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The District of Parry Sound Speaks Out on Poverty:



A Call to Action

District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network (DPSPRN)

Report Production Team

This report has been produced as a collaborative effort, and reflects the work and dedication of all members of the District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network.

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Executive Summary: What Does Poverty Look Like?

In Canada, we can improve the quality of living for all by addressing the root causes of poverty to prevent hunger, illness, and premature death. Locally, social and economic conditions are affecting rates of poverty across the District of Parry Sound. The need for change is urgent.

To reduce and prevent poverty we must first understand the poverty that exists in our own communities. The District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network (DPSPRN) created this report, which summarizes the results of several community meetings held across the District in 2009. The following themes emerged.

Poverty

Silence. Invisibility. Social Isolation. Lack of Dignity.

Some participants did not know that poverty exists in our communities. At the same time, members of our community- working full-time, or unable to work, or looking for work, or returning to school in hopes of better work- cannot meet basic costs of safe shelter and healthy food. They feel discriminated against and excluded. Parents cope with high stress and struggle to provide for their children. Poverty is seen as an individual problem rather than a community issue. People who want to help aren't sure how.

Housing and Food

Not safe. Inappropriate. Not enough. Not affordable. Unhealthy.

Homelessness exists in hidden and invisible forms across the district. Affordable housing, defined as 20% below average market rental rates, is not affordable for minimum wage and social assistance recipients. A single adult will have to wait an estimated seven years for safe, affordable housing. Rents are comparable to rates in larger urban areas, yet incomes are not. People experience chronic hunger cycles and lack adequate nutrition.

Employment and Transportation

Working poor. Lack of jobs. Rural challenges. Expensive transportation. Limited access to community.

More people holding down jobs struggle to make ends meet. Many are not eligible for needed social supports. Most work that is available is seasonal, part-time, contract, casual, minimum wage, or outside the district. People without reliable transportation have even fewer job opportunities. Lack of transportation is also a barrier to accessing food, social and community services, and healthcare.

Social Development

Frustration. Limited Opportunity. Lost Potential.

People are frustrated by current social assistance rules. Without adequate support, people living in poverty are unable to benefit from employment and educational opportunities. These same people best understand their own circumstances, which tools might help them climb out of poverty and how their situation may have been prevented in the first place. Participants urged the community to look beyond band-aid solutions and to work toward solving the root causes of poverty.

Recommendations

Listen. Raise Awareness. Advocate. Work Together. Creative Solutions.

Change requires broad policy shifts and proactive community strategies that will both prevent poverty and improve supports to lift people out of poverty. These changes must be informed by people with lived experience of poverty.

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Introduction

This report has been developed to support the poverty prevention and reduction work of the District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network (DPSPRN). It aims to profile local experiences of poverty and to establish a benchmark for moving toward healthier communities. It is intended to be used to raise awareness, ignite more discussion, encourage new ways of seeing and listening, and ultimately inspire action.

Throughout the paper, the District of Parry Sound is often separated into three geographic areas to help illustrate differences across the district. These areas are shown in Figure 1, and include West Parry Sound, North East Parry Sound, and South East Parry Sound. For a detailed description of the municipalities that make up each area, see Figure 5 located in Appendix A. The community meetings held by the DPSPRN in 2009 took place in the four towns located on the map (Britt, Burk's Falls, Parry Sound, and South River).

Figure 1. The District of Parry Sound by geographic areas, 2006 Census



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada *Census Subdivision Boundary File 92-162-XWE 2010001*, Released April 30, 2010; Statistics Canada *Boundary File 92-160-XWE 2006001*, Census year 2006, Released October 18, 2006; and DMTI Spatial Inc. *Cities, Towns, and Villages*, Released September 29, 2000. Created by: North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (March 24, 2010), Using ArcGIS, Version 9.3.1 (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Redlands, Calif.). North Bay, Ontario. NBPSDHU.

Profile of the District of Parry Sound

Table 1 shows demographic information for the District of Parry Sound in comparison to Ontario. Table 2 gives demographic information for each of the three areas in the District of Parry Sound.

Table 1. Demographic profile, 2006 Census

	District of Parry Sound	Ontario
Population	40,918	12,160,282
Land area (square km)	9,222.04	907,573.82
Population density (persons per km ²)	4.4	13.4
Median age of the population (years)	47.9	39.0
% of population aged 15+	85.7	81.8
% of population aged 65+	21.1	13.6
% Aboriginal population	5.5	2.0
% Immigrant population	7.6	28.3

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed May 3, 2010).

Table 2. Demographic profile by geographic areas, 2006 Census

	West Parry Sound	North East Parry Sound	South East Parry Sound
Population	19,710	10,125	10,565
Land area (square km)	5,918.28	1,084.68	2,219.09
Population density	3.3	9.3	4.8
Median age of the population (years)	48	46	49
% of population aged 15+	85.4	84.8	86.4
% of population aged 65+	21.5	17.5	21.2
% Aboriginal population	8.5	3.0	2.0
% Immigrant population	8.6	4.4	9.0

Source: Statistics Canada. 2009. Custom tabulation, table 01, based on *2006 Census of Population*; and Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed May 5, 2010).

In comparison to Ontario, the District of Parry Sound has a larger population of seniors and Aboriginal peoples, and a smaller immigrant population (see Table 1). The median age for the district is almost 9 years older than Ontario and the population density is much smaller.

Within the district there are also differences in the population. West Parry Sound has a very low population density and a large Aboriginal population, while North East Parry Sound has a much larger population density, fewer seniors, a lower median age, and a smaller Aboriginal and immigrant population than the rest of the district (see Table 2).

A more detailed description of the population of the District of Parry Sound is provided in Appendix A.

Background

I grew up in poverty, was raised on my dad's disability cheque. Working with poverty reduction efforts, a lot of this has been buried for a long time and now I'm breaking my silence.

(Community meeting participant, Britt, 2009)

While Canada is the ninth richest country in the world (Mikkonen and Raphael, 2010), its income inequality and poverty rates rank among the highest of developed nations and these rates continue to grow (Yalnizya, 2008). Our population's health is seriously compromised; people are suffering preventable hunger, stress, illness, and premature death (Mikkonen and Raphael, 2010).

This reality is lived each day by many local residents who struggle to meet their basic needs. Poverty is not a choice people make, nor is it inevitable. As a community, we need to better understand our circumstances if we are to reduce and ultimately prevent poverty.

This report is a starting point for the DPSPRN in working toward this effort. Three main sources informed the development of this report.

First, in 2009, members of the DPSPRN organized four meetings across the District and asked "What Does Poverty Look Like in Your Community?" (see Appendix D). Overall, approximately 110 people from across the district participated in the meetings. The intent was to:

- **Raise awareness of local poverty-related issues;**
- **Engage communities across the district in urging the development of healthier communities; and**
- **Gather information toward the development of a local profile.**

Second, the broader DPSPRN met several times over the year, and participated in a housing consultation in October 2009. Discussion notes from these meetings provide further insights for developing a local profile of poverty issues in the District of Parry Sound.

Finally, literature on poverty issues and statistical information from sources, such as the 2006 Census, were reviewed and included in this report.

Meeting participants provided insightful suggestions for poverty reduction. Generally, these were clumped into themes and captured in the "Let's Get it Done" sections of the report. More specific suggestions can be found in Appendix E.

I'm constantly begging for something, it feels horrible.

(Community meeting participant, Parry Sound, 2009)

Quick Facts

Illness and Injury

Low income is associated with higher rates of infant mortality, accident and injury, suicide, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, epilepsy, cancer, asthma, obesity, low birth weights, infectious diseases, and mental illness (Raphael, 2008).

Around the World

After three decades of unregulated global markets, wealth and power continue to accumulate in a way that denies many Canadians the resources they need to be healthy (Ronald Labonte in Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Poverty: We Need to Talk

I am poor – I am not worth much. Conditions remain the same because people who are struggling don't talk about it.

(Community meeting participant, Britt, 2009)

Silence. Invisibility. Social Isolation. Lack of Dignity.

People with little money experience greater isolation.ⁱ Community meetings revealed that conversation between economic “classes” is limited; people avoid uncomfortable conversations about poverty. Many low-income residents have little or no access to phone, internet, and transportation, and cannot easily advocate for themselves. In rural areas, it is more difficult for residents to know about their neighbours' circumstances, making it more difficult for residents to advocate for one another.

People living in poverty experience the loss of self esteem and dignity, increased levels of stress, depression, and a sense of hopelessness.ⁱⁱ Even still, many go the extra mile to help others, contributing as dedicated volunteers at local food banks, for example.

At the same time, some services meant to help those who live in poverty can reinforce feelings of social isolation and frustration.ⁱⁱⁱ People fear being labelled as “poor” by peers, and feel ashamed to access services. As such, people living in poverty may rather not say so, may not speak up, and may not ask for help. On top of this, people are often unaware of support services or social events taking place in their community.

We heard that poverty is often seen locally as an individual problem rather than a community issue that can be changed and that it is difficult for people to know how to help. For example, church congregations may be most familiar with international poverty, and less involved in the advocacy and policy change necessary for long-term change at home.

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Break the silence.**
- ✓ **Give voices to those living in poverty.**
- ✓ **Raise awareness.**

I lived in Britt all my life and haven't heard of people who need help with food.

(Community meeting participant, Britt, 2009)

ⁱ Supported by Stewart et al, 2009.

ⁱⁱ Supported by Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Supported by Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003.

Quick Facts

Lower Income

Median after-tax income for the District of Parry Sound is 16.4% less than that of Ontario (see Table 11).

Milk or Shoes

Parents struggle to support their children: indoor and outdoor shoes, winter clothing, a baseball mitt. Many forgo milk and produce so their children can have it; they become malnourished, and drained of emotional and physical resources. Often, children don't need to be protected from their parents but need their parents to be supported.

Stress

Social and material deprivation leads to prolonged high levels of stress, a condition which has been shown to cause many serious illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Housing: I Can't Find a Safe Place to Live

People are living in shanties without heat, electricity, paying exorbitant amounts of rent for substandard housing.

(Community meeting participant, Burks Falls, 2009)

Not affordable. Not safe. Inappropriate. Insufficient.

Affordable housing, defined as 20% below average market rent (Parry Sound District Social Service Administration Board, 2009), is not affordable for minimum wage and social assistance recipients. Rental rates are comparable to those in larger cities, yet incomes are not. To pay rent, people must sacrifice other basic needs (e.g. heat, hydro, food, supports). Shared housing is extremely limited and often not feasible, as health and/or safety may be compromised.

Participants spoke of hidden homelessness. People aren't sleeping on the streets, but many cannot afford adequate shelter and may live in vacant buildings, lots, or trailers. Individuals and whole families are "couch-surfing".^{iv}

There was also concern about local residents being displaced by increased costs of living associated with tourism and about preventing the loss of current housing. For example, what happens to seniors who live on farms they can no longer maintain? Those who own homes may be forced to live in crowded, unsafe, and unhealthy conditions. The district does not have adequate long-term care support, or emergency housing for people going through any kind of crisis (e.g. detox facility, emergency shelters for men and families.) Moreover, apartments for singles are scarce.

The current system is a punitive one. People don't speak up because they are afraid of losing what they do have.

(Community meeting participant, Burks Falls, 2009)

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Ensure people can afford safe and appropriate housing.**
- ✓ **Prevent loss of current housing.**
- ✓ **Advocate for more housing and supports.^v**

^{iv} "Couch-surfing" is a term used to describe how people seek to stay with friends or family when they lose their housing.

^v More housing is needed along the housing continuum, from emergency shelters and a detox centre to renting to home ownership.

Quick Facts

Waiting for a Home

The waiting list for rent-geared-to-income and market housing has hovered around the 400 mark for the past 3 years, and in February 2010 reached 434. It is estimated that a single person will wait 7 – 9 years for housing in West Parry Sound. A senior on the east side of the district will wait 3 – 4 years (PSDSSAB, 2010).

District of Parry Sound		
	East	West
Seniors	3-4 yrs	2-3 yrs
Singles	2-3 yrs	7-9 yrs
Families	2-3 yrs	2-3 yrs

Emergency Shelter

"Many [women] are 'working poor' and earning minimum wage...Financial hardship is one of the reasons why some women are forced to remain in an abusive relationship..." (Community meeting participant representing a local women's shelter, 2009).

Food: I Need it to be Healthy

The stuff you're supposed to be eating is expensive. One winter I lived on potatoes, peanut butter, toast, and porridge.
(Community meeting participant, Britt, 2009)

Not enough. Not affordable. Hard to get to. Unhealthy.

The cost of healthy eating in northern Ontario is greater than southern Ontario (Ministry of Health Promotion, 2008). It becomes even more difficult to eat healthy in rural areas, where prices may even be higher.^{vi} Many residents shop at single, expensive grocery or convenience stores, where choices are often limited to less healthy, more highly processed foods, such as white breads and sugary cereals. The price of food is hiked during tourist season. Chronic hunger cycles persist as people try to meet the cost of housing, and food is the most elastic budget item. They may rely on food banks where choices are limited and where the numbers of new clients continue to increase. Several participants expressed appreciation for the fruits and vegetables provided at the community meetings.

Community food programs (e.g. community gardens/kitchens, co-ops) are sparse and community food skills (e.g. cooking, gardening, and farming) are depleted. The District of Parry Sound relies on food being shipped in from outside this district.

I didn't drink milk for five years because I gave it to my children.
(Community meeting participant, Parry Sound, 2009)

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Advocate for healthy food for all.**
- ✓ **Raise awareness that access to healthy food and food skills are a community issue.**
- ✓ **Advocate for and support community programs that provide fresh, affordable whole foods and alternative ways of accessing it.**

^{vi} Based on accounts from community and regular network meetings. Convenience stores are sometimes the only place to access groceries.

Quick Facts

More Illness

Over the 4 year period from 2003 to 2007, the local health region has seen increasing rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity (North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, 2009).

Unmanaged Disease

About 1 in 3 diabetics find it difficult to afford the fresh fruit and vegetables required to help with management of blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Whole wheat pastas, lower fat cheeses, and skim milk are also difficult to fit into the budget (Perspective of a local nurse practitioner, 2009).

Employment: Part-time or Seasonal, Take Your Pick

“We do have people who are employed receiving assistance ...Many of these situations are represented by low-wage, part-time jobs... which just don't cut it in our community when the rental prices are as high as they are. As a result, keeping a roof overhead becomes a priority and things like utilities and groceries become a challenge to obtain.”

(Community meeting participant, representing local food bank, 2009)

Working poor. Lack of jobs. Rural challenges.

Local food banks report an increase in the number of people who are holding down jobs and still can't make ends meet. Many can't access necessary social supports because they are not eligible. The majority of work is seasonal, part-time, contract, casual, and minimum wage. Small businesses are closing and the local job market relies heavily on tourism.

Half of the District of Parry Sound residents who earn employment income have an annual income that is less than \$20,535 annually, almost \$9,000 lower than Ontario's median income (see Table 11). More young people face unemployment in the District of Parry Sound, compared to Ontario (see Table 4). Many retail and service jobs are filled by older workers in the District of Parry Sound than in Ontario (see Figure 2). This can be a problem since these jobs are often low paying and 25 to 44 year olds are often the primary income providers for families. Greater numbers of this age group working in lower-wage jobs leads to an increased likelihood of financial insecurity for local families.

Were you ever denied a job because of your address, because of where you lived? Yes.

(Community meeting participant, Burk's Falls, 2009)

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Advocate for living wages^{vii} and measures that increase job security.^{viii}**
- ✓ **Work with community partners to link economic development and poverty prevention efforts.**
- ✓ **Advocate for employment strategies that reflect rural needs of district.**

^{vii} Living wage: The living wage “reflects what people need to support their families based on the actual costs of living in a specific community” (Living Wage, 2010).

Minimum wage is legislated by the provincial government, and is currently \$10.25/hour (The Government of Ontario, 2010).

^{viii} Job security is a determinant of health (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Quick Facts

Part-Time Work

Of the District of Parry Sound residents who are employed, fewer earn full-time, full year income, compared to Ontario (see Table 11).

Education

In South East Parry Sound, 1 in 3 residents aged 15 and older have less than a high school education, compared to 22.1% for Ontario (see Table 5).

In Canada

Job insecurity continues to increase in Canada. For example, currently, only half of the working age population has had one full-time job for six months or more (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

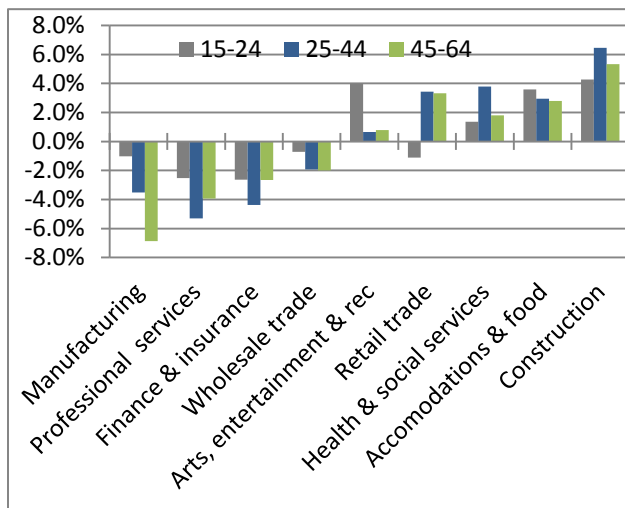
Insert: A Closer Look at Employment

The next few pages take a closer look at employment by breaking it down into the following sections: Types of jobs, Unemployment and Participation Rates, Education and Employment, and Transportation for Employment.

Types of Jobs

Figure 2 looks at the types of employment for different age groups found in the District of Parry Sound as it compares to the rest of Ontario.

Figure 2. Types of employment, the District of Parry Sound compared to Ontario, by age group, 2006 Census



Source: Statistics Canada. 2009. Custom tabulation, table 14, based on 2006 Census of Population; and Statistics Canada. 2008. *Labour, 2006 Census*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-559-XCB2006010. Released July 29, 2008. (accessed April 26, 2010).

In the District of Parry Sound there is a lower percentage of employment in manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical services, finance and insurance, and whole sale trade than in Ontario (see Figure 2).

A higher percentage of the District of Parry Sound’s 25 to 64 year olds (main household supporters) are employed in retail trade, which tends to generate minimum wage and lower paying jobs. In Ontario, these types of jobs are generally held by younger workers (e.g. students earning income for school).

The District of Parry Sound also has a larger percent of self-employed workers (17.1%) compared to Ontario (11.4%). People working in construction, the service sector, and self-employed positions may have less job security (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010; Krahn, 1991).^{ix}

The Canadian Context

Precarious forms of work include part-time, self-employment, and temporary work. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calculates an index of rules and regulations that protects employment and provides benefits to temporary workers. Canada ranks 26th of 28 nations on this index (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010).

Unemployment and Participation Rates

Quick Definitions

Unemployment Rates- The percentage of people currently without paid work, who are available to work and actively looking for work (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Participation Rates- The percentage of people who are currently working or without work and are available to work and actively looking for work (i.e. the employed plus unemployed) (Statistics Canada, 2008).

^{ix} Also, 37.4% of management positions in Parry Sound District are held by individuals who are self-employed compared to 20.6% for Ontario. The same trend is seen in primary industry occupations, with Parry Sound District having 44.1% of these workers self-employed, compared to 33.5% for Ontario.

Table 3 displays the participation and unemployment rates for the District of Parry Sound and the three geographic areas of the district (see Figure 1), as well as Ontario. Table 4 further breaks down the participation and unemployment rates by age group for the District of Parry Sound and the province of Ontario.

Table 3. Participation rates and unemployment rates, population aged 15 years and older, 2006 Census

Area	Unemployment Rate	Participation Rate
South East Parry Sound	8.8%	55.5%
North East Parry Sound	6.1%	59.2%
West Parry Sound	6.0%	58.1%
District of Parry Sound	6.7%	57.7%
Ontario	6.4%	67.1%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *Labour, 2006 Census*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-559-XCB20006020. Released March 4, 2008. (accessed April 12, 2010).

When comparing unemployment and participation rates for the District of Parry Sound (6.7%) and Ontario (6.4%), there is little difference in unemployment rates (see Table 3). There is however, a noticeable difference in participation rates, with the District of Parry Sound's (57.7%) participation rate being almost 10% lower than Ontario's (67.1%). Areas with highest unemployment rates and lowest participation rates in our district include South River, Whitestone, and Kearney.^x

Table 4. Participation and unemployment rates, by age group, 2006 Census

Area	Age Group					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Participation Rates						
District of Parry Sound	62.9%	86.2%	86.9%	83.6%	49.9%	11.1%
Ontario	65.2%	85.7%	86.5%	84.5%	61.5%	11.1%
Difference	-2.3%	0.5%	0.4%	-0.9%	-11.6%	0.0%
Unemployment Rates						
District of Parry Sound	16.8%	5.5%	4.7%	5.9%	4.6%	3.3%
Ontario	14.5%	6.3%	4.7%	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%
Difference	2.2%	-0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	0.3%	-1.0%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *Labour, 2006 Census*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-559-XCB20006020. Released March 4, 2008. (accessed April 12, 2010).

By breaking this data into age groups, we can see that the low participation rates are not due to the large number of seniors living in our district. Instead three age groups stand out. First, the 15 to 24 age group for the District of Parry Sound has a lower participation rate (-2.3%) and higher unemployment rate (2.2%) than the same age group for Ontario (see Table 4). Second, the 45 to 54 age group also shows a slightly lower participation rate (-0.9%) and higher unemployment rate (1.8%) for the District of

^x Areas throughout district with high unemployment rates and low participation rates:

Participation Rates:

- South East Parry Sound: Kearney 50.0%, Magnetawan 50.2%, Armour 52.8%, Burk's Falls 53.1%
- West Parry Sound: Parry Sound UNO Centre Part 41.3%, McKellar 48.9%, Whitestone 48.9%
- North East Parry Sound: Sundridge 48.8%, South River 49.1%, Machar 55.7%

Unemployment Rates:

- South East Parry Sound: July 12.0%, Kearney 11.3%, McMurrich/Monteith 10.9%
- West Parry Sound: Parry Sound UNO Centre Part 15.6%, Parry Island FN 15.4%, Whitestone 12.9%
- North East Parry Sound: Parry Sound UNO North East Part 10.3%, South River 8.2%, Powassan 7.7%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. 2006 Census of Population. Statistics Canada catalogue no. 97-559-XCB20006020. Released March 4, 2008. (accessed April 12, 2010).

Parry Sound when compared to Ontario. Lastly, the biggest difference in participation rate is seen in individuals aged 55 to 64, with the District of Parry Sound having a participation rate 11.6% lower than Ontario. The unemployment rate for this age group is similar for the District of Parry Sound and Ontario. These comparisons highlight two trends:

- Fewer young people are part of the labour force in the District of Parry Sound, and those that are part of the labour force are experiencing higher unemployment; and
- A larger number of older individuals preparing to enter into retirement age are not part of the work force.

Education and Employment

Table 5 illustrates the percentage of those without any certificate, diploma, or degree. Participation and unemployment rates are also displayed by highest level of education.

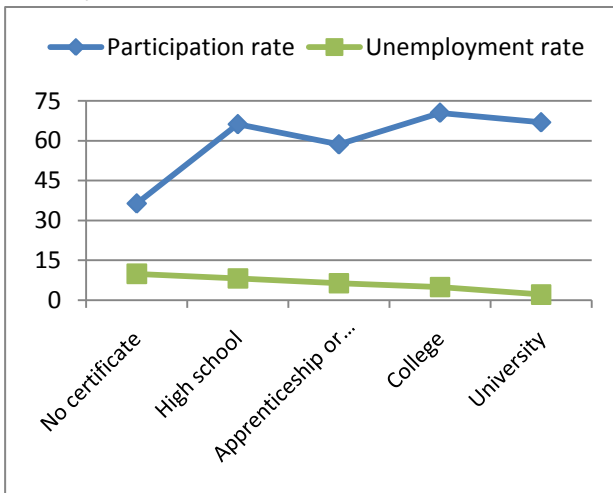
Table 5. Percent of population aged 15 years and older, without any certificate, diploma, or degree, 2006 Census

Area	No Certificate, Diploma, or Degree	No Certificate, Diploma, or Degree (%)
South East Parry Sound	2,765	33.3%
West Parry Sound	4,605	27.3%
North East Parry Sound	2,475	26.4%
District of Parry Sound	9,840	28.5%
Ontario	2,183,655	22.1%

In the District of Parry Sound, 28.5% of the population aged 15 and older have less than a high school education (not completed any certificate, diploma, or degree; see Table 5). This is over 6% higher than the average for Ontario (22.1%).

Source: Statistics Canada. 2009. Custom tabulation, table 11, based on 2006 Census of Population; and Statistics Canada. 2008. 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed April 8, 2010).

Figure 3. Participation and unemployment rates, by highest level of education, the District of Parry Sound, 2006 Census



Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. Labour, 2006 Census. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-559-XCB2006020. Released March 4, 2008. (accessed April 8, 2010).

There is a connection between education and employment for residents of the District of Parry Sound (see Figure 3). Overall, those with a higher level of education have higher participation in the work force and lower levels of unemployment.

For the participation rate (PR), individuals with a university degree had a 66.9% PR, those with a college diploma had a 70.5% PR, and those with no certificate, diploma or degree had a 36.4% PR. For the unemployment rate (UR), individuals with a university degree had a 7.8% lower UR than those without a certificate, diploma, or degree.

For all age groups combined, individuals with a university education have an unemployment rate of less than half, when compared to those with a high school education or less in the District of Parry Sound.

Transportation for Employment

Another obstacle for finding employment in rural areas is the distance required to travel to work. Most rural areas are unable to provide public transportation to residents. Table 6 looks at commuting distances for residents of the District of Parry Sound and Ontario.

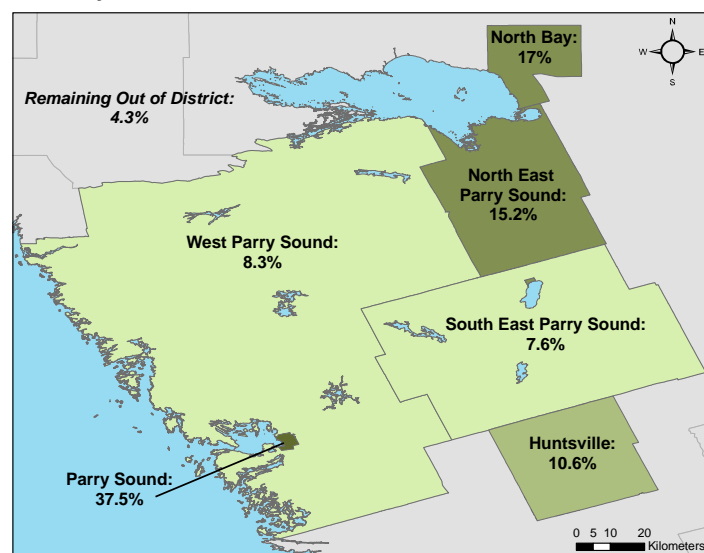
Table 6. Commuting distance by place of residence, 2006 Census

Commute Distance	District of Parry Sound			District	Ontario
	West	South East	North East		
Less than 5 km (%)	33.9%	15.9%	4.3%	21.4%	32.8%
5 to 9.9 km	11.5%	10.9%	20.2%	13.7%	21.6%
10 to 14.9 km	11.3%	6.9%	25.1%	13.2%	13.2%
15 to 19.9 km	11.7%	10.4%	11.8%	11.4%	9.3%
20 to 24.9 km	6.7%	10.3%	12.0%	9.0%	6.3%
25 to 29.9 km	3.4%	6.6%	8.2%	5.5%	4.2%
30 km or more	21.5%	39.1%	21.1%	25.8%	12.6%
Median distance (km)	13	23	16	15	9

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. Custom tabulation, table 05, based on 2006 Census of Population; and Statistics Canada. 2008. *Place of work and commuting to work. 2006 Census.* 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-561-XCB2006010. Released March 4, 2008. (accessed April 15, 2010).

Compared to Ontario, residents in the District of Parry Sound travel further to get to work. The District of Parry Sound generally has a lower percentage of people traveling less than 10 km to work and a higher percentage of people traveling 30 km or more to work than that of Ontario (see Table 6). Residents of South East Parry Sound travel the furthest for work, with 39.1% of workers having to travel 30 km or more to work.

Figure 4. Place of employment for residents of the District of Parry Sound, 2006 Census



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada *Boundary File 92-160-XWE 2006001*, Census year 2006, Released October 18, 2006. Created by: North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (March 24, 2010), Using ArcGIS, Version 9.3.1 (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Redlands, Calif.). North Bay, Ontario. NBPSDHU.

Figure 4 shows where the residents of the District of Parry Sound work. The majority of people work in the Town of Parry Sound (37.5%). The next largest area of employment is the City of North Bay (17.0%), followed by North East Parry Sound (15.2%), and the Town of Huntsville (10.6%). Nearly one in three residents in the District of Parry Sound (31.9%) are employed outside of the district. This may indicate a lack of employment opportunities close to home for many residents. For residents who do not have or cannot afford to maintain a vehicle, employment may not be an option. Therefore, transportation is a key factor for employment in rural areas. This may also indicate that the District of Parry Sound is unable to sustain its own population and is becoming dependent on employment opportunities outside of the district.

Transportation: I Can't Afford to Get There

Grocery stores jack up prices in the summer for tourists, no competition, people who can, will travel to bigger centres for groceries, (for those on a limited budget) the cost of travel offsets (the potential) cost of savings.

(Community meeting participant, South River, 2009)

Expensive Transportation. Limited Access to Community.

In some cases, people move into very rural areas to potentially lower their cost of housing, yet gas prices are high, public transportation is not an option, and so travel costs increase.

Lack of reliable and affordable transportation is a barrier to accessing food, employment, healthcare, and social and community services.^{xi} Travel for things such as before and after school activities, health and medical services, and library resources must be considered in the monthly budget. Without access to transportation the services listed in Table 7 are inaccessible.

Table 7. Travel to essential services from Burk's Falls

Service	Location	KM
Less Expensive Grocery Store	Huntsville	41
Hospital Emergency	Huntsville	41
Ontario Works	South River	27
Less expensive Gas	Sprucedale or Huntsville	22/41
Dentist	Sundridge, South River, or Huntsville	18/27/41
Court	Sundridge	18
Train	South River, Huntsville	27/41
ODSP	South River or Huntsville	27/41
Chiropractor	Sundridge	18
Physiotherapist	North Bay Huntsville	88
Counselling services	Sundridge	18
Addictions Services	Sundridge	18
Women's Shelter	Parry Sound, Huntsville, North Bay	84/41/88
Community Housing	South River	27

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Advocate for funding formulas that reflect costs of delivering programs and services in rural areas.**
- ✓ **Improve transportation infrastructure for low-income households.^{xii}**

^{xi} Supported by Stewart et al., 2009.

^{xii} Examples: subsidies for those living on fixed income in rural areas and supporting non-profit and volunteer programs that meet local transportation needs.

Quick Facts

Rural

Parry Sound District (4.4) has a population density more than three times smaller than Ontario (13.4) (see Table 8).

Transportation

A one-way taxi trip for groceries or laundry from McKellar Centre to the Town of Parry Sound costs \$31.

Social Development: Help Me Help Myself (and my family)

There's an expectation that people on welfare should live in complete deprivation.
(Community meeting participant, South River, 2009)

Frustration. Limited opportunity. Lost Potential.

Local social service organizations and food banks do great work but are all working beyond capacity, reacting to emergencies, and keeping shelves stocked. Though this is necessary and appreciated, band-aid solutions trap people in cycles of poverty. People living in poverty often want to get to a place where they can take care of themselves and their families.

Many children in Canada (15%) grow up in poverty (Make Poverty History, 2009). They may not develop a sense of what's possible. They may grow up assuming they do not have a right to healthy food or safe housing. Community support services require a much higher literacy level than people using the services often have and support systems are difficult to navigate. Some social assistance rules, such as having to sell off assets in order to qualify for support, are demoralizing, punitive, and further limit peoples' ability to climb back out of poverty.

People spoke of the "downward spiral" and the "layers of community challenges" associated with the social and individual stressors of living in poverty (e.g. widespread mental illness and addictions).

Let's get it done!

- ✓ **Advocate for social policy changes that enable people to meet their basic needs.**
- ✓ **Develop community strategies that reduce and prevent poverty.**
- ✓ **Assist in the development of an access point to help people navigate systems and benefit from available supports and opportunities.**
- ✓ **Engage, support, and consult with people with lived experience of poverty as primary resources.**
- ✓ **Engage politicians at all levels of government and advocate for improvements.**
- ✓ **Assess community capacity, build on assets.**

Quick Facts

Social Assistance

598 adults (347 East Parry Sound, 206 West Parry Sound) and 332 children (ages 0-17) were in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) Assistance in August 2009 (PSDSSAB, 2009).

1,279 families in the District of Parry Sound were in receipt of the Ontario Disability Support Program in September 2009 (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2009).

Government Transfers

In the District of Parry Sound, 16.6% of residents receive government transfers as a percentage of their total income, compared to 9.8% in Ontario (see Figure 8). In Burks Falls, 27.0% receive transfers compared to 9.6% in Seguin.

Depth of Poverty

In order to qualify for OW, an individual who loses his/her job can have assets amounting to no more than \$585. A single person in receipt of Ontario Works has a monthly income of \$221 plus a maximum monthly shelter allowance of \$364 for a total monthly income of \$585 (see Table 12). How will this person climb out of poverty?

Conclusion

Three ways a neighbor could help:

A pair of pants for my son

A cup of coffee

Someone to drink the cup of coffee with

(Meeting participant, South River, 2009)

It is well established that money, or lack of money, is a predictor of health. Stable, healthy, and sustainable communities across the district are only possible if efforts are made to improve the conditions that determine household incomes. A fair return for employment and adequate social assistance for those unable to work are essential.

Only when basic needs are met and circumstances stabilized, can low income people take advantage of opportunities.

In our community, it is too easy to slip into poverty and far too difficult to climb out. We need to pay attention to what is really going on. We need to find new ways of seeing and listen carefully to people with lived experience of poverty, who know most about this community challenge. We need to mobilize for long-term policy changes. Healthy food, safe housing, and dignity for all are possible.

Let's get it done! Reduce and Prevent Poverty in the District of Parry Sound.

Quick Facts

Health is:

- ✓ Having options and opportunities;
- ✓ A rewarding job with a living wage;
- ✓ Food on the table and a place to call home;
- ✓ A good start in life; and
- ✓ Community belonging (Sudbury District Health Unit, 2010).

Around the World

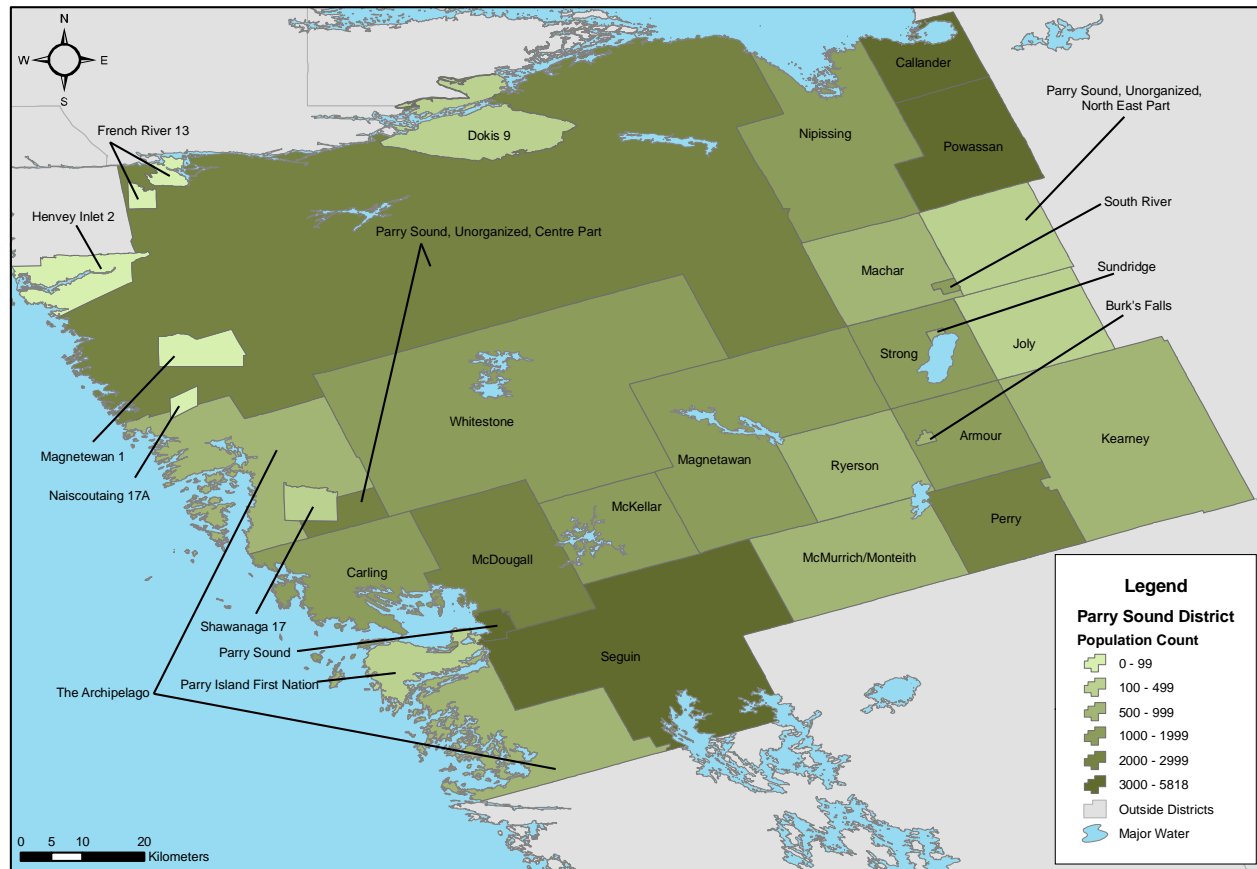
The greater the income inequality in a country, the poorer the health of the entire population (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

APPENDIX A – Demographic Information

Population Distribution – Rural

Parry Sound District is comprised of 31 Census Subdivisions (or communities), including: Armour, Burk’s Falls, Callander, Carling, Dokis First Nation, French River 13, Henvey Inlet 2, Joly, Kearney, Machar, Magnetewan 1, Magnetewan, McDougall, McKellar, McMurrich/Monteith, Naiscoutaing 17A, Nipissing, Parry Island First Nation, Parry Sound Unorganized Centre Part, Parry Sound Unorganized North East Part, Parry Sound, Perry, Powassan, Ryerson, Seguin, Shawanaga 17, South River, Strong, Sundridge, The Archipelago, and Whitestone.

Figure 5: Population distribution of the District of Parry Sound, by census subdivision, 2006 Census



Source: Adapted from Statistics Canada *Census Subdivision Boundary File 92-162-XWE 2010001*, Released April 30, 2010 and Statistics Canada *Boundary File 92-160-XWE 2006001*, Census year 2006, Released October 18, 2006. Created by: North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (March 24, 2010), Using ArcGIS, Version 9.3.1 (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Redlands, Calif.). North Bay, Ontario. NBPSDHU.

Figure 5 displays the population distribution for the District of Parry Sound by Census Subdivision. As indicated in the legend, the darker the green shading, the higher the population of the area. Only four municipalities in the District of Parry Sound have a population of at least 3,000 residents. The town of Parry Sound has the largest population in the district (5,818), followed by Seguin (4,276), Powassan (3,309), and Callander (3,249).

The District of Parry Sound has a population of 40,918 across 9,222 square kilometres. Table 8 displays the population density (the number of persons per square kilometre) and Table 9 displays the percent of the population living in rural areas^{xiii} for the District of Parry Sound and its two neighbouring districts (north- Nipissing District and south- Muskoka District), and Ontario.

Table 8. Population density, by area, 2006 Census

Area	Population Density
District of Parry Sound	4.4
Nipissing District	5.0
Muskoka District	14.8
Ontario	13.4

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed March 26, 2010).

Table 9. Percent rural population, by area, 2006 Census

Area	% Rural Population
District of Parry Sound	76.1%
Nipissing District	29.2%
Muskoka District	63.0%
Ontario	13.2%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. *GeoSearch 2006*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-197-XWE. Released February 14, 2007. (accessed March 26, 2010).

The District of Parry Sound has a population density that is substantially lower than Muskoka District (14.8), and similar to Nipissing District (5.0). However, when comparing to Nipissing District, it needs to be noted that this area includes the majority of Algonquin Park. When compared to the province, the District of Parry Sound has a population density more than three times smaller than Ontario (13.4).

Seniors

The District of Parry Sound has a large seniors population, with 21.1% of residents aged 65 and older. Table 10 displays the percent of the population aged 65 and above by area.

Table 10. Seniors, by area, 2006 Census

Area	% of Population Aged 65+
District of Parry Sound	21.1%
Nipissing District	15.9%
Muskoka District	19.8%
Ontario	13.6%

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed May 3, 2010).

The District of Parry Sound’s senior population is over 7% higher than that for Ontario (13.6%). The District of Parry Sound also has a larger percentage of its population aged 65 and older than both Nipissing District (15.9%) and Muskoka District (19.8%). Within the district, the village of Sundridge has the largest percentage of its population aged 65 and older (30.2%), followed by Parry Sound, Unorganized, Centre Part (28.0%), and The Archipelago (27.8%).

^{xiii} Rural areas include:

- Small towns, villages and other populated places with less than 1,000 population according to the current census;
- Rural fringes of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations that may contain estate lots, as well as agricultural, undeveloped and non-developable lands;
- Agricultural lands; and
- Remote and wilderness areas (Statistics Canada, 2008).

APPENDIX B – Income

Table 11 displays the percentage of those with both total income^{xiv} and employment income, as well as with full time full year income for both the District of Parry Sound and Ontario. Median incomes are also displayed for each group (see Table 11, Figure 6, and Figure 7).

Table 11. 2005 Income information, population aged 15 and older, 2006 Census

Category	District of Parry Sound	Ontario	Difference
Percent with income	96.2%	95.1%	1.1%
Median 2005 after-tax total income	\$20,567	\$24,604	\$-4,037
Percent with employment income*	64.5%	70.8%	-6.3%
Median 2005 employment income	\$20,535	\$29,335	\$-8,800
Percent with employment income and full time full year*	46.0%	52.8%	-6.8%
Median 2005 employment income full time full year	\$37,349	\$44,748	\$-7,399

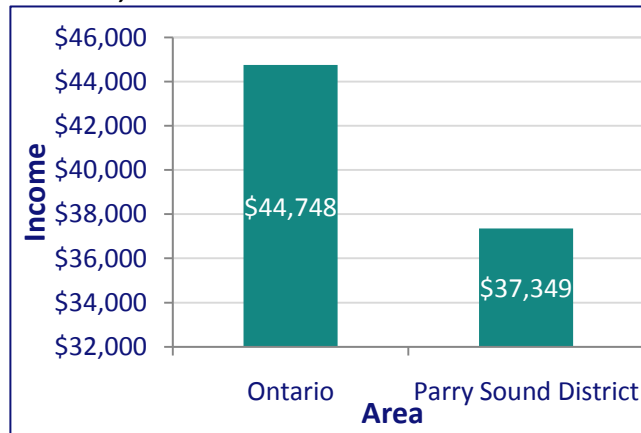
*= Calculated for persons with earnings.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *Income and Earnings, 2006 Census*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-563-XCB2006004.

Released May 1, 2008. (accessed February 26, 2010).

In Ontario, 52.8% of the population aged 15 years and older with earnings worked full time, full year (see Table 11).^{xv} In the District of Parry Sound, 46.0% of this same population worked full time, full year (- 6.8%). The District of Parry Sound has a median after-tax income for individuals, aged 15 and older, of \$20,567. This income is \$4,037 lower (-16.4%) than Ontario (\$24,604).

Figure 6. 2005 Median employment income, full time full year workers, population aged 15 years and older, 2006 Census

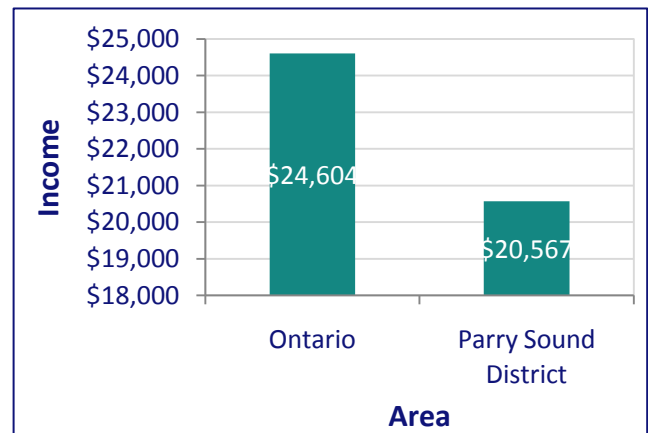


Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *Income and Earnings, 2006 Census*.

2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-563-XCB2006067.

Released May 1, 2008. (accessed February 26, 2010).

Figure 7. 2005 Median after-tax income, population aged 15 years and older, 2006 Census



Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census.

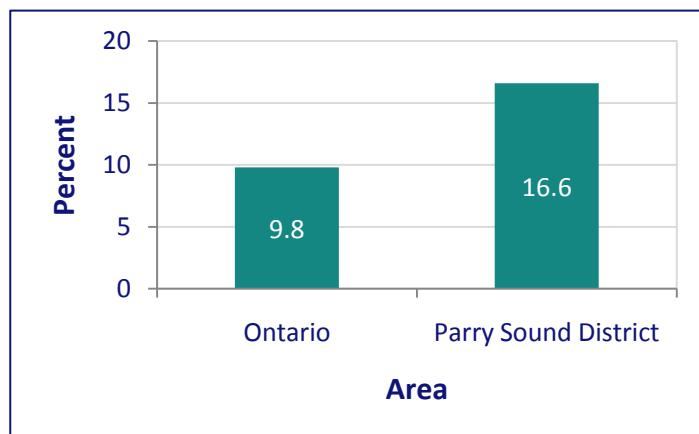
Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008.

(accessed February 26, 2010).

^{xiv} Total income: the total money income received from the following sources during calendar year 2005 by persons 15 years and over: Wages and salaries (total); Net farm income; Net non-farm income from unincorporated business and/or professional practice; Child benefits; Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement; Benefits from Canada or Quebec Pension Plan; Benefits from Employment Insurance; Other income from government sources; Dividends, interest on bonds, deposits and savings certificates, and other investment income; Retirement pensions, superannuation and annuities, including those from RRSPs and RRIFs; and Other money income (Statistics Canada, 2008).

^{xv} 'Full-year full-time workers': persons 15 years of age and over who worked 49 to 52 weeks, mostly full time (30 hours per week) in the reference year for pay or in self-employment (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Figure 8: 2005 Government transfers as a percentage of total income, population aged 15 and older, 2006 Census



Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Released July 24, 2008. (accessed February 26, 2010).

The District of Parry Sound (16.6%) has a higher percentage of individuals aged 15 and older who have government transfers^{xvi} as a percentage of their total income, compared to Ontario (9.8%) (see Figure 8). Government transfers include payments such as old age security pension, Canada Pension Plan, employment insurance benefits, and child benefits. The areas with the highest percentages of individuals receiving government transfers are Joly (36.0%), The Archipelago (29.3%), and Burk’s Falls (27.9%). Seguin (9.6%) is the only area with a lower percentage than Ontario. Examples of social assistance incomes for common family types are provided below (see Table 12).

Table 12. Examples of Social Assistance Incomes for Common Family Types, Ontario, 2009

Example of Social Assistance Incomes/month	Family Type		
	Single	Lone Parent & Child (under 12)	Couple with two Children (1 under 12 and 1 over 12)
Ontario Works			
Basic Allowance	\$221	\$341	\$574
Shelter Allowance	\$364	\$572	\$674
Total	\$585	\$913	\$1248
Ontario Disability Support Program			
Basic Needs	\$578	\$721	\$873
Shelter Allowance	\$464	\$729	\$859
Total	\$1042	\$1450	\$1732

Source: District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board. 2009. *ODSP and OW Rate Chart*. Released Nov/Dec, 2009. (accessed May 28, 2010).

^{xvi} Government transfers refer to all cash benefits received from federal, provincial, territorial or municipal governments, and include: The Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement, Allowance and Allowance for the Survivor; Benefits from Canada or Quebec Pension Plan; Benefits from Employment Insurance; Child benefits; and Other income from government sources (Statistics Canada, 2008).

APPENDIX C – Let’s Start Talking

BREAK THE SILENCE OF POVERTY

Discuss with family, friends, neighbours:

- What have you personally experienced or observed in others of material and social deprivation? Did these experiences have obvious health or health-related effects?
- How can we fix a social problem we do not talk about?
- How can a person actively participate as a member of a community without suitable clothing, transportation, and the feeling that they have something to contribute?
- How might some of the following circumstances contribute to poverty in our district?
 - Low levels of education;
 - Limited employment opportunities, concentrated in sectors that are generally lower paying and/or seasonal;
 - Defining poverty as an individual responsibility, and focusing solutions on the individual;
 - Taxes (property, income, corporate);
 - Denial – can’t see what’s happening in community; and
 - No local organized plan to prevent poverty.

Engage your community and business contacts:

- How much work in the District of Parry Sound is being contracted out and why?
- How can local communities build a better tie between economic development and poverty prevention?

Engage your health professionals:

- How can we work together to raise awareness around the social determinants of health and promote public policy action?

Ask your municipal, provincial and federal representatives:

- Do local employment strategies reflect rural needs?
- Why do you believe Canada’s poverty rate continues to be so high in international comparison? What is being done to address this fact?
- What are some of the barriers to poverty reduction locally, and in Canada?
- Do you believe that poverty rates in Canada can be substantially reduced without profound political change? How would this be accomplished?

“The rich developed societies have reached a turning point in human history. Politics should now be about the quality of social relations and how we can develop harmonious and sustainable societies” (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

APPENDIX D – Community Meeting Facilitator’s Guide

Roles: Facilitator(s), Introducer, Story Tellers, Greeters, Kitchen Staff, Recorders

STEP 1: Introducer

- Introduction to network & forum
- Introduction of facilitator

STEP 2: Facilitator

- Background of 25 in 5 campaign / declaration – 30 communities involved
- Provincial legislation / budget and the changes we would like to see
- Events organized to raise public awareness about poverty
- Community needs to want poverty reduction and needs to tell MPP it is important for many reasons including health, personal dignity, inclusion in community etc.
- Economic stimulus would be to put money in the hands of the poor

STEP 3: Facilitator

- Review agenda
- Housekeeping
- Note about picture taking & ways to avoid it
- Discussion guidelines (listen, no judgments, be curious, share own feelings, thoughts & experience)

STEP 4: Introducer

- Introduce 1st story teller

STEP 5: Story Teller (Anita)

- Share personal experience with group

STEP 6: Introducer

- Thank you to 1st story teller
- Introduce 2nd story teller

STEP 6: Story Teller (Ryan M)

- Share personal experience with group
- Share about Ryan’s work & how he can assist people with sharing their stories

STEP 7: Facilitator

- Introduction to discussion groups, split group into smaller groups
- Give group 5 minutes heads up to end

STEP 8: Facilitator & Recorder

- Around the room discussion on points discussed in smaller groups
- Answer the question “What does poverty look like in your community?”
- Write points on flip board paper, stick to wall
- Take points from each group & then open up to anyone

STEP 10: Facilitator & Recorder (X2)

- Ask the question “What can we do?” on a local level?

- What needs to be done on a provincial / federal level?
- Identify the gaps to agencies

STEP 11: Introducer

- Closing Remarks
- Discuss next steps and actions to be taken by the network
- (Forum in the fall after all community consultation have been held to discuss findings / report)
- Updates on local events

STEP 12: Facilitator

- Draws
- Feedback / Evaluations

This guide represents the training, facilitation and community organization support of Mike Balkwill.

Figure 6. District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network Community Meeting Advertisement

COMMUNITY MEETING



WHAT DOES POVERTY LOOK LIKE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

BRITT - LEGION HALL, 511 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
July 8, 2009 - 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM

PARRY SOUND - CAS BUILDING (upstairs) , 25 CHURCH ST.
July 29, 2009 - 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM

Share your experiences of poverty.
Share your experiences of working with those living in poverty.
Discuss possibilities for moving forward together to eliminate poverty.

Free and open to all. Lunch will be provided.

Sponsored by the **District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network**.
We believe in a community where everyone can afford healthy food and housing.

for more information:
email: pspoverty@gmail.com phone: Teryl at 705-746-5801 ext.3226
web site: www.dpspr.ca

Source: District of Parry Sound Poverty Reduction Network.
2009. *Community Meeting: What Does Poverty Look Like in Our Community*.

Promotional material contributed by Les Kovacs

APPENDIX E – Solutions

Meeting participants provided insightful suggestions for poverty reduction. These were generally clumped into themes and captured in the ‘Let’s Get it Done’ sections of the report. To retain some of the more specific suggestions, we have recorded them below.

Resource and Service Development

- Development of 211 directory to increase access to community, social, health, and related government services.
- ID Clinic – support replacing lost Canadian identification documents.
- Partnering with local banks (re: cashing cheques, service fees etc.).
- Increase public awareness regarding new and established services, could be a local handbook and included with tourist services.

Research and Advocacy

- Survey how much work is being contracted out, can we change this?
- “In My Shoes” initiative (working with politicians).
- Advocate for:
 - Long-term care supports (benefit of increased supports + job creation);
 - Early learning and childcare supports; and
 - Shelters (men, families) and detox facilities.
- Do municipalities have human rights policies or bylaws to designate for affordable housing?
- Encourage collaboration of local municipalities.
- Look at alternatives to market controlled rent.

Community Development and Skill-Building

- Greater role of churches (e.g. using churches as shelters, possible advocacy role of congregations, provide churches with opportunities to support poverty reduction).
- Community suppers, kitchens, gardens, and food programs.
- Community green days involving all in recycling goods (e.g. free clothing without stigma); logistical suggestions include using space on Isabella and creating opportunities for student volunteer hours; possible links with Friendship Centre for clothing collection and distribution.
- Strengthen network of community assets.
- Build on community strengths (e.g. rent in exchange for work, peer initiatives, neighbours supporting neighbours).
- To engage more of smaller communities (e.g. Britt), piggy-back with garage sales/yard sales and community events such as the monthly “fish fry”.

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