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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2023-INFO-100
Date: December 1, 2023

Subject:

The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on [Blueprint for Transformation: the 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty](#), released on October 30, 2023.

2. Background

2.1 In 2018, the Government of Canada made a commitment to reduce poverty through [Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). This foundation included establishing an official measure of poverty (i.e., Canada's Official Poverty Line), setting concrete poverty reduction targets to reduce poverty by 20 per cent by 2020 and 50 per cent by 2030, and passing the [Poverty Reduction Act](#).

2.2 The National Advisory Council on Poverty (NACP) was created to monitor and report on Canada's progress towards achieving its poverty reduction targets.

3. The NACP Report Highlights

3.1 Previous NACP reports noted a decrease in poverty rates between 2015 and 2020. However, due to existing and new pressures following the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 was the first time since the Poverty Reduction Strategy was implemented that the poverty rate increased. Data from the 2021 Canadian Income Survey show an increase of 15.6 per cent (i.e., about 405,000 more people living in poverty) in the overall national poverty rate compared to 2020.

- 3.2 Longstanding issues surrounding poverty reduction include: inequalities in poverty in which there are disproportionately higher poverty rates among groups made most marginal; linkages between the social determinants of health (e.g., low income and experiences of discrimination); the housing crisis; climate change; inflation and high cost of living (e.g., food insecurity); and strained frontline services.
- 3.3 There are data gaps related to poverty and certain populations are under-surveyed, namely First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) people, people living in institutions, 2SLGBTQ+ people, people seeking asylum, people with refugee status, people with temporary protected status, and people experiencing homelessness.
- 3.4 In Ontario, the poverty rate increased by 13.2 per cent from 2020 to 2021, despite a reduction of 49 per cent from 2015 to 2021.
- 3.5 Certain demographic groups experienced increased poverty rates between 2020 and 2021, including people who identified as Black, other racialized groups, persons in male-led lone parent families, and seniors.
- 3.6 The NACP engagement sessions with the public, including people with lived expertise, revealed four themes: income inadequacy and impact of the rising cost of living; the need to make equity and inclusion a priority; challenges faced by specific populations made most marginal; and challenges accessing benefits and services.
- 3.7 The NACP urges the Government of Canada to take urgent action in the following five areas:
 - a. Decrease FNIM poverty by continuing to work to earn the trust of FNIM people.
 - b. Continue to support equity-enabling efforts to improve dignity and inclusion.
 - c. Develop income adequacy.
 - d. Streamline benefits and services to make them low-barrier, easier to access and more responsive to individual needs.
 - e. Invest in poverty prevention and protection.

4. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 4.1 This report aligns with the following strategic goal and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
 - a. Goal 2: Community Vitality
 - 2.3: Enhance community safety and well-being
 - 2.4: Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Locally, the Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) is monitoring Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Staying updated on the national strategy will ensure DRHD is informed on national poverty trends and any changes to federal-level programming, policies and resources.
- 5.2 DRHD's Health Neighbourhoods initiative provides a picture of how health varies by where residents live. In 2015, seven Priority Neighbourhoods were identified that require focus to build on health and well-being. These Priority Neighbourhoods have the lowest income levels in the region.
- 5.3 DRHD works to improve health outcomes for those living with low income by modifying programs and services to address the needs of this population. DRHD also collaborates with Regional and community partners to help improve outcomes for those living with low income.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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