

News

Volume 3 Issue 1

Spring 2004

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Our Mission

Through Research, community development, and public education, the Peterborough Social Planning Council works to build a strong community.

Our Vision

The vision of the PSPC is to be an organization that facilitates active, broad based citizen participation in shaping healthy communities in Peterborough City and County; acts as a catalyst for positive, sustainable social change; and promotes the understanding that social justice is in everyone's interest.

Excerpts from a February 9th/04 presentation to the Budget Hearings

Provincial
The Peterborough

Social Planning council has grown increasingly alarmed over the past 10 years, as we have witnessed greatly increased deprivation among low income families and individuals in the City and County. This past spring we were involved in the Inter-Faith Social Assistance Reform Commission's hearings here in Peterborough where 50 people shared their experience of poverty and their recommendations for change. One of the people interviewed was homeless and he described our community as "a wasteland where I wander trying to find food and warmth and try to remain anonymous and unseen". This is not the community that most of us directly experience but it's the reality for a growing number of people.

At present, about one quarter of all renter households in the Greater Peterborough Area pay more than 50 percent of their incomes on rent and 50 percent of renter households pay more than 30 percent. This affordability crisis has resulted in increased homelessness, increased reliance on food banks, increased use of discretionary benefits and emergency financial assistance, and increased reliance on assistance from churches, service clubs and other community groups. It has also resulted in poorer health.

Incomes tend to be lower here than in the province as a whole; indeed they were 15 percent below the Ontario average in the last two censuses. More profoundly the median household income was only 81.9 percent of the Ontario median. Let me assure you that the cost of living for the basics here is *not* 15-20% below the Ontario Average.

The Social Planning Council's recommendations to you today address income security.

First we call upon you to increase the minimum wage. \$7.15 is not a living wage. It doesn't lift a full-time employee with no dependants above the poverty line.

We call on you to increase social assistance rates immediately and institute a cost of living adjustment. The PSPC fully supports the recommendations for change that have come from ODSP recipients and advocates across the province and from the Ontario Needs A Raise campaign and we implore you to immediately increase shelter rates for *all* social assistance recipients. The Premier has said that the Liberal Government is dedicated to seeing monthly payments increase for ODSP recipients. This differentiation supports the belief that some poor are deserving and some are not.

We urge you to immediately end the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement, a shameful federal-provincial shell game. Peterborough is one of only two communities in Ontario, that we are aware of, that has returned the municipal portion of the clawback to families the Ontario Government has taken it from. These families have told us repeatedly that they would prefer the dignity of direct assistance to their families rather than indirect support through community programs.

Perhaps the key work in this presentation is dignity. A healthy community and healthy province is one where people can meet their basic needs and hold their heads up in public—not where they seek invisibility and anonymity.

In closing we ask you to remember that social and economic justice is in *everyone's* interest.

By Frances Adams, Executive Director PSPC

2004 Garden Card

We are pleased to announce the arrival of the 2004 "Growing Communities" Garden Card available again for \$20. The card provides gardeners with a 20% discount on plants at the following nurseries & garden centres

- BURLEY'S GARDENING PICK ME UPS
- RURAL ROUTES at the PETERBOROUGH CO-OP GARDENS PLUS
- JANE'S PERENNIALS and GARDEN CENTRE
- GRIFFINS GREENHOUSES
- HORLINGS GARDEN CENTRE
- JACK AND JILL FARMS GARDEN CENTRE
- JOHNSTON'S GREENHOUSE and GARDEN CENTRE



Do you love spring? Love to eat? Love the water? Then come join the fun on a Dinner Cruise down the Otonabee River on Thursday, June 3rd at 6:15 p.m.

This PSPC fundraiser includes a BBQ Chicken Dinner by Franz, and entertainment.

Tickets are \$40.00 per person with a donation receipt for \$15.00.

Order your tickets early as space is limited.

The 2004 Garden Card is now available at the following locations:

- Burley's gardening Pick Me Ups; Titles Children's Bookstore; Eanor's Yarns & Books (Lakefield); The Avant-Garden Shop; Young's point General Store; PSPC office or visit our booth at the Peterborough Horticultural Show at the Evinrude Centre on Easter Weekend. A big thank you to all the businesses who contribute to this fundraiser for PSPC.



Community Plan Update

Through October to December last year, PSPC staff were busy helping the Affordable Housing Action Committee prepare the Community Plan Update required to initiate three additional years of funding from the National Housing Initiative.

The first consultation, primarily attended by service providers, established that the community priorities were: more stable operational funding for the shelters, improved outreach services in the city and county, more transitional housing, increased funding for the Emergency Fund, and improvements to existing programs to emphasize access and support services.

PSPC staff then worked with the Community Advisory Board to organize focus groups with youth and families at risk, adult men and women in shelters, and aboriginal

agencies. From these focus groups, priorities were established from the service users experiencing, or most at risk of homelessness.

Among the priorities identified were the need for mentors for youth, and the need for co-signers for all groups in their attempts to find housing. All groups reported experiencing overt discrimination from landlords. Aboriginal needs included a healing lodge with a small number of emergency beds. Every group identified safe, drug and alcohol free transition housing as an ongoing need with a spectrum of housing options for adults that leads to independent living or supportive housing for those requiring ongoing help.

A final consultation was held to review the results to date. The updated plan was revised to include

the adjusted objectives, activities and priorities. In mid-December the plan was presented to HRDC and it received ministerial endorsement shortly thereafter.

The next steps will be to complete the RFP process preparation and identify the first funding priorities. Meetings have taken place with Social Services to identify the types of funding that would be appropriate to the plan's priorities. It is anticipated that there will be a call for proposals from agencies before the end of February and funds could be flowing by mid-April.

For more information, contact John Bennett at 876-7088.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY



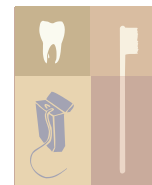
POSITIVE CHANGE

During the Week Without Violence in October, peaceful communities hosted a successful seminar in a change process called Appreciative Inquiry. At the seminar, 50 participants spent the morning exploring moments of exceptional co-operation using an appreciative inquiry approach.

Appreciative Inquiry is a group change method that focuses on what is working well by engaging people in asking questions and telling stories. The theory is that we evolve (as a group or individual) in the direction of our inquiry. For example, instead of spending our time asking questions about what is wrong and then trying to fix it, appreciative inquiry processes help us to identify what is working well and how we can do more of it.

This spring, with funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Peaceful Communities is offering a three-day train the trainer workshop in Appreciative Inquiry. The session is scheduled for March 30 – April 1, 2004 and will cost only \$125. This is a big opportunity for those engaged in peace building work as training in Appreciative Inquiry normally costs at least \$400/day.

If you are interested in becoming a practitioner in this innovative approach to organizational and group change, and if you are willing to share your experiences and apply the method with your own groups and communities, please consider applying for the training. Anyone is welcome to apply. You can learn more about the Appreciative Inquiry training workshop at www.peacefulcommunities.ca. Or contact Heidi Schaeffer at the Peaceful Communities office 761-5915.



New Dental Coalition Formed

A new coalition has formed to address access to dental health care in Peterborough City and County. Dr. Bob Bowes, Dental Consultant with the Peterborough County-City Health Unit, estimates that 5,000 local residents have major challenges accessing dental care due to finances. Seniors with low incomes and adults working for low pay with no benefits are most challenged. Recipients of social assistance and their dependants have partial coverage through Ontario Works and ODSP and can access local discretionary funding administered by the Health Unit, but significant limitations exist. These issues were discussed at a public forum in November that was organized by the Social Policy Initiatives Committee and facilitated by the PSPC and United Way. Eighteen people agreed to participate in a Coalition to develop and implement strategies to improve dental care. In addition to a number of individuals who personally face financial barriers to dental care, members of the new Peterborough Coalition for Dental Health Care include representatives from Peterborough Social Services, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Community Care, Case Coordination, Community Counselling & Resource Centre, the Health Unit, United Way and PSPC. Possible solutions that will be explored include establishing a dental fund that will accept donations, establishing a public dental clinic and advocating for greater recognition of dental health as integral to health policy. For more information, contact Jessica Robertson at 743-5915.

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PETERBOROUGH

**Social
Planning
Council**

Comings and Goings

PSPC has experienced some major changes in staffing since our last newsletter. After a decade as our part-time Office Manager, Anne Sloggett left to take a full-time teaching assistant position in the business program at Trent University. Anne saw the agency through thick and thin and she often described her colleagues here as her second family. Tracey Gainforth, who was with us for nearly three years, is now the Development Coordinator for the Lung Association.

Tracey's talents in special events organizing and her connection to almost everyone in town are sorely missed. Naida Harris Morgan who worked with us on a number of projects for 18 months was also hired at Trent, as Admissions Officer. Naida was responsible for designing a new look for our web site and all our

publications – and she made us look really good! Jan Dupuis wound up two years with us working on the Community Plan for Homelessness & Housing Insecurity and helped AHAC realize important advances. Leni Rautainen who facilitated the Peaceful Communities project with Heidi Schaeffer had to bow out a few months earlier than anticipated. We wish them all well and thank them for their good work.

Thankfully we have some newcomers here to cheer us up! John Bennett joined us in the fall and will be working for one year on the Community Plan and further development of the Affordable Housing Foundation. Yvonne Burton who many may know from her time with Trent Valley Literacy Association, is our new Administration & Communications Coordinator. This is

a new position that combines office management with fundraising and communications. Jessica Robertson is with us until late spring, completing a practicum for her social service worker diploma. In the near future PSPC will have a new Executive Director. Frances Adams, who has been with us since 1998 recently announced her resignation. Okay, enough already! Everybody stay where they are!



Anne Sloggett

Can you spare some time? A number of positions on our Board of Directors will be open as of the June 2004 annual meeting. Please notify the office if you are interested in playing a vital leadership role in our organization and community. In particular, we are seeking additional men, County residents and candidates with some financial management experience.

