

• OUR VIEW •

# Poverty is here

This is where it starts: sometime this month - or maybe next - a mid-size company in the GTA is pushed to outsource a department to stay viable. A person loses a job.

At first, he finds freelance work, then temporary manual labour gigs. Then, nothing.

A single parent, he looks at starting his own business, but that would require an infusion of cash. Or retraining, but that, too, would cost money, and leave the household without an income for an extended period of time.

The first things to go are the luxuries - TV packages, smartphones, music lessons. The SUV is traded in for a used compact car. Next come some harder choices - running the washing machine less often to save on hydro and water, fewer trips to the grocery store supplemented with items from the local food bank.

One day - and then the next - both kids go to school without breakfast. These are the faces of child poverty in our communities.

In a Metroland special investigative series, reporters from community papers across southern Ontario examine the issue of child poverty, which may at first blush not be visible in affluent areas such as York Region.

*'Make no mistake: child poverty is family poverty, and it is a cycle we need to break.'*

They present research that says more than 370,000 Ontario children (or 13.8 per cent) lived in a low-income household in 2013, only slightly better than the national average of 14.3 per cent. They also found that more than 800,000 students take part in more than 4,000 school meal programs across the province. Included in the articles are interviews with educators, food bank workers and politicians. The series has been running in our Thursday print editions.

Food banks and breakfast programs are busy. And we have no idea how many don't seek out assistance because of the stigma attached to poverty.

Certainly, initiatives such as the recent changes to the Child Tax Benefit program will help address the problem. As well, accurate, detailed information garnered through the recently restored long-form Census will aid in creating a focused poverty plan. But it could be years before such strategies bear fruit.

Other avenues that need to be explored include economic development initiatives that focus on maintaining - and creating - local jobs, investments in training and seeking out ways to help Ontario Works clients secure meaningful employment without worrying about clawbacks to benefits. Most of all, students need to learn life skills and strategies that will help put them on a path to a successful future.

Make no mistake: child poverty is family poverty, and it is a cycle we need to break.



• LETTERS •

## Compassion key component in end-of-life care

It is difficult to disagree with Dr. Wert's prescription for effective end-of-life planning, but unfortunately it ignores the elephant in the room.

He argues that technology is a critical part of the solution, i.e. the flow of information among those who work in the various health care settings. The fact is that information is only one side of the equation, the other being emotion: the nuclear impact of a death sentence on dying individuals and their families.

As one who has endured palliative care for both of my parents and father-in-law, I did not lack information from medical professionals. What I desperately

needed was attention to the emotional consequences of having to make decisions during a time that can cause something resembling post-traumatic stress syndrome. The stress can be so great as to lead to the complete breakdown of both families and their individual members. Who accepts the responsibility of helping them survive that trauma?

Yes, information sharing is important, but surely the other critical ingredient is emotional support or compassion. My father's doctor said, in as many words, that my dad would die in a matter of weeks, then he watched passively as I broke down in a torrent of tears. No kind hand was offered, let alone sessions in grief counseling.

My siblings and I quickly committed ourselves to

24/7 care while continuing to work. Soon after father's death, however, I had to quit a deanship, my brother faced an acrimonious divorce that threatened his career and my sister separated.

All the while, our mother was in chronic care due to her brain-damaging cardiac arrest and we had to move her a half-dozen times because none of the long-term care facilities could deal with her behaviour. At the same time, our son with intellectual difficulties left high school. The agencies helping him fill his time after graduation did so with wonderful day programs and services, but they virtually ignored our social and emotional needs as caregivers.

Is it fair to say our family suffered from a kind of post-traumatic stress dis-

order? If so, then little or no emotional first aid was ever offered. Thus, while better information sharing among health care settings is required, as caregivers we also need attention paid to our emotional wounds, whether they arise from taking care of dying parents or children living with disabilities.

It is unwise, even fatal, to hold one's breath to see provincial ministries working together in providing these desperately-needed supports, or the new federal "Ministry of Families and Social Development" address these concerns, especially if Minister Duclos also emphasizes information over compassion.

● MORE ONLINE

Read all letters online at [yorkregion.com](http://yorkregion.com)

CONTACT US

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**  
580 Steven Court  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4X1  
Phone: 905-853-8888  
Fax: 905-853-4626  
Web: [www.yorkregion.com](http://www.yorkregion.com)

**Letters to the editor**  
All letters must be fewer than 200 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters.

**Delivery**  
For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail [customersupport@metroland.com](mailto:customersupport@metroland.com) or call 1-855-853-5613.



WHO WE ARE

**Publisher**  
Dana Robbins  
**General Manager**  
Shaun Sauve  
**Director of Advertising**  
Maureen Christie

**Editor-in-Chief Metroland Central**  
Joanne Burghardt  
**Editor-in-Chief York Region**  
Lee Ann Waterman  
**Managing Editor**  
Ted McFadden

**Director Distribution**  
Mike Banville  
**Director Creative Services**  
Katherine Porcheron  
**Advertising Manager**  
Mara Sepe

ABOUT US



The Stouffville Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 100 community publications across Ontario.



The Stouffville Sun-Tribune is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981  
Web: [www.mediacouncil.ca](http://www.mediacouncil.ca)



[newsroom@yrmg.com](mailto:newsroom@yrmg.com)  
[facebook.com/yrmgnews](https://facebook.com/yrmgnews)  
[@yorkregion](https://twitter.com/yorkregion)