



**United Way**  
**Elgin Middlesex**

## **LONDON FOR ALL**

Submission to the Ministry of Community and Social Services about  
*Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*

**December 2017**

### **THE ROLE OF UNITED WAY ELGIN MIDDLESEX**

In May 2017, United Way Elgin Middlesex was named the Lead Agency for the implementation of *London for All*. In this role, United Way acts as a project manager, bringing partners together to develop and oversee implementation plans, ensuring ongoing evaluation and accountability for the work as well as reporting to stakeholders including the community. In addition, the Lead Agency ensures the meaningful involvement of individuals with lived experience of poverty in all aspects of the work including leadership roles.

As a leader, strategic partner and funder in the social services sector, United Way addresses complex social issues in our community by strengthening and supporting a network of local agencies, programs and services as outlined in our Community Impact Agenda. *London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty* addresses many of the desired outcomes of the Community Impact Agenda; in addition to strategies that require a larger-scale, collaborative effort.

As a result, United Way is uniquely positioned to fulfill the role of Lead Agency for *London for All* and is pleased to present the following submission on behalf of *London for All*.

### **ABOUT LONDON FOR ALL: A ROADMAP TO END POVERTY**

The Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty was convened on September 16, 2015 and given a six-month mandate to develop recommendations on what more the community could do to address poverty in London, Ontario. The report *London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty* was published in March 2016 and included 112 recommendations built on the foundations of the Panel's approach. This approach was rooted in:

- Social Determinants of Health
- Best available research
- Good work already happening in London; and
- Deep engagement with over 1,000 Londoners including those with lived experience

The Mayor's Advisory Panel on Poverty embarked on a process seeking to gain broad public input to build momentum towards solutions. Panel members attended nearly 100 different meetings and heard from over 1,000 Londoners, learning that thousands of London children go to school every day without having had a decent breakfast because their families have to choose between paying rent and buying healthy food. The panel also learned of continued inequities that limit some Londoners' ability to reach their full potential. This includes the double-edged sword of the skills gap meaning there are chronically unemployed workers in London even as jobs remain unfilled because employers can't find workers with the necessary skill sets.

### **POVERTY IN LONDON**

London urgently needs to address poverty. Our poverty rates are higher than the provincial and national averages. More than 62,000 Londoners live with poverty. In recent times, we had the highest unemployment rate of all big cities in the country. *London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty* is our community's plan to end poverty in a generation. Developed based on the feedback and experience of Londoners with lived experience and input from organizations that work to reduce the impact of poverty every day, this plan is truly reflective of our community's approach to end poverty. Led by the community, London is moving forward with our goal that London will reach its full potential by ending poverty in a generation.

What makes things different this time? Our community is different. Though we have more to learn, we have a better understanding of the causes and impacts of poverty. Our provincial and federal governments are increasing their

attention to the issue. Locally, London is fortunate to have many passionate, intelligent people working on addressing poverty. Our community is rallying around a growing resolve that “it ends here”.

## **INCOME SECURITY AS A CRITICAL STEP FOR POVERTY REDUCTION**

To break the cycle and stop the next generation from living in poverty, it is important to assist low-income families to become financially stable through a variety of means to support families to become self-reliant and successful. This can be achieved through measures such as:

- Ensuring adequate social assistance rates;
- Supporting families to build savings and assets; and,
- Increasing skills and supporting employment opportunities allows families to become self-reliant and successful.

Identifying and removing barriers to financial stability is essential to helping families to gain and maintain employment in order to break the cycle of poverty. Research has demonstrated that consistent, adequate incomes for families have positive impacts on health, quality of life, and the community as a whole. Poverty cannot be solved locally, and all levels of government play a critical role to reduce and alleviate poverty.

The *Roadmap for Change* is a comprehensive plan that will help break the cycle of poverty in Ontario. The recommendations contained in the report will significantly improve the income security system in Ontario. In addition the plan will take important steps to improve the relationship of the province with Indigenous peoples. London for All is supportive of this plan, and recommends that the *Roadmap for Change* be adapted by the provincial government as the 10-year plan to improve the income security system in Ontario.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations in *London for All: A Roadmap to End Poverty* are divided into eight sections: changing mindsets; income & employment; health; homeless prevention & housing; transportation; early learning & education; food security; and system change.

The recommendations outlined here are those related to Income & Employment which intersect with *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*.

- Support the implementation of the Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario recommendations, including linking social assistance rates to inflation and allowing individuals to retain more of their assets before accessing social assistance
- Advocate for adequate, liveable rates for people accessing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program
- Advocate for adequate, liveable rates for older adults accessing social assistance and pension programs, including:
  - Canadian Pension Plan
  - Guaranteed Income Supplement
  - Old Age Security
  - Guaranteed Annual Income System
- Reorganize individual social assistance funds, subsidies and vouchers to make it easier for people to access resources
- Reduce clawbacks for people moving from social assistance to paid employment
- Bring service providers together to develop a plan that coordinates supports for people transitioning from social assistance to work or school

The full list of recommendations, comprising the roadmap in its entirety, [is available here](#).

London for All and United Way Elgin Middlesex recommends that the Province adopt the Roadmap and begin implementing the recommendations contained in the plan to break the cycle of poverty in Ontario.