

Greater Sudbury Poverty Challenge



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Greater Sudbury Poverty Challenge

In December 2018, Public Health Sudbury & Districts hosted a one-day poverty simulation event called the Greater Sudbury Poverty Challenge. The event was held in partnership with the Partners to End Poverty steering committee, which includes agencies across Greater Sudbury that provide guidance to the [Circles Sudbury](#) poverty reduction initiative.

The event was designed to raise awareness about the realities of living in poverty and to reaffirm their commitment to poverty reduction.



Poverty Challenge Goals

1. Provide an authentic experience to participants to increase their understanding about the realities of living poverty;
2. Increase compassion and inspire sustained commitment to poverty reduction efforts.

Who Attended

Forty-three community leaders and decision-makers from across Greater Sudbury participated in the challenge.

What Was the Challenge

Each participant was given the profile of a person and asked to “live” their given profile.

Each profile was developed based on the lived experiences of Sudburians connected with the Sudbury Circles initiative.

The profile came with a series of challenges for participants to attempt to address given a finite set of resources and time, including navigating a range of common community agency encounters like applying for [Ontario Works](#), accessing food from the Food Bank, or travelling between agencies using the Transit System.

Representatives from seventeen community agencies were present to interact with participants, adding greater depth to the event.

Participant Feedback

All participants were invited to share their immediate reactions of the event in small group debrief sessions.

These words summarize prominent sentiments shared by participants during debrief sessions:

- > barriers
- > confusing
- > demoralizing
- > difficult
- > dignity
- > frustrating
- > inconsistent
- > lost
- > non-entity
- > overwhelming
- > struggling
- > support
- > unproductive
- > waiting



Survey Highlights

Participants were also invited to complete a voluntary survey following the event. The survey assessed participant's opinions regarding the event and attitudes towards poverty in our community. Thirty-four of the 43 participants completed the survey.

A Meaningful Experience



found the Poverty Challenge a valuable experience

Raised Awareness



had a better understanding of the financial pressures of poverty



had a better understanding of the relationship between poverty and health



had a better understanding of how people in poverty have different access to resources than those not in poverty

Inspired Change



felt that the current levels of poverty in the community are unacceptable



felt inspired to change



felt that additional training would be beneficial



were committed to improving cross-sectoral collaboration in our community



Top Focus Areas for Poverty Reduction

The top five areas community leaders have identified as focus areas for poverty reduction efforts were:

59%

for mental health supports

59%

for housing

47%

for transportation

44%

for children's services

44%

for health card

Participant Quotes

“Modelling the event after the lives of real people made the challenge much more meaningful. It was great to have individuals with **lived experiences** participate in the event, as it made the challenge less theoretical and more focused on actual struggles in our City (some of which may have **otherwise gone unnoticed**).”

“Life focus was in **accessing services** instead of living your life.”

“The **life that you are living** is parked as you try to get all of these supports.”

“All we are doing is helping people cope, we are **not changing or improving** the system.”

Poverty Challenge Video



Acknowledgements

Public Health Sudbury & Districts is extremely grateful to the following for their support with the Greater Sudbury Poverty Challenge:

- > Individuals from the community who shared their personal stories and worked with us to develop profiles for the event.
- > Agencies who participated in the event by representing themselves in the simulation.
- > St. Albert Adult Learning Centre for hosting the event.
- > Partners to End Poverty Steering Committee.
- > The Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction for permission to use and adapt the The Poverty Challenge¹ materials.

This event would not have been possible without support from these partnerships.

List of Community Agencies Represented

- > YMCA of Northeastern Ontario
- > Sudbury Catholic District School
- > Sudbury Vocational Resource Centre
- > N'Swakamok Native Friendship Centre
- > Salvation Army Food Bank
- > Homelessness Network
- > City of Greater Sudbury
- > The Children's Aid Society of the Districts of Sudbury and Manitoulin
- > ServiceOntario
- > Pregnancy Care Centre & Infant Food Bank
- > Health Sciences North
- > Butterfly Wings Perinatal Bereavement Services
- > Monarch Recovery Services
- > Jubilee Heritage Family Resources
- > Public Health Sudbury & Districts

¹ Public Health Sudbury & Districts adapted with permission materials from a poverty simulation toolkit developed by members of the Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction called The Poverty Challenge. The toolkit is based on a model where individual profiles are created based on real people living in the community in question. Public Health Sudbury & Districts adapted the model to incorporate actual representatives from local community agencies into the simulation as well to incorporate additional community perspectives and voices to the event.



Resources

Public Health Sudbury & Districts adapted the poverty simulation toolkit called “The Poverty Challenge”, developed by the Kingston Community Roundtable and created for its event the following resources are located in the appendices:

- > [Appendix A - Individual Profiles](#)
- > [Appendix B - Agency set-up questions](#)
- > [Appendix C - Individual participant evaluation form](#)
- > [Appendix D - Participating agency evaluation form](#)

Appendix A - Individual Profiles

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Emily: Profile Card

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EMILY

Age: 19



Education

Business student at Cambrian College



Employment

Currently unemployed



Income

\$2745 per month from Ontario Works (includes Trillium and child tax benefit for a single, 2-child person).



Family status

Common law relationship, three children (2 ½ year old, 1 year old, and a newborn).



Living situation

Living in a 3-bedroom subsidized apartment (~\$300/month).



Identification

Status card
Health card



Resources

You have no financial assets.
You are close with your mother and brother.
You rely on public transit for transportation.





EMILY

Age: 19

Strengths

- > Charismatic and optimistic for the future
- > Loving parent
- > Hard-working
- > Resilient



Background

You, your two daughters (through a previous relationship), and your new partner have recently moved to Sudbury from Cutler so that you can attend Cambrian College through the Academic and Career Entrance program.

You have just started receiving Ontario Works benefits.

You are also receiving educational funding from your band to support your school costs (\$3281.30 for tuition and books per semester).

Your partner is not currently working.

Shortly after moving to Sudbury, you become eligible for subsidized housing and move to a 3-bedroom apartment in New Sudbury.



EMILY

Age: 19

Strengths

- > Charismatic and optimistic for the future
- > Loving parent
- > Hard-working
- > Resilient



Round one

Current situation

You have given birth to your child and immediately experience severe postpartum depression.

You have incurred additional child rearing expenses and need support making ends meet.

Your partner becomes abusive to you and your two oldest children.

You discover that he has also been using street drugs.

Your partner is arrested after your mother calls the police during a particularly abusive event.

You have begun drinking to cope with your post-partum depression and the stress of your precarious finances and your domestic familial situation.





EMILY

Age: 19

Strengths

- > Charismatic and optimistic for the future
- > Loving parent
- > Hard-working
- > Resilient



Round one

You must

- > Get financial assistance.
- > Seek treatment for your postpartum depression and substance misuse related to alcohol.
- > Meet with Children's Aid Society.
- > Find a way to feed yourself and your family.



EMILY

Age: 19

Strengths

- > Charismatic and optimistic for the future
- > Loving parent
- > Hard-working
- > Resilient



Round two

Current situation

You have just found out that you are not eligible to receive Ontario Works and educational funding from your band simultaneously as this is considered overpayment of services and it is not permitted. Both sources of funding have been immediately cancelled.

You are no longer eligible for your subsidized apartment and must move out immediately.

Your partner moves out. He refuses to pay child support leaving you to take care of your three children.

Given your postpartum depression and substance issues, you are no longer able to care for your children. You arrange for your oldest two children to live temporarily with their father. You work with Children's Aid Society to make a kinship arrangement for your youngest child to live with your mother.

You have no Internet.





EMILY

Age: 19

Strengths

- > Charismatic and optimistic for the future
- > Loving parent
- > Hard-working
- > Resilient



Round two

You must

- > Search apartment listings on-line.
- > Find temporary storage for your household possessions.
- > Resolve your overcharge payment with Ontario Works.
- > Continue your education.

Suzanna: Profile Card

1/5



SUZANNA

Age: 36



Education

High school graduate



Employment

Currently unemployed, staying home to raise your children.



Income

\$0



Family status

Married with one child (4 years old) and pregnant.



Living situation

Living in subsidized 2-bedroom apartment (~\$220/month).



Identification

Health card

Birth certificate

Child's birth certificate



Resources

You are close with your father and brother.

Small amount of savings.

You own a vehicle.





SUZANNA

Age: 36

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Supportive
- > Loving parent and partner



Background

You and Stephane were living comfortably in a subsidized apartment with your 4-year-old daughter and another baby on the way.

You are more than halfway through your second pregnancy.

Stephane supported the family through contract labour work.

You and Stephane recently gave notice to the housing office where you currently reside because you finally are in a financial position to move out of subsidized housing and into an apartment.

Shortly following this Stephane lost his contract and has not been able to find a new one.

Stephane wants to go back to school but has an old student debt through the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Stephane's employment insurance has run out and you are now living off your small amount of savings.



SUZANNA

Age: 36

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Supportive
- > Loving parent and partner



Round one

Current situation

You and Stephane are uncertain if you can keep your current subsidized housing since you have already put in your notice to leave before Stephane lost his job.

You have been feeling unwell and worried since you are pregnant.

You and Stephane are running out of savings without any source of income. You are no longer able to make payments on your credit card and Stephane's student loans.

Stephane is still unemployed.

Stephane really wanted to find a job or go back to school but finally agrees to apply for Ontario Works to make ends meet.

You must

- > Seek advice regarding your housing situation.
- > Find temporary housing.
- > Seek medical care for your pregnancy.
- > Get financial assistance.



SUZANNA

Age: 36

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Supportive
- > Loving parent and partner



Round two

Current situation

Your family has been approved for Ontario Works, but you will not receive money for a few more business days.

Stephane feels strongly that he should get upgrading as he knows that he will be more desirable to employers.

Stephane has had to declare bankruptcy as you have exhausted your savings and had no other options for debt repayment.

You have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes and now have medical appointments twice weekly and a prescription for insulin. At your recent appointment you are informed that the baby might be born prematurely.

Ontario Works has not taken effect yet so you do not have drug benefits at present.

Your car is not running properly and so you are unable to use it.

You are having serious troubles making ends meet.





SUZANNA

Age: 36

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Supportive
- > Loving parent and partner



Round two

You must

- > Seek help accessing drug benefits.
- > Find a way to feed yourself and your family.
- > Find transportation, your car is no longer reliable.
- > Seek career counselling.
- > Get pregnancy and infant support.
- > Pay for your prescriptions that you and the baby require.

Stephane: Profile Card

1/5



STEPHANE

Age: 40



Education

High school graduate



Employment

Currently unemployed



Income

\$0



Family status

Married with one child (4 years old) and one on the way.



Living situation

Living in subsidized 2-bedroom apartment (~\$220/month).



Identification

Health card
Birth certificate
Child's birth certificates
Driver licence



Resources

You are close with your father in-law and your brother-in-law.
Small amount of savings.
You own a vehicle.





STEPHANE

Age: 40

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Committed
- > Loving parent and partner



Background

You and Suzanna were living comfortably in a subsidized apartment with your 4 year old daughter and another baby on the way.

Suzanna is more than halfway through her second pregnancy.

You supported the family through contract labour work.

You and Suzanna recently gave notice to the housing office where you currently reside because you finally are in a financial position to move out of subsidized housing and into an apartment.

Shortly following this you lost your contract and have not been able to find a new one.

You want to go back to school but have an old student debt through the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Your employment insurance has run out and you are now living off your small amount of savings.



STEPHANE

Age: 40

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Committed
- > Loving parent and partner



Round one

Current situation

You and Suzanna are uncertain if you can keep your current subsidized housing since you have already put in your notice to leave before losing your job.

Suzanna has been feeling unwell and is worried since she is pregnant.

You and Suzanna are running out of savings without any source of income. You are no longer able to make payments on your credit card and student loans.

You are still unemployed.

You really wanted to find a job or go back to school but finally agree to apply for Ontario Works to make ends meet.

You must

- > Seek advice regarding your housing situation.
- > Find temporary housing.
- > Help Suzanna seek medical care for her pregnancy.
- > Get financial assistance.



STEPHANE

Age: 40

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Committed
- > Loving parent and partner



Round two

Current situation

Your family has been approved for Ontario Works, but you will not receive money for a few more business days.

You feel strong that you should get upgrading as you know that you will be more desirable to employers.

You had to declare bankruptcy and have exhausted your savings as you had no other options for repaying your debts.

Suzanna has been diagnosed with gestational diabetes and now has medical appointments twice weekly and a prescription for insulin. At Suzanna's most recent appointment she is informed that the baby might be born prematurely.

Ontario Works has not taken effect yet so you do not have drug benefits at present.

Your car is not running properly and you are unable to use it.

You are having serious troubles making ends meet.





STEPHANE

Age: 40

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Committed
- > Loving parent and partner



Round two

You must

- > Seek help accessing drug benefits.
- > Find a way to feed yourself and your family.
- > Find transportation, your car is no longer reliable.
- > Seek career counselling.
- > Help Suzanna get pregnancy and infant support.
- > Help Suzanna pay for her prescriptions that she and the baby require.

Sophie: Profile Card

1/4



SOPHIE

Age: 22



Education

Grade 11



Employment

Currently unemployed



Income

\$2745 per month from Ontario Works (includes Trillium benefit, child tax benefit for a single, 2-child person).



Family status

Widowed and a mother of two children (ages 1 ½ and 2 ½).



Living situation

Living in an 2-bedroom apartment (\$1250 plus utilities).



Identification

Health card
Birth certificate for yourself and your children



Resources

You have no financial assets.
You rely on public transit for transportation but can occasionally get a ride from your father.





SOPHIE

Age: 22

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Intelligent
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Background

You are currently living in an apartment that you need to move out of next month.

Your partner and the father of your children recently died of a drug overdose.

Your mom lives in Elliot Lake.

Your father is in Sudbury and will help you on occasion with rides around town.

You are more determined than ever to make sure your children do not experience the same challenges you did growing up.



SOPHIE

Age: 22

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Intelligent
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Round one

Current situation

You applied for and recently started receiving Ontario Works since losing your partner.

You have started searching for a new place to live.

You need basic supplies for your children (food, diapers, and other supplies). You receive Ontario Works and receive a child tax benefit.

You need a new place to live by next month. You are currently nearly 50% of your income to pay rent and cannot afford it.

Your father is out of town and you do not have a ride for the next two weeks, you need to use the transit services.

You must

- > Find a way to feed yourself and your family.
- > Get parent and infant support.
- > Find transportation.
- > Find out how to get a housing subsidy.
- > Find housing that you can afford.



SOPHIE

Age: 22

Strengths

- > Confident
- > Intelligent
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Round two

Current situation

You can only receive supplies for your children from the Pregnancy Centre until they are 22 months old. Therefore, only one qualifies.

Your father is back in town and can drive you anywhere you need to go for the next two weeks.

You want to go to college, you need to talk to a guidance counsellor to figure out how to do this and what financial support there is to help.

Your sister is willing to watch the children so that you can speak with your guidance counsellor.

You must

- > Seek help navigating the different housing support services.
- > Seek advice about your education options and how to receive financial support.
- > Seek pregnancy and infant support.
- > Seek transportation.

Garrett: Profile Card

1/4



GARRETT

Age: 23



Education

Grade 11



Employment

Currently unemployed



Income

\$0



Family status

Single, father of a six-month-old child.



Living situation

Living on a couch in your brother's garage in Garson.



Identification

None



Resources

You have no financial assets.
You have some support from your brother.
You rely on public transit for transportation.





GARRETT

Age: 23

Strengths

- > Creative
- > Hard-working
- > Resourceful
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Background

You recently separated from your former partner and have a six-month-old son, who lives in a remote community in Northern Ontario.

You lost your job due to substance misuse related to alcohol and opioids, coupled with a lack of support programs in the community where you lived.

You moved to Thunder Bay to attend a 31-day residential treatment program for your addictions. Once the program ended you experienced short-term homelessness where all of your identification was lost.

You hitchhiked to Sudbury to live with your brother as you had nowhere else to go.



GARRETT

Age: 23

Strengths

- > Creative
- > Hard-working
- > Resourceful
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Round one

Current situation

You are couch surfing. Sleeping in your brother's unheated garage in Garson with a space heater to keep warm.

You no longer have savings to make ends meet. Your brother cannot provide additional support.

You want to continue treatment and plan to register at Monarch Recovery Services.

You must

- > Find a way to feed yourself.
- > Obtain financial assistance.
- > Seek help for your addiction.
- > Replace your lost identification.



GARRETT

Age: 23

Strengths

- > Creative
- > Hard-working
- > Resourceful
- > Determined to get back on your feet



Round two

Current situation

You have completed your treatment program.

You want a job and you want to get your Grade 12.

You have received your new identification from Service Ontario.

You must

- > Get financial assistance.
- > Find transportation.
- > Find employment.
- > Get your Grade 12 diploma.
- > Find a way to feed yourself.

Roger: Profile Card

1/5



ROGER

Age: 28



Education

Master's Degree



Employment

Currently unemployed



Income

\$2088 per month from Ontario Works including child tax benefit on Ontario Disability Support Program.



Family status

Married with three children (newborn, 1 ½ and 3 ½).



Living situation

Housing subsidy services



Identification

Health card
Birth certificate



Resources

You have no financial assets.
You rely on public transit for transportation.
You have emotional support from your partner.





ROGER

Age: 28

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Loving parent and partner



Background

You are a Masters Graduate but have extreme social anxiety.

You used to work for a computer company but have been on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) for the past two years due to extreme social anxiety.

You share custody of your two eldest children with your former partner.

You and your current partner have just lost your three-month-old child from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The loss of your child has greatly impacted your emotional health and increased your anxiety to the point where you do not feel comfortable in social situations and can no longer work.

You do not have a family doctor.

You have limited support outside of your current partner.

You have no father and your mother lives in the United States.

Your closest living relative is your brother who struggles with addiction and you do not keep in touch.



ROGER

Age: 28

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Loving parent and partner



Round one

Current situation

You currently live in subsidized housing and are content with the services there.

You have gone to a walk-in clinic to get your medications and to have Ontario Disability Support Program documents signed for renewal of support (as re-assessment is required every two years), but they refused, stating they did not know you well enough. You need this renewal of support to continue receiving financial support and health benefits.

You need medication for your anxiety, but the walk-in clinic doctor will not prescribe controlled medications.

You have been working very hard and trying not to think about the tragedy of losing your child. It has caught up with you and you need to reach out for additional help; you have been feeling suicidal.

You have no Internet.





ROGER

Age: 28

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Loving parent and partner



Round one

You must

- > Seek advice from the Ontario Disability Support Program office regarding the re-assessment.
- > Call a crisis line.
- > Search online on how to get a family doctor or nurse practitioner.



ROGER

Age: 28

Strengths

- > Hard-working
- > Loving parent and partner



Round two

Current situation

You need food and supplies for your family. Your wife stays at home with the children.

You have received a prescription for your medication (this was obtained during your admission through the Emergency Department).

You are grieving the loss of your child. The Emergency Department provided you with information about local social support services to reach out to.

You must

- > Seek help accessing drug benefits.
- > Seek grief counselling.
- > Get parent support services.
- > Find a way to feed yourself and your family.

Appendix B:

Agency set-up questions: Please complete

Agency name: _____

Set-up

- We would like to set up the day before event between 12-4pm
- We would like to set up early on the event day between 7-8 am

We require

- Electricity
- Additional chairs for clients to complete paperwork Number of chairs: _____
- Other: _____

We are able to bring

- Agency banner or table sign Brochures
- Intake/Registration forms Computer for on-line services
- Other (please specify): _____

Bus tickets (bus tickets will be provided)

- Our agency **does** provide bus tickets to clients
- Our agency **does not** provide bus tickets to clients

If yes, please describe under what circumstances tickets are provided and how many

Lunch

- Our agency reps will be staying for lunch
- Our agency reps will not be staying for lunch

Guest speaker

- Our agency reps will be staying for the guest speaker
- Our agency reps will not be staying for the guest speaker

Appendix C:

Poverty Challenge Participant Evaluation Form

The Poverty Challenge event was designed for participants to learn about the realities of individuals living in poverty in our community, including their experiences with social service navigation.

Your participation in this evaluation will help inform how we can improve on this work, including the possibility of hosting similar events in the future. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous.

Reflections from the session



For each statement, please use the following scale where **1** means that you strongly disagree, **2** that you somewhat disagree, **3** you neither agree nor disagree, **4** you somewhat agree, and **5** you strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I have a better understanding of the financial pressures faced by low income families in meeting their basic needs.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I have a better understanding of the impact of poverty on health.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I feel more empathetic towards people in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I have a better understanding of how people living in poverty have different access to resources than those not living in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I believe that the current rates of poverty in our community are unacceptable.	<input type="radio"/>				

Moving forward

	1	2	3	4	5
6. I plan to share information about this experience with my colleagues, family and friends.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I believe that changes to policies and programs should be informed by those accessing services, including individuals living in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I believe the agency I represent could benefit from additional training to foster greater empathy during service delivery (e.g., Bridges out of Poverty training).	<input type="radio"/>				
9. I am committed to improving cross-sectoral collaboration in our community to reduce poverty.	<input type="radio"/>				

10. What broader issues in the community would you like to see a greater focus on in the coming year to support poverty reduction efforts?
- Children's services
 - Disability supports
 - Health care
 - Housing
 - Income supports
 - Legal aid
 - Mental health supports
 - Transportation
 - Other: _____

11. The Poverty Challenge experience was well organized and engaging.

12. I would recommend others to participate in a future Poverty Challenge or similar events.

13. What did you find most effective from today's experience?

14. How will this experience shape your future practice?

15. What would you recommend improving for future poverty challenge events?

Appendix D:

Poverty Challenge Provider Evaluation Form

The Poverty Challenge event was designed for participants to learn about the realities of individuals living in poverty in our community, including their experiences with social service navigation.

Your participation in this evaluation will help inform how we can improve on this work, including the possibility of hosting similar events in the future. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous.

Reflections from the session



For each statement, please use the following scale where **1** means that you strongly disagree, **2** that you somewhat disagree, **3** you neither agree nor disagree, **4** you somewhat agree, and **5** you strongly agree.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. It was beneficial to have my agency represented at the Poverty Challenge.	<input type="radio"/>				
2. I was able to give participants a better understanding of my agency's role in the community.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I had sufficient time to explain my agency's services to participants based on the scenarios I was presented with.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I felt that when my agency could not help a participant that they understood it was due to:					
<input type="radio"/> Financial restrictions					
<input type="radio"/> Internal policies					
<input type="radio"/> Mistaken assumption by the participants on our agency's mandate					
<input type="radio"/> Staffing constraints					
<input type="radio"/> Other: _____					
5. I often had to refer participants to another agency to assist them with questions or situations.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Participating in this event gave me a better understanding of the pressures faced by other community partners in providing services to people living in poverty.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. Participating in this event gave me a better understanding of the services offered by other providers.	<input type="radio"/>				

Moving forward

8. What was one key take away from the Poverty Challenge session?

9. I would recommend the following improvements for future poverty challenges:

10. I would recommend others to participate in a future Poverty Challenge or similar events.

11. Please list agencies or types of individuals you would recommend to attend a future event.

12. Please share any other feedback.



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