

# Spruce Grove 5 Year Strategy to Reduce Poverty & Homelessness

## Core Collaborators: Workshop #1

July 19th, 2018

## What We Heard & Meeting Summary

### Introduction and Background

The day started with a beautiful welcome prayer from Elder Ella Arcand. Introductions from Core Collaborators, FCSS staff, and Urban Matters CCC staff took place. The background behind the project, the project overview and current FCSS Initiatives were discussed.

#### Some of the key background information that was shared is as follows:

- Spruce Grove continues to experience rapid growth and changing social trends (> 30% population increase from 2011-2016)
- Existing and emergent social issues are becoming more complex
- There is an identified homeless population that is increasing
- Clients who are successfully housed in our community remain in core housing need (i.e. > 30% of gross income goes to rent/utilities)
- Effective solutions are beyond the scope of a single program or service and it has been identified that a collective approach is needed
- There is a desire within the community to be part of the solution

#### Some of the existing FCSS Initiatives that were mentioned include:

- Program focusing on prevention at the earliest opportunity at all life stages
- Integrated Supports Coordinators (x3)
- Established relationships with partnering service providers and property managers
- In-kind support for centralized accessible services
- Social Sustainability Plan
- Five Year Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Homelessness

#### It was presented that the 5-Year Strategy to Reduce Poverty and Homelessness will:

- Identify root causes of poverty and homelessness;
- Define key terms (e.g. homelessness) in the context of Spruce Grove;
- Map assets and opportunities;
- Identify innovating, leading edge practices in addressing the root causes of poverty and homelessness;
- Outline specific actions to address these causes;
- Determine appropriate measures of success; and
- Identify a sustainable road map to implementation

## Identification of Key Social and Housing Trends in Spruce Grove

The first workshop exercise that the Core Collaborators took part in required participants to take five minutes to think about any social and housing trends that they are observing in Spruce Grove, and write their responses on sticky notes. The group was then taken through a 'Card Storming' exercise where they took turns posting their sticky notes on a wall in the room, aligning their responses in groups based on others' related answers. The responses were then discussed as a group and given names based on themes. A summary of the responses is listed underneath each theme, with verbatim answers written below with bullet points. Where language was changed to provide context to a response, the change is denoted with square brackets ([ ]).

### 1. Youth ('too big, too small')

There were many participants that felt that there is a clear trend that youth in Spruce Grove are increasingly struggling with issues around addiction and homelessness, as well as unsafe or unhealthy living conditions.

- Youth from Edmonton with inconsistent housing seeking out Spruce Grove housing as a safe space
- Youth: drugs and homelessness
- 33% of our youth are not graduating high school (regional statistic)
- No youth hostel
- Homeless youth are there but invisible
- Youth [are] living in unhealthy environments because it is all they can find or because it is the cheapest solution
- 'Too big, too small': Spruce Grove is at a size where it's too big that youth cannot find adequate or appropriate housing, but is still at a size that is too small to develop consistent and effective housing and addictions supports and treatment centres

### 2. Education and Awareness (decreasing stigma)

Workshop participants identified that there is a general lack of understanding surrounding social and housing issues in Spruce Grove, and that clearer messaging and education is required.

- Community is polarized on the issue
- Altruistic vs. fear
- Clients confused by unclear messages on where to go for help
- Lack of understanding

### 3. Addictions and Mental Health

Workshop participants agreed that addiction and mental health are complex, interrelated, multi-layered issues and that increased mental health support is required in Spruce Grove.

- Addictions
- Increase in substance misuse
- Drugs – fentanyl/meth
- Increase in addictions and mental health [issues]
- Mental health challenges
- Drug use/abuse – youth selling drugs to provide themselves with income
- Family-related issues, kids being kicked out, often due to drug use
- No mental health outreach – [need] more (MHA with no community supports)
- Need for mental health and addiction support

- [Poor] Mental health is crippling the success of individuals
- Multi-layered psycho-social stressors
- Mental health, addictions, education – [these] issues are conjoined

#### 4. Resource Challenges

It was noted that there are resource and funding deficiencies in the areas of mental health, housing and addiction support and that these resources are spread thinner by an increase in usage.

- Funding deficiencies for housing – CORE housing only provides \$323
- Increase in mental health [issues] /addictions – fewer resources
- Mental health resources and addiction resources are limited
- Increased usage of services (Eg: Food Bank)
- Small communities of homeless are beginning to populate park areas
- Increased interest from the community to respond to the issues of poverty and homelessness
- More clients coming from Edmonton – it's safer and there are more resources
- Clients coming on/off reserve
- Send homeless and those in poverty on to the city where more resources are available
- No 24 hour service for referrals or contact information
- Small town approach (“paradigm”); however, “Big City Issues” (“Trend-shift in social pressures”)
- Lack of resources for single men (mostly for women and children)

#### 5. Access

Workshop participants identified that lack of access (based on several reasons and determinants) creates barriers for those who need to access support services.

- Barriers to accessing detox/residential treatments – all centres located in Edmonton. This demographic is afraid of violence in city shelters
- Immigration supports
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of access to services if individual doesn't have their own form of transportation
- More conversations [required] about inclusion and accessibility

#### 6. Social Isolation (Eg: Urban Design)

It was noted that population growth and increased isolation were causing negative social impacts, and that social connection and inclusion need to be considered more in future urban design.

- Urban Design with no CPTED approach (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)
- The population has grown over the past 8 years
- People feeling more isolated and alone
- Not enough neighbour relations for ethnic people
- In the media – drugs, violence, suicide
- Not a lot of outreach
- [Need] To address racism, jurisdiction issues off and on reserve

#### 7. Income and Unemployment/Job Loss

Workshop participants expressed concern that there is an increase in the population of “working poor” and that a lack of jobs and income support is exacerbating this problem.

- Cost of living outpacing income for fixed income individuals (pension, AISH, etc.)

- Aging low income demographic with a fixed income
- Lack of job skills in individuals that have relied on physical labour jobs and those jobs are getting less common
- Increased working poor – people working full time but unable to make enough to live
- Increase in the “working poor”
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Job loss – now living above means
- Increased financial struggles
- Income support (Alberta Works) doesn’t come close to covering living costs

## **8. Domestic Violence/Crime (break down further)**

Participants highlighted the link between homelessness, abuse and crime.

- Criminal activities associated to homelessness are a manifestation of deep social issues
- Fleeing abuse – starting over
- D/V [Domestic Violence]
- Senior abuse

## **9. Lack of affordable Housing/Increased Cost of Housing**

It was identified and agreed upon that there is a lack of available affordable housing options in Spruce Grove. It was also noted that there is an increase in unsheltered homelessness in Spruce Grove.

- New housing is being offered that is smaller in size to make it more affordable
- Lack of appropriate types of housing
- Lack of affordable housing (2 identical responses)
- No or little affordable housing options with population increase
- Lack of affordable rental accommodations
- Increase need/desire for affordable housing
- Affordable housing is not affordable
- Need forms of social housing
- Lower rent housing tends to be much lower quality
- Increase in core housing needs 30%
- Those who are able to house are precariously housed – still at risk
- Couch surfing
- No low income housing
- The planning department received many calls asking about seniors housing that may be built or planned
- Individuals being denied housing due to appearance and social status
- Increase in condo/apartment construction – not affordable
- Revolving door – unable to maintain housing
- Lack of places to shower/clean up etc.
- Rent is expensive in Spruce Grove
- Decrease in resources (eg: rent subsidies, financial assistance for emergencies)
- Housing is a core need and without it other needs are not met
- Increase in unsheltered homelessness (visible)
- Increase in unsheltered persons

## How We Work Together: Key Concepts and Approach

As a group, the Core Collaborators discussed how they would work together to approach this project. Concepts such as **Theory of Change** and **Collective Impact** were introduced and reviewed, and the group was able to think about these concepts in the context of Spruce Grove.

Collective Impact was defined as:

*The commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem using a structured form of collaboration.*

Then the five elements of collective impact were discussed.

### 5 Elements of Collective Impact:

1. Common Agenda
2. Shared Measurement
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
4. Continuous Communication
5. Backbone Organization

## What Does Success Look Like In Six Months?

For the second interactive workshop exercise, participants were divided into two groups and asked to discuss what success would entail throughout the next six months of strategy development process, with a particular focus on the success of the process itself rather than final deliverables. Answers from each group are listed below.

### Group 1

- Core collaborator group needs to make a firm commitment to be fully involved the whole time
- Every stakeholder/collaborator needs to have an understanding of what each other/each agency does – precursor for a common vision
- Develop a really good community education plan – addressing stigma, misconceptions, diverging views, racism, etc.
- Include methodology with the plan so community understands why each part of plan exists – for validity, trust, credibility (goes back to team members roles)
- Those experiencing challenges with poverty and housing have confidence, less shame, feelings of support from community – will access services
- Strengthen communication among various service providers and service provider awareness so that we can serve our clients more effectively here in Spruce Grove (people want to stay here)
- Address inclusion, diversity, racism throughout the whole process and beyond (stigma-free services)
- Different agencies work together well: “every door is the right door”
- Transparency
- How do we share information with confidentiality/policy?
- Create a convenient and easy service pathway for clients to access services they need – smoothing the pathway, making the process seamless

- All community members are encouraged to be aware and understand the various services/resources that exist and how to connect to them (for when people come and ask for help) – City/FCSS/root of core collaborators take an active role in making this happen
- Developing a very clear/standard measurement tool that can track our progress, can streamline efforts with this in mind
- Recognize and respect the various different mandates of organizations involved – instead of seeing any gaps as challenges, seek them out as opportunities to connect and fill them together
- Theory of change ‘plans’ analogy – work together in alignment, all working on the ‘plan’ together, focus on our common goal to decrease homelessness and poverty
- Communicate the stats of poverty and homelessness to the community so that compassion and empathy are at the forefront (take out the fear and build understanding) – getting to know neighbours, more likely to help out, take action
- Put a face and a story to stats, humanize the numbers – ‘make it personal’
- Ensure youth are aware of issues/services/programs
- Schools are connected, counsellors are aware of how to support
- Youth hang out at the Log Cabin and Skatepark in Spruce Grove
- Personal connection, regular check ins, build relationships
- Build trust - can start with providing food, can find out about other resources that are needed (eg. housing)
- Maximize engagement of First Voices, especially youth First Voices – need to get creative with how we have those conversations, having conversations early in childhood – building trust

## Group 2

- Integrated 360 approach – integrated committee of agencies to support, systems approach person centred (RPAC – successful example)
- Strategy is implementable
- Identified the priorities (key contributions)
- Collaborators have identified capacity (what can be contribute) – understand each other’s roles, understand gaps
- Collaborative solutions
- Collaborative, sustainable solutions
- Every resident has access to safe, adequate, affordable housing
- Risk – how to keep focus Stony Plain too – re: Parkland County focus
- Working collaboratively with regional partners – identified opportunities to work collaboratively
- Strategy has a sense of priority to it
- Identified roles and responsibilities and TOR [Terms of Reference] (past pledge)
- Long-term lens (re: planning and development) – policy responses
- Keep the humanity in the strategy – this is about people, people first
- Long-term commitment – resources, people, accountability – critical to success
- Reinforcement – consistent commitment, consciousness raising, community desire
- Follow through
- Public education
- Success is a framework for addressing issues – understanding the systems
- Supports individual choice – user friendly
- Consensus – all walk away as one voice
- Regional – one voice

- Understanding roles of organizations – safe to express the paradigm of organization – might need to go for elsewhere – commitment dependent
- Focus on depoliticizing this conversation – identifying problems and solutions from a grassroots perspective – real stories of individuals
- Voice for people who can't/don't have a voice

## Participation Opportunities and Constraints

For the third and final interactive exercise, workshop participants were asked to individually record their responses to following three questions around their/their organization's ability to be present, participate and contribute to this initiative:

1. What do you/your org need to get out of participation?
2. What can you/your org contribute (e.g. time, knowledge, resources, etc.)?
3. What participation constraints do you have (e.g. time, policy, etc.)?

The Core Collaborators were then divided into pairs to interview each other and record the others' responses to the three questions.

Some of the common overarching themes that often came up for each question are as follows:

### 1. What do you/your org need to get out of participation?

- Understand the resources and potential partnerships that exist within the community
- Understand what other agencies/service providers in the community offer
- Collaboration and a unified approach

### 2. What can you/your org contribute (e.g. time, knowledge, resources, etc.)?

- Front Line support
- Education
- Safety
- Advocacy
- Data/Statistics

\*the answers to this question were less unified and were varied based on the organization's services

### 3. What participation constraints do you have (e.g. time, policy, etc.)?

- The time commitment required to participate in the initiative (how many meetings?)
- Limited resources (staff, time, funding)
- Tight timeline on the project

Below, each Core Collaborator's name, their organization they were representing, and their individual responses to the three questions above are recorded:

#### Adrienne – AHS (Addictions and Mental Health)

1. Being considered a valuable partner; clearer understanding of other organizations
2. Let people know of our resources – voluntary, therapist, employment, psychiatrist; harm reduction model; listening and learning about the difficulties in accessing our services – maybe change model

3. Concerned about how many meetings – ability to attend; capacity of organization to react

#### **Sue – Alberta Works**

1. Understanding of what other services/agencies offer
2. Provide understanding of the criteria, limitations; flexibility given by management to attend
3. Work within regulation – FOIP, time

#### **Brenda Johnson – Spruce Grove Chamber of Commerce**

1. Need to educate business community to be involved – appropriate outreach
2. Network through business community; advocacy work
3. Capacity is there, not sure constraints are there

#### **Mark – City of Spruce Grove Planning and Development**

1. Understand the issue – scope and scale
2. Community Planning – longer term; vision for housing – need to broaden our scope
3. Difficult to do direct action but over time develop policies to facilitate urban design

#### **Lorne – City Protective Services**

1. Better options and approach to deal with the situations/incidents (tools)
2. Frontline support, conduit for services and relationship building
3. As opposed to police, extremely constrained with the limitations in appointments (authorization)

#### **Lori-Anne – Meridian Foundation**

1. Create new partnerships with other organizations; want more presence in Spruce Grove; non-profit entity
2. More affordable housing and to broaden from 55+ (seniors) to younger demographic
3. Support of partnerships to operation

#### **Charlene – Children’s Services**

1. Knowledge of resources within the community; letting people know what Children’s Services can offer
2. Safety for children; advocates for families
3. Not 24 hrs – crisis lines exist and supported; legislated constraints by Children’s Services

#### **Shane - EMS**

1. Understand how EMS can support the community
2. 24hr service for crisis (first responder), experience with homeless people; no profit; AHS
3. Only respond to medical emergencies, not homelessness

#### **Dan – Homeless Link Alberta**

1. New/deeper connections – collaborative connections
2. Front line – linking service (any age)
3. Number of volunteers and funding; time and resources

#### **Marlene – Parkland NeighbourLink**

1. Better understanding of available resources
2. Works ongoing with homeless and 80% at risk of being homeless
3. Time constraints; resources; funding

#### **Brett – Engage (City Church)**

1. Working together across agencies/groups to assist community – serving well, breaking down barriers
2. Millennial age group at the church willing to get involved and volunteer

3. Trying not to move too quickly for sustainability – limited mandate, scaling, financial resources; Reach too far without capacity will cripple an organization

### **Brenda – FCSS**

1. Team concept – unity approach, promoting collaboration
2. Resources, people, time – education and awareness; “gatekeeper” – centralized hub
3. Resources – staff capacity; social worker – time and capacity; financial resources; trying not to move too quickly; help out clients

### **Lynne- FCSS**

1. Offer better services by collaborating; less people living in poverty; more/better partnerships; community is a decision maker
2. Education; information/stats/experience; the name of the City; marketing; program development; long history of partnerships
3. Limited resources; can connect people to money but can't give it; government rules to follow

### **Brenden/Megan – FCSS Youth Services**

1. Feedback/outcome; youth voice/trust voice
2. Support; keep an eye out for; peer relationships; friends
3. Willingness for youth to participate; tied by what FCSS can do – capacity, mandate, municipal, provincial

### **Beverley-FCSS**

1. Want to see unified approach to homelessness and poverty
2. Time; committed; perspective of case management
3. Tight timeline on the project – make it a priority (“make it a priority if were committed to project”)

### **Elder Ella**

1. Bring greater awareness about some of the myths that are present with the City and local communities; education
2. Time; wealth of experience and knowledge about your culture
3. Want to ensure that the group collectively understands the unique needs of indigenous residents; her grandchildren

### **Sheri – Food Bank**

1. Working with all the organizations to end poverty; increased or new partnerships; see fewer clients
2. Information/statistics/technology/data base; commitment to core collaborator
3. Financial resources – no budget

## **Defining Homelessness**

The group had an introduction to the accepted Canadian definition of homelessness, based on what has been created by the Canadian Observatory of Homelessness and the Canadian Homelessness Research Network:

### **Canadian Definition of Homelessness**

*Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental,*

*cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing.*

As homelessness is not a single event or state of being, it was important for the group to recognize that at different points in time, people may find themselves experiencing different types of homelessness.

The four different categories of homelessness that the group were introduced to were:

1. Unsheltered
2. Emergency Sheltered
3. Provisionally Accommodated
4. At Risk of Homelessness

Participants were encouraged to think about this definition of homelessness and these four categories in the context of Spruce Grove.

## Next Steps

Next engagement is First Voice Engagement on August 1st

- Grove Motor Inn: Block Party Event
- Lion's Log Cabin: Youth Pizza Party