

Vibrant Surrey Media Backgrounder – October 30, 2007

About Vibrant Surrey

In 1999, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, Surrey Social Futures Society and a community task force developed a Community Impact Profile (CIP) for Surrey based on an analysis of assets and challenges related to such issues as poverty and homelessness, with important profiles for each neighbourhood. In the absence of a social planning council for the community, it quickly became clear that a role existed for an organization that could build collaborative efforts, and would track and understand the unique challenges for poverty reduction in Surrey.

In 2001, Community Solutions – a United Way initiative led by Surrey Social Futures – set up several task forces: one on poverty and another on housing and homelessness. Shortly afterward, North Fraser Community Futures Corporation developed a plan based on the Surrey CIP and neighbourhood profiles to create Community Innovations – a for-profit organization to support local entrepreneurs.

This collaboration spurred community organizers began discussions with the national Vibrant Communities program. By June 2003, seven organizations had joined forces to create a Vibrant Surrey coalition. Over the next few years, the coalition focused on discussion with community leaders and organizations to develop a Surrey-made vision for poverty reduction. Vibrant Surrey united players who had never worked together and seeded development of a number of projects including Newton Advocacy Group's Project Comeback.

In mid 2007, with a membership of more than 20 organizations and growing, Vibrant Surrey received "Trail Builder" funding from the national Vibrant Communities organization. This represented a significant multi-year funding commitment. Vibrant Surrey recently became a legal entity – a registered not-for-profit society.

Moving ahead, Vibrant Surrey will enhance and strengthen Surrey's ability to improve lives and build a thriving community. Vibrant Surrey will help to build bridges between organizations and focus on shaping and encouraging a community economic development (CED) agenda.

About Vibrant Communities

Vibrant Communities is a community-driven effort to reduce poverty in Canada by creating partnerships that make use of our most valuable assets – people, organizations, businesses and governments. It links communities across Canada, from British Columbia to Newfoundland, in a collective effort to test the most effective ways to reduce poverty at the grassroots level.

Vibrant Communities takes four key approaches:

1. Comprehensive local initiatives aimed at poverty reduction;
2. Grassroots collaboration involving all sectors of the community in these initiatives;
3. Identifying community assets and putting them to good use in poverty reduction efforts;
4. A commitment to learning, change and sharing what we learn – whether they are the product of our successes or failures.

Vibrant Communities is supported by three national sponsors: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement.

At the heart of Vibrant Communities is the Pan-Canadian Learning Community, made up of representatives of the various member communities as well as the national sponsors. This group

engages regularly to discuss local efforts to reduce poverty and develop solutions by learning from each other's experiences.

The Pan-Canadian Learning Community also includes a Government Learning Circle, sponsored by Human Resources & Social Development Canada, in which government learners from all levels and portfolios come together to learn how they can play a key role in poverty reduction.

About Poverty in Surrey

- Nearly 20% (62,990 people) of Surrey households were living below the low-income cut-off at the last census (2000).
- People are moving to Surrey, both internationally and from other parts of Canada. This rapid in-migration is estimated at 1,000 people a month.
- The Surrey Food Bank's clients number 15,000 a month. 11% of these clients are the 'working poor' – people with employment but whose incomes fall below the low-income cut-off.
- People in Surrey who experience poverty are diverse and live in all neighbourhoods. In 2000:
 - 18,860 lived in Whalley;
 - 18,265 lived in Newton;
 - 11,745 lived in Guildford;
 - 6,455 lived in Fleetwood;
 - 4,430 lived in South Surrey;
 - 38,105 identified as belonging to a visible minority;
 - 20,227 were recent immigrants;
 - 11,471 were youth between the ages of 15 and 24;
 - 13,075 were on social assistance;
 - 9,449 were people with disabilities;
 - 9,430 were lone parents (mostly women); and
 - 3,310 were First Nations people.
- Surrey has more students below standard in reading, and more teen pregnancies than the BC averages.
- 39% of children in the care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development live in Surrey and White Rock.
- Surrey's serious crime rate was reduced by 13.7% between 1997 and 2002, but it remained almost 5% above the BC average.
- In Surrey, the very young (27.9% of children under 15) and those that are older (20.3% of those over 65) are the most likely to be poor.
- Women in Surrey earned an average of \$13,273 less than men in the year 2000.
- In general, a visible minority person is more likely to experience poverty than a non-visible minority person. In Surrey, the visible minority population has a higher poverty rate (30%) than the overall population (18.2%).

- At the last census in 2000, nearly 63,000 people in Surrey were not receiving a sustainable income Visit: www.vibrantsurrey.ca . For more information or to schedule interviews please contact Amanda Gibbs at 604-328-6670.