

## TAKING ACTION ON POVERTY: POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

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- On February 24, 2016, the Government of Saskatchewan will release *Taking Action on Poverty: The Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy*.
- The Strategy sets a target to reduce enduring poverty (i.e., that lasting two years or longer) by 50% by 2025.
  - At 10.6%, Saskatchewan currently has the second lowest rate of poverty in Canada, second only to Alberta. (This rate is based on Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure, which describes the disposable income needed to purchase a modest but adequate basket of goods and services.)
- The Strategy focuses on six priority areas:
  - Income Security
  - Housing and Homelessness
  - Early Childhood Development and Childcare
  - Education, Skills Training and Employment
  - Health and Food Security
  - Vulnerable Families and Individuals
- Early actions include:
  - Implementing an Early Years Plan;
  - Beginning a redesign of provincial income assistance; and,
  - working with community agencies to expand opportunities for housing for those deemed "hard to house."

A complete list of actions is appended.

- The Strategy fulfills the Province's 2014 Speech from the Throne commitment to develop a poverty reduction strategy and provides a response to recommendations of the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction.
- Members of the Advisory Committee on Poverty Reduction were:
  - Alison Robertson, Co-Chair, then Director of Community Development, Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre;
  - Constance Hourie, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Services;
  - Ron Anderson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice/Corrections and Policing;
  - Steve Compton, CEO, Regina Food Bank;
  - Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew, Director, Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre;
  - Karen Lautsch, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health;
  - Alastair McFadden, Assistant Deputy Minister, Economy;
  - Dr. Ryan Meili, Physician, WestSide Community Clinic;
  - Greg Miller, then Associate Deputy Minister, Education;
  - Russ Mirasty, retired RCMP Commanding Officer; and,
  - Dr. Cory Neudorf, Chief Medical Health Officer, Saskatoon Health Region.

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- In formulating their recommendations, the Advisory Committee:
  - hosted a poverty roundtable in April 2015 to gain advice and perspectives from community members;
  - met with organizations that serve those living in poverty;
  - solicited feedback from more than 350 people through an online survey; and,
  - reviewed past and ongoing initiatives that address poverty.
  
- Recommendations from the Advisory Group focused on:
  - promoting the rights and dignity of all people;
  - building on the strengths of individuals and families;
  - redesigning services to make them more accessible;
  - ensuring equitable services are available to all Saskatchewan residents whether they live on- or off-reserve;
  - encouraging government agencies and community organizations to work collaboratively to deliver effective services;
  - ensuring programs and policies designed to reduce poverty are based on evidence with clear targets and measurable outcomes; and,
  - encouraging the development of innovative policies and solutions to address poverty.