

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Niagara Poverty Reduction Network**  
Wednesday, September 16, 2020  
9:00 am to 10:30 am  
**Virtual Meeting**

**In Attendance:** Aidan Johnson (Chair), Jennifer Gauthier (Vice Chair), Maya Mercier, Michael Mondloch, Natalie Chaumont, Mary Wiley, Sally Herod, Sandra Lampman, Scott Cronkwright, Sharlene Volpatti, Susan Mifsud, Suzanne Veenstra, Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Vicki Doidge, Brandon Agnew, Ashley Chiarello, Ashley Pollock, Becky Dixon, Becky Western-Macfadyen, Cassie Ogunniyi, Catherine Mindorff-Facca, Cheryl Kincaid, Claudia Calabro, Deb Oglivie, Erin Walters, Glen Walker, Gracia Janes, Jan Kaye, Jon Braithwaite, Julie Gregory, Kim O'Rourke, Laryssa Smith, Laura Martin, Leslie Bellingham, Lianne Wyatt, Lori Kleinsmith, Marc Todd, Marcella Blanchard, Matt Corbeil, Dave Wyllie, Angela Brown, Robert Walker, Terri Bruce, Rachel Gillmore

### 1. Welcome, Mindfulness Minute & Land Acknowledgement

- Minutes from July 22, 2020 and Agenda approved

### 2. Coordinating Committee Update

Bank account: \$4,902.11

- To kick off our time back together, the Coordinating Committee decided to focus our time today on reorienting our membership to our goals and purpose
  - **Vision:** All Niagara residents live above the poverty line
  - **Mission:** Niagara residents, businesses and organizations working together to improve the quality of life in Niagara.
  - **Goals:** More residents, businesses and organizations know about poverty's root causes and are engaged in taking action to address root causes of poverty
  - **5 values entrenched in our work:** collaborative, inclusive, innovative, integrity, and accountable
  - **Objectives:** Education and information, supporting collaboration and advocacy work
- REMINDER: Are you a signed member of NPRN? If you aren't, and you would like to become an official NPRN member, you can get a copy from [Rachel](#)
- Priority Table Recruitment & Other Opportunities to Get Involved – Are you a member of one of our Priority Tables? We are always looking for more membership in these groups. If you are interested or would like to learn more about a particular Table, please feel free to connect with any Coordinating Committee member or the Convener.
- Honorary Membership Dues - A reminder that if your organization has extra funds, you are always able to support NPRN by providing a volunteer membership due. That is how we've been able to maintain a bank balance. If you would like more information about this, connect with Rachel or Aidan.
- The Coordinating Committee is working towards developing a new strategic plan for NPRN. Currently, a small Steering Committee has been formed to help information gather before the Coordinating Committee can begin setting strategic directions.
- Next steps for strat planning are a survey consultation with our membership! This will provide us with as much community information as possible to help direct our next goals and priorities. Once data is collected, we will compile a plan of action alongside the Coordinating Committee, which will come to the Roundtable for approval. It is vital that we hear your voice! Please watch your inbox for the survey in early October, and take the time to complete it

### 3. Priority Table Updates

#### Health Equity

- The Health Equity Priority Table is currently in the process of direction setting, but interest has been focused on the following:
  - Advocacy regarding the need for increased resources and care regulations in long term care and assisted living facilities
  - Collaboration with the Migrant Worker Health Table,
- If there are things you think we could do work on, please connect with [Rachel](#)

#### Affordable Housing

- Safe, affordable, decent housing can be out of reach for individuals and families living on a low income. The Affordable Housing Group is working to identify the key issues in Niagara and advocate for improvements across the housing continuum.
- Current work has focused on:
  - Tenant support and protection, especially in response to the stresses tenants have placed during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Advocacy relating to Bill 184, and ensuring protections of tenants under the Landlord and Tenant Board procedures
- A doodle poll will be sent out to gather availability to current members, if you would like to be included on the table, please connect with [Rachel](#)

#### Business Engagement

- The business engagement priority table has three areas of focus, including:
  - Coordination and facilitation of business engagement opportunities for NPRN,
  - Bringing business perspectives on poverty issues and potential solutions
  - Promotion and awareness raising of the Living Wage program to employers, as well as the promotion of Living Wage certified employers
- Current work includes:
  - Connecting with different Chamber of Commerce groups throughout the region to tap into their available resources
  - Developing a newsletter/article to share these findings with the Niagara Business community

#### Government Relations & Advocacy

- The Government Relations & Advocacy priority table works to encourage voters to make an informed decision during election season (federal, provincial, and municipal), while also working to maintain connection and relationship with Niagara's elected officials.
- This priority table promotes the Network's existing reports, position statements and papers on key issues, and liaises closely with all other Priority Tables

#### Marketing & Communications

- The NPRN Marketing & Communications Priority Table aims to support the work of all other Priority Tables with marketing and promotional material, while coordinating NPRN's social media, website, and the Speaker's Bureau.
- Current work includes:
  - Rebranding NPRN and modernizing the NPRN website
  - Developing a brochure for NPRN
  - Updating the Speaker's Bureau presentation and system
  - Continued work on NPRN's social media graphics that highlight different national days (e.g. International Women's Day) and how they relate to poverty

## Social Assistance

- The Social Assistance Priority Table formed in a merger with the Social Assistance Reform Network of Niagara (SARNN) early this year.
- The work of this Priority Table will be looking at changes within the Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) as well as other government income/financial programs, and developing strategies to advocate for better solutions in the development and administration of these programs.
- The Social Assistance Priority Table will also include developing a position on Basic Income for Niagara, and any related advocacy, including CERB related advocacy

## Wages & Work

- The Wages & Work Priority Table is transitioning to an Advisory Committee, with a focus on releasing and updating the Cost of Living and Living Wage calculations and reports annually.
- This Advisory Committee will liaise with the Ontario Living Wage Network as needed.
- We are not doing cost of living update this year due to COVID-19, but are hoping to be able to next year
- Please continue to promote \$18.12 this year

## 4. Food Systems Presentations:

**Niagara Food System Network:** *Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Director of Community Impact, United Way Niagara*

As a follow up to the presentation (as Tamara experienced technical difficulties), here are some key highlights and how to learn more:

- The Niagara Food Security Network (NFSN) is a network of members aimed at making Niagara a food secure community for all. Visit us here: <https://www.unitedwayniagara.org/special-initiatives/niagara-food-security-network/>
- Priority Tables - Key recommendations are being worked on by the members of the network. These recommendations are being addressed through these Priority Tables:
  - Assets & Evidence
  - Food Hubs, Use, Rescue & Logistics
  - Public Education & Lived Experience Engagement
  - Farmers Partnerships
  - Social Enterprise
- Niagara Community Garden Network:
  - The NCGN is a collaborative network of local food security leaders working together to build thriving community gardens. In 2020, the Network found their home at United Way Niagara as part of their commitment to improving food security for all residents. United Way Niagara is providing the backbone support for the Network including support with funding opportunities, marketing and communications and community engagement and development. Network members include nonprofit agencies, schools and childcare centres, public libraries, churches, neighbourhood groups and community members working together to grow healthy, nutritious food.
  - Learn more here: <https://niagaracommunitygardens.ca/>
- Get involved by becoming a member of the Network or by sitting at a priority table. If you are interested please email Tamara at [tamara@unitedwayniagara.org](mailto:tamara@unitedwayniagara.org)
- Like our Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/Niagara-Food-Security-Network-102791787998932>
- Sign up for our quarterly newsletter – visit here and sign up at the bottom of the page: <https://www.unitedwayniagara.org/special-initiatives/niagara-food-security-network/>

**Fresh Food Hub:** *Leslie Bellingham, Director of Development and Communication, Open Arms Mission*

- Outgrew storage capacity for food used in programs
- In 2011, purchased a former warehouse property to use for dry food storage
- Have 13 acres as part of this and looking at how to best use that moving forward
- In 2019, put in large walk in freezer to better store perishable donations
- Cannot receive large donations, e.g. frozen chicken
- Now also have 'Coldtainers' that go into vans so that food can be transported (able to pick up donations, not just receive)
- Have established another walk in cooler, sorting and packing room, and a walk in freezer
- If you could use extra storage space (dry or cold) for food, please reach out to Open Arms Mission

**Next meetings:** Wednesday, November 25, 2020 9-10:30 a.m. *online*  
Wednesday, January 27, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. *online*  
Wednesday, March 24, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. *online*  
Wednesday, May 26, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. *online*  
Wednesday, September 22, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. *online*  
Wednesday, November 24, 2021 9-10:30 a.m. *online*