

DATE: April 29, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Councillor Murry Krause, Chair of Select Committee on Poverty Reduction

SUBJECT: Select Committee on Poverty Reduction - Final Recommendations for Council Consideration

ATTACHMENT(S): Select Committee on Poverty Reduction Final Recommendations for Council Consideration May 2021 Report

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

1. RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated April 29, 2021, from the Chair of the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction, titled “Select Committee on Poverty Reduction- Final Recommendations for Council Consideration”;
2. APPROVES the recommendations of the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction, titled “Select Committee on Poverty Reduction Final Recommendations” in the attachment to the report dated April 29, 2021, and
3. DISSOLVES the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction as the Committee has achieved the objectives outlined in its mandate as defined in the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the opportunity to receive for information, the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction’s Final Report, and to consider its recommendations. The recommendations titled “Select Committee on Poverty Reduction Final Recommendations May 2021” propose how the City of Prince George can support implementation of TogetherBC, the Province’s poverty reduction strategy. As Chair, and with the unanimous support of the committee, I am also requesting Council resolve to discontinue the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction, effective May 31, 2021. The committee has fulfilled its mandate.

BACKGROUND:

Process and Focus Areas

In October 2019, Prince George City Council approved the formation of a Select Committee on Poverty Reduction. The Committee, comprised of representatives with diverse perspectives and understandings of poverty, met regularly to develop a series of recommendations regarding the City’s role in implementation of the Province’s TogetherBC strategy. Framed by six focus areas and seven lenses, the Committee utilized its meetings to examine the focus areas and develop a series of recommendations

relevant to the local context, and particularly the role of local government. The proposed recommendations were the focal point of a community engagement process that took place from February 11 2021- March 12 2021.

Community Engagement

The community engagement brought together the community to review, provide feedback on, and prioritize the recommendations. A key priority was to engage those who were both directly and indirectly affected by poverty, with a specific focus on those with lived or living experience. The engagement was comprised of various components including a live engagement platform powered by Ethelo, direct mailed post cards with a QR code to specific neighbourhoods, posters with a QR code, digital signage, and direct support from 52 community partners and/or agencies. 814 participants completed the survey, with 1852 visitors to the platform and over 17,900 page views. It was a multi-faceted, flexible engagement strategy, responsive to health, safety, and access challenges. Understandably, the global pandemic presented challenges to implementing a typical engagement; however, creative and intentional solutions were used to respond to these challenges. The engagement process successfully met the goals established by the Committee and provided a prioritized ranking of the recommendations in terms of importance and urgency for local government action and advocacy.

Recommendations

The attached report, “Select Committee on Poverty Reduction: Final Recommendations for Council Consideration, May 2021” contains a detailed account of the Committee process and community engagement process, as well as a summary of the Ethelo survey community voting results and the final recommendations prioritized for municipal action/advocacy. Community support for all nineteen of the recommendations was strong, demonstrated by the community voting scores for each of the individual recommendations. Therefore, the recommendations are presented according to a timeframe for local government based on action/advocacy.

- Advocacy - **ALWAYS** These recommendations (regardless of voting scores are of an advocacy focus for local government. Attention would be on-going and as opportunities (such as funding) arises.
- Action - **NOW** (as soon as possible, within the year)
- Action - **SOON** (within 6 months- 1 year)
- Action -**LATER** (1 year- 3 years)

This approach ensures all recommendations are included for City of Prince George response to poverty reduction. Considerations of milestones, resources required and partners/contributors are included in the report. These markers will be continually monitored and adjusted as the implementation of approved recommendations proceeds. In addition, advocacy avenues and tactics are included to accompany the advocacy themed recommendations. The summary table of recommendations is provided below.

POVERTY REDUCTION RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

ADVOCACY – ALWAYS	<p>Education & Employment: Advocate to keep adult basic education and English language learning courses free.</p>
	<p>Education & Employment: Advocate for ways to support people who want to improve their education, or access employment opportunities. For example, advocate for wage subsidies for Early Childhood Education workers and assistance programs for post-secondary students.</p>
	<p>Housing: Advocate for government programs, services and incentives at all levels that help people have suitable housing and supports for housing.</p>
	<p>Services & Supports: Respond to income insecurity and low wage poverty with advocacy focused on policy change, through, for example, living wage directives, guaranteed annual income commitments and/or competitive wages that encourage workers to enter fields like Early Childhood Education.</p>
	<p>Transportation: Ensure transit is affordable by working with BC Transit to enhance the fare structure and amenities (like free transfers).</p>
ACTION – NOW (immediately)	<p>Stigma & Discrimination: When the City is collecting information on social wellbeing priorities, ask for input from people who have experience living in poverty.</p>
	<p>Access to Services & Supports: Create more affordable childcare spaces for infants, toddlers, and school-aged children.</p>
ACTION – SOON (within 6 months - year)	<p>Stigma & Discrimination: Increase and improve services in specific areas to build social connections and get more people involved. Targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low income neighbourhoods • groups like seniors, single parent families, children and youth.
	<p>Stigma & Discrimination: Encourage changes to public attitudes around poverty (e.g. using city communications, funding opportunities, and education).</p>
	<p>Transportation: Ensure transit is safe by, for example, increasing street lighting in bus area routes, providing additional safe indoor waiting areas and expanding night service.</p>
	<p>Food Security: Advance opportunities for sustainable food sources including community gardening, food kitchens, and programming focused on food supply and education.</p>
	<p>Access to Services & Supports: Make it easier for people to access the City’s Leisure Access Program.</p>
	<p>Food Security: Use City tools (policy, grants, zoning, etc.) to support further development of community gardens and access to healthy food.</p>
ACTION – LATER (1 year – 3 years)	<p>Access to Services & Supports: Create a baseline inventory of accessible community services and programs for low-income residents of Prince George.</p>
	<p>Housing: Complete a Housing Needs and Demand Study for Prince George in 2022 that includes attention to different types of housing along the continuum.</p>
	<p>Transportation: Provide tailored transit education and improved information services (like simple and easy to understand bus schedules).</p>
	<p>Food Security: Develop a Food Policy Council (and Food Charter) that supports issues around community food security and insecurity.</p>
	<p>Access to Services & Supports: Support development of a Navigation Hub. A person (the “navigator”) will be available to help people access services and supports.</p>
	<p>Food Security: Use food access mapping to inform City project development decisions (i.e. provide incentives to develop projects close to food sources).</p>

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Council identified supporting initiatives that provide access to safe housing, healthy food, and community services, as a Social Health and Well-being focus area. The Select Committee on Poverty Reduction's final recommendations to Council, concerning the City of Prince George's role in the implementation of the provincial poverty reduction strategy, addresses this focus area and was identified as a 2020 work plan priority.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action 2020 Grant covered expenses associated with the design and implementation of the community engagement that ensured a diverse collection of voices provided input on the poverty reduction recommendations. Existing staff resources supported project management functions.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Council is asked to receive for information, the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction's report for Council Consideration, and to approve the recommendations that will contribute to poverty reduction at a local level. As the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction has fulfilled its mandate, Council is also asked to dissolve the committee.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Councillor Murry Krause, Chair
Select Committee on Poverty Reduction

Meeting Date: 2021/05/31