

**Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN)**  
**Wednesday, March 27, 2019 9am-11:30am, Niagara Catholic District School Board**

**Present:** Glen Walker (Chair), Laura Ciccone, Krista Butters, Jen Trozzi, Anne Watters, Ashley Chiarello, Lori Kleinsmith, Lynn Bethley, Walt Hollander, Wendy Matthews, Gillian Aitken, Erin Walters, Ryan Hilimoniuk, Jennifer Sinclair, Michael Mondlock, Jennifer Gauthier, Marc Todd, Chris Walsh, Nicole Sutherland, Melanie Wessel, Eden Ewert, Carrie DeWitt, Aidan Johnson, Ricky Kwan, Brandon Agnew, Mary Wiley, Mark Newman, Lisa Rice, Rachel Gillmore

**Regrets:** Melenie Neamtz (Vice-Chair), Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Deb Oglivie, Candice Stewart, Kim O'Rourke, Alyssa Zandwyk

Item	Discussion
<b>Welcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The meeting minutes for January 23, 2019, were approved as written</li> <li>• The agenda was approved as written</li> <li>• Introductions around the table</li> </ul>
<b>Coordinating Committee Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current bank account holds \$5,460.64</li> <li>• Reminder to complete membership renewal if you haven't already – NPRN has no membership fee, but donations to NPRN and the work of the Network are welcome</li> <li>• Explanation of Convener Role changes, including: supporting Coordinating Committee, collaboration with other community groups, on-boarding new members, connecting with people who have lived experience of poverty               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If members can think through what other groups they are part of, please link back to table with what collaborations you are involved in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Presentation</b>	<p><b>New NPRN Model: Glen Walker</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous Model:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Three years ago NPRN went through process of restructuring how we were working, revised vision and philosophy</li> <li>○ Philosophy within the network focuses on balance between charity and justice - network has focused on justice to compliment what organizations are already doing in terms of charity</li> <li>○ Network has role in trying to address larger picture issue through our collective voice</li> <li>○ Task groups restructured to allow for natural development around a given interest, knowing that they will disappear once that issue has been tackled in the way decided</li> </ul> </li> <li>• New Model:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Slightly different in that there is a division between Priority Tables (formerly Task Groups) and new groups supporting Operations, similarly to how NPRN used to function</li> <li>○ Suggested that Priority Tables fall into four key areas: Housing &amp; Shelter; Wages &amp; Work; Income &amp; Financial Security; Health Equity</li> <li>○ Coordinating Committee will still function to coordinate work between tables where they overlap, and oversee larger functions</li> <li>○ New model will help to allow for position papers being created for issues that lie outside of Priority Tables - e.g. childcare, rent subsidy, regional transit, etc. – allowing for the Coordinating Committee to talk more easily about these issues in relation to poverty to media/politicians/etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- If a new issue came forward that is outside of Priority Tables, there is still flexibility to create a group get started if it fits within the root causes of poverty and the capacity of NPRN to carry the new group
- Priority Tables:
  - Tables will operate along same lines as former Task Groups - existing task groups will fall into the listed priority tables, with exception of Youth Strategy
    - Youth Strategy group has been adopted by School Boards, has become involved more concretely within the Boards and has moved away from NPRN priorities
    - Rather than continue ownership by NPRN, Deb Oglivie will continue to liaise with the existing group and other pre-existing members may also do so
  - New model aims to have work continue along priority area of the given table, rather than have a Task Group resolve a specific issue and then dissolve, as currently occurs
  - As well, new model aims to have Tables be more flexible and fluid to Ministry/Government announcements, as Table will be monitoring news, etc. for emerging issues - This will better position us to respond to Media asks for NPRN responses to news
- Network Operations:
  - Network Operations groups include: Business Engagement; Marketing & Communications; Government Relations & Advocacy
  - These groups will provide support for work of Priority Tables
  - Information coming out of Priority Tables will help support Network Operations Groups to provide guidance and spread information - especially regarding Government
  - Government Relations & Advocacy group is new and needs to be established. Currently have Task Group around Elections, but this group has stopped. Looking to re-engage networks and membership to recruit for these Operations Groups
  - Looking to refresh membership of NPRN and Tables and Operations to continue work
  - Would like NPRN to function as go-to voice of poverty for community and media in Niagara

**Priority Table Information:**

- Affordable Housing (Ashley Chiarello, Lead):
  - Table description about promoting access to affordable housing across the continuum
  - Data set exists regarding housing need according to income; planning to look at lower income brackets, and what housing needs are occurring in these groups
  - Currently the Table is working to set priorities for future work
  - Table has created recommendations for municipal/town governments to address housing need and set own strategy
  - Table is not looking at new home buyers/all housing - looking at affordable housing options related to people living on low income, and that we are able to respond to local media and bringing in a person-centered voice to people experience housing issues in Niagara
  - Regarding tenancy, Table has identified that this is a need and is working to address the issue within the Table (possibly including highlighting needs of tenants, and resources/supports that can help tenants) - know this is an issue, but haven't explicitly decided what this is going to mean for the Table

- Health Equity (Erin Walters, Lead):
  - Working to support work of HEART project - research initiative from 2016 addressing people experiencing homelessness and their interactions with the Emergency Departments (EDs) in the hospitals – have published 8 recommendations to address identified needs, especially regarding mental health
    - Project now looking to put peer support workers within EDs to help support individuals. This will be put in place in Niagara Falls and Welland in summer 2019
    - Work of the Table will be transferred to a Steering Committee for the pilot project
      - Table will be transitioning focus over the next few months - new projects TBD, looking for input from NPRN membership
      - Potential focus of ODSP and changes regarding access – thought that Table could work to provide education and information to individuals and service providers for strengthened ODSP applications
- Wages & Work (Lori Kleinsmith, Lead):
  - Liaise frequently with Ontario Living Wage Network that oversees Living Wage Certification Program, and assists with calculation of Living Wage numbers for the community
  - Have now completed three annual reports on cost of living and living wage - committed to updated annually (last completed in November; July-October will be timing for writing next report)
  - Oversee ongoing and growing Living Wage employer certifications, write media releases, connect with employers, promote media releases
  - Last year held meeting with certified LW employers to celebrate success, network amongst each other, and address learnings (will likely do this again in November)
  - Beginning engagement work with local municipalities that are interested in Living Wage and implications for municipal government (City of St. Catharines interested in what implications are of playing a Living Wage for all employees and contract employees. Working to create report for councilors regarding Living Wage)
  - Table participates in occasional speaks and media interviews, monitors reports from government regarding wages and work (there have been many changes over the last years), and provide commentary when possible
  - Liaise with PEPiN (Poverty & Employment Precarity in Niagara - <http://pepniagara.ca/>) - participating in upcoming Webinar to highlight impact of precarious employment and how businesses can adapt to this to create better outcomes
    - great example of how we want to tie work together in community
    - May 15th, 1-2pm - information will be sent out along with Meeting Minutes
    - Webinar will be recorded and can be accessed later
    - Access Webinar here: [http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/event/better-business-outcomes-through-a-more-secure-workforce/?instance\\_id=1672](http://www.niagaraknowledgeexchange.com/event/better-business-outcomes-through-a-more-secure-workforce/?instance_id=1672)
  - Table does not currently meet regularly, will begin meeting again for next report
  - Main purpose of committee right now is to do reports, and Living Wage certification process
  - May see changes in some of this work and what will shift over to Operation Groups
- Income & Financial Security (Marc Todd, Lead)
  - Recently have seen announcements taking place regarding income security (Disability definition changing, and how that will impact Ontario Works; earnings exemptions; etc.)
  - Aware of income security reform coming from PC party, Table works to be aware of these changes and be able to advocate for the benefit of individuals receiving these programs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Table is new and has not yet met, but there is group working towards the SARNN (Social Assistance Reform Network Niagara) Spring Forum - speakers coming to talk about program changes and provide information about how to advocate for individuals' needs</li> <li>○ After SARNN Spring Forum in May, the Table will be formally established and open up membership to people interested in these issues</li> <li>○ Key idea - don't want this Table to overlap with Wages &amp; Work - distinction between in that this group will look more towards <i>government</i> policies regarding social assistance and disability</li> <li>○ Will allow for more flexible and quick action regarding government changes, rather than grouping these issues with Wages &amp; Work</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NPRN table agrees with new model</li> <li>● New model will be reviewed and refined according to evaluation efforts underway</li> </ul>
<p><b>Task Group Updates</b></p>	<p><b>Business Engagement</b> (Rachel Gillmore, Convener – Melanie Neamtz, Lead, absent):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Group working on letter to send to business community that links back to NPRN work</li> </ul> <p><b>Health Equity</b> (Erin Walters, Lead):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Currently working with HEART project and developing Steering Committee to guide funding received to supply Peer Support Workers in two Emergency Departments in Niagara (Niagara Falls and Welland)</li> <li>● Looking for 12 individuals to populate Steering Committee - can find information on NPRN website (<a href="https://www.wipeoutpoverty.ca/take-action-against-poverty">https://www.wipeoutpoverty.ca/take-action-against-poverty</a>) and on Niagara Connects - application is 3 simple questions</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing &amp; Shelter</b> (Ashley Chiarello, Lead):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting coming up Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> - if interested in attending, contact Rachel and you will be given info (can also find information on NPRN Calendar (<a href="https://www.wipeoutpoverty.ca/calendar">https://www.wipeoutpoverty.ca/calendar</a>))</li> <li>● Working to create work plan and speaking points regarding this issue to give to community leaders</li> <li>● Group currently in flux, it's great time to join and help develop new direction</li> </ul> <p><b>Wages &amp; Work</b> (Lori Kleinsmith, Lead):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 new LW employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Beechwood newest and most well-known to date - great example of business building slowly towards becoming a Living Wage employer</li> <li>○ John Howard Society also signed on in February</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Currently at a total of 12 Certified Living Wage employers, with 3 more signing on in April (2 next week, 1 more later)</li> <li>● We regularly put out Media Releases per employer certified - please share amongst your network and post media releases (Facebook, Twitter, Website) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Media releases include information about why a Living Wage is important from NPRN perspective, and also include quotes from employers about why this is important</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Also working to provide information to municipal government about Living Wage</li> <li>• Certification process helps to shine light on employers, but there are lots of ways that the Living Wage number can be used (reports, etc.) – e.g. Living Wage number is helping to inform NPI applications (encouraged that applicants are providing a Living Wage to any funded positions)</li> <li>• Depending on size of employer, there is the ability to roll out LW slowly - e.g. Hamilton Crossing Guards</li> <li>• Group is working to consistently keep Living Wage information out in community</li> <li>• Seeing snowball movement of Living Wage certification, and NPRN functioning as face of this work - hope to keep this up</li> </ul> <p><b>SARNN (social Assistance Reform Network of Niagara) &amp; NPRN Spring Forum (Marc Todd, Lead):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting today, after Roundtable meeting</li> <li>• Working to finalize date, location and speakers for Forum</li> <li>• Once solidified, information will be sent out and you will be able to register</li> <li>• Watch for emails regarding the announcement of the Forum, the next Task Group meeting is after the forum happens</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Health restructuring - ending of the LHINs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Major overhaul expected of funding and organizing of healthcare in Ontario</li> <li>○ Collapse of LHINs into ‘super healthcare organization’ that will include 3-4 LHINs in one organization, as well as several other organizations (Community Care Access Centres, Health &amp; Community Care, Cancer Care)</li> <li>○ For a local planning flavour, creating planning service organization - difference now is that new healthcare model will have existing groups of providers take on planning role, rather than having its own body</li> <li>○ New guidelines coming out locally around what this means</li> <li>○ Local Health Networks will disintegrate, and new model will have process that creates new planning table under existing funding - not exactly sure what this looks like</li> <li>○ Ontario Health Agencies will take over healthcare services, and under super organization there will be 30-50 Ontario Health Teams (not sure by region or by population) geared towards geographic area - unsure about exactly what this will look like</li> <li>○ LHIN Board of Directors has been dissolved, and new super agency “Ontario Health” Board of Directors has been appointed</li> <li>○ Ontario Health Team areas have to provide 3 services within the 6 that have been suggested by government (hospital, primary care, home and community services, palliative care, long term care, mental health and addictions) - Still unsure as to how an organization will take part in the smaller regional planning table</li> <li>○ Niagara has strong collaboration so far, with some organizations already working to address how this will look</li> <li>○ Goal of reform to allow people to move from services more smoothly - taking a similar approach to Alberta Health model</li> <li>○ <b>Regarding Change Management</b> - Important to look at how this will impact people accessing services, and that direct care providers are working to <b>ensure people accessing services that service will continue</b> - important that we can try to abate worries from people directly accessing services as changes will be slow and more administrative</li> <li>○ Potential that Health Equity Priority Table could work within this new approach regarding how people are receiving services and whether barriers have been addressed by new model</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overdose Prevention Site - currently waiting for funding and government announcement that site can continue - Funding and authority to run site will end on Friday</li> <li>• “Let’s Talk Homelessness” Forum occurring at Port Colborne Library tonight - looking to discover perceptions on Homelessness, stigmas and myths</li> <li>• NPI Evaluation - split into multiple phases with multi-disciplinary team guiding; looking to understand NPI evaluation and help inform what poverty looks like in Niagara <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2019 phase includes expanding analysis of existing statistics in region, in process of finalizing own survey addressing NPI recipients, as well as the nature of poverty in Niagara</li> <li>○ Looking at reporting mechanisms for NPI and NPRN’s advocacy roll and impacts</li> <li>○ End product of Final Report in 2021- will update Poverty in Niagara 2007 report, and looking at NPI and NPRN’s work, as well as other work occurring in Canada and Internationally re: best practices</li> <li>○ Will move forward to Council at that point, and the potential for a Niagara-focused Poverty Reduction Strategy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Reminders</b>	<p>Please mark your calendar for the next meetings: 9:00-11:30 a.m. @NCDSB Offices 427 Rice Rd. Welland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday, May 29, 2019</li> <li>• Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2019</li> <li>• Wednesday, November 27, 2019</li> </ul> <p><b>Transportation assistance available:</b>  Contact Rachel Gillmore for more information: <a href="mailto:info@wipeoutpoverty.ca">info@wipeoutpoverty.ca</a></p>