

Update: Edmonton's Poverty Elimination Initiative

Initiative Title: Edmonton's Poverty Elimination
City Council Lead(s): Mayor D. Iveson / Councillor B. Henderson /
Councillor S. McKeen
Department Lead(s): Citizen Services, L. Brenneis / K. Gunn

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term

Objective

The objective of this initiative is to implement a five-year EndPovertyEdmonton Road Map as a starting point towards ending poverty in Edmonton within a generation. To achieve this objective, a new community-led entity, EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) was launched in late 2016 to steward and oversee the implementation of a suite of innovative, community driven actions, as articulated in the Road Map.

The City of Edmonton, as a key partner and investor in EndPovertyEdmonton, will be responsible for 18 of the 35 Road Map actions and will play a significant catalytic role in advancing the goals of EndPovertyEdmonton within the corporation as well as with other orders of government.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of May 2017

1. Building a foundation for change

EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) as a community-led coalition in its inaugural year is becoming a strong community backbone organization with a solid governance structure, establishing a skilled Secretariat and setting up robust interconnected tables of engaged Edmontonians. The coalition building efforts achieved since the March 2017 update include:

- Multi-sector leadership in EPE's Stewardship Roundtable that includes representatives from the Federal, Provincial, Municipal and First Nations, Metis and Inuit governments, not-for-profit sector, business, academe and faith communities.
- The Indigenous Circle is fully constituted and currently planning their inaugural EPE Road Map action for 2017.
- An engagement approach for people with lived experience of poverty has been developed to guide the recruitment of members to the Stakeholder Forum.
- Development of a 2017 inaugural year work plan is underway.

- A Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Edmonton and the United Way Alberta Capital Region is in progress to pave the way for setting up the EPE office and confirm the fiscal agency of the United Way Alberta Capital Region.
- Andrea Burkhart will become the inaugural EPE Executive Director as of June 6, 2017.

2. *Steward the EPE Road Map and Vision*

EPE continues to support and monitor progress of EPE Road Map actions for 2017. A few highlights of the implementation of 2017 EPE actions include:

- PATH (Providing Accessible Transit Here) Program - launched May 9, 2017, the PATH Program gives homeless Edmontonians or those at a high risk of homelessness free public transit access in order to go to school, travel to work, find housing, attend medical appointments and access social services. This two- year expansion of the successful 2016 pilot reflects strong City-community collaboration. (EPE Road Map Action #19)
- Community Development Corporation - The Edmonton Community Foundation is leading the formation of this new entity and is anticipating the final identification and confirmation of selected land parcels from the City of Edmonton. (EPE Road Map Action #31)
- Early Learning and Care Steering Committee - Work has begun to develop an integrated approach to the early years and a part-time coordinator has been hired this spring. (EPE Road Map Action #29)
- The new EPE Indigenous Circle has created a draft suite of actions for 2017 that relate to promoting the talents of Indigenous people who are homeless. (EPE Road Map Action #2)

3. *Engage, inform and empower Edmontonians*

EPE builds on the community momentum sparked by robust engagement initiatives such as YEGShift Lab (Poverty, Racism and Housing), an InterFaith Action Guide and the System Navigator “Design by Doing” Action Labs. These community-based initiatives are intended to stimulate active conversations in neighbourhoods, work places and social networks where people pose thought-provoking questions and share best ideas about changing attitudes to end poverty.

EPE continues to draw active interest amongst Edmontonians through the EPE website and social media accounts. Many specific initiatives that align with the work of EndPovertyEdmonton - as well as groups and organizations offering to volunteer and support EPE - have come forward to connect their efforts. Over 40 organizations have already indicated their alignment with the

EndPovertyEdmonton Road Map.

4. *Advocate for policy and systems change*

EPE believes that advocacy is an essential element of tackling broader, systemic issues impacting poverty. To this end, EPE remains a consistent advocate of policies that impact greater and enduring positive outcomes for people experiencing poverty.

For the last quarter, EPE has been highly visible in national forums that advance the vision of ending poverty. EPE hosted well-received presentations at the 2017 National Poverty Summit in April in Hamilton and at the National Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Annual Conference in Ottawa this June.

EPE is a strong supporter of the Government of Canada's work to develop a National Poverty Strategy. EPE nominated four members from the Stewardship Roundtable as possible members of the National Advisory Committee and partnered with Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organization (ECVO) to host a community consultation on the National Poverty Strategy. Over 80 Edmontonians from various sectors participated in the event held April 25, 2017.

Future Steps

Looking ahead: The City's Role

Recent City initiatives reflect clearly that the EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy and five-year Road Map are seen increasingly as touchstones for City strategies to address a more equitable and inclusive community. Poverty has furthermore been identified as a key City priority for action.

Examples of recent City-led initiatives that are aligned to the Road Map in terms of goals and actions include Council direction for development of an Inner City Wellness Plan, the development of an Inclusion and Anti-Racism Framework and the Sliding Scale Model for the Leisure Access Program and Low Cost Transit Pass.

In 2017-2018, some key City actions on the poverty agenda include:

- Activate an integrated, city-wide mechanism to ensure a coordinated City approach to successfully implementing City-led Road Map actions 2017-2021.
- Continue to connect with and participate actively on the new EndPovertyEdmonton governance tables.
- Initiate work on the City's living wage policy, poverty lens and research on affordable housing.
- Implementation of a three-year low cost transit pilot with support from the Province.
- Offer training opportunities for City staff on intercultural competency, anti-racism and trauma-informed practice.

The role of the City as early convenor, investor, advocate and now implementer of actions to end poverty continues to evolve. In addition to the Road Map actions, the City has worked this winter and spring to lay the critical foundational building blocks for the new EndPovertyEdmonton coalition, positioning it for success in achieving its bold vision.

Looking ahead, the City will support the transition of responsibility from the City to the newly formed coalition, EndPovertyEdmonton, as well as work with diverse community partners, sectors and orders of government, to advance new approaches and solutions to end poverty in a generation.

Evaluation

This significant made-in-Edmonton effort to end poverty, that has garnered national interest, is just embarking on its five-year Road Map along this journey. The City's investment in EndPovertyEdmonton's establishment and in the activation of a spectrum of community initiatives outlined in the Road Map, is critical.

While the City's commitment is entering a new phase in 2017, it is essential to stay the course, continuing to engage political and community champions to advocate and visibly promote this key issue. City Council reports ensure a regular and visible platform for the EndPovertyEdmonton coalition to grow its voice and presence to advance change. The focus on building a movement for systemic and attitudinal change has experienced early momentum. The City Council leads for this Initiative strongly support continued effort and profile for this work.