



9 August 2024

Allison Penner
Deputy Clerk
Corporate Services Department
City of Owen Sound

Re: Renewal of Formal Representation to the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force

Dear Allison,

We are writing to continue our formal agreement with the City of Owen Sound for a representative to be assigned to the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force.

We have many municipal, provincial and federal representatives who engage in the Poverty Task Force and its activities. County Wardens, Mayors and Council members across Grey Bruce are actively engaged with the Poverty Task Force, however, the City of Owen Sound is the only municipality that has requested a formal agreement.

We believe that formal representation by the City of Owen Sound will continue to strengthen the communication and engagement between our respective organizations as well as community members. Given the current poverty, mental health and addiction challenges in the community, we feel it is critical that we work together as partners to meet the needs and address system changes.

The Poverty Task Force was founded in 2012 by the Mayor of Owen Sound, Executive Director of the United Way of Bruce Grey, Director of Grey County Social Services and the Chair of the Ecumenical Committee of Grey Bruce. The Director of Bruce County Human Services joined soon after. <https://povertytaskforce.com/>

We are led by a Steering Committee consisting of Grey County, Bruce County and the United Way of Bruce Grey. These three backbone organizations provide the essential funding for the Poverty Task Force. The United Way of Bruce Grey employs the Coordinator and provides administrative support.

The Poverty Task Force works in partnership with 72 community-based agencies, planning tables, community groups, universities, institutes and policymakers. It is a platform that allows for meaningful dialogue, education and purposeful partnerships that address the root causes of poverty in Grey and Bruce Counties. Our objective is to spark and inform public debate, and to engage the social, academic and policy communities around important issues of poverty reduction in rural communities.

As an Action Table of the Grey Bruce Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, we are responsible for carrying out collective action on income security. This includes action to increase income to households, access to income supports and provide financial literacy on predatory practices.

The Poverty Task Force through its Action Groups and Communities of Practice also carry out collective action to:

- address poverty related issues facing Grey Bruce communities – housing, income security, employment security, food security, health equity, transportation and engaging with people with lived experience,
- improve access and provision to free income tax filing through the Grey Bruce Community Volunteer Income Tax Program Network,
- support Grey Bruce Food Share/Food Rescue and Grey Bruce Community Garden Network,
- collect data-based evidence and carry out local participatory research with universities and research partners through the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative, Grey County Housing Home Takeover Pilot, Four County Labour Market Planning Board research on employment and co-chair the Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC),
- and promote system-level discussions with Grey Bruce lower tier and upper tier municipal leaders and provincial governments leaders.

The Poverty Task Force has several active meetings.

- The Poverty Task Force as-a-whole meets monthly online, with an in-person meeting scheduled for October 2024.
- Food Security Action Group and Income & Employment Action Group meets monthly online.
- Housing Community of Practice meets weekly online.
- Networks and collaboratives meet as needed to carry out activities and research,
- The Community Voices is currently on hold as we work with Grey Bruce Community Drug & Alcohol Strategy and the Grey Bruce Ontario Health Team to build a new peer advisory joint group.

Due to the increasing complexity of issues facing all our lower-tier municipalities, we will be seeking formal representatives from all Grey and Bruce municipalities for the 2024-2025 years, to ensure a consistent flow of information and to capitalize on all partnership opportunities.

Yours Sincerely,



Jill Umbach
Planning Network Coordinator
Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force/United Way of Bruce Grey
povertytaskforce@unitedwaybg.com
519-377-9406