Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

Presentation to Diversity Equity Inclusion Advisory Committee

April 16, 2024

Marc Todd
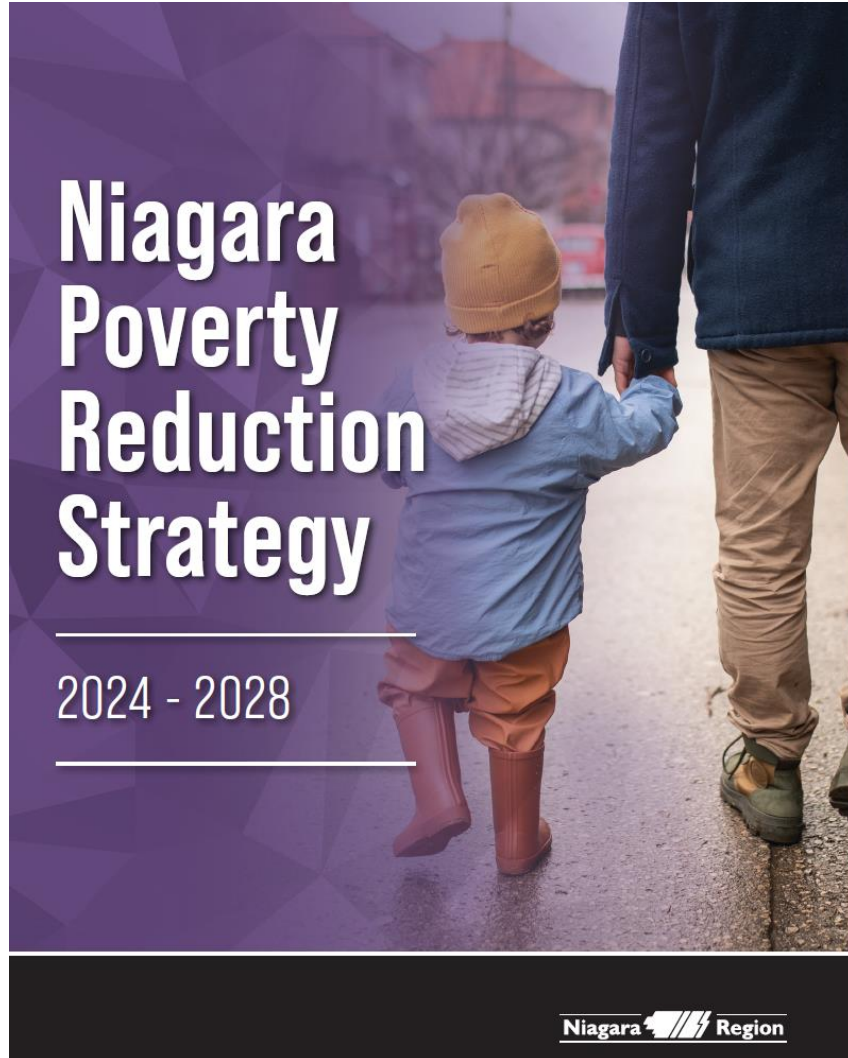*Manager, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO)*

Agenda

- Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy
  - Recommendations
  - How to create change

- Next Steps
  - Community discussions and alignment
  - Niagara Prosperity Initiative funding

Poverty as a Human Rights Issue

Poverty is unique to each person, complex with no single solution, a human rights issue.

Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

- Recommended by Brock University report
- Identified in the Region's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
- Part of Council's Strategic Priorities under Equitable Region
- Links to other strategies i.e. HHAP, DEI, Ec-Dev, Transportation, Children's Services Plan etc.
- Developed with extensive community input and research

Areas of focus

- **Indigenous Well-being**
- **Housing**
- **Income**
- **Employment**
- **Food Security**
- **Early Child Development**
- **Transportation**
- **Mental Health and Addiction**

Recommendations

- **Indigenous Well-Being:** Indigenous community to develop a strategy for Indigenous specific poverty reduction initiatives.

- **Housing:** Provide housing stability services for people living in poverty to maintain their current housing, prevent eviction, improve social inclusion, and access income through periods of financial instability.

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Recommendations

- **Income:** Increase opportunities for living wage employment in Niagara and advocate for adequate, liveable rates from government income assistance programs.

- **Employment:** Promote and develop decent work opportunities that provide fair wages and benefits and foster stable, consistent, and safe employment.

Recommendations

- **Food Security:** Improve access to fresh, culturally appropriate, affordable and nutritious foods through income-based solutions to food insecurity.

- **Early Child Development:** Improve access to affordable, high-quality child care for families living in poverty or at risk of poverty.

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Recommendations

- **Transportation:** Continue the work of Niagara Region Transit to achieve affordable and equitable access to services across municipalities.

- **Mental Health and Addiction:** Enhance core service capacity and offer a choice of timely, early recovery interventions and treatments for people who are living in poverty or at risk of poverty.

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How to create change

- Service Access, Coordination, and Capacity
  - ➢ improve ease of system navigation and access

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
  - ➢ poverty is shaped through the intersections of identity, such as age, culture, gender, race, ability and other social aspects

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How to create change

- Leveraging Voices of Lived Expertise
  - ➤ creating opportunities for people with lived expertise to provide input in policy development, planning and decision making

- Changing Mindsets
  - ➤ address false belief systems that feed into negative and harmful stereotypes

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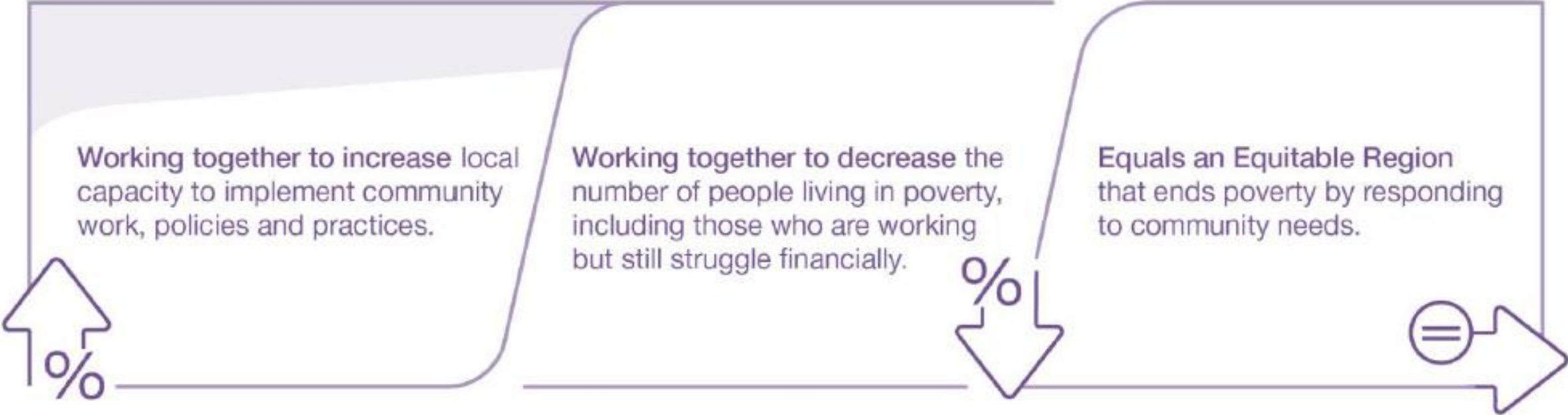
How to create change

- Advocacy
  - ➢ensure that people have their voice heard, to protect and promote rights and have views considered when decisions are being made

- Funding
  - ➢adequate funding for outcome focused programs and addressing funding gaps

Working Together

Working together to increase local capacity to implement community work, policies and practices.

Working together to decrease the number of people living in poverty, including those who are working but still struggle financially.

Equals an Equitable Region that ends poverty by responding to community needs.

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Next steps

March - December 2024

- Connect with interested and affected parties and invite them to identify their role in helping to end poverty
- Explore with community champions ways to best implement actions listed in the strategy along with others that emerged during community engagement
- Align Niagara Prosperity Initiative with the strategy and release call for applications

Next steps

January 2025 - December 2028

- Start Niagara Prosperity Initiative funded projects
- Increase local capacity to implement community work, policies and practices
- Monitor and evaluate the strategy and impact on poverty
- Bring together implementation champions to explore the impact of our collective work and share knowledge about promising practices