

AAA Project: Awareness, Advocacy, Action

- ▶ My Presentation in May focused on the Campaign's goal of raising awareness for an increase to Social Assistance Rates in this province. The \$100 Healthy food Supplement was and continues to be our specific request.
- ▶ However, our project is more global in that it concentrates on the need for creating Healthy Communities, which extends from promoting physical activity for children to implementing an affordable housing strategy for Canada and everything in between.
- ▶ As we move forward into Year Two of the project, we can decide together what issues in relation to the creation of healthy communities we want to focus on as a community of concerned residents, clients, workers, volunteers and boards of directors.

Canadian Facts: The Social Determinants of Health

- ▶ Central to the understanding and goals of this Heart and Stroke Project is the language of the Social Determinants of health.
- ▶ The following summary best describes the reality in Canada and the misunderstanding of what contributes to poor health (mental, physical), inadequate living conditions and limited potential and life satisfaction.

Overview

- ▶ “The primary factors that shape the health of Canadians are not medical treatments or lifestyle choices but rather the living conditions they experience. These conditions have come to be known as the social determinants of health.
- ▶ This information – based on decades of research and hundreds of studies in Canada and elsewhere – is unfamiliar to most Canadians. *Canadians are largely unaware that our health is shaped by how income and wealth is distributed, whether or not we are employed and if so, the working conditions we experience.*

Improving lives is dependent on our understanding of what contributes to Health and well-being.

- ▶ Our health is also determined by the health and social services we receive, and our ability to obtain quality education, food and housing, among other factors.
- ▶ And contrary to the assumption that Canadians have personal control over these factors, in most cases these living conditions are – for better or worse – imposed upon us by the quality of the communities, housing situations, work settings, health and social service agencies, and educational institutions with which we interact.
- ▶ Improving the health of Canadians requires we think about health and its determinants in a more sophisticated manner than has been the case to date.

Our Video – Courage to Change my World

▶ Is intended to:

- Present some facts about poverty in our local community and the inequities that exist on a larger scale, which contribute to poverty and poor outcomes.
- Present some historical context in which social change was created to improve the lives of Canadians and how we have lost ground in the last 30 years.
- Present some alternative approaches.
- Present an opportunity for discussion and dialogue.
- Present ways to advocate for change with a goal to Action.

Watching the video... Questions to come back to.

- ▶ Ask yourself the following...
 - Was there anything new that you learned from watching this Video?
 - Do you see any relevance of the information and challenges posed in the video for the work you do, or the community you volunteer in, for the constituents you represent, or in your own life? And if so, What?
 - Do you agree or disagree with the statement that planning for the future health of Canadians requires a more sophisticated understanding of what does and does not contribute to our health?

Before our Discussion ... *A bit more about Poverty in York Region.*

- ▶ The Poverty Free Ontario Campaign refers to those living on Social Assistance levels at 30% of the Poverty Line as living in DEEP POVERTY
- ▶ Working Poverty is also a very real and growing problem that is often masked. We underestimate this at our own peril.
- ▶ Approximately 48% of those relying on food banks in York Region have at least one person working in their family.

Deep Poverty on Social Assistance

- ▶ Living in deep poverty on social assistance (below 80% of LIM-AT) means that tens of thousands adults and children across Ontario experience chronic cycles of hunger and hardship each month when money runs out to meet basic necessities.
- ▶ SA Incomes Remain Unacceptably Low (2008)
 - Poverty line for one adult is \$18,582/yr (LIM-AT)
 - Single adult on OW gets \$7,352/yr (39.6% LIM-AT) Basic income gap is -\$11,230/yr
 - Poverty line for a lone parent with one child is \$26,279/yr (LIM-AT)
 - Lone parent on OW with a young child gets \$16,683/yr (63.5% LIM-AT) Basic income gap is -\$9,596/yr

Working Poverty Trap....

- ▶ Low pay and poor jobs keep too many people trapped in poverty in Ontario.
- ▶ In 2004, 60% of parents and single adults living in poverty were employed but with insufficient earnings to live above the poverty line. In 2008, one-third of all Ontario children living in poverty (LICO-BT) were in families with full-time, full-year hours of work.
- ▶ In 2004, the OECD reported that Canada, along with the United States, has the highest proportion of low-paid workers among the major industrialized countries in the world.
- ▶ It should come then as no surprise, that Canada's income gap between the rich and the poor is growing at an even faster rate than that of the United States.

One Man's Poetic Portrayal of the Despair of Hunger

Chronic Cycles of Hunger and Hardship

In this country, the poorest don't starve.

They starve a while, get ill.

Eat a while, almost get healthy.

Then starve a while again, then get sicker, then eat a while get a little energy then get hungry and go through it all again and again and again.

**Excerpt from "A Definition of the Poor"
by John Palmer, Sudbury**

Targeted Constituent Groups *can get results on these issues.*

(A Key AAA Strategy)

- ▶ **Volunteers are Voters Too Campaign** – the usual suspects – anti-poverty groups and the poor, don't have as much clout with politicians as upstanding members of our communities who volunteer their time willingly.
- ▶ **Food Bank Awareness Group was a logical one (Freedom 90);** you'll be hearing more from them in the new year. Charity is not the answer and has become the crutch.
- ▶ **Boards of Directors of Non-Profit Agencies** Volunteers who are in a unique position to influence decision makers because they see the realities at the ground, understand the connections between poverty and health outcomes and can be vocal and influential with elected officials.

Questions – Discussion

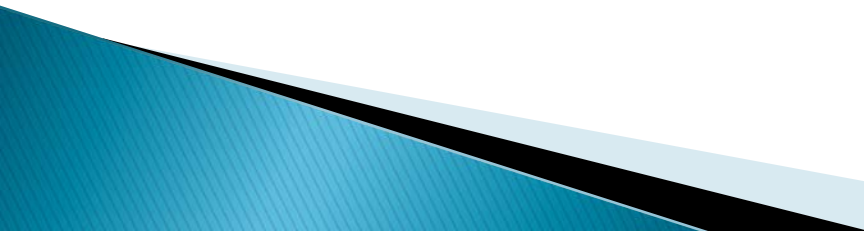
- ▶ Questions posed before the video... Slide #6
- ▶ Facilitator's Guide to Discussion of the Video
- ▶ Ways for individuals or this group to advocate and/or take this message to your own communities/networks.
- ▶ Suggested opportunities for Action or ASKS..
 - Support for \$100 HFS (Petition, Letters, Speaking to MPP)
 - **Endorsement of YR's invitation to the Social Assistance Reform Commissioners' to hold a consultation here *****
 - Invitation from Boards of Directors or staff groups to have this presentation given to them.

Introducing the Resources

- ▶ Letter writing Kit (being revised for post election)
- ▶ Video and Discussion Guide
- ▶ AAA resources Online
- ▶ Preparation of Webinar to share with wider audiences
- ▶ Advocacy Calendar in Year Two and other plans



Year Two of AAA Project

- ▶ **Continued pressure re: \$100 HFS and general increase in raising of rates to cost of living.**
 - ▶ **Attention and work around the SARC recommendations expected in January 2012.**
 - ▶ **Advocacy Calendar** – Establishing an Awareness and Advocacy plan for 2012 that involves community partners across York Region taking a role.
 - ▶ **Ongoing Training of Community Advocates** to create more public awareness of the need to address income inequities and as a result improve overall health outcomes.
 - ▶ **Presentations to Community Groups, Boards of Directors , volunteers** to gain more allies and champions to speak to these issues.
 - ▶ **York Region Summit on Income Inequities and Health Outcomes in Fall 2012**
- 

Invitation to CYF Forum

- ▶ Building on the **Shared Education and Awareness Campaign “ONE VOICE”** that the forum embarked on this past summer, there are opportunities for continued awareness and advocacy with respect to children and families.
- ▶ Being part of the HSPB “Making Ends Meet Initiative” and its Multi-Sectoral input paper to the Social Assistance Reform Commission;
- ▶ Keeping the public and elected officials informed of the impact of policies or lack of policies, on the most vulnerable members of our communities.
- ▶ Joining us in our **Advocacy Calendar Project** to keep the issues front and centre for the public and elected officials.