

A Voice for Equality, A Strong Voice for Women PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET

BY SHERYL LOEFFLER, DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

Poverty tourism, someone called it. It's true – I visited the country of Poverty for a week. I wouldn't want to live there, and I don't think that others should have to.

Between 25 September and 1 October, I was one of 10 people in our community taking part in the Put Food in the Budget Challenge. We agreed to spend no more than \$20 on food – the amount a single person on social assistance has to spend – and to take ourselves shopping on foot, bicycle or bus. The purpose of the challenge was to call attention to the inadequacy of \$20 a week for food and to garner public support for a Healthy Food Supplement of \$100 a month for those on social assistance.

The program would pay for itself in saved healthcare costs. From Lightman, Mitchell and Wilson's 2008 Poverty is Making Us Sick: "An annual increase of \$1,000 in income for the poorest 20 per

cent of Canadians would lead to almost 10,000 fewer chronic conditions and 6,600 fewer disability days every two weeks."

I spent five hours planning my shopping list, scouting prices in at least 10 different locations, and five hours shopping, spending \$19.20. I managed to feed myself a more or less balanced diet. But if I'd had a mental or a physical disability, if I didn't have the knowledge I needed to keep myself healthy, or if it had been winter, I doubt that I'd have been able to do it.

The 10 of us blogged our experiences (www.waterlooregion.org/food). A few excerpts from my blog follow:

22 September. Twenty dollars. The newspaper said this morning that we were going to be given \$20 for the week.

A knot of something like fear in my stomach. I'd been told that we'd have between \$20 and \$25. I never thought I'd find the loss of five imaginary dollars so distressing.

The Shopping List

ValuMart Tomato sauce \$1.49	Shoppers Drug Mart Bread \$0.99 Eggs \$2.04	Zellers 2 tins of tuna \$1.34
Zehrs Cheese \$4.99 Onions \$1.79	Dollar Store Green tea \$1.00	Sobeys Cabbage \$1.69 Celery hearts \$0.99
Dollar Store Macaroni \$0.69 Spaghetti \$0.69 Peanut butter \$1.50	TOTAL \$19.20	

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26 September. I counted my remaining slices of bread. Not enough to last the week, if I have bread with lunch.

27 September. I'm eating less and less. The food I'm eating is bland, unvarying. But this is worse. I'm finding myself divorced this week from the social aspects of food, aspects that are far more important than aesthetics – food as emblem of family, community, nation, food as nurture, intimacy, friendship, celebration.

29 September. I say I'm not hungry. But I'm thick. Had to be called to a 1.30 p.m. meeting yesterday, even though it was staring at me from my open daytimer. And I'm slow. Everything is taking longer. I just want to sleep.

30 September. This week, I've walked and walked and walked in the shoes of someone on social assistance. That's

not quite true. I've walked in the shoes of someone on social assistance in only one aspect of that person's life – his or her relation to \$20 a week for food.

For me, this week's exercise in excessive walking and limited eating has also been an exercise in the art of seeing. Hunger is largely invisible in our community. But I've learned to see clues all around me. The tipped grocery carts abandoned on street corners. The women with bundle-buggies, men without helmets on bicycles. The mothers on sidewalks pushing infants in strollers, trailing toddlers. People waiting for busses. People shopping the food aisles of dollar and discount stores. People laden with shopping bags on the streets. Are they all hungry? Probably not. But too many of them are.

In *Nightlife*, published as an insert in today's *Record*, the restaurant reviewer concludes: "Dinner for two a very reasonable \$150." If one evening's dinner for two people at \$150 is considered very reasonable by a large percentage of us living in Waterloo Region, surely \$20 a week for food for a person living on social assistance is very unreasonable. It's also unacceptable.

Those living on social assistance in our community are among the most creative and adaptable and resilient among us when it comes to food. They have to be. They're also among the bravest.

Can you imagine what they would be able to do to improve their own lives and our lives in community together with \$25 extra for food a week, \$100 extra a month, two-thirds of that very reasonable dinner for two?

▼ **Please contact your local MPP. People shouldn't be hungry in The Most Intelligent Community in the World.**

POVERTY – A WOMEN'S ISSUE

BY JOANNE RAYMOND,
PRESIDENT OF THE YWCA BOARD

Poverty is the lack of basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter because of the inability to afford them.

In today's society poverty is a reality for millions of women around the world. They make up the vast majority of the poor of the world. Research indicates that women living in poverty are more likely to experience domestic violence, drug addiction, HIV, food insufficiency for themselves or their family compromising parenting, depression, homelessness, sickness and health care for others.

Many women feel powerless and trapped and lack the resources and support to change their lives and get out of poverty. Empowering women will provide a key basis for fighting poverty. Two-thirds of the illiterate in the world

are female. Studies show that when women are supported and empowered, all of society benefits. As Michelle Bachelet, the UN Women executive director said, "Gender equality must become a living reality." When women and girls are empowered to tackle these issues, whole families and communities directly benefit.

The empowerment of women is instrumental in the fight against poverty. The mandate of the YWCA has been to improve the lives of women and children since 1905. It provides programs and support providing turning points for women at all stages of their life regardless of culture and ethnic background.

▼ **Walking a mile in her shoes has never been easy, but we look forward to your continued support of our endeavours to enhance the lives of women and children in our community.**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY ELIZABETH CLARKE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Almost all of the YWCA's programs aim to reduce the damaging impacts of poverty on our clients and in our community. Our emergency, transitional and supportive housing programs provide basic necessities including food and shelter to homeless women and families. Our licensed childcare and after-school programs deliver subsidized early childhood education and care, along with nutritious meals and snacks, to

children from low income families. Our drop-in centre offers free recreational opportunities to girls who live in the downtown Kitchener area, and our summer camp offers subsidized outward-bound camping experiences to children who could not otherwise afford them. We are proud to be a major part of the social safety net that exists in Waterloo Region. But we know that the work that we're doing, while undeniably important to the more than 2,000 people who use our services every year, is only a thread in the net that must be woven if

FROM THE ED CONTINUED ON P. 4

we are to truly eliminate poverty in our region, our province, and our country.

According to Opportunities Waterloo Region – an organization that works to engage and partner with local governments, not-for-profits, businesses, groups and individuals to identify and address the root causes of poverty – while Waterloo Region is a comparatively wealthy one, the gap between the richest and the poorest of our citizens is wide and growing wider every year. Almost one-third of our employed population is earning less than a living wage (calculated for our community as \$14 per hour). Over 3,000 people are on the community housing waiting list and likely to wait up to six years for housing they can afford. Over 15,000 adults and children live on social assistance and close to 2,800 people will use homeless shelters over the course of the year. In one month, more than 14,000 people will have to rely on food hampers in order to get enough to eat.

Opportunities Waterloo Region states that, “Fortunately, Waterloo Region has abundant resources to actually overcome poverty. What we need is a consolidated effort – a community action plan resulting in sustainable prosperity for all.” That consolidated effort involves endorsing the Region of Waterloo’s initiative to create a strategic plan for a poverty-free Waterloo Region, calling upon the Region of Waterloo to reinvest the \$10 million in savings that it will realize when Ontario Disability Support Program benefit payments are fully uploaded to the province in 2011 to fund poverty reduction initiatives in the region, demanding that the provincial government reaffirm its commitment to

the 2009 Poverty Reduction Act, which addresses child poverty, and to extend that commitment to eliminating poverty to single adults, and to call upon the federal government to create a plan that complements provincial and territorial plans to eradicate poverty in Canada.

ISARC – the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition – is a province-wide network of faith groups formed to work together to advance social justice and reduce poverty in Ontario. Throughout 2010, ISARC conducted community hearings in 25 communities, assessing programs intended to reduce poverty, as part of its Social Audit initiative. ISARC concluded that, “Poverty persists in Ontario and is destructive to individuals, families, and to the communities in which it occurs”, and asked “All parties have indicated that they have plans to reduce or eliminate poverty. Why is there poverty in a province as wealthy as Ontario?”

In ISARC’s Resolution to End Poverty in Ontario, the coalition challenges the provincial government to implement substantial increases in social assistance, to release and implement a housing strategy that includes protection and creation of safe and affordable housing which is integrated with other housing, to review the minimum wage and adjust it to a living wage (calculated for the province at \$15 per hour) with annual cost of living increases, to address provincial employment equity both within government and in the private sector, and to eliminate the “stupid rules” within the provincial social assistance systems that sustain and exacerbate poverty. According to ISARC, “As Ontario struggles to recover from the recession, poverty elimination must be the first priority.”

In a 2010 report titled *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*, researchers at York University argued that living conditions are far more important in determining Canadians’ health than is the state of our health care system. Income and wealth, employment, working conditions, quality of education, food and housing are the most important factors, the study concluded. Fifteen percent of Canadian children live in poverty, putting Canada at a rank of 20th out of 30 of the world’s wealthiest nations. Only 17 percent of Canadian families have access to licensed child care. Canada ranked last among 25 wealthy developed nations in meeting various early childhood development objectives. Canada is among the nations with the greatest gap between men’s and women’s earnings and ranks 19th of 22 OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – nations in reducing the earnings gap between men and women. And Canada ranks 27th out of 29 in public spending on disability-related issues. “While one of the world’s biggest spenders in health care, we have one of the worst records in providing an effective social safety net. What good does it do to treat people’s illnesses, to then send them back to the conditions that made them sick?” the researchers asked.

The report’s recommendations to provincial and federal governments include increasing minimum wage and social assistance rates to the level at which an adequate diet is affordable, ensuring that healthy foods are affordable, and providing affordable housing and childcare that would reduce other family expenses and leave more money for acquiring an adequate diet.

We have brand new municipal and regional councils in our region, with newly elected officials eager to begin governing. We have a provincial election, and most likely a federal one, too, looming. And we have the research and recommendations of groups like Opportunities Waterloo Region, ISARC, and York University to guide our political actions and decisions. The York University researchers urged that “poverty should not be seen as the fault of lazy, unmotivated people.” And poverty reduction should not be seen as a benefit to lazy, unmotivated people, but as the way to improve our region, our province and our country for all of us.

SOCIAL MEDIA AT THE YWCA

Interchange comes but twice a year, and while we at YWCA K-W love putting it together, there just isn’t space for everything we do. But don’t worry! Now we have a new way to tell you all about what’s going here, right when it’s happen.

YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo has entered the ever-popular sphere of Social Media. That’s right, you can now find us on Facebook and Twitter! Check out our pages where you can find out what’s going on right now at the YWCA, ask questions and be the first to hear about awesome events and opportunities to get involved.

There’s so much happening this year at YWCA K-W, so don’t miss a thing!

Follow us on Twitter: @YWCA_KW

“Like” our Facebook Page: Search “YWCA K-W” on Facebook

THE PERSISTENCE OF

POVERTY

BY EMILY BAETZ

Compared with many other developed countries, Canada has fared well in the time following the recession, with our economy quickly recovering and banks and public finances appearing sound. We have one of the highest standards of living and have numerous times been named as the best country in the world to live by the UN. However, poverty is still an incredibly prominent issue in Canada.

In 1989, the federal government pledged to irradiate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Over twenty years later, there are still approximately 3 million Canadians are living at or below the poverty line, and almost twenty percent of those are children. Poverty has now reached levels that haven't been seen for two decades, and continues to rise.

Many provinces, including Ontario, have adopted long term poverty reduction strategies, most with focus on an increase in minimum wage, social assistance programs and supportive housing. The federal government has been urged to develop a nation-wide strategy that will work alongside the provinces, allowing them to set measurable goals in a realistic timeframe and be held accountable for it's success. However, the response from the Harper government was that the best long-term strategy to reduce poverty would be to focus on sustainable employment. While

a good start, jobs are not the complete solution.

Nearly one-third of those living in poverty are employed, but still not making enough money to rise above the line. Minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour, nearly four dollars less than the living wage that is calculated for our community. There also a lack of fulltime, permanent jobs available. Combine that with long wait times for sustainable housing and subsidized childcare and we create an inescapable cycle of poverty.

The notion that more jobs will end poverty is like saying that driving a hybrid will stop climate change; a good start, but not a solution. We need to work together as a community, as a province and as a country to find a solution that works for everyone so that we can eliminate poverty in our lifetime and truly make Canada the best country in the world to live in for every one of its residents.

POVERTY BY NUMBERS

70% Those living in poverty worldwide who are female

\$0.71 Amount a women earns per every dollar earned by a man

20% Ontario residents who spent over 50% of their income on housing (2005)

\$10.25 Minimum wage in Ontario

1 IN 10 The amount of children living in poverty

38% Food bank users who are children or youth

22 Canada's ranking amongst 33 OECD nations on infant mortality

588,000 The amount of jobs lost from October 2008 to July 2009

29% Part-time workers who are involuntary, meaning they would like but are unable to find full-time work

\$41,740 Average amount of outstanding household debt in Canada in 2009

1 IN 4 The amount of First Nations children living in poverty

2.5 The increased likelihood of a child living in poverty to have a disability

\$7.6 BILLION The estimated amount of healthcare savings annually that would happen if we raised the incomes of the poorest 20% of Canadians

52.1% Single mothers with young children who live in poverty

2010 The highest year of food bank use since 1997

39% The income increase of the wealthiest share of families with children over the past 19 years

\$11 Hourly rate need for full-time workers to help escape the poverty cycle

14% The income increase of the poorest tenth of Canada's population over 19 years.

750,000 Number of Canadians under the age of 15 currently in need of sustainable housing

33% Low-income children who had at least one family member working full time while still unable to rise out of poverty in 2008

129 People utilizing YWCA K-W's supportive housing programs in 2010

35% Jobs that are "non-standard": part-time, contract, temporary or self-employed.

\$5,400 The full child benefit needed for a single parent working full time to make a pathway out of poverty

30% Amount of income spent on housing for 1 in 4 families.

\$21,320 Annual income (before taxes) of a full-time worker at minimum wage

880 People who used Mary's Place, a YWCA K-W emergency shelter, in 2010

Information gathered from the 2010 *Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada*, 2010 *Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario*, MakePovertyHistory.ca and YWCA records.

WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES Every day, thousands of people walk along King Street in downtown Kitchener, but on June 22, look out for something a little different. ▼ YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo will be holding their first annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event in front of Kitchener City Hall from 11:30-1:30 on June 22, 2011. This event combines big hearts with big feet as our community's men strap on their high heels and raise money for the YWCA. ▼ Participants are asked to raise a minimum of \$200 and will walk from City Hall to Market Square and back. Should you be interested in being a part of this event, email Communications and Events Coordinator Emily Baetz at emily.baetz@ywcakw.on.ca or call 519-576-8856 x 100 for more information. Sponsorship Opportunities are also available.



THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to all of our recent donors for making such a difference, in so many ways, to the women and families served by the YWCA.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO

Keith Ainsworth
Jim and Heidi Balsillie
Bank of Montreal
Sandra Beingessner
Mary Burrows
Marian Campbell
Canadian Women's Foundation
CIBC
Elise Devitt
Erb Street Mennonite Church
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Parkminster United Church
REALTORS Care Foundation
Rockway Mennonite Church
Marcia Shortreed
Carol Southwood
Spaenaur Inc.
St. George's Forest Hill Anglican Church
The Home Depot Canada Foundation
Elva Zehr

FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS.

- ▼ To those who gave generous gifts in honour of **Val Brookes and Leander Wigboldus, Mandy Dennison, Elaine Good, Heather Lackner and Maria Joergensen.**
- ▼ To those who gave generous gifts in memory of **Gordon Darwood, Joyce Rigby, and Irene Wray.**
- ▼ To **Barb Aggerholm** of *Grand Magazine* for her excellent coverage of Club 84's 30th anniversary.
- ▼ To **Mannheim Mennonite Church, Parkminster United Church Women, and St. Jerome's University Catholic Community** for their gifts of meals at Mary's Place.
- ▼ To **Waterloo Region Museum** for its generous gift of complimentary family passes.
- ▼ To **local businesses, faith groups, service clubs, and other groups and organizations** for making both financial and in-kind donations.
- ▼ To our **Club 84 members and annual donors** for their generous gifts, both financial and in-kind, and for their gracious words of support.



LEMONADE STAND Kate Cebulski and Quinn Ruby donating the proceeds of their Lemonade Stand to Phyllis Rohrbacher of Mary's Place.



THE TAMPON TOWER, a fundraiser created by MSW students from Laurier to collect feminine products for Mary's Place.



BMO Susan Wedsworth presents three generous cheques from the Bank of Montreal and the BMO Employee Charitable Foundation to Executive Director Elizabeth Clarke.

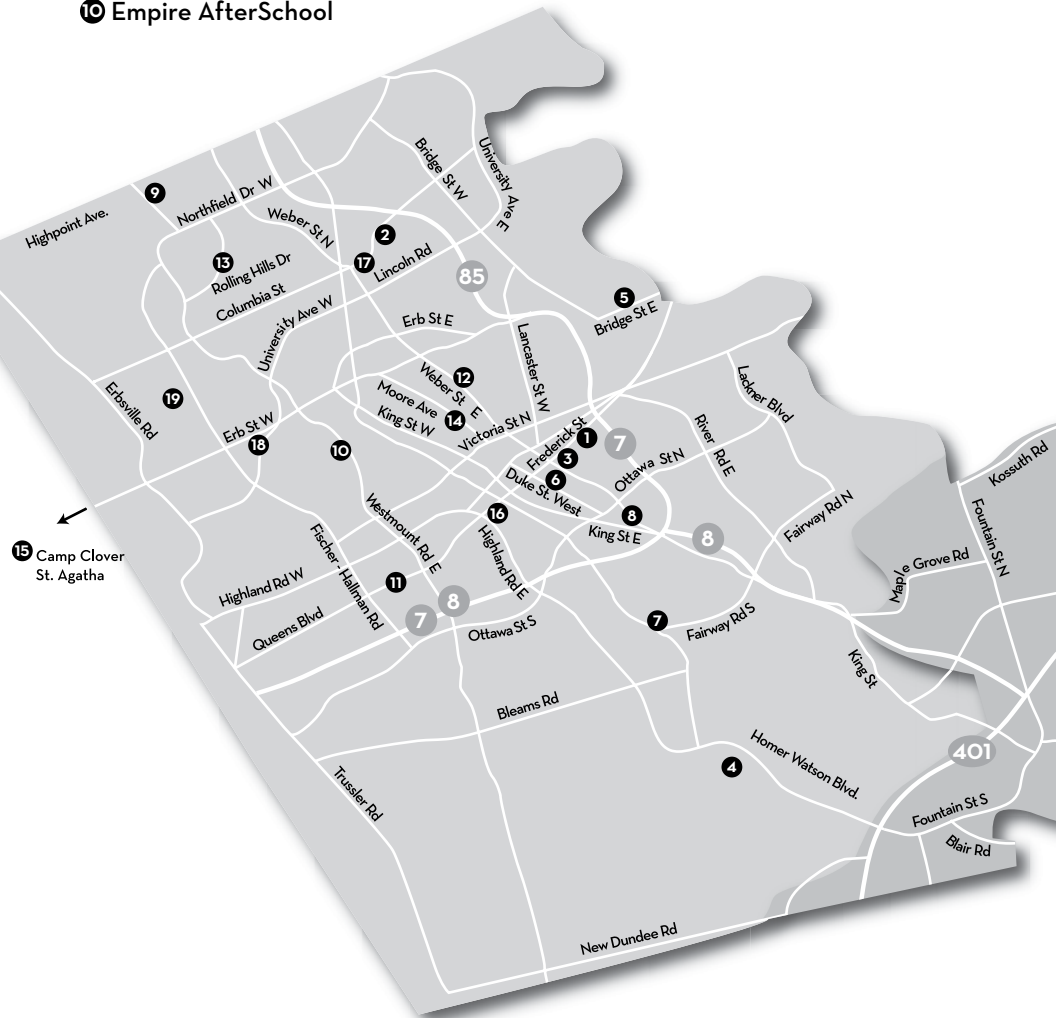
GOING GREEN

Taking cue from many other local organizations, YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo has decided to offer an online version of Interchange. This will have all of the same great information about what is happening at the local YWCA, but with a smaller environmental impact. Starting with the Fall 2011 issue, we will be giving you the option of receiving it via Canada Post or email.

If you are interesting in receiving your future issues of Interchange via email, please send a message to emily.baetz@ywcakw.on.ca stating your name, mailing address and email address to be added to the list.

YWCA LOCATION MAP

- 1 YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo Community Resource Center
- 2 Lincoln Road
- 3 Mary's Place
- 4 Survivors of Abuse and Trauma - GVI
- 5 Bridgeport Childcare Centre
- 6 City Kids Daycare
- 7 Downtown Daycare
- 8 Girls on the Move
- 9 Laurel AfterSchool
- 10 Empire AfterSchool
- 11 Southridge AfterSchool
- 12 Sheppard Homework Club
- 13 N. A. MacEachern Homework Club
- 14 Elizabeth Ziegler Homework Club
- 15 Camp Clover
- 16 Benton Street
- 17 LINC Program
- 18 SHOW Program
- 19 Mary Johnston Homework Club



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We adhere to all legislative requirements having to do with privacy protection. We do not rent, sell, or trade our mailing lists. For more information, visit www.ywcakw.on.ca.

If you do not wish to be contacted, please telephone Sheryl Loeffler at 519-576-8856 or e-mail her at sheryl.loeffler@ywcakw.on.ca.

We wish to recognize our donors in our Annual Report and newsletter, *Interchange*. If you do not want to have your name published, please indicate here:

I do not want my name published in YWCA publications.

SIGNATURE _____



YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo follows Imagine Canada's Ethical Fundraising Accountability Code.

Charitable Registration Number BN 11898 7643 RROOO1



INTERCHANGE

Interchange is published twice a year by YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo.

Writing, editing and photography co-ordination: Emily Baetz.

Graphic Design: LINDesign.ca

YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo relies on financial support from United Way, businesses, corporations, faith groups, employee associations, foundations, service clubs and other organizations.

Most importantly, we rely on people like you.

Please consider a gift to the YWCA. Help to improve the lives of women and children in Waterloo Region.

I support the YWCA!

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- Please send this newsletter to me by e-mail.
- I would like to support YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo with a gift of
 \$50 \$150 \$300 Other _____
- I would like to become a Club 84 member with an annual gift of
 Mary Kaufman Circle, \$840 Four 84, \$484
 84 and More, \$184 Level 84, \$84
- I have remembered YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo in my will.
- I have enclosed a cheque or money order, payable to YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo.

Please charge my donation to

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 Expiry date _____
 Signature _____

I would like to make my donation in monthly installments. Please deduct the following amount from my credit card on the 15th day of each month: _____ (minimum \$10). Monthly donations can be changed or stopped at any time by contacting YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo.

Please use my gift
 where it is needed most.
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 for the YWCA's international development projects.

Funds raised in excess of those required for a designated department will be applied to the general charitable purposes of YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo.





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FOR WOMEN

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