POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Phase II Stakeholder Engagement Summary

February 2021

Background

The City of Winnipeg (City) is developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy (strategy), which will serve as the foundation of the City's work in poverty reduction. The strategy will clarify the City's role, identify and prioritize short and long-term actions to reduce poverty in our community, and set out an implementation plan.

As the level of government closest to residents, municipal governments across Canada are taking steps to reduce poverty. In spring 2019, the City documented measures it was already taking to reduce poverty; a total of 146 measures were documented at that time. The following spring, the City worked with members of the community to develop a draft strategy.



Image 1: Working with the community to develop the Poverty Reduction Strategy

Engagement

The City partnered with Make Poverty History Manitoba and the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (an initiative of United Way Winnipeg) to co-create the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Representatives from each organization and the City formed a core working team to oversee and provide guidance on the project. Phase 1 of stakeholder engagement occurred in fall 2020. A draft strategy was created following Phase 1.

Phase 2 of stakeholder engagement focused on confirming the direction of the draft strategy and to identify priority actions for implementation. Stakeholder sessions were held in fall/winter 2020 with poverty reduction-related organizations and those with lived experience of poverty and homelessness. The sessions were held virtually to comply with COVID-19 public health orders and gather input on the draft strategy, including:

- Gaps in the proposed objectives and actions
- Priorities for implementation
- Potential partnerships for implementation

A summary of the Phase 2 stakeholder sessions is in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Stakeholder Sessions

Date	Meeting	Stakeholder Type	Attendees
September 25, 2020	Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council and United Way	Stakeholder organization	15
November 3, 2020	Province of Manitoba	Government organization	5*
November 17, 2020	Winnipeg Regional Health Authority	Government organization	N/A*
November 18, 2020	Fearless R2W	Lived experience stakeholders	10
November 24, 2020	Themed session #1 Community Well-being Supports	Stakeholder organizations	19
November 25, 2020	Themed session #2 Equity in Transportation	Stakeholder organizations	23
November 26, 2020	Themed session #3 Affordable Housing	Stakeholder organizations	22
November 30, 2020	Themed session #4 Equity in Employment and Income Opportunities	Stakeholder organizations	19
December 9, 2020	Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.	Lived experience stakeholders	3
December 11, 2020	Make Poverty History Manitoba	Stakeholder organization	10
December 14, 2020	Indigenous Community Organizations	Stakeholder organizations	5
December 14, 2020	Lived Experience Circle (Peer support groups)	Lived experience stakeholders	14

*The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Province of Manitoba, Department of Families provided feedback through written submissions.

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Engaging Lived Experience Stakeholders

It was important to the relationship building and for the outcomes of the project to engage with residents who have lived experience with poverty. At the onset of the project, it was identified that the wisdom and knowledge from the community was invaluable and needed to be the foundation of the strategy and the driving force behind the actions that the City will take to reduce poverty and make lasting positive change in Winnipeg.

Intersectionality

How individuals defined poverty varied based on their age, culture, gender, race and other social aspects. Experiences of poverty are shaped by the intersections of identity, so reducing poverty needs to recognize social categorizations and how they overlap.

An Indigenous youth stakeholder with lived experience described their experience of poverty as being tied to a lack of job opportunities and being profiled by police when they were crossing the street or at the park with friends.

> ***I have almost been arrested a number of times when we were doing normal things, like playing catch or soccer in Assiniboine Park in the evening.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 9, 2020)**

An older lived experience stakeholder talked about their experience of poverty being connected to a lack of access to healthy affordable foods and how that has a negative impact on their overall health.

> ***You can't help people if they don't have food, security, and basic housing.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

Creating effective solutions for the strategy that reduce poverty in Winnipeg requires an intersectional approach.

There were also several common experiences identified by lived experience stakeholders. This included themes of feeling like they had a lack of opportunity, freedom, choice, power over their own lives, and that their voices were not being heard.

Interconnection

During the engagement, lived experience stakeholders noted that all thematic areas are important because they are interconnected and support each other. These connections make it impossible to make meaningful change in one thematic area without addressing the other thematic areas.

For instance, having housing and an address is important to gain employment. But without employment, it is challenging to secure housing. In addition, where housing is located will affect the reliability of transit. Without reliable transit, it is challenging to maintain employment and pay for housing. All these themes are interconnected and need to be addressed together.

> ***Public transit becomes a barrier to everything like appointments and job interviews when you are low income.*** **(Lived experience stakeholder, November 18, 2020)**

Participants experiencing poverty describe how it takes all day to be poor. They spend most of their time going between various offices, services, and supports just to meet basic needs like food, transportation, and rent.

> ***We need to go to too many different places to deal with each and every need that has to be addressed. Why can't we go to one place?*** **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 9, 2020)**

Having a Seat at the Table

Engaging lived experience stakeholders while developing the strategy has been a priority, but the hope is to do more than just initial engagements. The wisdom of lived experience residents is important and needs to be included in more conversations. Lived experience stakeholders noted that the voices residents experiencing poverty was often missing from City decisions.

There was support and interest amongst the lived experience stakeholders to be invited into these conversations and have a say on how the City makes decisions that impact those experiencing poverty.

> ***The community needs to be consulted and listened to in regard to what they are willing to trade off on, what should be added on and what the City needs to keep in this strategy.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

If we listen deeply, we will find that lived experience stakeholders have solutions of how to address important topics relating to poverty, ways governments can collaborate more closely, and how to create a more prosperous community where everyone can have the opportunity to flourish.

Compensation

We recognize the value of the deep understanding of lived realities by those who we engaged with. We aimed to have the engagement with lived experience stakeholders to be equitable and meaningful for all involved. Honoraria was provided to all those participants with lived experience in recognition of the time and knowledge they provided to the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Thank You

It is with sincere gratitude that we wish to thank all of the lived experience stakeholders from the community groups and organizations that we engaged with. Your wisdom is the foundation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. These community groups and organizations included:

- Fearless R2W
- Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc.
- Poverty Awareness and Community Action
- Lived Experience Circle

What We Heard: Priorities

The eight thematic areas of the draft Poverty Reduction Strategy were shared with stakeholders. At some of the stakeholder meetings, participants were asked to place stamps beside their top three most important thematic areas to help the project team prioritize the strategy's implementation. Stamps were available using the virtual meeting platform's annotation tool. The number of stamps beside each thematic area was counted and is presented in Figure 1 below.

Stakeholders who participated in this activity prioritized the eight thematic areas in the following order:

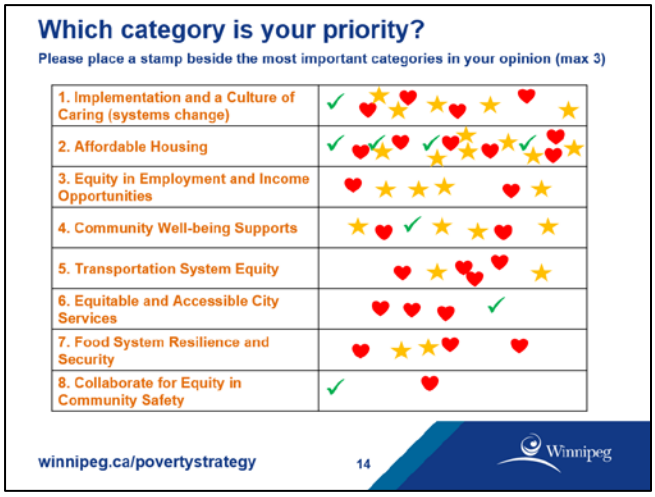

Image 2: Prioritizing Thematic Areas in Zoom

Figure 1: Prioritization of Thematic Areas

1. Affordable Housing (60)

2. Community Well-being Supports (34)

3. Equity in Employment and Income Opportunities (31)

4. Implementation and a Culture of Caring (30)

5. Equity in Transportation (24)

6. Food System Resilience and Security (23)

7. Collaborate for Equity in Community Safety (22)

8. Equitable and Accessible City Services (12)

(xx) refers to the number of stamps stakeholders allotted to each thematic area during the stakeholder sessions.

To learn more about the Poverty Reduction Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/povertystrategy

What We Heard: Priorities (cont'd)

Affordable housing emerged as the highest priority area for stakeholders. Stakeholders described housing as a foundation that would help improve the lives of those experiencing poverty across other thematic areas in the draft strategy. As one stakeholder noted, access to housing increases a person's well-being, safety, and employment opportunities. Another stakeholder indicated that rent can take the majority of someone's income. Without affordable housing, there is little money left for food, clothing, and other essentials.

Community well-being supports emerged as the second highest priority area for stakeholders. One stakeholder noted that without proper mental health and social supports other thematic areas would be difficult to achieve. Many people need supports for housing, employment, and safety to be successful.

Equity in employment and income emerged as the third highest priority. One stakeholder noted that without adequate employment and income, food security and housing is a challenge. Another stakeholder noted a lack of employment opportunities for youth.

Despite prioritizing the thematic areas in order of importance, one key takeaway from the discussions that followed is that all thematic areas are important because they are interconnected and support each other. Stakeholders pointed out numerous relationships between the different thematic areas and explained how it would be difficult to have success in one thematic area without the support of another thematic area. Stakeholders told us that the draft strategy needs to consider the connection between all areas for success in poverty reduction.

What We Heard: Actions

Following a discussion on implementation priorities, stakeholders were presented with the draft strategy's objectives and/or potential actions for the thematic areas. In some of the sessions, stakeholders were placed in small breakout groups using the virtual meeting platform's breakout tool. Each breakout group was assigned a different topic related to the thematic areas and associated objectives. Groups discussed the potential actions proposed in the draft strategy, identified gaps, and highlighted critical actions. Each breakout group was then asked to report back to everyone at the end of the stakeholder session.

Highlights from these discussions and examples of comments shared by stakeholders can be found in the Summary Sheets on the next pages. The Summary Sheets summarize some key points that were shared with the project team and are organized by thematic area and objective. Perspectives from both the lived experience stakeholders and stakeholder organizations are included. The Summary Sheets are not intended to provide a complete account of all that was said during the session. Detailed notes from each stakeholder session can be found in Appendix A.

Summary Sheet #1 – Affordable Housing

Description: Homeless supports, partnerships for transitional and affordable housing



Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders

1. Increase the City's capacity and commitment to partnering and planning for affordable housing.	• The not-for-profit sector is best set up to provide affordable housing in a sustainable way.
	  o However, not-for-profit developers need someone to guide them through the City's development process.
	• A partnership where City provides free land and tax incentives while the Province provide capital investment should be investigated.
	  o Manitoba Housing has partnered with City of Brandon on four housing projects.

2. Address the urgent and immediate housing needs of shelterless residents through partnerships.	• Available housing should be prioritized by who is in most need.
	  o This could include seniors, new Canadians, Indigenous families.
	  o Housing should be geared to income.
	• A partnership with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to lobby for change at the provincial and federal level should be explored.
	• Anti-eviction strategies are needed, as previously unsheltered residents do not always function within the expectations of the housing structure.

3. Utilize tools and resources available to the City to encourage more affordable housing development projects.	• Development permits for affordable housing should be fast-tracked. • Zoning tools could be used to increase affordable housing supply, such as density bonusing and inclusionary zoning. • Ensure that when there are affordable housing requirements in place, that developers must deliver (don't make false promises). • More communal living options are needed in Winnipeg. • Resources are needed for community housing. o Rent for affordable housing units in for profit developments often increases once government incentives end or the property changes hands.
4. Maintain and improve existing housing stock.	• Winnipeg's affordable housing needs cannot be met only through new builds and must think about improving existing housing stock. • The condition of existing housing stock is a challenge. • Prevent the loss of rooming houses. o The current quality and condition of rooming houses in an issue. • The city could adopt a condo conversion bylaw to protect existing affordable housing. • Landlords are an important component to housing. • Large rent increase justified by minor renovations is a challenge.

> ***If we want to keep housing affordable, resources should go to community housing.*** **(Stakeholder, November 26, 2020)**

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Summary Sheet #2 - Community Well-being Supports

Description: Health, mental health, harm reduction, healing,

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders
1. Improve the well-being of shelterless residents by addressing their urgent needs through collaboration with community partners and other levels of government.	• A human rights-based approach should be taken to encampments. • Oversight and cleaning are essential for public washrooms to be successful. • Recreational facilities could be used as warming facilities for shelterless residents. • Currently all community supports are on Main Street and in the North End. o Collaboration is needed to establish new services in other areas of the City.
2. Ensure front-line City staff have the knowledge, skills, and resources to help connect residents to needed supports.	• Provide frontline City staff with a list of resources to help connect residents to supports. • Provide training to City staff on community support skills (e.g. mental health first aid, crisis intervention, how to make referrals, etc.). • AEDs and Naloxone should be available in City buildings. • More City staff need Naloxone training.

3. Develop strategic partnerships to connect people in crisis to supports.	• Many community well-being issues are Provincial jurisdiction, but the City needs to be at the table (e.g. shelter space, isolation spaces, food security, etc.).
	• Community supports are often preferred by people over police or health care intervention.
	  o Wellness occurs through community supports that help people through tough times.
	• There should be a safe place where youth can go to get help 24 hours a day.
	  o There should be resources and staff support there to help kids fill out forms, get referrals etc.

4. Support harm reduction to save lives and minimize the negative health and community outcomes of substance use.	• Advocate for and support safe supply and substitution therapy. • Often it is not just what the City does but how the City does it. • While the City installed sharps containers for harm reduction, they were unsuccessful because of the locations selected. • Provide garbage bins and fire safety equipment at encampment sites rather than removing encampments.

> ***It's not just what we do, it's how we do it.***
> **(Stakeholder, November 24, 2020)**

> ***Safe injection sites would support harm reduction and sharps containers.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, November 18, 2020)**

To learn more about the Poverty Reduction Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/povertystrategy

Summary Sheet #3 – Equity in Employment and Income Opportunities

Description: Training, low-barrier jobs, social procurement, living wage

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders
1. Demonstrate a commitment to human rights and equity by decreasing barriers and maximizing employment, training, and mentorship opportunities that focus on equity, diversity, reconciliation, and poverty reduction.	• The City needs to focus not only on diversity in hiring but also how many of those new hires are retained. o Employee experience needs to be positive and with a sense of belonging in the work place. • Many workers need support when they transition from training programs into employment. • Credential recognition is a barrier to a lot of newcomers in Canada and is the choice of an organization in many cases to recognize credentials.
2. Leverage City purchasing to achieve social and community benefits.	• The City needs to review purchases and look for products or services that overlap with what social enterprises offer. o Social enterprises need help knowing where they could fill gaps and what they can deliver. • A social procurement policy is crucial to supporting community businesses.
3. Support social innovation and social purpose real estate.	• The City could issue a request for proposals to not-for-profit organizations for the use or sale of empty City land and buildings. o Ask proponents to identify what they can pay and what the community benefit will be instead of asking a specific price.
4. Advocate to senior levels of government on increasing opportunities for the social and economic stability of low-income families (i.e. childcare).	• The City should advocate to support the new provincial Bill 41 on credential recognition. • Businesses should provide youth in need with more employment opportunities and help to get any required certifications (e.g. identification, driver's licence, first aid, food handlers certificate). • There should be more programs to help youth learn trades.
5. Increase income supports (living wage policy, increasing EIA, Basic Income).	• Living wages need to increase with the cost of living. • Living wages should also apply to contractors and subcontractors. • Some organizations prefer to see low income people obtaining higher paying positions than implementing a living wage.

> ***Organizations often focus on diversity in hiring but do not focus on how many are retained.***
> **(Stakeholder, November 30, 2020)**

> ***There needs to be more employment opportunities for young people.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, November 18, 2020)**

Summary Sheet #4 - Implementation and a Culture of Caring



Description: Accountability for implementation, building trust, considering systemic barriers in decision-making

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders

1. Improve City's capacity to implement strategy.	• Increase the number of staff assigned to the Poverty Reduction Strategy's implementation.
	  o Actions should be implemented quickly, like on a one-year timeline.
	• Not allocating any additional funds or resources to poverty reduction contradicts the intentions of the strategy.
	• Commit to spending in the budget each year to carry out its strategic actions to reduce poverty.
	• There should be an advisory committee on poverty issues.
	  o This committee could help apply a poverty reduction lens to city decisions.
	  o A mentorship program could help lived experience residents be part of this committee.

2. Establish accountability for implementation and build trust.	• Develop and implement a process to meaningfully engage of people with lived experience in City decision-making. • Transparency in the Poverty Reduction Strategy can be improved by differentiating actions that are already being implemented from new actions. • Use Market Basket Measure (MBM) as an official measure for conformity with national standards and to allow for comparability with other metropolitan areas across Canada. • People with lived experience should be involved in developing the plan and in implementation.
3. Increase Public Service awareness of systemic barriers related to poverty and social inequity, and factor them into decision-making and service delivery.	• Admin reports should have a poverty implication section to increase awareness across the Public Service, similar to the budget implication section. o What does this decision have to do with reduction of poverty? • An Indigenous council would be beneficial for all decisions that impact Indigenous people.
4. Advocate and develop partnerships.	• The equity lens tool could be helpful for advocacy. • Support the Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy's key target to reduce the child poverty rate by 25 percent by 2025. • It is difficult for youth to access services with so many different providers. • It would have an impact if the City advocated to other levels of government on issues impacting poverty.

> ***The City says it values poverty reduction but by not allocating any additional funds or resources is a contradiction.*** **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

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Summary Sheet #5 - Equity in Transportation

Description: Access to affordable transit, transit service to employment opportunities

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders

1. Increase affordability and accessibility of transportation for those who need it most.	• Reduced single fare options are important for low-income transit riders, not just reduced monthly passes.
	  o Have a sliding scale for the low-income monthly pass. Even at the reduced rate many people still can't afford a monthly pass.
	  o Have a pass for youth to ride for free during school hours.
	• Free rides for youth under 12 years of age are important.
	• The City needs to support ride share programs, which are used as alternative for those uncomfortable with taxis.
	• Bicycle theft in Winnipeg needs to be addressed, as many low-income residents rely on bicycles for transportation.
	  o Implement a reward system for salvage businesses who report suspected thefts.
	• Transit fare free zones Downtown are important especially with the elimination of the Downtown Spirit.
	• Actions to support people in poverty with mobility issues are needed

2. Target improvements to transportation infrastructure and services to areas where residents rely on transit to move around the city.	• Parking requirements are often a barrier to densification and affordable housing.
	• Good neighbourhood design is required for good transit.
	  o If the layout of neighbourhoods and the connections between neighbourhoods are poor, there will be no efficient transit routes.
	• The City shouldn't always a focus on infrastructure, but focus on the service.
	• More needs to be done to ensure active transportation routes are kept accessible during construction and winter.
	• Many low-income people rely on personal vehicles.
	  o Poor road conditions increase the cost of ownership.
	• Snow removal needs to be prioritized in areas of high pedestrian and transit use.

3. Support transportation needs of unsheltered residents (i.e. during extreme cold/hot weather, COVID-19).	• More effort is needed to raise awareness about Winnipeg Transit's cold weather policy among vulnerable residents. o The City should broaden this policy to include other types of weather other than just extreme cold (e.g. snow, wind, etc.). • Cancelling the Downtown Spirit had a large impact on unsheltered residents, as it provided access to shelters and services people relied on.

> ***The Downtown Spirit being cancelled caused a lot of problems and barriers for folks.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

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Summary Sheet #6 - Food System Resilience and Security

Description: Food security, culturally appropriate foods, sustainable foods

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders
1. Work with partners to increase sustainable, culturally appropriate food security for all residents.	• Find partnerships to better utilize City-owned commercial kitchen facilities. • Partner in a food hub model where locally produced food suppliers are supported to go to low income communities and food deserts to sell affordable locally produced foods. o It is not just about access to food, but access to healthy and good quality foods. • The Winnipeg Food Council could support local wholesale distributors. • Link Indigenous knowledge and land-based education information to food initiatives. • Access to food is a big issue for youth living in poverty.

2. Maximize use of City's tools and resources to increase food security and access for the most vulnerable residents and in areas of higher need.	• Licensing of commercial kitchen facilities is often beyond of capacity of front-line organizations feeding those in need.
	  o Could there be flexibility in kitchen standards for community organizations making meals for the community?
	• Community gardens should be able to produce food for the community but often their primary function ends up being social benefits and community access to green space with providing food being the last purpose.
	  o Community gardens aren't set up to maximize food production.
	  o The City should hire a professional with a PHD in agriculture who has the skills and expertise to monitor and manage soil levels and support community gardens to ensure they are thriving.
	• The City could operate a grocery shuttle that brings Downtown and inner-city residents to the suburbs where food is cheaper.

> ***It is not just about having food but having good quality foods.*** **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

> ***Community gardens aren't sustainable without access to affordable water.*** **(Stakeholder, December 11, 2020)**

Summary Sheet #7 - Collaborate for Equity in Community Safety

Description: Community-based approaches, safety, security community well-being

Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders

1. Increase and resource equity and community-based approaches to safety and security all residents, in particular Black, Indigenous and People of Color, (BIPOC) residents.	• Community elders need to be part of the Police and Crisis Team (PACT) model for it to be successful.
	• A cost-benefit analysis of safety benefits from community services needs to be conducted.
	  o Funding community services may be cheaper and more effective in achieving community safety than policing.
	• Defund the police.
	  o More money should go to non-profit groups for community initiatives, rather than to enforcement.
	• Public spaces should be monitored by organizations trusted by the community, like the Bear Clan, instead of cadets and police.

2. Increase the safety and security of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people, and youth through partnerships.	• The PACT model is not preferred by the community. o The presence of police often causes additional distress to those in crisis and can escalate the situation.
3. Address systemic racism and inequity in all City departments and service agencies through community-informed leadership, diversity hiring, and targeted programs and initiatives.	• The City needs to reevaluate who is on the Winnipeg Police Board. • A properly funded and representative Public Safety Board is needed, not the current Winnipeg Police Board. • An Indigenous advisory committee would be beneficial to policing.
4. Maximize use of City facilities as neighbourhood hubs for community safety and well-being, particularly in areas of higher need.	• Funding safe spaces would achieve community safety objectives with less money than policing.

> ***When there are safety concerns we put more money into police. Can we fund safe spaces to achieve goals with less money?*** **(Stakeholder, December 11, 2020)**

> ***Police presence can cause more duress for those experiencing crisis.***
> **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

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Summary Sheet #8 - Equitable and Accessible City Services

Description: Service delivery, equitable access, community development



Objectives in the Draft Strategy	Example Comments from Stakeholders
1. Ensure all residents have equitable access to City services, in particular demographic groups experiencing inequity.	• Barriers exist for persons with a disability when a support worker accompanies them to recreation and leisure activities (e.g. swimming lessons). o City staff need training on support worker responsibilities. • Eliminate library late fees so there is no judgement or penalties when returning overdue books. • Provide unsheltered residents with access to showers at City recreation facilities. • Support youth in care and youth aging out of care by providing easier access to City services and special programs with other partners agencies. • Winnipeg needs public green spaces that are safer and more accessible.
2. Use community development models for service delivery in areas of higher need.	• Community centre boards can be disconnected from community needs and do not provide evidence-based service delivery. o More consultation with the community is required.
3. Maximize use of City's tools and resources to address and reduce systemic inequities.	• Develop policies to maximize use of City facilities and assets for community benefit. • Not-for-profit organizations require costly insurance for activities on publicly-owned lands and in City facilities. o The City can help not-for-profits provide more services to the community by assisting with the cost of insurance. • The City can waive fees for community spaces.

> ***Access to City services compliments the income you have.*** **(Stakeholder, November 26, 2020)**

> ***The libraries should implement a no questions asked late fee forgiveness program.*** **(Lived experience stakeholder, December 14, 2020)**

To learn more about the Poverty Reduction Strategy, please visit winnipeg.ca/povertystrategy

Next Steps

In February 2021, the Public Service will be reporting back to the Executive Policy Committee of Council to update on stakeholder feedback and to outline next steps toward the completion of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The draft Poverty Reduction Strategy will be finalized with the help of feedback collected from the Phase 2 stakeholder engagement. A respond to feedback and how it was considered will be included in the strategy. Some of the comments from stakeholders relate to work that is underway by the City, so an update on those actions will also be included.

A detailed implementation plan will also be developed. Additional stakeholder meetings may occur on an as-needed basis as the project team finalizes the strategy and implementation plan. The recommended strategy will require Council approval once finalized.

Appendices

Appendix A – Stakeholder Session Meeting Notes and Written Submission

Appendix B – Sample Stakeholder Session Presentation

Appendix C – List of Stakeholder Organizations