

# ADDRESSING POVERTY IN CARMAN/DUFFERIN

*COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN  
2019*

Prepared by:

The Carman/Dufferin Poverty Reduction Committee

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## A: INTRODUCTION

In March of 2019 an informal group of local residents of Carman/Dufferin gathered to begin a conversation around poverty in our community as we all were seeing increased evidence of the impact of poverty in our community. The conversation led the group to question how we as a community could better understand the impact of poverty within our local context and how we might work together to find creative solutions towards building a community of care and support for all who live here. As the group recognized a need to continue to explore the answers to these questions, the Carman/Dufferin Poverty Reduction Committee was created with regularly scheduled meetings.

Early in the committee conversation, it was recognized that the topic of poverty is one that impacts community residents of all ages in some way, those who are living or have lived the experience, those who provide supports and services, those who govern our community and oversee our built environment and those who provide education, training, employment, and recreation within our community.

To address poverty in a wholistic way, the committee's first priority was to look at inviting the whole community into the conversation to see how we might all play a role in identifying and addressing some of the needs that currently exist in our community. The committee recognized that the input of all age groups, and walks of life were needed to help identify needs and make changes for the benefit of all.

To facilitate this, the Committee planned and hosted a "Community Roundtable to Address Poverty" which was held on Thursday November 7, 2019. The highlights of this roundtable will be addressed later on in this report.

## B: VISION and VALUES

Following the Roundtable the Committee developed a common vision and values to guide community involvement on the future Steering Committee and Working Groups.

**COMMON VISION: Together, creating a community where everyone has the opportunity and supports to flourish where they live, learn, work and play.**

**COMMON VALUES:** Common values will guide our behaviour, inspire our actions, and encourage conversation within every component of this community initiative.

- "Nothing about Us, Without US" - Ensure we have individuals with lived experience of poverty involved on the steering committee and working groups.
- Shared responsibility – Everyone has something to contribute.
- "It takes a village" Spirit of Collaboration – Partnerships, Relationships, Community connection, Working together for the good of all
- Respect – for one another, for the voice of the individual with lived experience, for each other's culture

- Empowerment for all – Community solutions, enabling people’s participation, Building confidence.
- Sustainability – How will positive outcomes be sustained?
- Accessibility and Equity – Services are available to all who need them
- Best Practice – What can we learn from other communities? What is out there that is proven to work

## C: THE POVERTY REDUCTION COMMITTEE

Following the Community Roundtable, the Poverty Reduction Committee saw the need to move towards a more formalized structure to ensure role clarity and guidelines for the Steering Committee and the Working Groups. The Committee was renamed as **“Carman Wellness Connections – Addressing Poverty”** with the establishment of Committee Terms of Reference. ([Appendix A](#))

## D: HEARING THE STORY

This story was shared at the beginning of our Community Roundtable and remains important in setting the tone and being a reminder to why this community initiative is important as we present the details of our report in the following pages.

*“This story describes what a family living in poverty might experience and is based on real-life events, shared by folks in our community, who gave permission for us to share pieces of their experience. These experiences have been blended into a story of a fictional family.*

*Although we know that there are groups most vulnerable to poverty (such as youth, single mothers, Inuit, FN, and Metis people, people with disabilities, as well as new comers), we know there are too many different experiences of poverty in our community to include in one short story. Many people who are on disability have reminded us that they did not choose to get sick. This one story is only meant to get us all thinking about the impact that poverty has on individuals and on our whole community.*

*Some pieces of the story we share might resonate with you, and some may not. This story may make you feel uncomfortable, sad or hopeful. Our hope in sharing this story is that it helps to continue the conversation today and in the months to come as we learn more from one another and value everyone’s story.*

*So let me paint you a picture. A picture of what poverty looks like in our community. Meet Sara, Sara is a 5 year old girl who just started school this fall. She lives in Carman, with her parents Jane and John, and her little sister Sally.*

*Sara’s Dad John is an immigrant, moved to Canada 6 years ago on his own, came to Manitoba because he had an Aunt here. Although he was a trained nurse in his home country his certificate for nursing is not recognized here, he was able to find full-time work in Winnipeg as a Health Care Aide.*

*It was in Winnipeg that John met Jane. Every evening they seemed to catch the same bus and lived in the same area. It took John a few months, to finally ask Jane on a date. They fell in love! Jane's pregnancy with Sara was a surprise to both her and John, but it was an unexpected and wonderful surprise all at once. John and Jane decided to get married.*

*Jane was a young bride, without a grade 12 diploma. She doesn't have a lot of work experience and suffers from depression and anxiety; but she was able to find part-time work in a restaurant during her pregnancy with Sara. She grew up in Winnipeg, and has a lot of family there, but also has a complicated relationship with her parents, so they are not close.*

*You see... Jane was removed from her parents care by CFS multiple times growing up. Jane had been introduced to alcohol at the age of 11 and smoking marijuana at the age of 15, by her own parents. As stated by Jane herself, "My parents were more interested in being my friend than my parents."*

*When she had met John, Jane had recently been released from treatment for addiction, and in part of her recovery plan she no longer had contact with her family. She didn't like to talk about her family.*

*After the birth of Sara, Jane unknowingly struggled with postpartum depression. John, knew something wasn't quite right, and not entirely aware of Jane's history with her family, he encouraged her to touch base with her family, as he could see that she was struggling and he felt helpless.*

*Jane did reach out, she and Sara would spend time with her family when John was at work, and soon Jane was going there whenever she could.*

*During this time, Jane's parents were experimenting with other, more dangerous drugs like meth and it did not take long before Jane was caught up in it once again.*

*An incident occurred, police were involved. Luckily Sara was with her father at the time, however CFS did remove all Jane's younger siblings from her parents' care.*

*John and Jane were warned by CFS, which prompted them to move to Carman where his elderly Aunt lived.*

*The family's arrival to Carman was a blessing to his Aunt, she was a widow with no children of her own. She too was struggling to make ends meet on a low income.*

*John was able to get a HCA job in Carman, part-time to start. Aunt Helen had lived in Carman for a while and told Jane about the library, 10 for 10 deals at the co-op and told her about the Carman Family Resource Centre. Together they helped each other.*

*Aunt Helen also had an old truck that had broken down and John who had minimal mechanic skills, was proud that he got it running again. They were able to get to appointments and get groceries much easier.*

*Soon after their arrival to Carman, Jane found out she was pregnant, at first John was upset. They were just getting on their feet, they had yet to find Jane help for treatment for addiction and her mental health struggles. Once she found a Dr. she did get connected to Public Health*

*and learned about some of the resources for pregnant woman in the community. Although it took months for her to get connected to therapy and treatment, she finally got some help and felt things were going in the right direction.*

*The birth of Sally really brought them back together as a family. Both Jane and John knew that the best thing for their growing family was to continue to live in Carman, away from the city, away from the friends and family that may influence Jane.*

*Carman, A beautiful town, not too far from Winnipeg, but yet far enough away.*

*A town large enough that there are schools, daycares, a library, grocery store, pharmacies, clinics and a hospital. Everything that they should need?*

*But John struggled to find full time employment. He found seasonal work in the area to help make up for the part-time work.*

*When the girls were older Jane thought that she could help by getting a job and putting the girls in day care, but there were no spots available at either daycare.*

*Aunt Helen's health was worsening and they could no longer rely on her for childcare, in fact Jane was spending more time helping Aunt Helen.*

*Although John had a valid license they no longer had a working vehicle. He had spent some of their savings on what he thought was the problem with the truck, but it still wasn't running properly. It was an old vehicle and John realized they needed something newer. But where would he find the extra money?*

*At the end of the month there was no extra money to put aside for a vehicle.*

*In fact, money was so tight that food security was a concern nearly every month.*

*Jane heard about Food Vouchers that she could access through the churches from the Public Health Nurse, she has already accessed 4 vouchers this year. Jane stresses about their financial situation and their housing.*

*Their living arrangements were becoming difficult, the girls were getting older, collecting more stuff, and Aunt Helen's place was small and she was tired and it was hard for Jane to keep the girl quiet enough. John worked hard to find a way for them to get their own place, yet worried how Aunt Helen would do without them. Financially living together benefited them all.*

*Jane and John had applied for MB Housing because they know the rent will be more manageable. They haven't heard anything yet, but they have heard it can be a long waiting list. Jane looks forward to having more space, and a place they can call their own.*

*Jane has been doing well with refraining from drugs, she speaks to her younger siblings about once a month but has not seen her parents. She is still struggling, sometimes feels alone, feels anxious and shy when she meets other Moms. At therapy she has learned some coping strategies, but when things get stressful everything seems like too much.*

*Jane looks at the good things in her life, she is happy with her family and she feels safe.*

*Her and the girls try to go out every day. They go to the library. They have gone to Carman Family Resource Programs. In the summer they enjoy the park and the splash pad.*

*They see that there are a lot of activities offered in this community for kids. They would like their kids to be able to participate in soccer, and swimming lessons as they get older but John and Jane wonder if they will have the time and money to do that. Winter is coming and with it more challenges. They live in the NW side of Carman, so getting to the south end of town can be difficult. Handi-van is an option but there is a cost, and believe it or not scrounging up 8\$ just doesn't happen sometimes.*

*Thanks goodness the school bus comes to this end of town to pick up and drop off Sara. It is a highlight for Sally she can't wait to ride the bus and go to school like her big sister.*

*"Living in poverty is hard. It requires impossible choices. Pay the rent or pay for medicine? Follow Dr's orders to remain on disability or return to work before you are well? Pay the hydro bill or buy food?"*

*"The experiences of poverty – hunger and inadequate nutrition, substandard housing, preventable illness and disease, precarious employment, huge levels of family stress and social isolation, feelings of inadequacy, diminished opportunities to develop and learn, and discrimination and stigmatization – exact a heavy toll on individuals, including children and families." that live in our community!*

*Poverty costs, and the price is simply too high, for individuals, children their families and our community!"*

## **E: Gathering Community Input – Community Roundtable**

### **1) Community Roundtable Planning:**

The Committee partnered with Health in Common to help plan and facilitate the Community Roundtable.

The Roundtable was made possible by generous sponsorship from:

- Canadian Reformed Church – Carman East
- Town of Carman
- Homestead Coop
- Carman Ministerial Association
- Embracing the Spirit – United Church of Canada
- Dufferin Agricultural Society – Truck Pull
- Carman United Church
- Individual Anonymous Donation
- Healthy Communities Carman/Dufferin

The one day event was advertised in the local paper, community posters, emailed through community networks, community posters and personal invitation. A central registration contact was set up and there was no cost to attend with a lunch provided. Childcare and transportation were provided so that these needs were not barriers for individuals to attend.

Over 100 participants attended the event with representation from a wide variety of sectors from within the community and local government. There was a wide age range from high school students to seniors with many who shared their experiences of having lived or are living in poverty.

## **2) Building a Common Foundation – Using Community Data:**

The committee started the roundtable by introducing some local data to facilitate a common starting point to inform participants of our local reality. Participants were encouraged to use the data throughout the day to help inform group discussions to explore factors that exist within our community that may contribute to or be a result of poverty.

It was important to have access to data at the local community level of Carman and Dufferin. Poverty is complex and includes many factors related to the data. It is very individual and everyone has a unique story.

The data used for discussion purposes were sourced from the following:

- 2019 RHA Community Health Assessment Data – ([Appendix B](#)). The Committee wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance of Southern Health-Santé Sud staff in compiling some local and regional data from the newly released 2019 RHA Community Health Assessment.
- Carman & District Ministerial Association Grocery Assistance Program  
Total Annual \$ spent on Grocery Assistance Program:

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
\$9,046	\$5,284	\$12,563	\$11,840	\$15,271	\$22,326
- EIA Total Monthly Tax Free Income Tables found on the Government of MB website at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/eia> for General Assistance, Single Parent and Persons with Disability.

## **3) Engaging our community residents/stakeholders in the conversation:**

The Roundtable discussion began with participants asked to consider what a good week living in Carman looks like for each of them and then as a large group, similarities were identified. The table groups were then asked to consider what could get in the way of one's ability to do these kinds of things and then reported back to the whole group.

The results of the discussion were themed into eight areas of focus for further discussion:

1. Education and Employment
2. Opportunities to connect and spend time with other people in the community.
3. Efforts to address stigma and discrimination
4. Affordable leisure and recreation opportunities
5. Affordable Transportation options
6. Access to fresh, affordable food
7. Access to mental health and addiction services
8. Access to social services and housing through small group discussions related to these 8 Key Areas of Focus to gather information as to what already exists and what is needed to address these Key Areas of Focus.

The participants were then given the opportunity in small groups to provide input related to the areas of focus guided by three questions:

1. What is already happening?
2. What needs to happen?
3. Who needs to be involved?

❖ See [Appendix C](#) - *Carman Poverty Reduction Council - Planning Session Notes* compiled by Health in Common for complete details of the Community Roundtable Participant input.

All participants provided their email contact so that the committee could continue to communicate with them following the event and facilitate ongoing involvement in future working groups.

In the days that followed the event, committee members noted that community conversations were continuing and many participants inquired when they would hear back on next steps, and some even began to come together to begin thinking about creative community solutions.

Feedback from participants and committee members following the event:

- ✓ It was a wonderful day. It was so well run that I'm sure people felt that they got to share ideas and hear many great ideas of others just as I did.
- ✓ Excellent job telling the story, it was really good.
- ✓ That was an amazing day.
- ✓ Thank you to the Committee for "Poverty Reduction in our community" for co-ordinating this very timely, interesting & informative conference. I met new people and learned a lot. The number of participants of varying ages & financial backgrounds, local government, and different organizations who were in attendance is a very strong indication that this conversation is long overdue in our community. I look forward to reading the summary when it becomes available. Thank you again for your time & dedication towards making Carman/Dufferin a "Healthy Community".
- ✓ Very valuable and exceeded expectations.
- ✓ Hoping something further will come of it.
- ✓ Some people were disappointed and felt shut down at times.
- ✓ Energy and interaction remained high throughout the full day. Affirms how important this issue is to our community right now.
- ✓ Gathered lots of input to inform our next step towards action planning.
- ✓ Appreciated contributions from the youth.
- ✓ Great to see that the food left over at the end of the day was made available for participants to take, which was well received.

Follow up communication with all participants was completed in early Dec 2019, providing them with the Community Roundtable report.

## F: MOVING FORWARD - DEVELOPING OUR COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The Poverty Reduction Committee used the Community Roundtable information to inform the first step in developing the Community Goals for further action planning.

### 1. Community Action Plan – Goals

With the Roundtable report in hand the Committee developed the following Goals:

Goal 1: To Formalize the Poverty Reduction Committee and Create Working Groups.

Goal 2: Establish a central community location/navigator for individuals to access information and navigate services.

Goal 3: Community residents have access to a comprehensive, centralized Community Resource List.

Goal 4: Increase options for accessible and affordable transportation

Goal 5: Increase access and options for fresh affordable food.

Goal 6: Increase educational and employment opportunities.

Goal 7: Increase access and options to mental health and addiction services (link with the existing Mental Health Committee)

Goal 8: Increase quality affordable housing options in our community.

Goal 9: Access to affordable leisure and recreational activities for children, youth and adults.

### 2. Working Groups:

The Committee identified Working groups around these goals and put out an invitation in January 2020 to Roundtable participants, the Carman/Dufferin Healthy Communities Network and other community contacts for individuals to consider volunteering on any of the Working Groups or on the Steering Committee.

See [Appendix D](#) – *Call for volunteers for Steering Committee and Working groups.*

### 3. Community Action Plan

Once the Working Groups are established, with the support of the Steering Committee and information gathered at the Community Roundtable, the Working Groups will begin identifying activities and engage in planning, implementation within the community.

The Goals and each Working Group's identified activities and ongoing work will be recorded in the Community Action Plan and will be reviewed and adjusted going forward by the Steering Committee.

#### **4. Common Definitions:**

The committee recognized the need for common definitions to assist the Working Groups in developing their respective activities. The following definitions were developed:

##### **Activity Timeframes to Completion:**

- Short Term: Can be completed within One (1) Year
- Medium Term: Can be completed within Two (2) Years
- Long Term: Can be completed within Five (5) Years

**Projected New Funding Costs for Activities:** Required for planning, implementation and sustainability.

- None – able to do within existing resources
- Minimal – Less than \$1000
- Some - \$1000 - \$5,000
- Substantial – More than \$5000

## **G: MONITORING AND MEASURING**

As with all action plans, the Steering Committee will continue to work on defining what indicators will be used to measure any change or impact in our community.

Credible longstanding statistical data sources such as Stats Canada – census information, and the RHA Community Health Assessment which is updated every 5 years will continue to be a resource to help the committee to identify the most consistent and appropriate outcome indicators.

The committee will also continue to look to local data that organizations may have as it relates to specific action items.

The Provincial and Federal Poverty Reduction Strategies will continue to inform our work around data indicators and targets.

## **H: PARTNERING WITH MUNICIPAL, PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

As our community continues to be excited and committed to move forward with our action plan, we will be better positioned to work with our local and provincial governments for creative solutions to address poverty

### **Local:**

Ongoing collaboration, communication and partnerships with our Town and RM Councils will be important for alignment and joint planning within our community action plans. Town and RM Council input and endorsement is critical to the success and achievement of the community Action Plan.

The Committee submitted a letter of request ([Appendix E](#)) for the annual Town/RM planning session to strengthen this working relationship in 2020. Even though the committee did not have any specific funding request at that time, it was an opportunity to bring awareness that project funding may be required as the Community Action Plan moves forward in the coming and subsequent years.

The Committee appreciates the close working relationship with Southern Health Santé-Sud as their staff give of their time, knowledge and expertise in supporting this community led initiative.

The Steering committee is applying for a one year Healthy Living Together grant up to \$10,000 through Southern Health-Santé-Sud for 2020-21 to support the Working Group activities.

### **Provincial:**

In reviewing “Manitoba’s Poverty Reduction Strategy – Pathways to a Better Future” available on the Government of Manitoba website, the Committee recognizes that the key areas identified within our community very much align with many of the key areas in the provincial strategy.

*As a community, we look forward to contributing to the provincial strategy plan as it states: “Pathways to a Better Future is about fostering relationships across sectors to address our shared responsibility to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. This strategy brings together diverse stakeholders across governments, businesses and community organizations to implement innovative solutions by and for Manitobans. Poverty reduction is complex. The expertise of our cross-sectoral partners is fundamental to working together to improve outcomes for vulnerable Manitobans. The Manitoba government will build on the relationships developed during our public consultations to ensure that poverty reduction efforts renew and build upon these existing partnerships. Community-based organizations played a key role in our consultations. These organizations understand community issues and champion the needs of those they support. Community-based organizations provide critical services, programming and social connections that help support Manitobans in need. The Manitoba government is committed to empowering these organizations and fostering community-based solutions that produce positive results.”*

### **National:**

Many of the areas identified in the Government of Canada’s poverty reduction strategy, “Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy”, provides a larger context of information, and action plans that benefit Canadians and will have impact within our community as well. The successes of the national and provincial strategies will provide benefits to the residents of Carman Dufferin, and the creative solutions that we are able to achieve within our community, will link directly into both these strategies.

## I: MAKING IT HAPPEN!! - MOVING TOWARDS A DESIRED FUTURE -

Addressing poverty in our community will require collaboration and partnerships with all sectors and residents of Carman/Dufferin. It can start with even the smallest gesture of care and support for one another. Each one of us has something to contribute. All community residents and organizations can be part of this exciting endeavor to achieve our common vision: **Together, creating a community where everyone has the opportunity and supports to flourish where they live, learn, work and play.**