

## **Municipal Priorities According to our Community**

Municipal councils are commencing their new terms of office. To assist them to develop their agendas for action and change, we are providing an Infonote on the results of the All Candidates Discussion held on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010. At that meeting participants provided ideas for change in 6 sectors. What follows is a synopsis of the discussion and the key directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue. These key directions will assist our councils to identify paths of change and community improvement.

### **Proceedings of the October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 All Candidates Discussion on Social Issues**

Over one hundred and twenty members of the public attended the All Candidates discussion on Social Issues on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2010. Twenty seven Mayoral, Councillor and Public Trustee candidates attended and had an opportunity to discuss relevant issues with community members.

The organizing and planning committee members included the Peterborough Social Planning Council, Peterborough County City Health Unit, CMHA, Health Coalition, Council of Canadians-Peterborough Chapter, Poverty Reduction Network and community activists.

### **Overview**

Six topic areas were identified by the planning committee:

- Health care
- Income security
- Public access to transportation,
- Housing security,
- Food security
- Employment

Participants self-selected the small group/topic they wished to discuss. They had an opportunity to dialogue with other citizens and a mayoral and/or councillor candidate about the issues as they related to the topic. Pre-prepared questions provided the focus for discussion. Thirty minutes were allotted for each discussion, whereby people were then provided the opportunity to move to a second topic area.

The results of all of the discussion groups are documented in the appendix of this report. The following table provides the key directions identified through the discussions as well as an overview of the rationale as to why these key directions must be addressed by our municipal leaders in the future.

# Food Security

## The following information was prepared as the backgrounder for the meeting with municipal candidates of the 2010 election

The Peterborough Community Food Network has the following vision of Food Security for Peterborough City and County:

A community enjoys food security when:

- all people, at all times, have physical & economic access to nutritious, safe, personally and culturally appropriate foods,
- food is produced in ways that are environmentally sound, socially just, and promote community self reliance,
- food is provided in a manner that promotes human dignity.

### General Information:

- There is significant concern in Peterborough that many people in our community are not food secure.
- Community members living in poverty experience a range of food insecurity from *food insecure*, defined as worrying about running out of food, to *severe food insecurity* defined as children not eating for a whole day.
- In Peterborough, 7.3% of households are food insecure with 2.4% categorized as severe. Households with children (12.2%) have a higher food insecurity rate than households without children (5.1%) This data was not collected from First Nations or homeless people, so we can conclude that many more community members are

## Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue

1. Educate people about what is 'nourishing food' re healthy choices
2. Centralize social food network
3. Work with public utilities so rental costs and associated fees are lower thus more money to buy food
4. Advocate for increased funding ODSP and OW
5. Increase job creation
6. Council should connect with Food Security group for ideas to deal with food security
7. Attract new food producers (retailers) to the city which would give farmers new places to sell their food
8. Municipality needs to work with provincial and federal governments to change quota laws and regulations to support local food production
9. Increase affordability of farms for new farmers to start up/continue
10. Increase community gardens and community green houses
11. Build on the very strong farm community and we need to support local food producers
12. Support the community garden movement

affected.

- The Nutritious Food Basket survey conducted annually in Peterborough includes a review of a variety of incomes and basic expenses for families and individuals living in Peterborough. The 2010 survey found that people living on a median income would have to spend 13% of their monthly income to afford a Nutritious Food Basket. However, a single parent with two children, receiving Ontario Works would have to spend 32% of her income to afford the Nutritious Food Basket, or over twice that of their middle class counterpart.

- People living on low incomes find that after paying for rent and utility, there is not enough money to buy nourishing food. No matter how much people try to juggle, it is impossible to make ends meet, so people have to buy less and poor quality food. For example, a single person living on Ontario Works would find themselves spending \$231 more than they have if they purchased nourishing food (-\$231 per month). The reality is that they must pay rent and go without adequate food.

Adults and children of all ages in food-insecure households consume less fruit, vegetables, and milk products when compared with those in food-secure households. A recent study found that for women in particular, the lower the household income the less able they were to afford milk products and vegetables. Food-insecure individuals' dietary patterns are dictated by income, with social assistance recipients particularly vulnerable.

- To address this desperate issue, some people turn to food banks. In Peterborough, monthly food bank use has consistently

13. Assist the low income sector to access local produce



increased since 2000. There were 7,900 visits to Peterborough City and County food banks in March 2010. Food bank use has increased by 10% over last year and 54% over the past 7 years. Thirty-two % of local food bank users are youth and children under the age of 18.

## Housing

The following information was prepared as the backgrounder for the meeting with municipal candidates of the 2010 election	Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In March 2009 the United Nations Committee stated “Canada should make housing a right”. Canadian law doesn’t recognize adequate housing as an enforceable right or a policy commitment by government. Canada is one of the few countries in the world that doesn’t have a National Housing Strategy.</li> <li>• The Affordable Housing Action Committee (A.H.A.C.) confirms in their report “Housing is Fundamental” that there is desperate demand for affordable safe housing in Peterborough. As of February 2010, 1501 individuals were on a Social Housing Wait List in the greater Peterborough area. There is a chronic shortage of rental accommodation appropriate for the needs and income levels of those experiencing persistent “core housing need”.</li> <li>• In a Statistics Canada – 2006 Census Report it states that 50.5% of Peterborough rental households (28% nationally) spent over 30% of pre-tax</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advocate that people require additional assistance to be able to afford adequate housing</li> <li>2. Plan for more supportive housing units.</li> <li>3. Work with other levels of government to develop supportive housing programs for the homeless</li> <li>4. Develop a more systemic model on supporting homeless versus the current model relying on faith donations</li> <li>5. Encourage and develop co-op housing across the city</li> <li>6. Support programs for kids on the street and increase support for youth shelter and youth initiatives</li> <li>7. Ensure Brock Mission offers shelter services to hardest to serve.... Hold them accountable to do their job</li> <li>8. Create appropriate shelter services/warming room for hardest to serve</li> <li>9. Work with the Affordable Housing Action</li> </ol>

<p>income for housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation reported in 2010 that the average rent in Peterborough for a bachelor unit was \$592.00, a one-bedroom unit rented at \$749.00 and a two bedroom unit rented at \$891.00. To put this into perspective, the cost of a one bedroom apartment in Peterborough is unaffordable to people with an hourly income under \$14.40 per hour as reported in the A.H.A.C. 2010 “Housing is Fundamental”.</li> <li>• Shelter usage bed days reported for The Brock Mission, Cameron House and The Youth Emergency Shelter increased by 22% from 2008 (14,623) to 2009 (17,844).</li> <li>• Peterborough’s Vacancy Rate rose to 6% in October 2009 and is set to reach 6.5% in 2010. However, a 6% vacancy rate has NOT resulted in rent decreases.</li> <li>• The Affordability gap for tenants leads to a high rate of “economic evictions” i.e. for arrears in rent.</li> <li>• The monetary costs to society to terminate a tenancy and evict a tenant far outweigh the cost to preserve a tenancy. Studies show that it is cheaper for society to prevent eviction than to pay for emergency assistance and services when people become homeless. According to a report prepared by the East York/East Toronto Family Resources Centre, the savings to the tenant, landlord and society by proactive eviction prevention, were approximately 50% of the cost of eviction for a single person and 40% of the cost of eviction for a family.</li> </ul>	<p>Committee through its report “Housing is Fundamental” to promote/advocate for housing issues/change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Encourage builders/developers to take on a greater role in building affordable housing as part of new residential building developments</li> <li>11. Convince developers that affordability is their responsibility. There are examples where the private sector has invested/donated to affordable housing</li> <li>12. Waive development charges for affordable housing and provide incentives to the developers to be part of the housing solution</li> <li>13. Act as a broker for vacant properties holding them until developers are ready to develop them for affordable projects</li> <li>14. Increase building standards to reduce cost of operating homes (better insulation etc.) thus making it cheaper to live and thus more affordable</li> <li>15. Encourage conversion of older homes to affordable apartments</li> <li>16. Regulate rooming standards</li> <li>17. Encourage development of tenants association to discourage the landlords associations and high rents</li> <li>18. Change tax policies to reduce property costs for apartments</li> <li>19. Encourage use of venture capital</li> <li>20. Plan for a full-service shelter</li> </ol>
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- Compounding the problem of unaffordable housing is the rising cost of utilities. “One in five households in Ontario spends 12% of their total income on utilities” states the A.H.A.C. report. This creates a major affordability problem for tenants when the rental housing stock is poorly maintained causing utility costs to soar. Tenants have very little control over the maintenance of their buildings.
- Peterborough has the highest population of low income renter households among a sample of 27 Ontario Municipalities (Housing out of reach: Report Brendan Wedley, Peterborough Examiner, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008)
- The economic realities are that the percentage of households that rent is 25%, the median monthly rent payment was \$785.00 in 2007 (Ontario: \$801.00) and 52.8% of renter households have annual incomes below \$30,000.
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- The Affordability gap for tenants leads to a high rate of “economic evictions” i.e. for arrears in rent.
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## Income

The following information was prepared as the backgrounder for the meeting with municipal candidates of the 2010 election	Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is most often used to measure poverty in Canada is Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut Off (LICO). Statistics Canada has determined that the average household spends about 35% of its income on basic needs - food, shelter and clothing. Therefore, a family is considered "poor" if they spend 55% or more of their household income on these items.</i></li> <li>• The LICO is defined by different family sizes and different populations' after tax income. The following table indicates the low income cut-offs after-tax in 2006 for rural areas and urban areas with populations 30,000 to 99,999, similar to the City of Peterborough.</li> <li>• A person or family is considered to be living in poverty if their income falls below the LICO.</li> <li>• Those in low income households are among the most vulnerable in our community. As illustrated in the table below, in Peterborough City and County there are over 400 children under the age of six living in poverty and over 700 seniors living in low income households.</li> <li>• Many in our community struggle financially. Statistics Canada's Low Income Counts indicate over 12,000 individuals in Peterborough City alone are considered to be living in poverty;</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Address the social determinants of health in order to affect change for people living in poverty person's life, while living in poverty</li> <li>2. Review and increase the discretionary benefits</li> <li>3. Develop and emergency fund to help people waiting for OW, ODSP, EI, senior benefits</li> <li>4. Municipal government should advocate for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• family responsibility act</li> <li>• Guaranteed income</li> <li>• Review of \$75 million budget on social programs</li> <li>• a community development response to poverty</li> <li>• better income supports</li> <li>• Increase social assistance rates – increase the money in the pocket and reduce/eliminate the clawback if people do find part-time jobs</li> <li>• streamline processes for better access to OW and ODSP</li> <li>• advocate for the disadvantaged</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Municipal government has a significant role to play as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate and increase</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<p>as a result many of these individuals receive assistance from social services and nonprofit agencies to assist in providing for their basic needs and shelter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimum wage is the lowest hourly, daily or monthly wage that employers may legally pay to employees or workers. Supporters of the minimum wage say that it increases the quality of life of workers and reduces poverty. In Ontario the minimum wage has recently risen to \$10.25 hr.</li> <li>• Living wage (unlike minimum wage) is a term used to describe the minimum hourly wage necessary for shelter (housing and incidentals such as clothing and other basic needs) and nutrition for a person for an extended period of time (lifetime). Supporters of living wage concepts say it will increase quality of life by eliminating poverty.</li> <li>• Peterborough Businesses have been asked to support living wage policies.</li> </ul>	<p>awareness about the issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase social assistance</li> <li>• Continue to fund food programs</li> <li>• Continue to fund after-school programs</li> <li>• Sports subsidies</li> <li>• More community gardens</li> <li>• facilities to house fresh produce or freezer storage</li> <li>• Teach youth how to garden – have retired people be mentors</li> <li>• Enhance community/collective kitchens</li> <li>• Municipal support program to empower the citizens to ‘self manage’</li> <li>• Continue clinics in the downtown</li> <li>• Recognize and support the work of Kawartha Food Share</li> <li>• Continue breakfast programs re Food for Kids</li> </ul>
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## Transportation

<p><b>The following information was prepared as the backgrounder for the meeting with municipal candidates of the 2010 election</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation is about moving people, not about moving cars. Yet the way some North American cities have been built, it would appear the opposite is</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand public transit service to Parkway/Queensway to accommodate people to get to jobs</li> </ol>
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true. 36% of Greater Toronto and Hamilton area residents do not have a driver's license. To live up to the Canadian principles of equity and accessibility, our cities must be built to allow the mobility of those who cannot – or choose not – to drive.

- Building convenient and accessible pedestrian and cycling infrastructure makes it easier for physical activity to become a part of our daily routine.

### **Residents of Peterborough Mode of Transportation to Work**

- 2006 Census data shows that workers across Canada were commuting farther to work in 2006 than in 2001, and a slightly decreasing proportion were driving their car to work.
- The median distance travelled by workers to their place of work in 2006 was 7.6 kilometres, up from 7.2 kilometres in 2001 and 7.0 kilometres in 1996. Workers in Ontario had the highest median distance in 2006 with 8.7 kilometres.
- The median commuting distance in the City of Peterborough is only 4.2km yet 82% of commuters use a car to get to work.
- 12% of the population in Peterborough does not have access to a vehicle.

(Source: Peterborough "Health for Life Pedestrian and Bike Plan" 2009)

**The City is quite compact and dense which creates ideal distances for walking and cycling**

Health for Life Peterborough (HFL) released

2. Revise the bus system to increase the frequency of service
3. Explore the use of a service hub system for public transit
4. Put bike racks on buses
5. Develop more/safer cycling paths – explore the successes of Montreal which has 2 way separated bike lanes. Plan for a bike lane system that connects to the county
6. Promote alternatives to cars and have a vision and a plan for a safer pedestrian/cycling system
7. Explore the visions of other communities that allow seniors to ride for free and promote the reduction of cars
8. Educate the public about the need/importance of alternative transportation systems
9. Increase the transportation budget
10. Peterborough Social Planning Council should continue its research on transportation re study on ridership to get a sense of how to arrange the bus system, promoting need for alternative transportation, research the number of people who would/could take public transit
11. Improve lighting for bus stops
12. Work towards a county bus system
13. Build a more walkable community which also addresses safety issues for population such as the blind
14. Develop the approach "move people not cars"

the “Community Action Plan: City-County of Peterborough” on World Health Day April 7, 2010. The report was created by 8-80 cities, an organization that empowers communities through community participation and education, to advocate for improved public spaces and pedestrian and bicycling facilities.

First year recommendations of the report include the following:

**Low cost, high benefit, good visibility and easy to implement actions that could be taken right away to make the City of Peterborough more Pedestrian Friendly & Bicycling Friendly:**

**For the City:**

1. Improve the maintenance of sidewalks
2. Implement Car-free Sundays in the summer
2. Create safe and effective traffic crossings in the downtown
3. Temporarily transform parking areas into public spaces
4. Ensure that every school has implemented the walking school bus program
6. Implement pedestrian and cycling education programs in schools
7. Ensure that cars do not park in bike lanes
8. Increase the availability of safe and accessible bicycle parking
9. Increase signage for cyclists and pedestrians

**For the County:**

1. Integrate pedestrian and cycling trails and routes into the County’s planning procedures
2. Build the Bridgenorth trail according to existing plans
2. Identify trails for future development
3. Create wayfinding signage on trails

15. Explore an integration between school buses between school buses and county road service to integrate into municipal bus service

16. Build on the existing trail system

17. Build a vision of transportation that includes public transit, cycling and walking

## Key Transportation and Communication Links Locally

- 30 minutes to Ontario's major transportation corridor (Highway 401)
- Municipal airport with 5,000' lighted runway (24-hours), expansion underway
- Solid transportation infrastructure with extensive bus routes and accessible, affordable parking
- Located along the Trent-Severn Waterway
- Connected to North America's main communications system offering wireless & fibre-optic cabling, as well as seamless video, voice and data links

(Source: GPAEDC Community Profile 2009 & 2010,)

## Local Transportation Options

### Transit

As the impact of excess vehicle use is increasingly felt in our cities and towns – rush hour jams, road rage, tax dollars for road building and repair, dying city centres, poor air quality – public transit systems are being recognized as important to community vibrancy and growth.

- For every \$10 million invested in transit, over \$15 million is saved in transportation costs to highway and transit users.
- Taking transit is approximately 10 times cheaper than owning and operating a car - an economical option to replace a second car. [www.region.york.on.ca](http://www.region.york.on.ca)
- Public transit connects people and places. Transit provides independence for our seniors, disabled and youth. It enables those with lower incomes to access increased opportunities and a better quality of life.



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- Public transit is an inexpensive, safe, efficient and important method for moving citizens. In Peterborough, public transit systems are available for both local and intercity travel.

(Source: Peterborough Social Planning Council, **“Planning for Great Streets: A report on how the City of Peterborough can transform its street network into cherished public space”**, 2010).

## Health Care

### Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue

- 1.Reinstate the municipal appointment to the hospital board re liaison to Council
- 2.Develop a list of community organizations that provide financial or service support to residents
3. Increase communication between agencies and users of social assistance support re do people understand the level of supports available to them? What are the limitations of the system?
- 4.Improve communications between the Hospital Board, city hall and community
5. Support/promote preventative medicine and health promotion re more education needed in the schools, support agencies to be more flexible in (providing prevention programs)
6. Develop acute mental health beds for youth are needed



7. Encourage people who have survived mental health issues to share their stories and put a face to the issues

8. Develop more long-term care facilities for seniors needing nursing care

9. Lobby for increased home care to allow people to stay safely in their homes

10. Explore the role that volunteers can play through the church community re: providing supports, monitoring people as they may require more assistance with chores in order to stay in their homes



11. Build on programs such as the one offered by St. Peter's high school re helping seniors in their homes

12. Improve/increase the 'handi van' service

13. Develop safe housing for those with mental health issues

14. Increase street workers to support people in crisis

15. Increase supports for those in crisis

16. Explore the development of an overnight low barrier shelter, warming room for winter and expand the Our Space program

## Employment

### Key Directions needed to improve Quality of Life around this issue

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1. Address the zoning changes that are needed to attract business
2. Encourage investment in Peterborough
3. In tandem with the Downtown Master plan consider how we can provide tax incentives and the type of downtown infrastructure needed to bring/keep businesses
4. Market Peterborough to get more business investment



5. Strive to attract 'good' jobs
6. build on the work of the GPAEDC and develop other partnerships to market Peterborough as a place of choice for new business

For more information about our InfoNotes contact

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A United Way Member Agency