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**Item No. 12.1.1**  
**Community Planning & Economic Development**  
**April 5, 2017**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

**ORIGINAL SIGNED**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Maggie MacDonald, Managing Director, Government Relations & External Affairs

**DATE:** March 28, 2017

**SUBJECT:** HRM Anti-Poverty Strategy

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**ORIGIN**

On February 23, 2017, the Standing Committee on Community Planning & Economic Development passed the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Community Planning and Economic Development request a staff report to:

1. Evaluate a request to collaborate with United Way Halifax on an anti-poverty strategy with the aim of benefitting the economy and social fabric of the municipality; and
2. Evaluate a request for up to \$20,000 in an in-kind-contribution toward the development of an anti-poverty strategy. The in-kind contribution may include, but not be limited to, office space, printing costs and public engagement support.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

**The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter states –**

**Purpose of Act**

**2** The purpose of this Act is to

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to
  - (i) provide good government,
  - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
  - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that CPED recommend to Regional Council that

- (1) HRM collaborate with United Way Halifax and other partners on the development of an Anti-Poverty Strategy for the municipality and
- (2) HRM initially make up to \$20,000 of in-kind support available to develop the strategy
- (3) HRM consider additional involvement in activities designed to reduce poverty based on the report arising from the consultations to be launched by the United Way.

## **BACKGROUND**

### Poverty

Poverty appears in a multitude of ways in daily life. There is not a single cause of poverty nor is there a single solution. Unemployment, underemployment, precarious work, insufficient wages, gender & race pay gaps, poor access to education, unaffordable and inaccessible childcare - all public policy issues – each play a role in the persistence of poverty.

End Poverty Edmonton wrote "Edmontonians experience poverty when they lack or are denied economic, social and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community." The same could be said for HRM residents.

In 1989 Parliament set a goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. It was not achieved. The Federal government is now running case studies in six communities across the country to learn what works and what doesn't as it crafts a national poverty reduction strategy.

Several provinces have launched poverty reduction efforts. In 2009, Nova Scotia produced "Preventing Poverty, Promoting Prosperity – Nova Scotia's Poverty Reduction Strategy". The document included challenging goals but there are no recent reports of progress.

Canada has no single measure of poverty but three widely used measures track poverty statistics: the Low Income Measure, the Low Income Cut-Off and the Market Basket Measure.

Data for Nova Scotia show that child poverty, while down from over 25% in 2000 is still over 20%. Some 40% of Nova Scotian children living in poverty live in a family with at least one full-time/full year earner.

In recent years, several Canadian cities have developed strategies to target local poverty. Saint John, NB, has seen positive measureable results after 10 years. It is too early to know how successful other municipal efforts have been.

### Poverty in HRM

The February United Way presentation to CPED (Attachment A) noted "Halifax has many strengths." The municipality is growing and prosperous but not all residents share in that prosperity.

"The 2016 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia" written by Lesley Frank for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives notes that Halifax CMA's rate of child poverty is 18.8%. While that rate is below the provincial rate, it masks some wide variations, from 5% in Hammonds Plains to over 20% in parts of Dartmouth and Halifax. HRM does have a poverty challenge.

### What HRM is doing now

In the absence of a formal poverty reduction strategy, HRM has in place several activities designed to deal with issues which have an impact on low income residents. Some examples include:

- Participation in the Housing and Homelessness partnership
- Participation in the Mobile Food Market Initiative
- Introduction of the Low income Transit Pass
- Many free recreation programs, events and facilities

Missing is a framework that links activities like those noted above in a systematic way designed to tackle the broader issues facing residents living in poverty. At the March 7, Committee of the Whole on the Budget, staff presented a report on “17/18 and 18/19 Fiscal and Consolidated Accounts”. That report’s Attachment A – “Additions Above Preliminary Fiscal Direction – February 15, 2017 COW” included under the Strategic Theme “Social Development” and Priority Outcome, “Housing and Neighborhoods” the Option to “Develop poverty reduction strategy” budgeted for 2017-18 only at \$50,000. Council has agreed to participate in the development of a poverty reduction strategy and to fund some of the related work.

It is clear that any poverty reduction strategy will include activities that fall outside HRM’s mandate. The value of a strategy is that it will help align the work of organizations which have an interest in seeing poverty reduced. This alignment should improve the results from poverty reduction work.

### United Way and Poverty Reduction

Canadian United Ways have grappled with issues of poverty for many years. Using a range of programming, United Ways have sought to alleviate the impact of poverty, often working with local agencies dealing with specific groups experiencing poverty. There have been some successes in different municipalities but several Canadian United Ways have concluded that reducing poverty requires a more comprehensive approach.

Calgary and United Way started work on the Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative in 2013. “End Poverty Edmonton” has United Way Alberta Capital Region as a partner with that city.

Lessons from Calgary, Edmonton and elsewhere show that a strategy needs to balance the need for broad consultation with developing tangible, focused and achievable goals and priorities.

### United Way of Halifax and Its Poverty Reduction Plans

From discussions with other United Ways, United Way Halifax has gained insights into what to do and what not to do in the development of a poverty reduction strategy.

United Way Halifax recently adopted a new mission and vision. It also outlined the differences it wants to make over the next five years. As noted in Attachment A, United Way Halifax will work to see that:

- People have the skills and opportunities they need to achieve financial security
- People have the skills and community supports they need to build strong, vibrant neighbourhoods
- People have the relationships needed to build a sense of belonging and improve their well-being
- Halifax has a culture of active living and healthy eating

For preparation of a poverty reduction strategy, United Way Halifax proposes to use most of 2017 to undertake widespread consultation and discussion with people living in poverty and those seeking to reduce poverty. The timeline included both the February presentation to CPED and

- The public announcement of the Poverty Strategy Co-Chairs
- Finalization of the full work team and the governance structure for the work
- Release of a discussion paper and a challenge to the community to tackle poverty together

- Consultations with, and input from, business, the community sector, governments, first-voice, newcomers, youth, indigenous people, African Nova Scotians and others to ensure that poverty issues in urban, suburban and rural HRM are well understood and included in the strategy
- Public Launch of the Strategy

Implementation work will begin in 2018.

## DISCUSSION

The CPED motion has two elements – collaboration and in-kind support.

### Collaboration between United Way and HRM

“(1) Evaluate a request to collaborate with United Way Halifax on an anti-poverty strategy with the aim of benefitting the economy and social fabric of the municipality”

Through its recently approved Strategic Plan, Council has indicated a direction to focus on social development and healthy and liveable communities. Draft budget and business plan include work on a poverty strategy in 2017-2018.

Council could

- Ask municipal staff to lead the work.
- Partner with the Province which has responsibility for many issues crucial to reducing poverty.
- Wait on a possible national poverty reduction strategy and align its efforts with that plan.

While each of these options is possible, a request for collaboration has come from United Way and is a reasonable opportunity. United Way Halifax has:

- a commitment to work on poverty reduction
- links to many community agencies whose cooperation will be needed to develop and implement an effective poverty reduction plan
- connections with other Canadian United Ways working on the issue
- support from the business community in Halifax
- relationships with key provincial “social” departments through the “Between the Bridges” project (That work could be a useful foundation for a broader poverty reduction strategy. Lessons learned from the consultation process used to develop the work program for Between the Bridges are also germane to work on poverty reduction.)

United Way is ready to work on poverty reduction. It has invited HRM to be a partner. HRM would like to see poverty reduced. Collaboration with United Way seems a sensible course of action. It will allow HRM to work on issues where it has a mandate. It does not preclude other actions or partnerships.

### In-Kind Support

“(2) Evaluate a request for up to \$20,000 in an in-kind-contribution toward the development of an anti-poverty strategy. The in-kind contribution may include, but not be limited to, office space, printing costs and public engagement support”

Lessons from elsewhere suggest that preparation of a poverty reduction strategy is neither simple nor inexpensive. United Way is a small organization and will require resources to develop the strategy.

United Way has committed to work on poverty reduction and assigned staff to work on the development of the strategy. United Way notes that it could use:

- support from HRM around public engagement facilitation
- access to HRM support around specific tasks
- printing support

- meeting spaces for small or large collaborative meetings
- support around graphic design
- access to the Shape Your City portal for community consultation supports.

HRM already has in place activities which could be part of an overall poverty reduction strategy. Depending on what comes out of the consultations around the strategy, these activities could be broadened, deepened or supplemented with other municipally-led work in HRM responsibility areas.

During strategy preparation, HRM could help by taking some of the following actions. HRM could make:

- experienced staff available to
  - o contribute to the discussion paper that will be the basis of the consultations
  - o participate in the Working Group preparing the strategy
  - o work on community consultations
  - o work on issues impacting groups experiencing poverty
- the on-line tool “Shape Your City” available for use with the consultations
- meeting space available in municipal facilities
- printing capacity available

What United Way wants and what HRM can provide mesh well.

The Mayor and Councillors can also encourage resident participation in the exercise through their own actions and their contacts with community members.

HRM has many staff working with communities. Through that work those staff members understand the challenges poverty brings. For example, staff working on community development, accessibility and inclusion issues, or working with immigrants, African Nova Scotian Communities, and others could all bring insights to the development of a poverty reduction plan. The Public Safety Advisor, Community Police Officers and Crime Prevention officers all have useful links to the community. Halifax Regional Police interact with many people living in poverty and have experience referring them to organizations which can help.

The Provincial government needs to be part of any poverty reduction work. The Mayor and Councillors could play a role in advancing discussions with provincial political people.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The draft 2017-18 HRM budget includes \$50,000 to support development of the poverty strategy.

This report seeks to identify ways that HRM and its staff can contribute in-kind support of up to \$20,000 to the work. The discussion section of the report identifies some ways that the municipality can help.

If the consultations to develop a strategy go well, an outcome will be an implementation plan. That plan will require financial or other support. Council should expect a request for support to arise from the consultations and requests for additional funding for 2018-19 and beyond.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Opening up a discussion on poverty reduction brings with it considerable risk.

- Can discussions on such a potentially emotional topic be “managed”?
  - o Can HRM’s role be contained to areas where it has responsibility or authority?
- Can the expectations for action be met and managed?
- Can the voices of people living in poverty be properly heard, and their ideas acted on?
  - o Can productive discussions take place?
- Can an effective strategy be developed and implemented?

- Can support for long term programs be sustained?

Working in partnership with United Way, the province and others with a stake in seeing poverty in HRM reduced should help minimize the risks inherent in setting out to reduce poverty. Lessons from efforts elsewhere suggest that real progress is possible but real change will take time.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The 2017 initial phase of this work will depend on effective community engagement. The work will be mainly consultation. United Way has an ambitious timeline and a wide range of people and groups to consult. The success of the strategy developed will rest on the community buy-in that results from the consultations.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications from the consultation phase of the Poverty Reduction Strategy development work.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Council has already identified funds for work on a poverty reduction strategy. It has committed to work on the issue. The option of not undertaking a poverty reduction strategy appears to be off the table.

Council could use HRM staff to do the work and choose not to work with United Way of Halifax. Given the complex nature of poverty, engaging organizations like the United Way should benefit both parties. A similar argument could be made about working with other organizations interested in the issue. A municipal partnership with only the province could be put in place but why not work with all parties that would like to see poverty reduced?

A United Way-HRM partnership which could be expanded to include other organizations – public or private – ready to work on the issue constitutes an appropriate starting point.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Collaborating on an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Halifax

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/standing.php> then choose Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee and the meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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# Collaborating on an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Halifax

A presentation to the Standing Committee on Community Planning and Economic Development

Sara Napier, President & CEO -- United Way Halifax  
February 23, 2017

# Topics for Discussion

1. Halifax in 2017
2. The needs in our City
3. A Halifax approach to poverty
4. Our collaborations and partnerships to date
5. Community support and national alignment

# 1. Halifax in 2017

# Halifax has many strengths

- Third highest GDP growth of Canadian cities
- A progressive Regional Council
- A record of collaborating and putting the issues first
- A readiness among community, business, and government to focus on compassion and inclusion



## **2. The needs in our city**

Halifax. United by compassion.  
Rich in opportunity. Free of poverty.





## **3. Poverty Strategy for the City**

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life ...

Nelson Mandela

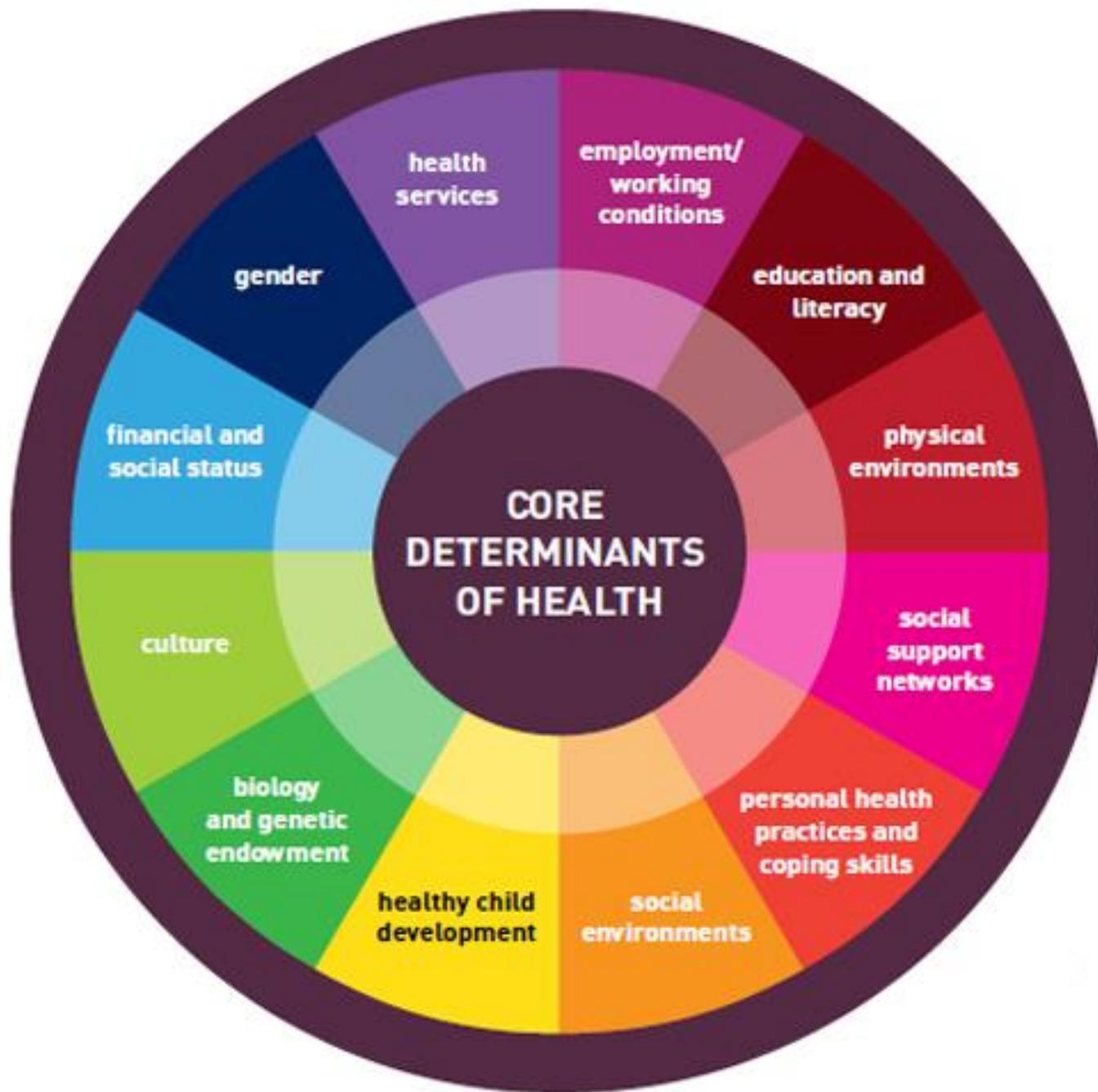


## The Strategy

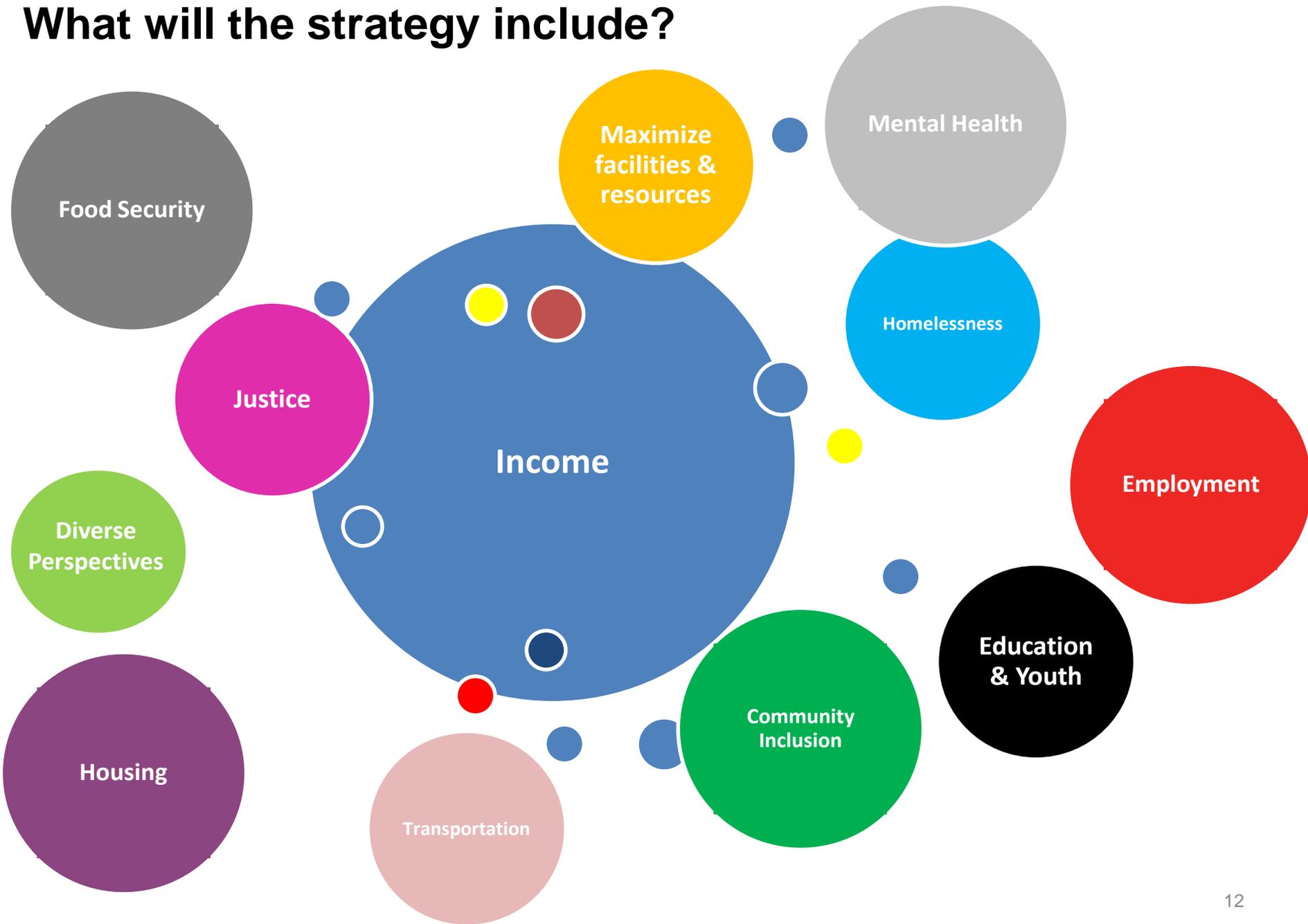
United Way Halifax is proposing a partnership with the Halifax Regional Municipality to launch a progressive anti-poverty plan to benefit the economy and social fabric of our great city.

The strategy will go beyond the traditional measures of income and an ability to meet essential needs such as food, housing and clothing. This strategy will focus on root causes and core determinants of health, and make bold recommendations within and outside of the Municipal purview.

This will be a collaborative process, giving voice to our citizenry, including first voice, community, and business from all parts of the municipality - urban, suburban and rural. The plan will be completed in 2017; implementation will begin in January 2018.



# What will the strategy include?



# Proposed Timeline

- Feb. 2017 – Present to CPED for endorsement
- Apr. 2017 – Poverty Strategy Co-Chairs publicly announced
- May 2017 - Full work team and governance finalized – first meeting held
- June 2017 - Co-chairs release a discussion paper and community challenge to solve poverty together
- July – Nov. 2017 - Consultations and input from business, community-sector, government, first-voice, newcomers, youth, Indigenous community, African Nova Scotian community, and more to ensure urban, suburban and rural issues are well understood
- Dec. 6/2017 - Public launch of the Halifax Poverty Strategy, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax Explosion
- Jan. 2018 - Plan implementation begins, with reporting against progress. Regular updates to investors (including CPED). Work of the Co-chairs and work team continue
- 2019 - The plan is fully implemented

## **4. Current United Way – City collaborations**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Housing &amp; Homelessness Partnership</b></p>    | <p>A coalition of partners working to end homelessness in our city. Includes the work of Housing First (By MOSH &amp; Herring Cove Apartments) and the Housing Needs Assessment</p> <p>Council Endorsed</p> |
| <p><b>Mobile Food Market</b></p>                        | <p>Makes affordable, high quality, fresh fruits and vegetables available in communities with limited access to fresh food.</p> <p>Council Endorsed</p>  |
| <p><b>Try Do Partnership</b></p>                        | <p>A partnership dedicated to developing nutrition and active living strategy for Halifax</p> <p>Municipality actively involved</p>   |
| <p><b>Dedicated Volunteers &amp; Staff Partners</b></p> | <p>Almost 20 formal touch points with various talented people focused on community development</p>  |
| <p><b>Workplace Fundraising Campaign</b></p>            | <p>Municipality raises important funds for community work with United Way as charity of choice</p>  |

## Financially Supporting the Strategy

- To finance the creation of the strategy, it is ideal that United Way Halifax, the Halifax Regional Municipality, and a private donor all contribute to the staffing, project and consultation fees to complete the strategy in the coming months.
- It is envisioned that after the strategy is completed, private sector investment will come together with all three levels of government to change conditions for Haligonians for years to come.

## **5. Community Support & National Alignment**

**end**poverty  
edmonton



# POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY



**United Way  
Centraide  
Canada**

together  
we are  
possibility



**United Way**  
Halifax

# Testimonials of Support

## **Overview of community support**

- Over the past several months, and in particular over the past few weeks leading up to this presentation date, United Way Halifax has reached out to many partners, donors, community leaders, and caring citizens to seek feedback and support for a Halifax anti-poverty strategy. We have had excellent and engaging conversations – so many share this vision for change and we know the process of building the plan will be collaborative and enriched by many different voices and perspectives. A sampling of these voices can be found in the following pages...

“Halifax Regional Police (HRP) have long recognized that one of the most pernicious effects of poverty has been the absence of opportunity for people, particularly young males of marginalized communities. The absence of opportunity, be it educational, work-related or general life experience can, and in many cases, does lead to criminal activity which results in a corresponding drop of social capital and individual potential.

We also recognize the imperative of dealing with poverty not in silos, but as an overall coordinated strategy involving the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

HRP will not only encourage this approach, we will support it in any way we can, recognizing that we are talking about the future of individuals and especially our collective future.”

**CHIEF JEAN-MICHEL BLAIS**

Halifax Regional Police

“My vision for Halifax would be for everyone to be treated equally and everyone to have the same amount of opportunities.

When I was 17-years-old, I was living in a homeless shelter. My son was 5 months old at that time. With the help from United Way, I've gone to high school and graduated. I've gone to college and graduated.

My son is in Grade 3 now. I believe from my own experience that anyone can make it in life with the right amount of support. Because we all need it at some point in our lives.”

**AMANDA YOUNG**

Dartmouth Resident

“Speaking on behalf of the association I fully support your organization in relation to anti-poverty in the Halifax area, it's something that's long overdue.”

**SPENCER COLLEY**

Chairman

East Preston Ratepayers Community Development Association

“United Way Halifax has a long history of making our city a better place to live, but there is still work to be done and support needed. It is for this reason that I strongly urge you to join us in creating a Poverty Strategy for Halifax so we make this city a better place for all.”

**NANCY TOWER**

Chief Corporate Development Officer

Emera

“Poverty is the number one determinant of health locally and globally. Solutions require our collaborative commitment, investment, and support of a shared strategy. The IWK Health Centre is proud to be a meaningful partner with the United Way on this all-important initiative.”

**TRACY KITCH**

President & CEO  
IWK Health Centre

"Two issues that must be looked at in any discussion concerning an anti poverty strategy is the lack of safe and affordable housing for those at or below the poverty line, and the role mental health and addictions issues play in maintaining the poverty cycle."

**TODD LEBLANC**

Business Manager

The Salvation Army