indicated having children aged 6 – 12 living with them
- 12% of respondents indicated having children over the age of 13 living with them

Living Situation – With or Without Children and Gender

Women

- 40% of female respondents indicated not having children living with them
- 58% of female respondents indicated having children living with them

Men

- 68% of male respondents indicated not having children living with them
- 32% of male respondents indicated having children living with them

Housing Situation

- 94% of respondents are renters:
 - 52% indicated having subsidized rent
 - 47% indicated not having any subsidized rent
- 4% of respondents indicated being home owners

- 1% of respondents indicated living in a group home or facility
- 1% of respondents indicated not having a place to live

Subsidized Housing and Target Populations

- 57% of female respondents indicated having subsidized rent
- 45% of male respondents indicated having subsidized rent
- 61% of disabled respondents reported having subsidized rent
- 56% of visible minority respondents indicated having subsidized rent
- 17% of respondents who indicated having neither English or French as their main language reported having subsidized rent
- 67% of respondents who indicated French as their main language reported having subsidized rent
- 58% of respondents who indicated English as their main language reported having subsidized rent

Employment situation

- 7% of respondents indicated working full time
- 15% of respondents have part time employment
- 5% of respondents indicated being self-employed
- 26% of respondents were unemployed
- 30% of respondents were not working (retired, stay-at-home parent, etc.)
- 1% of respondents identified themselves as being a volunteer
- 1% of respondents identified themselves as being full time students
- 3% of respondents indicated their employment situation as 'other'

Employment situation and target populations

- 44% of visible minority respondents were reported as not working and 29% reported being unemployed
- 27% of respondents with French as their main language indicated being unemployed and 7% reported as not working
- 31% of respondents with English as their main language indicated being unemployed and 25% reported as not working
- 14% of respondents who indicated having neither English nor French as their main language were unemployed and 57% indicated as not working
- 43% of respondents with a disability indicated being unemployed and 27% indicated as not working

Source of income

- 74% of respondents indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers (OW, CPP, ODSP, WSIB)
- 11% of respondents indicated their main sources of income came from employment
- 2% of respondents were self-employed
- 13% of respondents indicated receiving income from other sources (spouse, OSAP, panhandling, own income, other).

Source of income and Gender

Women

- 71% of female respondents indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers (OW, CPP, ODSP, WSIB)
- 14% of female respondents indicated their main sources of income came from employment
- 2% of female respondents were self-employed
- 12% of female respondents indicated receiving income from other sources (spouse, OSAP, panhandling, own income, other)

Male

- 90% of male respondents indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers (OW, CPP, ODSP, WSIB)
- 5% of male respondents indicated their main sources of income came from employment
- 0% of male respondents were self-employed
- 5% of male respondents indicated receiving income from other sources (spouse, OSAP, panhandling, own income, other).

Income from Government Transfers, Target Populations (OW, CPP, ODSP)

- 88% of disabled respondents indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers
- 58% of visible minority respondents indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers
- 47% of respondents with French as their main language indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers
- 77% of respondents with English as their main language indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers
- 67% of respondents who indicated having neither English nor French as their main language indicated their main sources of income as coming from Government transfers

Total Yearly Household Income

- 51% of respondents indicated their total income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 32% of respondents indicated having a total income ranging between \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 11% of respondents reported their income ranging between \$20,000 - \$30,000
- 5% of respondents indicated having a total household income ranging between \$30,000 - \$40,000
- 0% of respondents had an income over \$40,000

Gender and Total Yearly Household Income

Women

- 54% of female respondents reported their income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 28% of female respondents reported having an income ranging between \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 13% of female respondents reported having an income ranging between \$20,000 - \$30,000
- 5% of female respondents reported their income as ranging between \$30,000 - \$40,000.

Men

- 69% of male respondents reported their income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 35% of male respondents reported having an income ranging between \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 0% of male respondents reported having an income ranging between \$20,000 - \$30,000
- 5% of male respondents reported their income as ranging between \$30,000 - \$40,000.

Total Yearly Household Income and Target Population

Disability and Total Yearly Household Income

- 53% of respondents who indicated having a disability reported a total income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 39% of respondents who indicated having a disability reported a total income of \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 8% of respondents who indicated having a disability reported having a total income between \$20,000 - \$40,000

Visible minority and Total Yearly Household Income

- 53% of visible minority respondents reported their income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 22% of visible minority respondents reported having an income ranging between \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 16% of visible minority respondents reported their income ranging between \$20,000 - \$30,000
- 9% of respondents reported their income ranging between \$30,000 - \$40,000

Immigration status and Total Yearly Household Income

- 46% of immigrant respondents reported their income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 46% of immigrant respondents reported their income ranging between \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 8% of immigrant respondents reported having an income ranging between \$20,000 - \$30,000

Main Language and Total Yearly Household Income 0 - \$10,000

- 57% of respondents reporting French as their main language indicated having an income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 25% of respondents reporting neither English or French as their main language indicated having an income ranging between 0 - \$10,000
- 50% of respondents indicating English as their main language reported having an income ranging between 0 - \$10,000

Appendix D Draft Community and Protective Services Priorities



Community and Protective Services Strategic Framework

Community and Protective Services goal is to place **Priority on People**. In order to have the most impact on the people we serve and our communities, we have developed a focused plan that follows the 20/20 guiding principles and the strategic directions identified in the Human Services and Arts and Heritage Plans.

The City's vision is reflected in the 20/20 guiding principles:

- A caring and inclusive City
- A City of distinct, liveable communities
- A green and environmentally sensitive City
- A responsible and responsive City
- A healthy and active City
- A creative City rich in heritage, unique in identity
- An innovative City where prosperity is shared among all

The Human Services and Arts & Heritage Plans identify six Strategic Directions that guide all decisions and moves us towards the City's vision for the year 2020:

- *Diversity and inclusion*: equal access to services
- *Access to the basics*: opportunities for all to participate in community life
- *Safe and healthy communities*: basic assets for all neighbourhoods
- *Focus on prevention*: prevent problems before they occur
- *A working city*: access to employment and lifelong learning
- *A City rich in culture*: access to local arts, heritage and cultural programs

The 20/20 Plan looks twenty years down the road. In order to get there, we need to take small manageable steps. We will also **build collaborative communities, focus on prevention, and continually improve services**. These are the priority projects that over the next few years will get us closer to our 20/20 vision:

Children's Agenda

Develop a continuum of services that support families with children aged 0-12 years to maximize their potential to participate fully in the community.

Neighbourhood Planning

Develop a collaborative, multi-sectoral, community based process to design local area plans that address social and physical elements.

Literate and Learning Community

Develop, support and promote learning and literacy through the cataloguing of existing opportunities, sustaining partnerships and initiating new partnerships.

Working City

Develop a program to increase employment opportunities and employment experience in industry specific sectors for those in need ie. immigrants, sole-support parents and youth.

Community and Cultural Investment

Review how the current cultural and community funding programs can be revised to support the Department's strategic priorities.

Emergency Management Program

Develop a mitigation strategy, branch emergency plans and branch-specific business continuity plans. Support and deliver emergency exercise training to internal and external partners.

Community Capacity Building: Homelessness

Build community capacity to prevent and end homelessness through mechanisms such as an inventory of affordable housing and support services and toolkits for assessing and enhancing capacity.

Access to Culture

Improve access to local cultural programming through facilities and promotion.

Physical Activity Strategy

Develop a 5-year Citywide, physical activity strategy focused on youth, workplace environments, schools, and internal City service provision.

Public Education: Safety and Safe Behaviour

Create and deliver a public education outreach program that focuses on safe behaviour and injury prevention.

Successful Aging

Inventory existing programs and identify opportunities to deliver effective, efficient and affordable services to seniors in collaboration with community-based partners.

Staff Investment

Promote staff engagement, encourage leadership, facilitate information sharing and collaboration, and foster a positive work atmosphere.

