



Social Justice Redefined: A Call to Action

Final Report

A Conference Sponsored by
The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay
William Watts Ballroom–Cranberry Resort
Collingwood, Ontario
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Abstract

There is a strong commitment in Southern Georgian Bay to collaborate in addressing social issues. In January of 2015, 60 area residents met for a one-day Call to Action conference, sponsored by The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay. Liz Weaver from the Tamarack Institute facilitated the event and Heather Bebb from the County of Simcoe was a guest speaker. Participants discussed gaps, potential actions and offered advice for each of the following social sector areas: Food Security, Housing, Income Security, Mental Health, Seniors, Transportation and Youth. The principal outcome from the day-long discussions was that success can only be achieved through strengthened collaboration, sharing of resources, increased community awareness, continued commitment and dialogue. The following report summarizes the discussions and recommendations.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Liz Weaver from Tamarack Institute, Heather Bebb from the County of Simcoe and the team of volunteers who helped plan the event and write the final report: Jamie Berman, Joslyn Biggins, David Green, Michael Locey, Don May, Day Merrill, Gail Michalenko, Jennifer Parker, Claire Tucker-Reid and Donna Wilson.

A special thank you to Larry Law for allowing us to host the event at Cranberry Resorts.

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Prosperity Through Collaboration

Introduction

The mandate of the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay (TISGB) is to develop capacity through community engagement. Our goal is to educate and bring together groups to discuss ways of improving the quality of life in our region.

In late January 2015, 58 stakeholders met to discuss the social justice priorities in Southern Georgian Bay (Collingwood, Clearview Township, Town of the Blue Mountains and Wasaga Beach) and better ways we can work together to address the issues affecting the quality of life of our residents.

The questions addressed were:

1. What are the gaps?
2. What are our successes?
3. How can we impact change and make a difference?
4. What advice/recommendations do you have?

Our Collective Vision

Our vision for the future:

Southern Georgian Bay stakeholders are engaged, empowered and effectively addressing the social issues that affect our quality of life such as food security, housing, income security, mental health, seniors, transportation and youth.

Our Commitment

We are committed to bring positive change and prosperity to our region by:

- Working collaboratively with stakeholders and decision-makers;
- Reducing duplication within the system and using resources more efficiently;
- Increasing community awareness of issues, proposed courses of action and successes;
- Involving the community and communicating what is needed; and
- Continuing to dialogue with stakeholders and decision-makers.

Our Priorities over the Next Three Years

Food Security

- Creating a regional Food Coalition to assess Food Security Issues/Actions
- Working with local food banks on developing more sustainable models of responding to food security issues
- Continuing to create community gardens, food co-ops, community and mobile kitchens, and school gardens
- Identifying/adhering to best practice alternatives-organic solutions

Housing

- Establishing a Regional Task Force to address housing issues collectively
- Increasing awareness of housing issues and developing a business plan for affordable housing
- Identifying potential land for affordable housing and a developer to take it forward

Income Security

- Economic development activities focused on attracting employers
- Educating business leaders on employing those who face barriers
- Devising incentives requiring infrastructure involvement from employers
- Supporting existing businesses to do better at providing equitable wages

Mental Health

- Lobbying for prevention opportunities, crisis services and education
- Promoting the use Community Survivor Project support workers, walk-in opportunities
- Promoting/making accessible a Mental Health First Aid course
- Increasing collaboration among stakeholders

Seniors

- Increasing services to support seniors e.g. Senior Day Centres
- Creating opportunities for Youth-Senior connections, e.g., community service requirement
- Expanding Home for Life regionally
- Developing coordinated services for seniors (personal care, pet care)
- Establishing life skills training/support programs that teach, coach, support, empower
- Leveraging connections with retirement homes to support healthy living for seniors
- Devising advocacy mechanisms for seniors

Transportation

- Establishing volunteer delivery services
- Connecting people with time & vehicle with people in need (non-profit Uber model)
- Promoting carpooling via social online networking
- Conducting an assessment of community needs e.g. LHIN
- Identifying best practice resources e.g. Community Reach

Youth

- Supporting collaboration among youth-focused agencies (multiple drop-in nights) to empower compassionate, determined communities
- Expanding our view of Youth (Provincial/Federal services now define youth to age 30)

Next Steps

The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay has developed this Final Report to provide a summary of what communities, stakeholders and individuals can do to address these social issues. The Institute commits to the following next steps:

1. Present options for ongoing ISGB support for Social Justice initiatives to its membership for consideration
2. Continue to connect Social Justice stakeholders
3. Inform community influencers of ISGB plans and strategies
4. Develop working groups to work collaboratively on opportunities

Get Involved

If you are reading this paper and are interested in supporting Social Justice and other initiatives at the regional level, we need you! Please contact the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay to learn about our work and opportunities for membership: info@TISGB.com .

Workshop Description

Presentation Summaries

Liz Weaver –Vice President, Tamarack Institute

Workshop: *Collective Impact and Community Change*

- Successful community change requires individuals and organizations to collaborate
- To avoid continually competing for limited resources, we need to work together intentionally in cooperative, collaborative and integrative ways
- Building trusting relationships is a key step in achieving collective impact. When goals and resources outweigh the importance of relationships, barriers are created and collective impact/issue resolution is put at risk
- Community issues are best solved collaboratively and can only be achieved when time and effort is put into building trust/relationships and common ground is reached

Heather Bebb–Manager, Social Policy and Planning, County of Simcoe

Presentation: *Simcoe County's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2015*

- Using a collective impact model, the County of Simcoe will offer “backbone” support to an emerging poverty reduction strategy in Simcoe County including the following:
 - Hosting a community engagement event in October 2015 to determine priority areas for action on poverty reduction in Simcoe County
 - Establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Group to provide feedback and input into goals and activities related to poverty reduction efforts in Simcoe County
 - Establishing a governance structure (e.g. Poverty Reduction Task Force) involving key community stakeholders including social and health service providers, criminal justice sector, settlement services, FNMI, labour, for profit, non-profit, faith community, elected officials, media and others
- Participants will be encouraged to adopt an Equity Impact Lens to evaluate programs, policies and procedures through the lens of how they may negatively impact or exclude individuals who are experiencing poverty
- Participants will also be encouraged to adopt Results Based Accountability as a shared outcome measurement framework to ensure that both program and population level impact can be tracked
- The County of Simcoe will also implement an internal corporate poverty reduction strategy that includes the development of the following:
 - Corporate and Divisional Poverty Action Committees

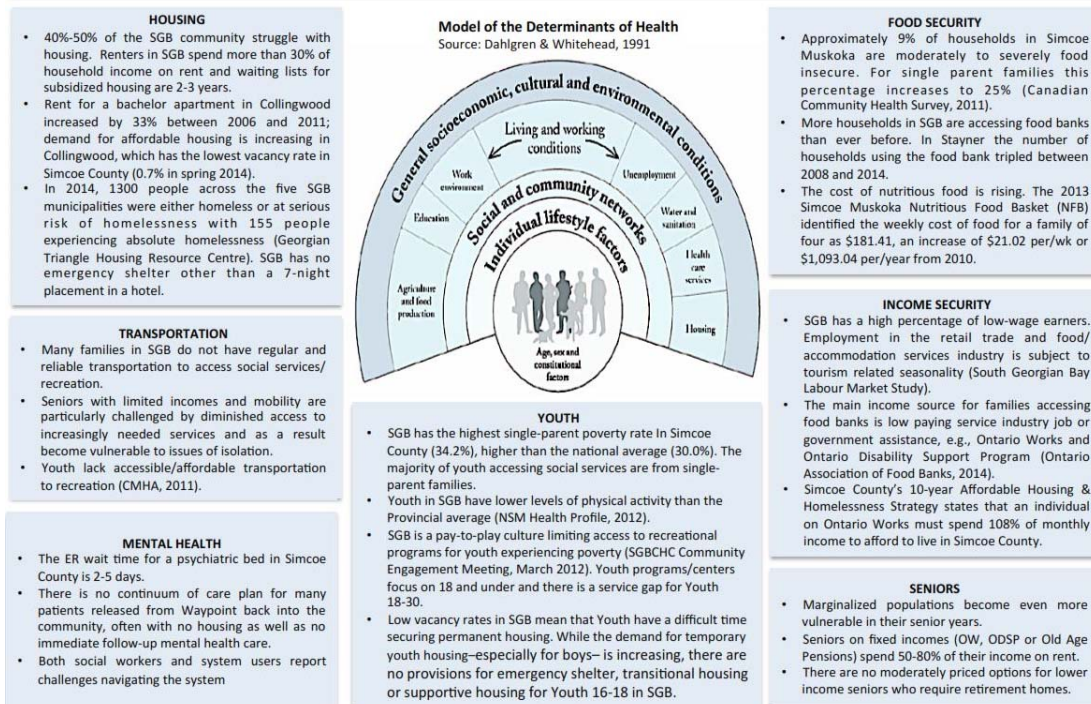
- Equity Impact Grant to support the involvement of individuals with lived experience of poverty in poverty reduction efforts
- Community Capacity Building Grant to support the access to professional development activities for staff of community providers in the homelessness sector
- Implementation of Equity Impact Assessment and Results Based Accountability

In 2014, the County of Simcoe engaged in community based research to learn about the experience of poverty in Simcoe County from individuals directly impacted by poverty. *Voices of the Poverty Experience Report* is based on responses from 176 surveys, 34 peer interviews and 5 focus groups. Respondents prioritized housing (28%), transportation (11%) and regular meals (8%) as the most significant daily living challenges.

*See Liz and Heather’s full presentations at www.TISGB.com

Key Social Issues in South Georgian Bay 2015

Food Security, Housing, Income Security, Mental Health, Seniors, Transportation and Youth are key social issues in South Georgian Bay (SGB). The Material and Social Deprivation Index, a measure of socio-economic indicators, identifies distinct areas across the region experiencing a *high degree of social and economic poverty*. Areas of focus compiled from the United Way, local service agencies and census data are reviewed below. These issues are interconnected, reflecting both poverty and challenges related to availability of, awareness about and access to services.



Full size info-graphic can be found in Appendix 1.

Social Justice Call to Action: 5 Consistent Themes

1. We Need To Collaborate:

- Sharing resources (knowledge, metrics marketing) will build greater capacity
- Partnerships will increase funding opportunities

2. We Must Break Down Silos

- Engaging all stakeholders
- Taking the time to learn about each other
- Bringing everyone into the conversation

3. We Need to Increase Community Awareness

- Making pressing social issues visible
- Asking questions and addressing community issues together
- Using a collective voice

4. We Need to Talk to One Another

- Establishing forums for discussion
- Determining common goals
- Sharing best practices

5. We Need to Involve the Whole Community

- Actively seeking out people with lived experience
- Working together toward common goals
- Encouraging friends to volunteer



Table Dialogues

What are the gaps? What are our successes? What could we do that would make a difference?
What advice/recommendations do you have to move forward?

Housing

Housing Gaps

- Limited affordable rental units
- Lack of emergency and transitional housing
- No youth housing (emergency or permanent)
- Invisibility of homelessness
- Lack of community awareness
- Lack of funding to create affordable housing
- Absence of political will/collective effort from municipalities to address housing issues
- Lack of developers willing to assist with issues



Housing Successes

- Collaborative Housing Networks (Housing Champions)
- Rent Geared-to-Income initiative
- Social service organizations and programs:
 - Home Horizon
 - Housing Resource Centre
 - Churches sponsoring low-cost apartments and social workers
 - My Friend's House
 - Habitat for Humanity

We believe these opportunities around housing could make a difference...

- Continued collective advocacy and awareness
- Collective Voice (e.g. Simcoe County's 10-year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy)
- Rent supplements
- Municipal legislation to create more affordable housing (e.g. Bill 140 to legalize accessory apartments)
- Building a Business Case to take action
- Housing First Approach
- Regional housing task force (with council representation from each municipality)

Our Advice is to....

- Create Regional Housing Task Force (with council representation from each municipality)
- Increase advocacy and awareness

- Draft a business plan for affordable housing in South Georgian Bay
- Identify potential land and developers to take the plan forward

Our recommended Action is to....

- Consider applying to Ontario Trillium Foundation to support affordable housing next steps
- Develop a promotional strategy that demonstrates the economic and social advantages of affordable housing for the entire community

Food Security

Food Security Gaps

- Lack of a regional Food Council
- Lack of a robust, functional inventory of community food programs
- Limited access to healthy food (transportation)



Food Security Successes: Local programs

- 211 online calendar of free daily food programs
- Christmas Cheer Community Dinner
- Community Action Program for Children (nutrition programming for young mothers)
- Community Gardens in Stayner, Wasaga Beach, Thornbury
- Community Meals at Churches (Souper Tuesday, Church Friendship Dinners)
- Food Banks (Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, emergency food at churches)
- Good Food Box
- My Friend's House
- School Nutrition Programs
- Transition Towns (Collingwood)

We believe these opportunities around Food Security could make a difference...

- Increased collaboration
- Agriculture/access to agriculture
- Community gardens
- Community dinners
- Church kitchens
- Simcoe County Food Charter
- Increased school involvement

Our Advice is to....

- Create a Regional Food Coalition including: youth, farmers, local food organizations, municipalities, Health Units, School Boards, Community Health Centres, Georgian Bay Family Health Team, Health Link, Churches

- Create a coalition and develop a Food Assessment for SGB to discuss next steps
- Continue to create community gardens, food co-ops, community kitchens, mobile kitchens and school gardens
- Work with local food banks on developing more sustainable models of responding to food security issues

Our recommended Action is to....

- Increased community engagement, building on current best practices and developing connections

Mental Health

Mental Health Gaps

- Paperwork between institutions, lack of communication
- Expectations from professionals that clients will show up for appointments (e.g. OW)
- Lack of empathy training (Police/Hospital personnel)
- Lengthy ER wait times for youth beds
- Lack of sanctuary/safe place for youth
- Lack of crisis service
- Lack of early recognition of mental health needs in youth
- Cost of medication
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



Mental Health Successes: Local social service programs

- Bell Let's Talk
- Community Agency Support Programs (Home Horizon & My Friend's House)
- New Path Walk-In Clinic
- School based programs
- Team Unbreakable run therapy program
- YMCA Community Youth Engagement Program
- YMCA free youth memberships for disenfranchised youth

We believe these opportunities around Mental Health could make a difference...

- Directory of mental health services including 211
- Link with Northern Muskoka LHIN as a common access point for mental health and addictions
- Mental Health Leads in schools
- More community counselling

- Supporting the lobbying efforts of the LHIN for more mental health services
- Churches collaborating to offer drop-in centres
- Increased collaboration between area service providers and programs
- YMCA relationship with local mental health (e.g. referrals for free youth memberships, youth 13-29 years)
- Consumer Survivor Project (staff will accompany on appointments)
- Promoting Mental Health First Aid for employers
- Community Health GMCH grants
- Website notmyselftoday.com Bell Let's Talk

Our recommended Action/Advice is to....

- Lobby for prevention opportunities, crisis services, education
- Use Community Survivor Project support workers, walk-in opportunities
- Promote/access Mental Health First Aid course
- Increase collaboration among stakeholders: Waypoint Centre, Ontario Works, OPP, Hospital/paramedics, schools/teachers, New Path/other clinics, YMCA, Salvation Army, Churches, Georgian Bay Family Health Team, SGBCHC, youth justice, court system, non-profits (Home Horizons, My Friend's House)

Transportation

Transportation Gaps

- No transportation in non-major centres
- Limited access to affordable food/services, etc.
- Prohibitive cost to own/maintain/insure a vehicle
- Aging community with older drivers losing licenses
- County border issues



Transportation Successes

- Active Transportation Plan - Collingwood
- LINK route between Wasaga Beach/Collingwood/Blue Mountain
- Handicap Van
- \$5/month bus fares for youth in Wasaga Beach
- Ontario Works provides monthly passes to clients
- Volunteer drivers
- Trail system

We believe these opportunities around Transportation could make a difference...

- Delivery services for those with a vehicle

- Create a database of businesses and engage the business community
- Host a forum for business leaders on conscious capitalism (flexibility and accessibility)

Seniors

Seniors Gaps

- Income barriers
- Gap between living wage and social assistance
- Employment barriers (limited jobs at living wage/skills gaps for available jobs lack of flexibility in work schedules)



Seniors Successes

- Local programs:
 - Home for Life,
 - Answers for Seniors,
 - Valley Visitors,
 - Fitness for Health partnership with YMCAs
- Grocery Delivery

We believe these opportunities around Seniors could make a difference...

- Senior day centres (e.g. Richmond hill model) in a dedicated building
- Increased services to support: social interaction, nutritious food, basic health services, supported transportation, technology
- Youth - Seniors connection- create community service requirement
- Home for Life regional expansion
- Coordinated services for seniors (personal care, pet care)
- Life skills training & support programs that teach, coach, support, empower
- Leverage connections with retirement homes
- Advocacy for seniors: government (municipal, regional, provincial, national) and non-profit/private companies (CARP, NGOS)

Our Advice is to....

- Bring doctors and seniors to the table
- Get informed about services, agencies, etc.
- Apply for funding
- Increase no-charge senior programs at YMCAs and libraries
- Enhance connectivity of seniors' groups
- Host "New Territories for Seniors" workshops on relevant topics with expert presenters
- Provide support for caregivers of seniors

Youth

Youth Gaps

- Multiple stigmas: mental health, addiction (isolation), homelessness and poverty
- Lack of affordable housing/emergency housing/transportation
- Many single-parent families
- 13% unemployment rate
- Service gaps for youth age 18-30
- Lack of accessibility/knowledge of resources/access to information
- Lack of awareness of communication about youth programs and activities
- No succession planning for youth group leaders
- High school graduation rates lower than provincial average
- Teen pregnancy rates higher than provincial average



Youth Successes

- Local service organizations and programs including:
 - My Friends' House, Youth Centres, Optimist Club, L'ARC
 - After school program at Matthew Way (Georgian Blue Gardens)
 - \$5 monthly bus pass for youth 11-19, Wasaga Beach
 - Single parents program at Collingwood learning centre
 - Erie street church youth drop-in/homework club grade 5+
 - All Saints Anglican young adults drop-in, Tues 11-2, light lunch
 - Children's treatment network-families for recreation programs
 - YMCA + Pillars program
 - High school sports teams
 - School breakfast clubs, kids clubs
 - YMCA Collingwood/Wasaga Beach: Friday youth night, recreational opportunities for participants of CAPC, youth leadership programs
 - Local initiatives for high school completion
 - CAPC/Catalpa Mom & Tot program, YMCA respite care for special needs children
 - COMPASS network (Community Partners With Schools)
- Expanded provincial/federal definition of youth to age 30
- Good collaboration between youth employment/education/business
- Expanded opportunities for secondary/post-secondary learning
- Thornbury Transition Town community garden to pair elders with children and/or youth to work in garden and access fresh food

We believe these opportunities around Youth could make a difference...

- Collaboration between youth-focused agencies (multiple drop-in nights)
- Compassionate, determined communities
- Leverage expanded definition of youth to age 30
- Local service providers and programs:
 - The Door youth drop-in programs, Collingwood/Stayner
 - Employment Ontario job training improvements
 - YMCA membership subsidies
 - Transition Collingwood
 - Healthy Kids Community Challenge
 - Learning Centre in Collingwood
 - Home Horizon youth program
 - Kinark: Youth Crisis Support
 - Georgian Bay Family Health Team
 - School Mental Health Leaders
 - Colleges: promote mental health support
 - Georgian College (SGB) run different courses that link to services, expand curriculum and partnerships to university
- School Board student engagement activities

Our Suggested Actions/Advice....

- Use experience of retirees
- Be persistent but have a timeline for goals/action
- Approach Town Councils
- Engage and involve youth in the discussion
 - Create an inventory of existing services/needs
 - Build a strong, eager team who are trusted and committed
 - Aim communication plans towards youth
- Develop/implement lunch programs (e.g., United Way's Eat Well to Excel) in all SCDSB schools for children without food/lunch
- Develop low-cost/no-cost after school and evening programs for kids, with a snack
- Develop county-wide lunch programs for children without food/lunch
- Support Home Horizon program to provide transitional housing for youth
- Social Entrepreneurship what about it???
- Establish Youth Committees in each municipality
- Business Owner Discussions/Mentorship with youth

Appendices

- A. Document: Key Social Issues in South Georgian Bay 2015 (sent to registrants prior to event)
- B. Summary of post-event evaluations
- C. Event Invitation
- D. Event Agenda

Key Social Issues in South Georgian Bay 2015

Summary of Post-Event Evaluations

General Feedback

A total of 58 individuals representative of municipalities across South Georgian Bay attended *Call to Action: Social Justice Redefined*. At the conclusion of the day, participants were asked to complete an online event evaluation. The information presented reflects the 28 completed evaluations. The majority of participants rated the event overall as excellent (39%) or very good (43%), indicating that the structure of the day enabled them to feel involved (82%).

A Participant's Perspective

A. Key Event Elements

<i>Strengthening Awareness</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity for considering the 'Big Picture' and examining complex social issues ▪ Commitment, compassion and encouraging current community initiatives ▪ Highlighted the importance of building community awareness
<i>Collaboration, Networking and the Collective Impact Model</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need and importance of collaboration across sectors and levels of government ▪ Overarching interest in collaboration ▪ Opportunity to network ▪ Collective impact model and application at a local level ▪ Value of collaborative brainstorming to address complex issues
<i>Identifying Resources</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities for accessing and drawing upon Tamarack's programs ▪ Identifying person or client resources ▪ Importance of speaking with individuals with 'lived experience'

B. Event Speakers and Future Opportunities

A strong majority (86%) of the participants found the event speakers to be excellent. Suggestions for future events or seminars included a focus on:

<i>Specific Topic Areas</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing ▪ Youth ▪ Mental Health ▪ Compassionate Communities movement ▪ Local stories – presentations from community partners and local groups

Case Studies and Best Practice

- Presentations of best practices for collective impact
- Community experiences using the collective impact model
- Case studies of successful agencies and/initiatives
- Innovative approaches to affordable housing

Strategic Decision Making

- Developing an Action Plan
- Leveraging municipal decision makers
- Engaging the business community and building connections with social service agencies
- Drawing on for-profit principles and applying them to not-for-profits, building financial viability
- Grants or funding opportunities
- Area economics and demographics

Event Invitation

You are Invited!

The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay Presents.... A Call to Action: Social Justice Redefined



**January 30th, 2015
William Watts Ballroom,
Cranberry Village,
Collingwood**

***With Guests Liz Weaver,
Tamarack Institute and
Heather Bebb, County of
Simcoe***

***Friday, January 30, 2015, 8:30 - 4:00pm
Light Lunch provided***

- Social Justice realities in South Georgian Bay, Simcoe County and Canada...
 - Liz Weaver: National Best Practices and Collective Impact
 - Overview of Simcoe County's Poverty Strategy
 - Issues and successes in South Georgian Bay
 - Working Group: How can South Georgian Bay move forward collaboratively to improve quality of life for all families? How can community engagement be most effective?

To RSVP email: events@tisgb.com

Event Agenda

- 8:30 Registration and Networking
- 9:00 Welcome! Setting the context for the day: Don May & David Green,
The Institute of South Georgian Bay
- 9:30 Collective Impact – A new way forward for Communities –
Liz Weaver, Vice President, Tamarack Institute
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 Collective Impact Case Study: Simcoe Poverty Strategy –
Heather Bebb, Manager, Social Policy and Planning, County of Simcoe
- 11:30 Table Dialogues: How could a collective impact approach help advance SGB?
- 12:00 Table Dialogue reflections
- 12:30 Lunch and Networking
- 01:00 Current Research and Priorities
- 02:00 Smaller Table Dialogues around the priority areas and suggestions for moving
forward
- 03:30 Wrap-up and Summary
- 04:00 Adjourn