



For Immediate Release

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Creating Shared Prosperity and Leading by Example: Roles Local Government Can Play to Contribute to Poverty Reduction – Opinion Editorial

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network congratulates all candidates running in the fall municipal and regional elections. Strong and dedicated public service leadership is an important part of our society.

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN) is a collective of over 30 agencies and individuals from various sectors who are working to raise awareness and take action on poverty issues in Niagara. As part of our work, we have created and published a document entitled, *“Creating Shared Prosperity and Leading by Example: Roles Municipal and Regional Government Can Play to Contribute to Poverty Reduction”*. The purpose of this document is to highlight areas and examples where local government can take direct action to address poverty issues. We have shared this document with all local candidates and hope it will guide their future work. The document is available on our website at www.wipeoutpoverty.ca.

Many municipalities have not traditionally assumed an explicit social role beyond recreation programs or community festivals. Their responsibilities and interests have often focused more upon physical infrastructure and the nuts and bolts of city operations such as roads and sewers. But, the social infrastructure role of local governments is also a critical part of a community’s overall economic and social well-being. We recognize there are many constraints on municipalities, including downloading from higher levels of government, smaller tax bases, and an inability to run an operational deficit. However, communities often bear the high costs of the consequences of poverty, as was outlined in the 2012 report from the Brock Observatory, *“Are the Cost of the Consequences of Poverty Holding Niagara Back?”* and many residents rely on their local government as a social safety net.

Local governments are in a unique position to promote awareness of the pressing social needs in the community and the importance of social investment. They can foster a sense of social responsibility amongst all sectors and can take leadership on collaborative action. Niagara Region has demonstrated this in several ways already such as its on-going funding of the Niagara Prosperity Initiative and its collective voice on GO Transit expansion into our region. However, there are many other opportunities and actions to consider, including a comprehensive Niagara-wide poverty reduction strategy.

As the October 27 election nears, NPRN invites you to ask local candidates which ideas in their platforms will better address poverty in Niagara.

Elisabeth Zimmermann,

Chair, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network consists of 30+ organizations – health and social service agencies, boards of education, faith-based groups, the business community, regional government, and individuals who live in poverty – working collectively to reduce poverty in Niagara through information sharing, changing attitudes, and compelling Niagara citizens to take action. For more information on the NPRN, or to get involved, visit their website at www.wipeoutpoverty.ca

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