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/ TRANSPORTATION / HOUSING / INCOME / SUPPORT /

IS HOW WE  
END POVERTY  
IN SURREY

TRANSPORTATION

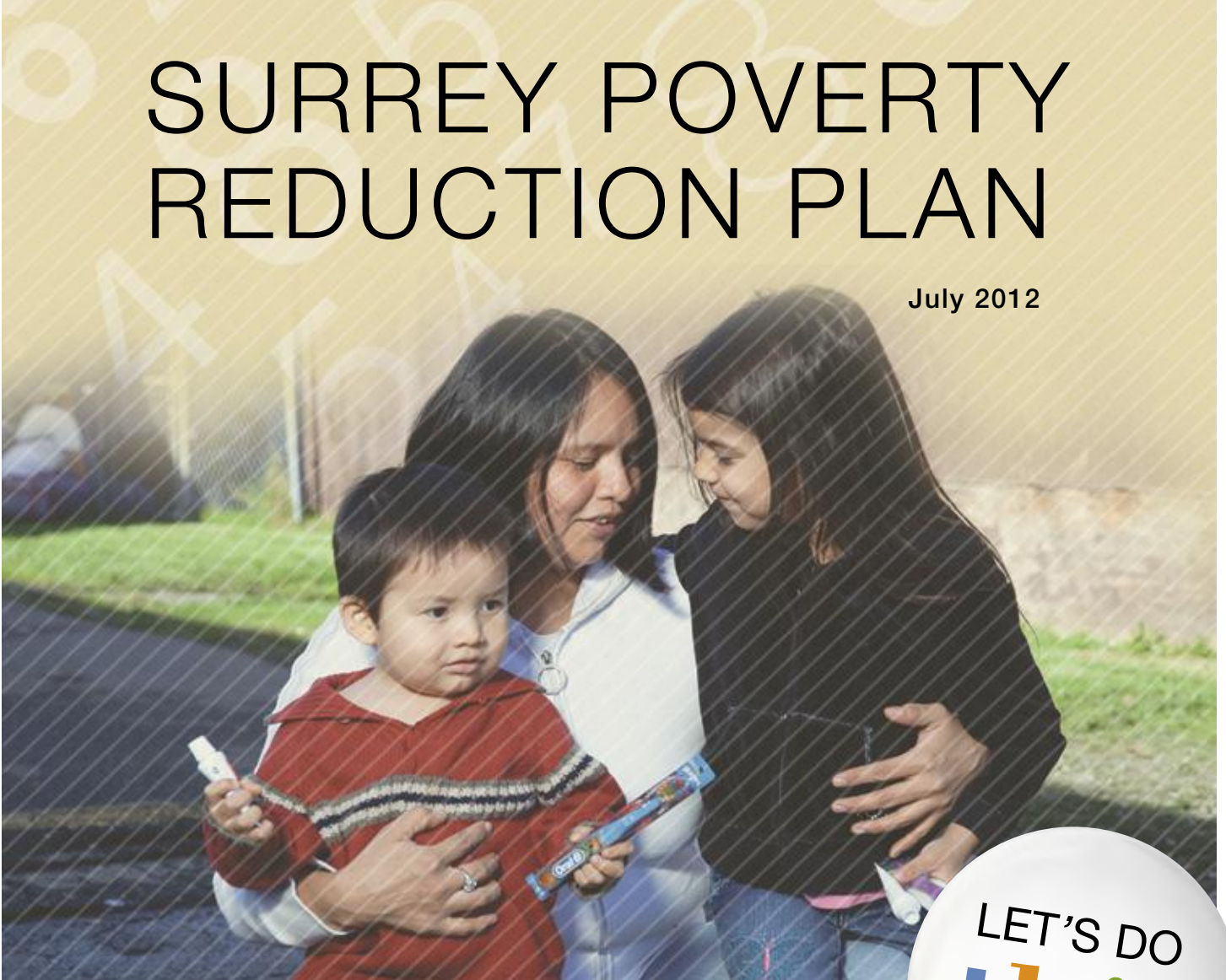
HOUSING

INCOME

SUPPORT

# SURREY POVERTY REDUCTION PLAN

July 2012







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## Acknowledgements

**this is How We End Poverty in Surrey** could not have happened were it not for the contributions of more than 100 concerned citizens and professionals who came together to develop a practical strategy to end poverty in Surrey. During two community consultation exercises we heard from non-profit and government agencies, faith based groups and engaged citizens who wanted to roll up their sleeves and help. We are truly thankful for all their contributions. We look forward to working with the community to ensure that the recommendations featured in this Plan have every opportunity to see the light of day.

We would also like to acknowledge the partnership that came together to implement the consultation process and to develop the final Plan. With Vibrant Surrey as the lead, this Plan reflects a true partnership between Vibrant Surrey, City of Surrey, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research: Community Learning and Engagement (CIR:CLE) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), Fraser Health Authority Aboriginal Health, Surrey Homeless and Housing Task Force and Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society. That such a diverse coalition came together to produce the Plan is reflective of the reality that the eradication of poverty is everyone's concern.

A project of this magnitude would not have been possible without the generous financial support from multiple sources. We would like to acknowledge the financial support provided by the following:

- **Vibrant Surrey Poverty Reduction Society**
- **Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society**
- **United Way of the Lower Mainland**
- **City of Surrey**
- **Vancouver Foundation**

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the leadership of Councillor Judy Villeneuve, who has worked tirelessly for more than 20 years to support the needs of persons living in poverty. Throughout the development of this Plan Councillor Villeneuve made sure we were all aware that we were doing more than writing a Plan — we had a mandate to produce something that would be of practical value to those most directly affected by poverty. We thank Judy for keeping us grounded to the reality that there are 71,000 real human faces behind the statistics about poverty in Surrey.





## Executive summary

### Moving to eradicate poverty in Surrey

**this** is **How We End Poverty in Surrey** provides a comprehensive set of recommendations to move towards the eradication of poverty in Surrey. The Plan is based on a series of community consultations and is grounded in a set of twelve fact sheets developed to ensure an evidence based understanding of poverty in Surrey. **this** refers to the four broad policy areas or themes that were used to help categorize the recommendations: transportation, housing, income and support.

The main priorities within each **this** category are provided below. In the body of the Plan the recommendations are further developed and include key facts derived from the fact sheets, examples of initiatives already underway in Surrey (we make no claim that this is a comprehensive list), and recommended actions. The recommended actions identify level of responsibility based on federal, provincial, municipal and community categories. In this context community responsibility refers to a wide spectrum of stakeholder groups including the private sector, non-profit, faith based groups and the general citizenry.

## PRIORITIES

### transportation

- Develop higher density, transit-oriented communities
- Promote walking and cycling
- Advocate for increased transit services
- Advocate for more affordable and accessible transit services

### housing

- Advocate for a national housing strategy
- Address homelessness
- Maintain and increase the supply of non-market and social housing
- Ensure market rental housing is accessible and affordable for low income households
- Support the provision of affordable and appropriate housing for all

### income

- Advocate for federal and provincial policy and program improvements
- Increase awareness about income services and supports
- Promote local economic development
- Encourage employers to adopt a living wage

### support

- Promote healthy children and youth
- Support education and literacy
- Increase access to post-secondary education
- Build a healthy and inclusive community
- Improve health outcomes
- Support the settlement of recent immigrants



Participants provide feedback at the March 2012 Poverty Dialogue.

The Plan represents a starting point — a commitment by the community to take action.



## Introduction

According to census data, one in five Surrey residents, about 71,000 people, live in poverty. This is 71,000 too many.

Some population groups are especially vulnerable to poverty. Single parent families, people with disabilities, recent immigrants and refugees, one-person households and Aboriginal people are over-represented among those living in poverty.

Place also matters. Increasingly there is a trend toward more concentrated pockets of poverty in cities across Canada. This is also the case in Surrey where some neighbourhoods have high levels of poverty and deprivation.

And while the focus of the recommendations of this Plan is on the needs of the 71,000 Surrey residents living in poverty, we know there are multiple consequences of poverty that affect us all. According to a recent federal government report:

*“...poverty costs us all. Poverty expands healthcare costs, policing burdens and diminished educational outcomes. This in turn depresses productivity, labour force flexibility, life spans and economic expansion and social progress, all of which takes place at huge cost to taxpayers, federal and provincial treasuries and the robust potential of the Canadian consumer economy...”*

*We believe that eradicating poverty and homelessness is not only the humane and decent priority of a civilized democracy, but absolutely essential to a productive and expanding economy benefitting from the strengths and abilities of all its people.”\**

If we are all affected by poverty then a key question is this: who is responsible for the eradication of poverty? While the impacts of poverty are most acutely felt at the community level, eradicating poverty requires a serious commitment from both the federal and provincial levels of governments. It is these levels of government that have responsibility for the policies and programs that could effectively increase income levels and provide the social supports to transition individuals and families out of poverty.

Indeed, national and provincial groups have developed comprehensive recommendations for addressing poverty. These include:

- *In From the Margins*, Federal Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2009;
- *Child Poverty Report Card*, First Call BC, 2011; and
- *A Poverty Reduction Plan for BC*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2008.

\* Source: *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada*, Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, November 2010, 40th Parliament, 3rd Session.

Eradicating poverty is not only the humane and decent priority of a civilized democracy, but absolutely essential to a productive and expanding economy.

## Purpose

The aim of **this is How We End Poverty in Surrey** is to provide a comprehensive and practical set of recommendations to eradicate poverty in Surrey. The Plan does not duplicate the efforts of national and provincial recommendations, but it has drawn inspiration from these documents. While this Plan recognizes a local role to advocate for federal and provincial action, the Plan is primarily focussed on actions that the City of Surrey and local community groups can take to tackle poverty.

The purpose of Surrey's Poverty Reduction Plan is to provide strategic direction for addressing poverty in Surrey. The Plan represents a starting point — a commitment by the community to take action. It is expected that the Plan will evolve as other good ideas and opportunities emerge.

## About the Plan

**this is How We End Poverty in Surrey** is focussed in four policy areas — transportation, housing, income and support. Access to affordable housing and transportation, an income that covers living expenses, and supports and opportunities that promote health and well-being and inclusion in the community are key features for addressing poverty among all people and families who are living on very low incomes.

We are hopeful that this Plan, and the set of fact sheets, will be useful to community groups in their proposal writing efforts and to thus bring more financial support to agencies working hard to eradicate poverty in Surrey.

The Plan is organized by the four policy areas or themes — transportation, housing, income and support (**this**). Each theme includes:

- key facts taken from the Fact Sheets that were developed as part of this project;
- example initiatives highlighting work that is already underway in Surrey to address poverty; and
- priorities and recommended actions.

A word of caution about the examples that were selected to highlight ongoing work. We note that by highlighting one particular initiative we have systematically excluded others that could just as easily have been mentioned. The citation of examples is not meant to suggest what we deem is better or best. Rather, the examples provided are merely meant to recognize that efforts to eliminate poverty are ongoing and rapidly evolving.

The Plan is primarily focussed on actions that the City of Surrey and local community groups can take to tackle poverty.

For each recommendation, we have identified the level of government (federal, provincial or municipal) that we see as responsible for implementation. We have also identified community as a source of responsibility for some recommendations. Here community refers to multiple possibilities including the private sector, non-profit, faith based organizations and the general citizenry. The transportation section also includes Translink. Finally, please note that municipal refers to both the City of Surrey and Surrey Public Library.

Where primary responsibility lies with the federal and/or provincial levels of government, the City of Surrey and community agencies can take action by: advocating to seek resolution to issues; understanding or acquiring and maintaining knowledge about the issue; and supporting the implementation of solutions through actions that are within the City's and/or community's responsibilities or mandates.

Recommendations that indicate both municipal and community responsibility are actions for which either could take the lead to implement. For example, the City of Surrey may choose to take the lead in implementing a recommendation related to food security. Likewise, a community agency may apply for a grant to undertake a food security project.

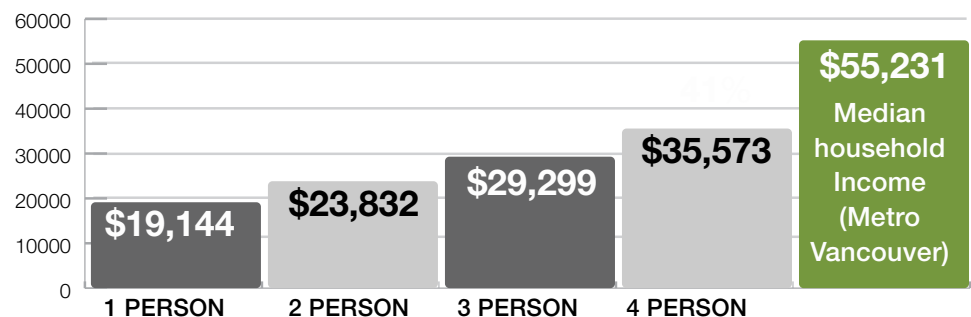
## Defining poverty

Statistics Canada calculates the income threshold that determines if a household is living in poverty. This calculation takes into consideration differences in family and household size, community size and incomes in community. The graph below shows the low-income cut-offs (LICO) for households of different sizes.

## What are the low income cut-offs?

LOW INCOME CUT-OFFS BY FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD SIZE COMPARED TO THE REGIONAL MEDIAN INCOME

For a city the size of Surrey, households below these income levels are considered to be living in poverty.







The March 2012 Poverty Dialogue engaged the community in developing the Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan

## Background and methodology

The need for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan for the City of Surrey has been long expressed by numerous stakeholders. It was also acknowledged that a credible plan would need to be supported by authoritative evidence that describes the statistical reality of poverty in Surrey.

In the fall of 2010, the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force (SHHTF) and Vibrant Surrey Poverty Reduction Society took the lead on the initiative. They invited a small group of stakeholders including the City of Surrey, the Fraser Health Authority (Aboriginal Health) and the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society (SHHS) to actively participate in the community collaboration. This initiative aligned with the City of Surrey's Social Planning Advisory Committee's (SPAC) priorities as SPAC had identified poverty reduction as a priority for their 2010-2011 Work Plan.

This steering committee was successful in attracting the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to conduct the research, and with financial contributions from Vibrant Surrey and SHHS the project got underway. Rather than conduct new research, the methodology was to compile data that already exists from a variety of sources including the Census, labour market surveys and the Community Social Data Strategy database housed with Metro Vancouver and SPARC BC. The result of this work was the production of twelve fact sheets in late 2011.

A preliminary dialogue with community stakeholders on November 8, 2011 brought together 22 participants who generated initial feedback on the draft fact sheets and provided input to the development of an Action Plan.

The **this is How We End Poverty in Surrey** fact sheets were prepared to provide an evidence-base for the Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan. The fact sheets compile existing census and other data related to poverty in Surrey including:

- *The Facts on Poverty in Surrey*: Key facts and figures, focusing on four policy areas — transportation, housing, income and support.
- *Living in Poverty in Surrey*: Seven fact sheets focusing on vulnerable population groups — families, seniors, people with health and activity limitations, women, men, Aboriginal people, and immigrants.

In 2011, Vibrant Surrey secured United Way of the Lower Mainland funding to develop the Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan through a comprehensive consultation with a wide range of community partners. The steering committee was expanded to include the Surrey Women's Centre and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research: Community Learning and Engagement (CIR:CLE) at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.



Roundtable discussions at the March 2012 Poverty Dialogue

Place-based strategies that build upon assets and resources at the neighbourhood level can help to lift low income families and individuals out of poverty.

On March 30, 2012, the Poverty Dialogue, a full-day community consultation, was held to engage stakeholders in the development of the Poverty Reduction Plan. Approximately 100 people, representing diverse community and government agencies, participated. The objectives of the dialogue were to: inform stakeholders about the fact sheets and identify how these can be used for advocacy, program development and evaluating progress; and consult with stakeholders on strategies and actions that should be included in the Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan.

Two subsequent focus groups helped to guide the development of the Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan. The Plan was written through the collaborative efforts of CIR:CLE, SPARC BC, City of Surrey Social Planning, Vibrant Surrey, SHHTF and SHHS.

### Implementation of the Plan

Vibrant Surrey will coordinate the implementation of this Poverty Reduction Plan through a collaborative community process. This will involve a number of activities, outlined below in General Recommendations.

#### General Recommendations

- **Communicate the data and strategies** to the broader community including Surrey City Council, Surrey Board of Trade, Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force and other coalitions working to address poverty and its impacts, as well as government agencies such as Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- **Make the Fact Sheets accessible** for community groups to support program development, advocacy and measuring and reporting on community outcomes and needs.
- **Establish a collaborative community roundtable** with key government, business, non-profit, and other groups to implement the Plan.
- **Convene community forums** to share progress, determine actions and support community-level decision making.
- Where possible, **update the Fact Sheets with new data** from the 2011 Census and other sources.
- **Monitor and report on implementation** of the Plan on a regular basis.
- **Participate in the Cities Reducing Poverty Learning Community** – a national network working collaboratively to reduce poverty.



# transportation

Many people in Surrey need to rely on their cars to get to and from work, school, shopping, recreation and medical appointments. For many low income households the cost of transportation can be significant.

Exploring choices to reduce the cost of transportation for low income families and individuals and facilitate greater mobility within and across the region is an important focus of Surrey's Transportation Strategic Plan.<sup>1</sup> This includes promoting and supporting communities that are safe, healthy, and child-friendly and working with community partners and other levels of government to ensure that transportation choices are available to support the well-being and inclusion of all residents.



## Key facts

- Households in Metro Vancouver spend an average of \$803/month on transportation-related expenditures.<sup>2</sup>
- The majority of workers who live in Surrey rely on their car to get to and from work. This includes approximately 85% of all workers in Surrey compared to 74% of all workers across the Metro Vancouver region.<sup>3</sup>
- Public transit can reduce transportation costs for Surrey residents with a three-zone transit pass costing significantly less than owning and operating a vehicle. For example, for a family of three (2 adults and a child), transportation costs can go from approximately \$803 per month using a private vehicle to \$349 per month using public transit.
- 11% of Surrey residents take public transit to get to work. Aboriginal people (19%), people with disabilities (13%), and recent immigrants (19%) are more likely to take public transit to get to work.
- Discounted transit passes targeted to specific households and population groups in the community make a real difference for families and individuals struggling to make ends meet.

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Report on Transportation. Surrey, BC: City of Surrey.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. (2009). Survey of Household Spending.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. 2006 Census.





11% of Surrey residents take public transit to get to work.

## KEY FACT

The majority of workers who live in Surrey rely on their car to get to and from work.

## Current initiatives

Below are some examples of initiatives underway:

- Surrey's Transportation Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup> addresses access to transit, improved walking and cycling opportunities within the City, and greater connectivity across the region.
- So far, sixteen Surrey schools have taken part in the HASTE HUB program for Active School Travel.<sup>5</sup> This program focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging alternative modes of travel to and from school including walking or cycling instead of driving.
- The City of Surrey Engineering Department has an on-going Safe & Active Schools program to create a safe and friendly environment for children and youth. This program includes traffic and pedestrian safety audits for all public elementary and secondary schools in Surrey supported by an annual program of improvements such as traffic calming, parking controls or new crosswalks.<sup>6</sup>
- In a typical year, 12 new kilometers of cycling routes are constructed in Surrey. With additional one-time funding, 18 kilometers of new cycling routes were either approved or started construction in 2010. Two pedestrian and cycling overpasses above Highways 1 and 99 were also completed in 2010.<sup>7</sup>
- Two post-secondary institutions in Surrey, Simon Fraser University (SFU) and Kwantlen Polytechnic University, participate in Translink's U-Pass program. Participating in this program allows post-secondary students to have unlimited access to transit for \$30/month.
- Translink offers monthly concession fares of \$46.50 for a 3-zone bus pass for seniors, secondary school students (14 to 19 with a valid GoCard), and children 5 to 13. Children 4 or younger ride for free.<sup>8</sup>
- Special discounted fares and accessible transportation is also offered to people with disabilities through Translink's HandyDART and HandyCARD programs.

<sup>4</sup> Surrey (City of). 2010. *2008 Transportation Strategic Plan*.

Available on-line: <http://www.surrey.ca/files/2010-Transportation-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> HASTE Hub for Active School Travel. 2012. *Action Showcase – View by School District*.

Available on-line: <http://hastebc.org/showcase/mapped-data-school-district>

<sup>6</sup> Surrey (City of). 2012. *Safe and Active Schools*.

Available on-line: <http://www.surrey.ca/city-services/4791.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Surrey (City of). 2010. *2010 Report on Transportation*.

Available on-line: <http://www.surrey.ca/files/2010-Transportation-Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Translink. 2012. *U-Pass FAQ*.



# Priorities and Recommended Actions

## transportation

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE				
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	TRANSLINK	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Develop higher density, transit-oriented communities</b>					
• Create mixed use, compact communities that will allow people to access destinations closer to home and reduce their need to travel, as well as provide them with convenient access to transit services.			✓	✓	
• Consider reduced parking standards for new residential developments with good transit access (to reduce the cost of housing).				✓	
• Support the provision of shared vehicles in new multi-family residential developments in order to minimize the need for privately owned vehicles.				✓	✓
<b>Promote walking, cycling and other transportation alternatives</b>					
• Promote alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle by raising awareness of walking and cycling opportunities.		✓	✓	✓	✓
• Ensure that residents have the opportunity to choose safe, healthy non-motorized transportation modes for many of their trips through implementation of the City of Surrey's Walking Plan and Cycling Plans.				✓	✓
• Encourage the provision of convenient and secure parking and storage for bicycles in new developments, existing public spaces and public facilities.				✓	✓
• Design new developments that are walkable.				✓	✓
<b>Advocate for increased transit service</b>					
• Implement the City of Surrey Transportation Strategic Plan and South of Fraser Area Transit Plan.		✓	✓	✓	
• Increase community shuttles in areas that cannot support conventional large bus routes.			✓		
• Monitor the demand and supply of custom accessible transit (HandyDART), to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet the mobility needs of those not able to use the conventional system.			✓		

TABLE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE				
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	TRANSLINK	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Advocate for increased transit service — continued</b>					
• Ensure that overcrowding does not limit the mobility of people with accessibility challenges when using the conventional transit system.			✓		
• Implement Light Rail Transit connecting communities South of the Fraser.			✓		
<b>Advocate for more affordable and accessible transit services</b>					
• Convene a group that includes the City, Translink, and community stakeholders to work on developing transit solutions for low-income families/individuals.			✓	✓	✓
• Develop a more equitable transit fare structure for people traveling around Metro Vancouver Region (eg. from Surrey to Vancouver), including exploring a distance-based pricing system and a longer duration before bus tickets expire.			✓		
• Provide a discounted transit pass rate for individuals and families who are receiving Income Assistance, and for non-profit agencies that provide transit passes to low-income people using their services.			✓		
• Ensure all bus stops, buses, rapid transit stations and services are accessible for people with mobility limitations.		✓	✓	✓	
• Explore potential partnerships between supermarkets, transportation providers and other key stakeholders to increase transportation options for low-income families/individuals who face barriers to accessing food.			✓		✓



# housing

Access to safe, affordable housing plays an essential role in supporting the economic and social well-being of families and individuals. While housing in Surrey is more affordable when compared to other parts of the Metro Vancouver region, there are still too many families and individuals living in Surrey who are unable to find housing that is affordable with the resources that they have available.

As one of the single largest expenditures in a household's budget, access to affordable housing plays an important role in helping to break the dynamics of poverty and low income. Not only does Surrey's Social Plan<sup>9</sup> identify housing affordability and homelessness as a priority for the City but the City has taken an active role in working to identify strategies and partnerships that can help to provide an expanded range of housing options for those who need it most.



## Key facts

- While many households will aspire to own their own home, for some households renting is their only option. Approximately 35% of all households across Metro Vancouver are renters compared to approximately 25% of all households in Surrey.
- Approximately 1 in 3 renter households in Surrey were in core housing need in 2006. This represents approximately 10,430 renter households across the City who are facing challenges in finding suitable housing that costs less than 30% of their household income.
- Approximately 3,495 renter households in Surrey were in "worst case need." These are households that are in core housing need and spending at least 50% of their income on their housing costs.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents* (March 2006). Surrey, BC: The Social Planning & Research Council of BC (SPARC BC). <http://www.surrey.ca/files/SocialPlanFinalReport2006.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. 2006 census.

## KEY FACTS

1 in 3

Approximately 1 in 3 renter households in Surrey were in core housing need in 2006.

- The 2011 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count identified 400 individuals in Surrey who were without a place to live on the night of the count. This includes 230 individuals who were sleeping outside at the time of the count.<sup>11</sup>
- The existing inventory of subsidized housing and the rent assistance available through the Province's RAP (Rental Assistance Program) and SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters) program make a real difference to households in need. There are currently 1,068 families and 1,285 seniors in Surrey helped by BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) programs and approximately 4,376 households living in social housing.
- As of June 2011, there were approximately 1,320 Surrey families who were on BC Housing's Applicant Registry (waiting list) and who were eligible for social housing.

## Current initiatives

Below are some examples of initiatives underway:

- In 2007, Surrey City Council established the Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society<sup>12</sup> with a commitment of \$9.5 million to help work toward solutions for ending homelessness in the City of Surrey.
- The City of Surrey entered into an MOU Agreement with BC Housing in 2008 to leverage opportunities to expand the supply of transitional and supportive housing units available to people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Through this Agreement, 140 housing units and 40 beds have been opened or are under development on City-owned properties.<sup>13</sup>
- The City of Surrey is currently working on the development of a Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey. It will provide strategic direction for facilitating the provision of housing and services for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in Surrey.
- Local service providers across the City actively work to provide housing, services and supports to help those who are homeless as well as work on strategies and initiatives to prevent homelessness. This includes initiatives like the Homeless Connect Day held every year in partnership with the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness as well as initiatives like the Surrey Rent Bank which provides short-term assistance to families and individuals who are in crisis and who are at risk of becoming homeless.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Metro Vancouver. 2012. *Metro Vancouver 2011 Homeless Count Report*.

<sup>12</sup> Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society. 2012. *History*. Available on-line: <http://surreyhomelessnessandhousing.org/about/history/>

<sup>13</sup> Surrey (City of). 2011. *PLAN for the SOCIAL well-being of Surrey residents*. 2010 annual report.

<sup>14</sup> Newton Advocacy Group. 2012. *Surrey Rent Bank*. Available on-line: <http://www.newtonadvocacygroup.ca/main/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/SRB-Brochure.pdf>



## Priorities and Recommended Actions

## housing

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Advocate for a national housing strategy</b>				
• Develop and implement a national housing strategy.	✓			
<b>Address homelessness</b>				
• Sustain and increase the funding focussed on homelessness until a combined strategy on housing and homelessness is developed to guide federal and provincial investment.	✓	✓		
• Coordinate among all government departments and agencies the policies and programs that address issues related to homelessness such as: justice, health, income, employment etc.	✓	✓		
• Maintain and increase the funding for the Unlicensed Supportive Recovery Home Program to enable additional beds to be funded through this program.		✓		
• Complete and implement the City of Surrey Master Plan for Housing the Homeless in Surrey.			✓	
• The Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society to continue providing grants for projects that provide solutions to homelessness in Surrey. The Society will also raise funds to enhance its ability to have an impact on homelessness in Surrey.				✓
• The Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force to continue to provide a leadership role by coordinating services, building the capacity of local non-profits, engaging the business community, and identifying gaps and solutions to homelessness in Surrey.				✓
<b>Maintain and increase the supply of non-market and social housing</b>				
• Provide funding to maintain and increase the supply of non-market and social housing in Surrey.	✓	✓		
• Plan and create the capacity and conditions necessary to develop new social housing projects in Surrey that respond to the needs of diverse population groups.	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Commit funds to maintain and develop additional housing for urban Aboriginal people.	✓	✓		
• Contribute surplus federal and provincially owned lands in Surrey for the development of social housing at a reduced cost or no cost.	✓	✓		

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Ensure that market rental housing is accessible and affordable for low income households</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER), Home Adaptations For Independence (HAFI) and other housing services and programs that are available for low-income households.</li> </ul>			✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and increase the funding levels available for rent supplement programs, including the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) for low-income working families.</li> </ul>		✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain and enhance housing stability strategies such as the Surrey Rent Bank.</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the Residential Tenancy Act such that the Residential Tenancy Branch's (RTB) dispute resolution services are more accessible to low income renters and more effective in responding to their needs, and that decisions are enforced by the RTB, and in a timely manner.</li> </ul>		✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce taxation changes that will stimulate the development of new purpose-built rental housing.</li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Support the provision of affordable and appropriate housing</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a City of Surrey Housing Action Plan that will identify housing issues and strategies for municipal actions that will ensure that there is an adequate supply of housing to meet the full range of incomes and needs in the city.</li> </ul>			✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a residential rehabilitation program to replace the federal RRAP program, which was terminated in 2011 at the same time that federal funds were transferred to the Province for renovation programs.</li> </ul>		✓		



# income

**Surrey's Social Plan recognizes that “an inclusive city is one where everyone can participate and benefit from opportunities offered, regardless of economic means.”**

While there is the potential for families and individuals living in Surrey to benefit from the economic and social opportunities that come with the growth and change that the City is experiencing, there is also the need to work actively to ensure that such opportunities are available to everyone. For some, this might mean improving access to training programs and other initiatives designed to provide greater financial stability to low income families and individuals who are living from pay cheque to pay cheque. For others, it might mean working to strengthen and enhance the social safety net.



## Key facts

- Some households are at greater risk of poverty and exclusion. This includes single parent families, recent immigrants and single person households (senior and non-senior).
- Households relying on income assistance are living well below the Low Income Cut-offs. For example, a single person on income assistance receives only \$610 per month, or \$7,320 per year, to live on. This is considerably below the low-income cut-off of \$19,144 per year for a single person household. Likewise, a couple with two children receives \$1,101 per month, or \$13,212 per year, below the low income cut-off of \$35,575 for a family of four.
- Income assistance rates have not increased since 2008 while the cost of food, shelter and other basic essentials has continued to increase.
- A minimum wage of \$9.50 per hour, assuming a 37.5 hour week, translates into an annual income of \$18,525. This income level represents approximately 97% of the poverty line for a single person household, and 77% of the poverty line for a single parent with one child.
- Targeted initiatives like the Federal Child Tax Benefit and OAS/GIS can play a critical role in helping to lift low income families and individuals out of poverty and help to provide the foundation needed for moving forward.



There is significant variation in the employment and economic opportunities available to different groups and sectors of the community.

Targeted initiatives like the Federal Child Tax Benefit and OAS/GIS can play a critical role in helping to lift low income families and individuals out of poverty.

## Current initiatives

Below are some examples of initiatives underway:

- The City of Surrey has taken a leadership role in advocating for the federal government to terminate the transportation loan program for government assisted refugees (GARs). Currently GARs, who are humanitarian refugees in desperate need of protection, are required to repay the costs associated with their transportation to Canada and their pre-entry medical costs.
- The Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Strategy (MVUAS) helped to facilitate a partnership between the City of Surrey, the City of Vancouver and ACCESS (an Aboriginal employment agency) to create opportunities for Aboriginal people to develop skills needed to access administrative opportunities within local government including positions within the library system.<sup>15</sup>
- The Surrey Public Library, in partnership with OPTIONS, organizes an employment workshop for newcomers, which helps to provide them with the information and skills that they need to find suitable and appropriate work.<sup>16</sup>
- The Employment Centre for Persons with Disabilities (ERCPD), located in Surrey, provides employment services to assist people with disabilities to attach to the labour market.<sup>17</sup>
- Federal initiatives such as the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), the Child Care Tax Benefit (CCTB) and BC's Family Bonus have helped improve the economic situation of many low income families with this support often lifting a family out of poverty.
- The assistance available through the Federal government's OAS/GIS programs and the indexing of this assistance has helped to provide greater economic stability and reduce the depth of need among many low income seniors living in poverty.

<sup>15</sup> ACCESS.2012. *ACCESS Funded Programs*. Available on-line: <http://programs.accessfutures.com/>

<sup>16</sup> OPTIONS. 2012. OPTIONS homepage. Available on-line: [options.bc.ca](http://options.bc.ca)

<sup>17</sup> BC Centre for Ability. 2012. Employment Centre for Persons with Disabilities (ERCPD). Available on-line: <http://www.centreforability.bc.ca/?page=25>



## Priorities and Recommended Actions

## income

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Advocate for federal and provincial policy and program improvements</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately cancel all outstanding refugee transportation loan debt and cease seeking repayment of transportation costs for new government assisted refugees coming to Canada.</li> </ul>	✓			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make improvements to policies and programs that impact low income individuals and families including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Income Assistance and Disability Benefits</li> <li>o Minimum Wage</li> <li>o Employment Standards</li> <li>o Training Programs for People with Disabilities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make improvements to policies and programs that impact low income individuals and families including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Child and Family Benefits</li> <li>o Employment Insurance (EI)</li> <li>o Income Guarantees (at or above LICO )</li> <li>o Employment Programs for Aboriginal People</li> <li>o Live-In Care Giver Program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Increase awareness about income services and supports</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness among low income individuals and families of the Surrey Public Library's services including free job search and resume writing workshops, and free access to computers and the Internet for job search activities.</li> </ul>			✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness among low income individuals and families of the need to file an income tax return in order to benefit from tax credits. Promote the availability of free income tax filing services for low income people.</li> </ul>			✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore and promote strategies to assist people for whom the new on-line application for Income Assistance is a barrier.</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓
<b>Promote local economic development</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new opportunities to assist people facing barriers to employment to gain employment skills and experience.</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the sustainability of non-profit agencies through the development of social enterprise and other related initiatives.</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓

TABLE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Promote local economic development — continued</b>				
• Ensure that government policies and regulations encourage and support small business development and co-operatives.	✓	✓	✓	
• Explore the development of micro-loan programs.				✓
<b>Living Wage</b>				
• Government and other employers to pay their regular and contract employees a living wage that allows them to access a good quality of life in Surrey.	✓	✓	✓	✓



# support

**Many families and individuals living in low income face real challenges in meeting basic day to day needs.**

Access to affordable child care, education and other opportunities can make a real difference in helping families and individuals to overcome the challenges of poverty and low income. Place-based strategies that focus on providing supports to those who are most vulnerable can help to not only address gaps in the social safety net but also to provide low income families and individuals with the kind of stability and support that they need to move forward in their lives.



## Key facts

- Local schools, churches, community centres, recreation centres and libraries all represent an important part of the social infrastructure in communities and play an important role in promoting and supporting the well-being of families and individuals.
- On average, fewer Surrey residents have college or university degrees than in the region as whole. In Surrey, 45% of residents have some post-secondary education (college or higher), as compared to 57% in Metro Vancouver.
- Services provided through the non-profit sector as well as targeted strategies across all levels of government can be part of the solution by responding to gaps in the social safety net and helping vulnerable families and individuals access the services and supports that they need in the community.
- Place-based strategies that build upon assets and resources at the neighbourhood level and target resources and services to those in the greatest need also play an important role in helping to lift low income families and individuals out of poverty.



The Surrey Library offers free services that support literacy.

## KEY FACTS

On average, fewer Surrey residents have college or university degrees than in the region as a whole.

## Current initiatives

Below are some examples of initiatives underway:

- In 2011, the City of Surrey opened a 77,000 square foot library in City Centre, which provides a variety of literacy services, employment programs, and family programs in the Whalley area.<sup>18</sup>
- Strong Start BC early learning programs, sponsored by the provincial Ministry of Education, provide free school-based early learning services for adults and their young children, aged birth to five.<sup>19</sup> Twenty-two elementary schools in Surrey have Strong Start programs.
- The First Steps Early Childhood Development Settlement Program, provided by OPTIONS Community Services in collaboration with DIVERSECity Community Resource Society, and Umoja African Family Services, provides an ECD focussed settlement and developmental support program for young refugee children ages 0-6 years old. This program is offered in both the Whalley and Newton areas.<sup>20</sup>
- Surrey's Community Schools Partnership, starting with just three schools in 2007, now supports more than 25 schools in identifying specific needs of the children and families, and bringing together community resources to meet those needs.
- As a Welcoming and Inclusive Communities project,<sup>21</sup> the Surrey Food Bank in partnership with DIVERSECity's Community Kitchen<sup>22</sup> held workshops with newcomers on how to use Canadian foods typically found in Food Bank hampers to cook culturally familiar, healthy meals.
- The City of Surrey's Parks and Recreation Department's Leisure Access Program enables low income residents to participate in Parks, Recreation and Culture activities at a reduced cost.<sup>23</sup>
- The Sources/Newton Advocacy Group, located in the Newton area, advocates welfare, mental health, and housing issues with all levels of government. It also provides a pro-bono legal clinic and free tax clinic services for low income residents.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Surrey (City of). 2012. *Plan for the Social Well-Being of Surrey Residents. 2011 Annual Report*. Available on-line: [http://www.surrey.ca/files/Social\\_Plan\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.surrey.ca/files/Social_Plan_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> British Columbia Provincial Government Ministry of Education. 2012. *StrongStart BC*. Available on-line: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/strongstart\\_bc/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/)

<sup>20</sup> OPTIONS Community Services. 2012. *First Steps ECD Settlement Program*. Available on-line: [http://www.options.bc.ca/program\\_info.php?cat\\_id=4&program\\_id=71](http://www.options.bc.ca/program_info.php?cat_id=4&program_id=71)

<sup>21</sup> Surrey WIC (Welcoming & Inclusive Communities) Project. *Demonstration Projects*. Available on-line: <http://www.wicsurrey.org/demonstration-projects>

<sup>22</sup> Diversecity Community Resources Society. *Food Security Programs*. Available on-line: <http://www.dcrs.ca/index.php?page=Food&section=services&cat=community&sub=2>

<sup>23</sup> Surrey (City of). 2012. *Leisure Access Program*. Available on-line: <http://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/1773.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> Newton Advocacy Group. 2012. *About*. Available on-line: [http://www.newtonadvocacygroup.ca/main/?page\\_id=2](http://www.newtonadvocacygroup.ca/main/?page_id=2)



## Priorities and Recommended Actions

## support

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Promote healthy children and youth</b>				
• Collaborate with the Ministry of Children and Family Development on their pilot project to reduce child poverty in Surrey.		✓	✓	✓
• Increase awareness of and access to free early literacy and school readiness programs available through the library, recreation services and other community agencies.			✓	✓
• Continue and increase efforts to support and encourage vulnerable youth, including Aboriginal youth, new immigrant and refugee youth, and youth from low-income families, to participate in library, recreation, civic engagement and other community activities.			✓	✓
• Continue to implement the City of Surrey Child and Youth Friendly City Strategy.			✓	
• Invest in a high quality, universally accessible child care program.	✓	✓		
<b>Support education and literacy</b>				
• Increase awareness of services offered free of charge at the Library, such as books and DVDS, computers and the Internet, technology training classes, assistance with filling out online forms, story-times for children, etc.			✓	✓
• Increase awareness of services offered free of charge at the Library for people with disabilities, including home delivery of books and audio books, specialized computer technology for those with visual impairments, and story-times for adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities.			✓	✓
• Continue to implement the Surrey Public Library's Learning for Life Strategy.			✓	
• Ensure that the School District No.36 (Surrey) receives an equitable share of provincial education funding, especially for vulnerable students.		✓		
• Reduce the student drop-out rate, especially among Aboriginal students.	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Reduce the use of cheque cashing and payday loan services by increasing financial literacy.				✓

TABLE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Increase access to post-secondary education</b>				
• Ensure that an equitable share of post-secondary funding goes to support additional spaces for the growing population in the South Fraser area.		✓		
• Develop strategies for making post-secondary education more accessible for vulnerable and under-represented groups.		✓	✓	✓
• Change the student loan program to make loans for publically-funded post-secondary institutions more accessible to low-income students, and to ensure that new graduates are not overly burdened by debt.	✓	✓		
• Explore and consider ways to address problematic lending practices of financial institutions, facilitated by private post-secondary institutions, which leave some students with high debt levels and low-wage employment prospects.		✓		✓
• Increase the participation of women in trade schools.		✓		✓
<b>Build a healthy and inclusive community</b>				
• Continue to develop activities and opportunities that build social connectedness and sense of belonging among all Surrey residents, and that specifically include low income individuals/families and neighbourhoods.			✓	✓
• Develop strategies and/or initiatives that target low income individuals/families or neighbourhoods, and enhance access to recreational, cultural, library and other opportunities that promote health and well-being.			✓	✓
• Promote awareness of the City of Surrey's Leisure Access Pass (LAP) that provides free or reduced price recreation services for low income people. Also promote awareness of free-of-charge community events and other opportunities.			✓	✓
• Develop and support initiatives to increase low income households' dignified access to healthy food.			✓	✓
• Promote coordination of food security efforts including the coordination of meal programs.			✓	✓

TABLE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE			
	FEDERAL	PROVINCIAL	MUNICIPAL	COMMUNITY
<b>Improve health outcomes</b>				
• Increase awareness of the health resources available in the community.			✓	✓
• Adopt “plain language” and translated versions of health education materials and community social service materials.		✓	✓	✓
• Assist low-income individuals/families to access a quality primary care practitioner.		✓	✓	✓
• Ensure that mental health and addictions services are available and accessible for families and individuals who need them. Provide training to those who are supporting people with mental health concerns.		✓		
• Expand home support services for vulnerable seniors.		✓		
<b>Support the settlement of recent immigrants</b>				
• Develop strategies to support the settlement of refugees and other vulnerable recent immigrants.	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Increase new immigrants’ awareness of services and supports that are available to them.	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Support initiatives that address the issue of foreign credential recognition.	✓	✓		✓



## Appendix I

### Steering committee

**Councillor  
Judy Villeneuve**

Chair, City of Surrey Social Planning  
Advisory Committee and President,  
Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society

**Sonya Boyce**

Surrey Women's Centre

**Lorraine Copas**

Social Planning and Research Council of BC  
(SPARC BC)

**Stephen Dooley**

Kwantlen Polytechnic University and  
The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research:  
Community Learning and Engagement (CIR:CLE)

**Scott Graham**

SPARC BC

**Laurel Jebamani**

The Aboriginal Health Team,  
Fraser Health Authority

**Susan Keeping**

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Task Force

**Vera LeFranc**

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society

**Marlis McCargar**

Social Planning, City of Surrey

**Mary Miller**

Surrey Homelessness and Housing Society

**Aileen Murphy**

Social Planning, City of Surrey

**Alice Sundberg**

Vibrant Surrey Poverty Reduction Society

**Charlotte Watson**

Engineering Department, City of Surrey





## Appendix II

### Poverty Dialogue participants

Aaron Cheng	Judy Peterson
Adriana Azzolini	Julie Potter
Adrienne Montani	Julie Stephenson
Ahmed Kafafi	Karen Abrahamson
Aileen Murphy	Karen Norman
Alice Sundberg	Kingsley Okyere
Angel Huang	Kulpreet Singh
Bruce Ralston	Lani Caron
Charles Partridge	Laurie Cavan
Charlotte Watson	Lindseigh Lochhead
Christine Mohr	Maddy Carlington
Daljit Gill-Badesha,	Manreet Kainth
Darrell Ferner	Margaret Mubanda
David Kerr	Marlis McCargar
David Pereira	Mary Miller
David Poulette	Mary Pichette
David Woollven	Maxine Larmour
David Young	Meredith Seeton
Denise Darrell	Michel Pouliot
Doris Sai-Boateng	Michelle Orfield
Elaine Clare	Michelle Shaw
Eric Kwon	Mike Lally
Feezah Jaffer	Mishele Blumke
Gary Robinson	Morten Bisgaard
Gurdeep Khaila	Natasha Smith
Helesia Luke	Nina Rihal
Irene McLellan	Nylle Kristine Quines
Jacki Tokaryk	Peter Hill
Janet Kreda	Pooja Khandelwal
Jean Macdonald	Richard Hosein
Jesse Sangha	Rocio Cabrera
Joanne Tang	Ron Savoy
Jonquil Hallgate	CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



## Appendix II - continued

### Poverty Dialogue participants

Sandra Olson  
 Sarjeet Purewal  
 Shayne Williams  
 Sonya Boyce  
 Stacey Rennie  
 Susan Keeping  
 Susan Papadionissiou  
 Susan Woronko  
 Tanya Fink  
 Tiffany Nguyen  
 Trish Garner  
 Vera LeFranc  
 Victoria Barr  
 Wanda Stachura  
 Yazmin Hernandez Banuelas  
 Yves Trudel

### Collaborative community engagement process

The Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan is the product of a dynamic and truly collaborative community engagement process. More than 100 citizens and professionals took time to attend two separate consultations and provided recommendations to which this Plan is grounded. In other words, the recommendations provided in this Plan have a broad base of multi-sectoral support, and we are very hopeful that this support will enhance the viability of implementation.





**The Surrey Poverty Reduction Plan** is dedicated to the over 71,000 individuals in our City who face the daily challenge of living with limited incomes.

We hope that the recommendations in the Plan lead to dedicated action on the part of businesses, community agencies and all levels of government that will have a lasting positive impact on the economic circumstances of people living in poverty.

- transportation
- housing
- income
- support