

Suburban Poverty in Peel Region, Ontario: A Land-Use Strategy Evaluation

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Abstract

This report presents place-based policy responses to suburban poverty in Peel Region, Ontario. Until recently, suburban poverty did not receive significant policy attention. Suburbs are often associated with wealthy and middle-class populations. However, many inner-ring and outer-ring suburbs have poverty rates that are comparable to those of central cities. The migration of low-income populations and low-income jobs and a lack of affordable housing are some of the central causes of poverty in the suburbs. These causes, in combination with a strained social safety net, a lack of adequate transportation and poor service delivery result in difficult living conditions for many suburban households. Local policy-makers must address the central causes of poverty in order to have an appropriate response.

Officials have adopted several policies to counter the effects of suburban poverty in Peel Region: Breaking the Cycle, the Long Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan, the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy and The Big Move. Much less is being done at the local level, where government is closest to the people and where officials can have an impact on housing, transportation and services, key factors in the lives of low-income households.

In general, the effectiveness of policy responses to suburban poverty is unclear. Governments lack accountability, as the appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools are not in place. Recent legislation, policies and strategies appear to address poverty issues in Peel, but the current system of governance is a hindrance to their implementation.

Résumé

Ce rapport présente les politiques axées sur le lieu (*place-based policies*) adoptées en réponse à l'augmentation de la pauvreté dans la région de Peel, en Ontario. Jusqu'à récemment, la pauvreté en milieu suburbain n'a pas reçu beaucoup d'attention. La banlieue est souvent associée à une population aisée ou de classe moyenne. Pourtant, de nombreuses banlieues dans la première et la deuxième couronne ont des taux de pauvreté comparables à ceux des villes centrales. La migration de ménages à faible revenu et d'emplois mal rémunérés et le manque de logements abordables sont les causes centrales de la pauvreté en milieu suburbain. Ces causes, en combinaison avec un filet de sécurité sociale sous tension, un manque de services de transport adéquats et une mauvaise distribution des services publics, créent des conditions de vie difficiles pour de nombreux ménages de banlieue. Les décideurs locaux doivent confronter les causes centrales de la pauvreté afin d'y apporter une réponse appropriée.

Les élus ont adopté un certain nombre de politiques afin de lutter contre les effets de la pauvreté suburbaine dans la région de Peel : Breaking the Cycle, Long Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan, Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy et The Big Move. Il y a moins d'action au niveau local, où le gouvernement est le plus proche des gens et où les élus peuvent avoir un impact sur le logement, les transports et les services publics, qui sont des facteurs clés dans la vie des ménages à faible revenu.

De manière générale, l'efficacité des politiques publiques en réponse à la pauvreté en milieu suburbain n'est pas claire. Les gouvernements ne sont pas assez imputables face à la population, car les moyens appropriés de suivi et d'évaluation ne sont pas en place. Des lois, politiques et stratégies récentes semblent s'attaquer à la pauvreté dans la région de Peel, mais le système de gouvernance actuel est un obstacle à leur mise en œuvre.

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1. Introduction & Methodology

1.1 Introduction

For quite some time, urban sprawl and suburbanization have been important topics in the planning field. They have been associated with eras in which people preferred to flee the ills of the inner city and pursue a life in the periphery. Many moved to the suburbs, with aspirations for a better quality of life. Some of these aspirations included better access to amenities, better schools, safer communities, and in many cases escaping poverty. Yet today, it is evident that many of these notions are flawed. Many suburban communities struggle with the same issues that big cities face, such as high crime rates and homelessness. Poverty exists in suburban communities as it has existed in urban communities.

Until recently, poverty in the suburbs has been present but largely unnoticed. Suburban poverty, like poverty elsewhere, demands policy attention because affected households experience poor educational achievement, low health levels, high unemployment and social deprivation (Andrulis et al., 2004). However, countering suburban poverty presents a policy dilemma: the historic invisibility and low densities of suburban poverty mean few services are provided locally; lack of public transportation in suburbs means people cannot access services and amenities elsewhere; and, as a result, low-income suburban households lack adequate safety nets.

Policy makers counter suburban poverty through two types of policies: people-based and place-based. This report focuses on the latter. Yet, people-based policies are essential to poverty strategies. Low-income tax credits, employment insurance and child benefits are examples of strategies that are people-based. Higher-level policy-makers at the federal and provincial levels of government implement these policies. They may complement or contradict place-based policies that land-use planners typically work with. Examining people-based strategies is beyond the scope of this research, but they are vital to addressing poverty.

In the last five years, a rise in suburban poverty has resulted in regional policies directed at countering its emergence and effects (Kneebone & Lou, 2014). Peel Region, Ontario, is an example of a low-density suburban area where poverty is receiving policy attention. Forty-five percent of neighborhoods in the region are considered to be low-income (Mendleson, 2013). Policy innovations include, specifically: *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*; *The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy* and *The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy*, implemented to address poverty in the suburbs of Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon.

Specifically, Brampton and Mississauga are the proposed study areas for this research project. They are two lower-tier suburban municipalities in the upper-tier municipality of Peel Region, in the Greater Toronto Area, with significant rates of poverty. The goal of this research paper is to examine how the incidence of

poverty is addressed in Peel Region and in particular in the municipalities of Mississauga and Brampton. Further, this research will illustrate the relationship between suburban poverty and land-use planning, with the hope of affecting the manner in which urban planners approach the issue of poverty. Information derived will be potentially beneficial for urban planners and policy-makers from all levels of government throughout Canada.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions that were investigated include: What are some of the causes and implications of poverty in the Region of Peel? How do Brampton and Mississauga address the issue of poverty? How can Brampton and Mississauga improve their poverty strategies? The answer to these questions can suggest how to improve poverty strategies from a land-use perspective in general.

1.3 How Were The Research Questions Answered?

A review of the literature related to suburban poverty, a review of relevant policy documents and interviews with municipal officials from Peel were used to answer the research questions.

A review of relevant literature pertaining to suburban poverty clarified the causes and consequences of the issue as well as clarifying the implication for policy makers. Also, the literature outlined the relationship between suburban poverty and land-use planning. Many place-based poverty approaches are addressed through land-use planning. Therefore, understanding poverty from a

land-use planning perspective was instrumental to this research and fundamental to answering the research questions.

To understand the issues of suburban poverty in Peel, a review of municipal, provincial and statistical documents concerning poverty was conducted. Peel Region faces specific challenges in relation to poverty; therefore it is important to review census data, regional and municipal strategies and provincial legislation. Documents such as *Ontario's Poverty Strategy*, *The Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy*, *Peel's Poverty Reduction Strategy* and *Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan* were reviewed. Understanding Peel Region and the province of Ontario's approaches to suburban poverty are key to answering the research questions.

Four municipal officials were interviewed to obtain information not included in the literature or policy documents¹. Three urban planners from Peel, as well as an advisor from the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy were interviewed to provide varying perspectives on the poverty issue in Peel. It was an effective way to obtain relevant, real-time evidence and was a direct method of answering the research questions. The results of the interviews were compared to the findings from the review of literature and policy documents to determine similarities and differences. Comparing the findings from the literature, policy documents and interviews was useful to investigating whether or not poverty strategies are addressing Peel's needs, and to recommend improvements.

¹ See appendix for interview questions

² Other GTA suburbs averages are the average statistics from Halton, Durham and York Regions.

The second chapter of this report is a literature review that discusses the relationship between poverty, in particular suburban poverty, and land-use planning. Further, this chapter presents the causes and consequences of poverty in the suburbs.

The third chapter discusses suburban poverty in the context of Peel Region. Census data is used to provide indicators of poverty in the region and in comparison to the rest of the GTA. Plans, policies and strategies that address suburban poverty are also examined in this section.

The fourth chapter presents the results of interviews with local planners and brings together research findings and recommendations from the literature review, the policy review and the interviews. Poverty strategies in Peel appear to address the needs of Peel residents, but the system of governance hinders the effectiveness of poverty strategies.

In the conclusion, the limitations of the research and the overall summary of the findings are presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Poverty And Land-Use Planning

Poverty is often linked to politics, economics and social capital. Land-use regulation is often overlooked in the poverty discussion. As land-use strategies are often place-based, land-use regulation plays a substantial role in suburban poverty. Thus, it is important to introduce the relationship between land-use and poverty before discussing the relationship between land-use and suburban

poverty. Land-use management is a tool that the government can use to protect social, cultural, economic and environmental interests from destructive individual actions. Regulating land use and land-use markets ensures that vulnerable populations have access to affordable housing, transportation and essential services. Further, the regulation of land use and of land-use markets is essential for: reducing poverty, growing the economy, investing in the private-sector, empowering the poor, and ensuring good governance (Deaton, 2005).

Sustainable Development

Much of the literature about poverty and its relation to land use is discussed with reference to “sustainable development”, which refers to the balance of social, environmental and economic interests. However, many authors would argue that seldom is this balance achieved, and that sustainable development has become a hollow term amongst urban planners. In reality, planners tend to focus on only one pillar of sustainability often because of an environmental focus (e.g. advocating for parks and open space) (Campbell, 1996). The discourse on sustainable planning tends to prioritize environmental responsibility, but to disregard the issue of poverty. This is one of the driving forces behind the lack of awareness of poverty in land-use planning. Land-use issues are political and require awareness and discussion amongst a wide range of stakeholders within the political arena to create effective land-use policies (Deaton, 2005). This range of stakeholders includes groups that advocate for the poor. Land use planning

and poverty have an important relationship, but the inaccurate application of sustainable development policies has put a strain on poverty reduction (Campbell, 1996).

It is important that planners focus on the social pillar of sustainable development, which relates to issues such as social equity and social inclusion. Disregard for the social pillar of sustainable development can lead to increased spatial exclusion, limiting the ability of populations to participate economically, socially and politically in society. Generally, this means that people who live in higher-income neighbourhoods will have better access to essential services than people who live in low-income neighbourhoods. For planners to encourage a socially just environment, it is vital that residents have access to select local services in their communities. Doctor's offices, pharmacies, post offices, banks, supermarkets, corner stores, restaurants, pubs, primary schools, libraries, recreation facilities and community centres are the key services identified by respondents in the Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (Gordon et al. 2000; Dempsey et al. 2009). These land uses are conducive to social equity and poverty reduction, and should be considered in discussions pertaining to sustainable development.

Reducing Sprawl

Though the term sustainable development has been a hindrance to poverty reduction efforts, actual sustainable development in practice is purposed to play

a role in reducing poverty rates. One facet of sustainable development is reducing urban sprawl. Reducing sprawl allows regions to develop more densely in order to efficiently distribute municipal services and infrastructure. Orfield (2005) shares some of the successes from land-use policies in Oregon and their positive effects on poverty. Measures limiting sprawl combined with inclusionary zoning legislation reduced concentrated poverty and racial segregation in Oregon. These policies were enacted at the state level to prevent leapfrog development and displacement, while discouraging private developers from developing elsewhere. Orfield (2005) emphasizes that it is essential to formulate a coordinated policy approach to reduce poverty. Prohibiting exclusionary zoning, requiring comprehensive planning with dedicated enforcement, reducing sprawl and promoting infill, discouraging displacement and linking affordable housing with transit are the coordinated policy components that have shown to be effective in poverty reduction. Using what Orfield refers to as “urban growth boundaries,” this regional approach to poverty reduction require that districts in the state of Oregon concentrate urban growth in areas where municipal services can be effectively and efficiently delivered. Orfield states:

Growth management policies, by requiring careful designation of lands available for development, also can lead to more infill development in central cities and older inner-ring suburbs. Infill with higher-end housing and commercial space has the potential to spark renewal in financially

depressed and resource-poor urban areas (Orfield, 2005: 117)

Growth management policies appear to be part of a comprehensive approach to the poverty issue in Oregon.

Promoting Diversity

Promoting diversity is another initiative that planners may use to reduce poverty. Neighbourhood stability is vital in any poverty reduction strategy – and diversity is key to neighbourhood stability as, “communities characterized by ‘self-conscious diversity’ are more stable than communities that do not actively work to develop and sustain diversity” (Orfield, 2005: 151). Orfield (2005) recommends a series of initiatives that promote diversity such as: maintaining and strengthening fair housing laws; encouraging the creation of programs that support mixed-income development and developing strategies to strengthen community based organizations. Diverse communities are healthy communities, and planners play a role in fostering diversity through land use policies and social strategies (Orfield, 2005).

Land Use and Politics

Politics define the relationship between poverty and land use because land-use decisions are made in the political arena (Deaton, 2005). This arena is largely comprised of policy makers, government institutions and philanthropic

organizations. These actors are responsible for causing poverty because they control of the distribution of a nation's resources (Brady, 2009). This implies that land-use planners and municipal officials share the responsibility for causing as well as alleviating poverty. Although many decisions are made in the political arena, land-use planners have the expertise to create plans, policies and strategies that stimulate poverty reduction. In the next section, the relationship between land-use planning and poverty is discussed in the suburban context.

2.2 Suburban Poverty In North America

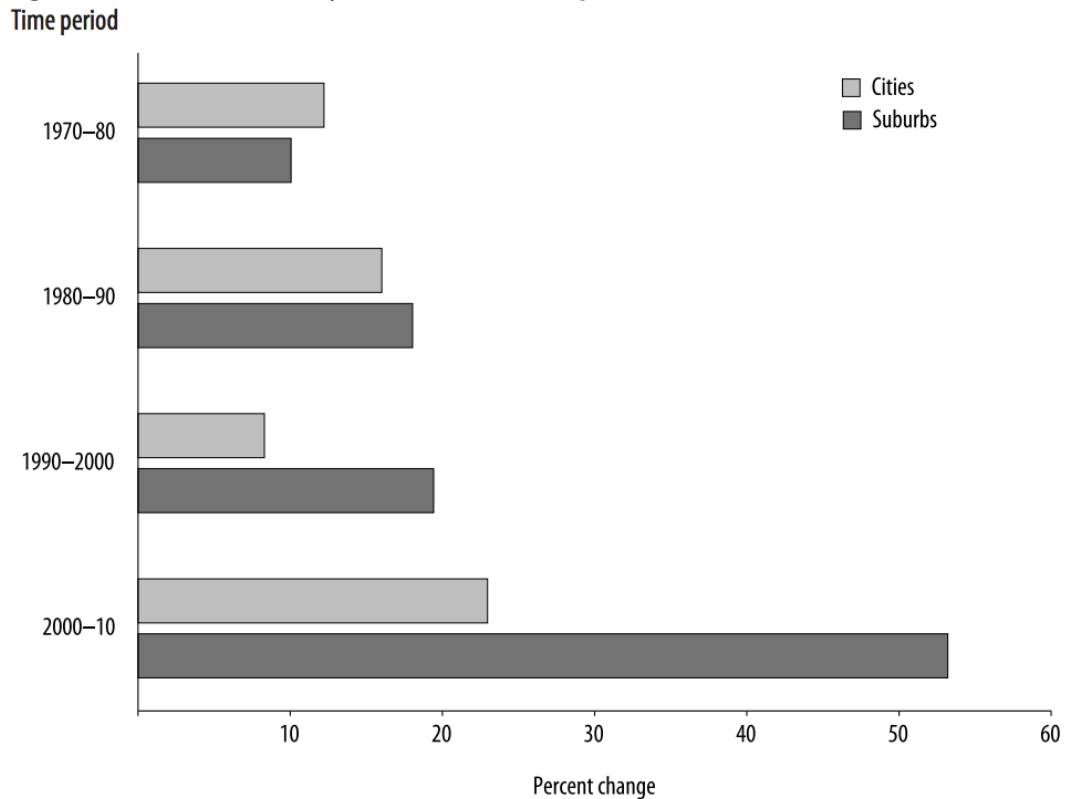
As a significant part of North America's population has shifted to the suburbs, poverty has made a similar shift (McGirr, 2012). The graphs below illustrate the growth of poverty in suburban communities in the United States. Between 1980 and 1990 poverty in suburban communities grew at more than twice the rate than in cities (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Trends and causes

Suburban poverty rates have continually grown over time. Poverty policies generally focused on urban solutions, but during the 2000s poverty became more prominent in the suburbs than in cities (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

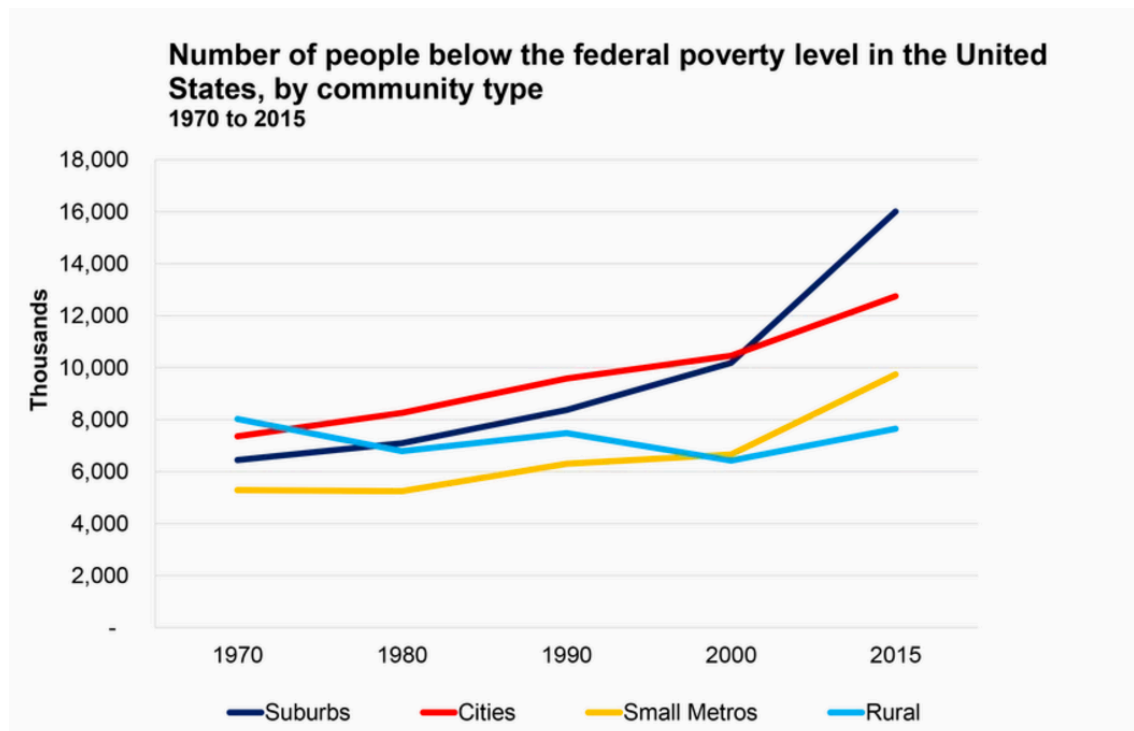
Figure 1: US Growth Rates in City and Suburban Poor Populations

Figure 2-2. Growth Rates in City and Suburban Poor Populations, 1970 to 2010



Source Berube & Kneebone (2013)

Figure 2: People Below the Federal Poverty Level in United States, by Community Type



Source: Kneebone (2017)

The figures above illustrate the growth rates of suburban and urban poor populations over time. Evidently, suburban poverty growth rates have outpaced urban poverty growth rates (Kneebone, 2017). As poverty has grown in cities at a constant rate, the growth of poverty in the suburbs cannot all be attributed to populations migrating from central cities. Suburban poverty has seemingly grown independently, and in the next section some of the causes of this phenomenon will be discussed. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

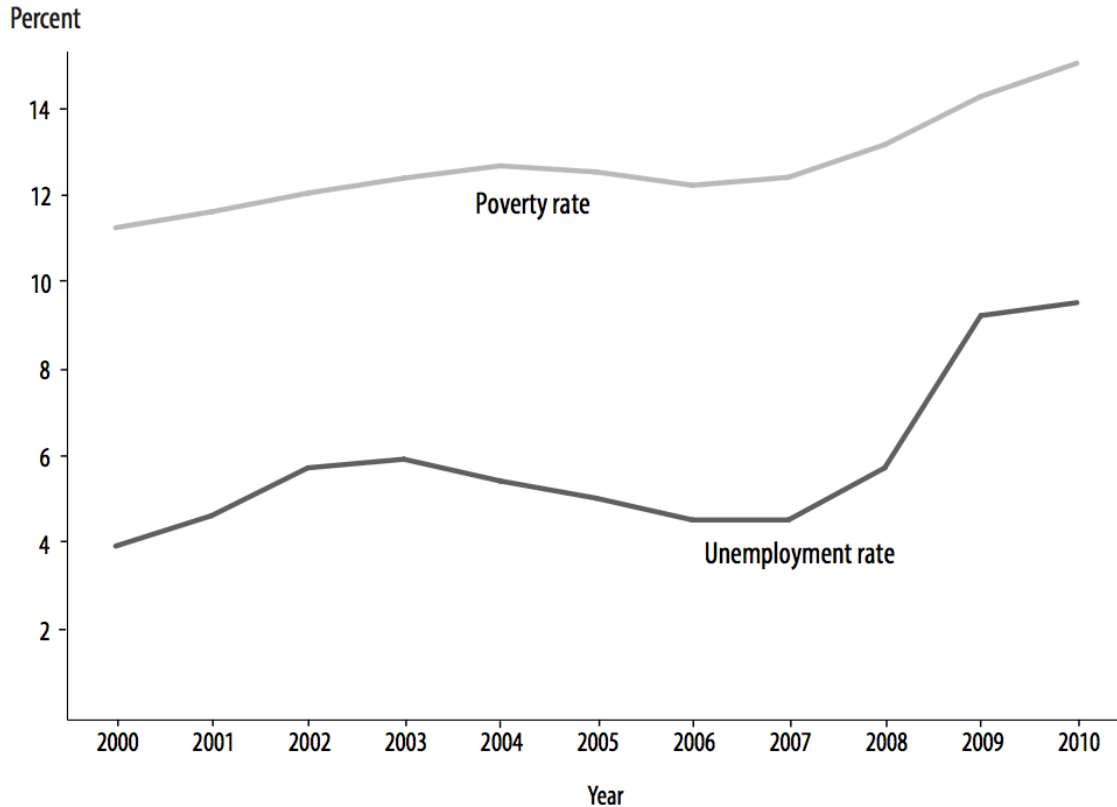
The causes of suburban poverty are often uniquely tied to the relationship between the suburb and its central city. The actions of land-use policy-makers in central cities affect the development of the surrounding suburbs. Also, history plays a role in the explanation of different development patterns in different cities and their suburbs. Exclusionary development practices were common in older post-war suburban municipalities, resulting in a lower proportion of minority and low-income populations. In newer metropolitan areas, suburbs often had larger poor populations and a larger share of minorities. These are not the causes of suburban poverty, but they explain the way in which suburbs developed demographically. Overall, the causes of suburban poverty are attributed to three different variables: the economy, population change and housing (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

The Economy

As it does with urban poverty, the economy plays a significant role in the causation of suburban poverty. It is essential to understand the broad economic picture to understand the relationship between the economy and suburban poverty. The period between 2000-2010 has had the largest growth in poverty in recent decades. This increase in the poverty rate is connected to the short economic downturn of 2001 and the great recession in the late 2000s. The figure above illustrates the relationship between the poverty rate and the unemployment rate. As the unemployment rate increases, the poverty rate increases as well (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Figure 3: Poverty and Unemployment Rates in the United States, 2000 to 2010

Figure 3-1. Poverty and Unemployment Rates, United States, 2000 to 2010



Source: Berube & Kneebone (2013)

The downturn in 2001 affected the manufacturing and information technology sectors, and the great recession in 2007 affected the whole economy. Many Americans lost their jobs, and unemployment rates continued to rise. Additionally, the number of jobs that were typically located in the suburbs began to diminish. The construction and manufacturing sectors experienced significant decline during the 2000s and most of this employment was located in the suburbs, causing many suburban households to become poor (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

According to Berube and Kneebone (2013), the relocation of industries to the suburbs is another cause of suburban poverty. As industries located to the suburbs, America's poor followed suit to remain closer to employment.

Berube and Kneebone (2013) pose the question, "Will suburban poverty decline significantly as the economy improves?" (Berube & Kneebone, 2013: 44) The answer to this question is no. There are two reasons for this: trends suggest that low-wage employers and low-wage employees will continue to migrate to the suburbs; and employment growth will be the largest in lower-wage sectors. Low-wage employment does not aid in the alleviation of suburban poverty. Often these jobs are difficult to access, and do not provide workers with sufficient resources to escape poverty. These factors imply that suburban poverty will continue to be a policy challenge for North American policy makers (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Population Change

Undoubtedly, different areas of America experienced different rates of suburban population growth. Yet, whether there was population growth, stagnation or decline, poverty rates still continued to increase in these suburbs. This is partially explained by the change in demographics in suburban communities. Suburban communities experienced an increase in household sizes, generally made up of families with children, which are more likely to experience poverty. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Immigration has also played a role in the increasing rates of poverty and changing demographics of suburban communities. Immigrants tend to locate in suburban communities because of the attraction to employment and the lower costs of housing. However, data shows that poverty rates are higher among immigrant populations, explaining the overall increase in poverty rates in the suburbs. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013) Poverty rates among immigrant populations can be explained by lack of proficiency in English, unfamiliarity with local labour markets, and lack of formal training and education (Suro et al. 2016). Still, suburban municipalities experienced significant increases in poverty in the absence of a large immigrant population (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Housing

Housing is a substantial element of the suburban poverty picture. Changes in the housing market and the location of affordable housing are two major components that affect suburban poverty (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). The housing market fluctuates as housing stock ages and as the population and consumers' preferences change. Aging housing stock becomes less desirable and thus more affordable for low-income populations. Many suburbs have a significant amount of ageing housing stock and as a result have attracted large low-income populations (Bier, 2001).

The HOPE VI program created in 1992 by US federal policy makers to decrease the concentration of poverty in inner-cities, led to the demolition of a

significant portion of the affordable housing stock in central cities. At the same time, suburban municipalities began to have larger quantities of affordable units in their ageing housing stock, attracting low-income families to the suburbs. In addition, the *Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program* allowed many low-income families to afford suburban affordable housing units (Berube & Kneebone; Covington et al. 2011). Affordable housing in combination with the search for safe communities explains much of the influx of low-income families to the suburbs. In 2008, approximately half of HCV recipients lived in suburbs (Covington et al. 2011).

The *Hope VI program* also had an effect on Canadian policy-makers, as it influenced the restructuring of public housing programs in Canadian provinces. With goals of poverty deconcentration and social mixing, the provincial government in Ontario demolished and redeveloped several public housing projects. As a result, many of these areas experienced gentrification, causing low-income households to migrate to the suburbs (August, 2008).

The subprime lending boom and the housing market crash also contributed to suburban poverty. Suburban communities with high rates of poverty experienced higher foreclosure rates than ones with lower rates of poverty. As a result, many of these municipalities have shrinking tax bases, and the in-migration of low-income families of affordable housing is adding to already high poverty rates (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

The causes of suburban poverty show a similar trend: people migrating to suburban communities without adequate support systems. The next section discusses some of the implications of suburban poverty.

2.3 Implications Of Suburban Poverty In the United States

As suburban poverty is a fairly recent policy issue, it has been difficult for policy makers to formulate an appropriate response. Poor access to transit, services and jobs are a result of the lack of policy attention toward suburban poverty.

Access to Employment

In America, it appears that a significant percentage of the jobs are located outside of the central city as 43% of jobs are located 16 kilometers or further from downtown (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). This suggests that a significant percentage of the jobs are located within inner and outer-ring suburbs. However, these statistics are misleading because most of the job growth occurs in high-income suburbs and a large portion of this employment is made up of low-wage service jobs (Stoll & Holzer, 2007). As a result, low-income residents in the suburbs are forced to commute vast distances for low-wage employment. This phenomenon is called the spatial mismatch between jobs and housing.

Public Transportation

Public transportation allows suburban residents to access employment. The inability for residents to access employment is more often than not related to access to public transportation. In the suburbs, cars remain the most dominant mode of transportation, but this is often a burden for low-income households. Yet, studies show that low-income suburban residents likely have access to at least one bus stop within walking distance; however this does not indicate reliable or consistent service. Further, suburban transit only allows low-income households to access 25% of a metropolitan area's jobs (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Suburban municipalities typically struggle with funding effective public transportation because of lower densities and dispersed residential communities and employment centres. As a result, many low-income residents do not have adequate access to public transportation and, especially if they cannot afford a car, are not able to access employment, which results in further impoverishment (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Municipal Services

In addition to connecting people to jobs, public transportation is vital for connecting people to services. Community centres, doctors' offices, schools and daycare centres also become difficult to access when public transportation is unreliable. Also, non-profit services providers such as food banks and employment services tend to locate in central cities, where poverty is spatially concentrated. Consequentially, the poor populations in suburban communities

are not able to easily access these services. At the same time, “Philanthropy has yet to fully adapt to the new geography of poverty” (Berube & Kneebone, 2013: 65), a fact that also explains the lack of social services in suburban communities. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). Still, if services were to locate in the suburbs, poor transit accessibility would make many of these services difficult to reach.

Education

Though it is believed that suburban students have access to a higher quality of education, it is not always true. Suburban schools often have higher test scores than urban schools, but they are often ill-equipped to address many of the educational implications of poverty. Dealing with English as a second language or with nutrition and health issues puts a strain on educational resources and has negative consequences for low-income suburban children. Often this results in lower educational attainment (Berube & Kneebone, 2013)

Perceptions

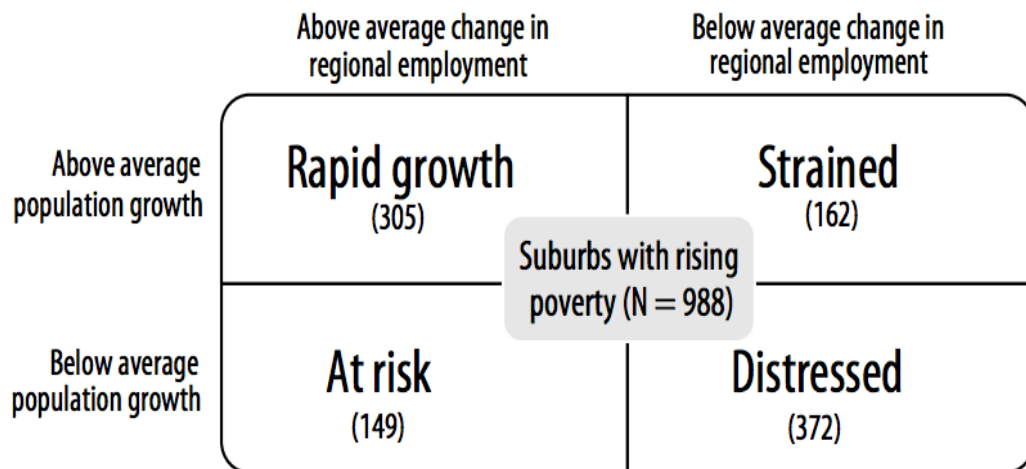
The inadequate perception of poverty is one reason for which poverty is inadequately addressed in suburban communities. Policy makers, non-profit organizations, and even residents are often unaware of poverty in the suburbs because it often remains invisible (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). Philanthropic organizations dealing with suburban communities are frequently underfunded because of the lack of understanding of the changing geography of poverty

(Allard, 2011). Suburban municipalities also lack the funding to administer social services in aid to vulnerable, low-income populations (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). Addressing the poverty issue will require policy makers, philanthropist organizations and residents to first acknowledge the growing presence of poverty in the suburbs and learn about its causes and consequences. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Types of Suburbs

Based on their research, Berube & Kneebone (2013) conclude that there are four types of suburbs, which they label as follows: rapid growth, strained, at

Figure 4: Types of Suburbs in the United States



Source: Berube & Kneebone (2013)

risk and distressed. The four types depend of two different variables, population growth and change in regional employment, as illustrated in the figure below (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

Rapid growth suburban municipalities generally have above average change in employment (positive and negative) and above average population growth. This type of suburban community has seen large increases in suburban poverty. Between 2000 and 2010, municipalities of this type saw a growth of their poor populations by 71%. Strained suburban municipalities typically have high population growth, without job growth. These municipalities have seen poor populations grow by an alarming 92% by the end of 2010. At-risk suburbs have seen growth in employment accompanied by slow population growth. These communities are typically urbanized, have an older housing stock and are ethnically diverse. They have seen a 46% growth rate of their poor population between 2000 and 2010. Distressed suburbs have low population growth and low employment growth and most American suburbs fall in this category. These communities mostly have ageing infrastructure, are urbanized and have an ageing housing stock. Poverty rates in these communities increased by 52% between 2000 and 2010. The different types of suburban communities illustrate local differences in the regional pattern of suburban poverty, and demonstrate the need for appropriate policy responses depending on the context (Berube & Kneebone, 2013).

2.4 Suburban Poverty In Canada

Berube and Kneebone (2013) thoroughly discuss the issue of suburban poverty as it applies to the United States. But for Canada, it does not appear that there is a significant amount of literature on the same topic. A significant portion of the Canadian literature suggests that many poverty issues only exist in inner-ring suburbs of Canada's largest cities (Fiedler & Addie, 2008). The United Way (2004) in a report titled *Poverty By Postal Code*, states that:

Because the geographic distribution of poverty across city-regions like the GTA follow distinctive patterns, with city cores typically exhibiting much higher poverty levels than the outer, newer suburbs, it is important to understand if this polarity is intensifying in the Toronto region. (United Way, 2004: 8)

The authors of the report put emphasis on Toronto as being the centre of poverty in the region. However, they do acknowledge some of the issues in the inner ring suburbs, such as an increasing number of single parents, newcomers, unemployed and youth, which parallel trends in the United States (United Way, 2004). Walks (2001) also discusses the similarity in trends between the United States and Canada. In Toronto, the decline of the manufacturing sector and the suburbanization of employment played an integral part in causing socio-spatial inequality and polarization (Walks, 2001).

Walks (2001) also discusses the role of immigration in socio-spatial inequality and polarization. It appears that racial segregation does not play a significant role in this process. However, research does show that Canadian immigrants self-segregate for socio-cultural and economic reasons. Lower-income immigrants migrate to lower income tracts in central cities and mature suburbs, while high-income immigrants locate in the newer suburbs and the exurbs (Walks, 2001).

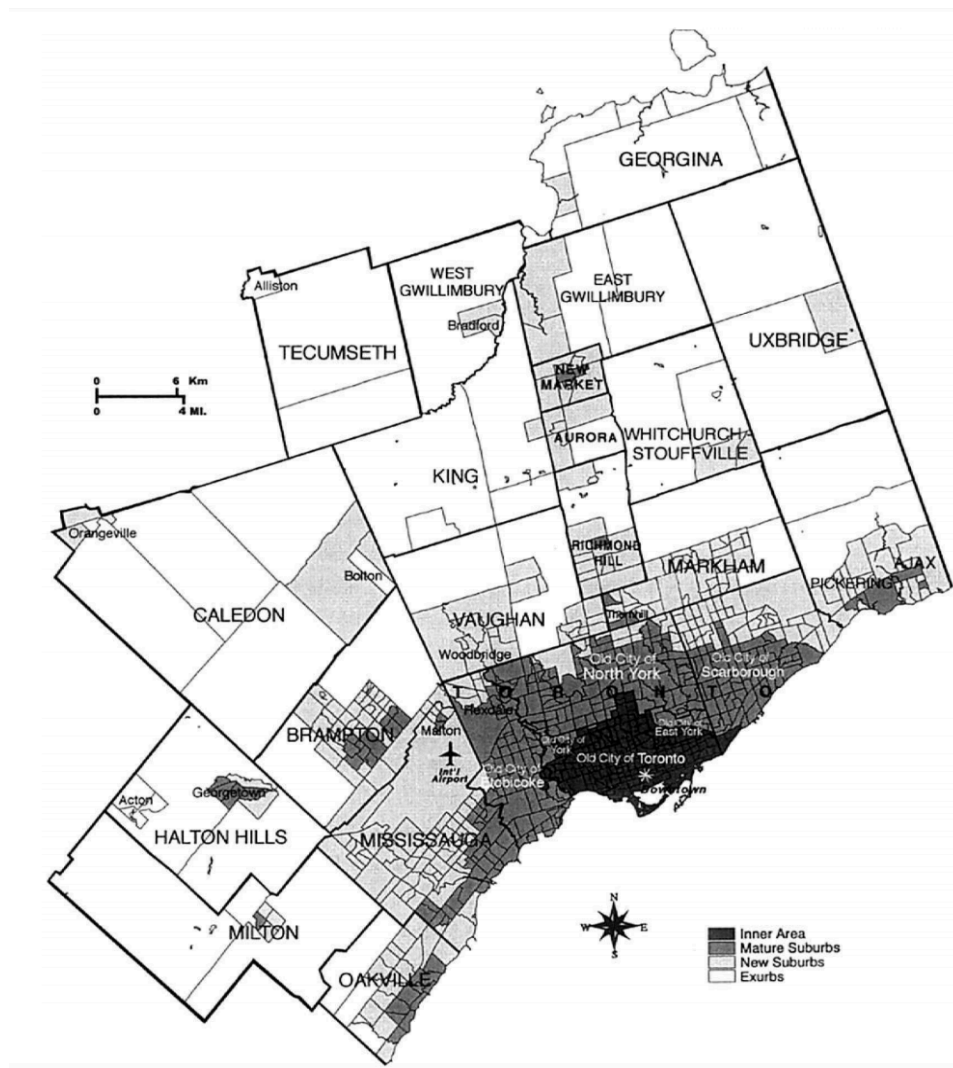
Types of Suburbs in Canada

Walks (2001) distinguishes three different types of suburbs in the Greater Toronto Area (shown in figure 5 below): mature suburbs, exurbs and new suburbs. In 1991, mature suburban communities had the largest income disparities as some neighbourhoods were very poor and others were some of the most expensive in the Greater Toronto Area. Many residents of mature suburbs are unemployed or employed in the manufacturing sector and low-level service sectors. Also, a disproportionate amount of social housing is located in these communities.

New suburbs are likely home to middle class families. They have low levels of income disparities and are generally car-oriented. Immigrants and non-immigrants appear to self-segregate in these communities in what is

described as a “checkerboard fashion” (Walks, 2001: 438). Exurbs located on the fringe of built-up areas, were once home to lower-income populations who

Figure 5: Types of Suburbs in the Greater Toronto Area



Source: Walks (2001)

worked in the manufacturing or rural occupation sectors (fishing, forestry, mining). However, by 1991, the exurbs saw an influx of high-income

professionals, which can likely be explained by the development of luxury, homes in these communities.

Walks (2001) draws a few conclusions about trends in the three residential zones. First, the mature suburbs have begun to show characteristics that are typically ascribed to the inner city such as high poverty rates and high rates of income polarization. Second, low-income populations are generally found in mature suburbs, as new suburbs are not built to accommodate these populations and have been “partially successful at excluding lower-status social groups” (Walks, 2001: 439).

Hulchanski (2010) draws similar conclusions. It is acknowledged that gentrification is a factor in the suburbanization of poverty, but the census data also illustrates another trend: middle-income populations have declined both in the city and in the suburbs, while low-income populations have increased. This suggests that people from both the city and the suburbs have transitioned into poverty (Hulchanski, 2010).

Hulchanski (2010) identified some of the characteristics of suburban poverty in the Greater Toronto Area. Population growth rates, household composition, housing tenure, immigrant population, visible minority population, education rates, employment rates and income levels are all variables that may indicate the extent of suburban poverty. The table below shows the characteristics of suburban poverty in Toronto.

Table 1: Characteristics of Suburban Poverty in Greater Toronto

(Hulchanski, 2010)

Characteristics of impoverished suburbs	
Population Growth	-Large population growth
Household Composition	-Large percentage of single parent families -Large percentage of children and youth
Housing Tenure	-Larger proportion of renters -Large proportion of the population spending 30% or more on housing
Immigrant Population	-Dramatic increase in foreign born population
Visible Minority Population	-High percentage of visible minorities
Education	-Unlikely to have a university degree
Employment	-Many manufacturing jobs and many blue collar workers
Income	-Declining incomes and a high proportion of households below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) level
Travel	-Poor access to public transit

The criteria Hulchanski (2010) uses to describe suburban poverty in the inner suburbs in Toronto, are consistent with the literature on suburban poverty in the United States. Some of these criteria will be further explored in the following chapter.

It appears that the literature on outer-ring suburban poverty in Canada is not as up-to-date or rich as in the United States, as suburban poverty does not appear to be well documented for Canadian outer-ring suburbs or what Walks (2001) refers to as newer suburbs. Yet, whether in Canada or the United States, the fundamentals of poverty are the same. The economy, housing and population change remain causes of poverty in the Canadian context. The next chapter will introduce Peel Region and its distinct characteristics of suburban poverty.

3. Suburban Poverty In The Region Of Peel

This section describes poverty as it applies to the Region of Peel. The Regional Municipality of Peel is an upper-tier municipality, a suburb of Toronto and includes the lower-tier municipalities of Brampton, Mississauga and Caledon. Peel is used as a case study for this research to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of strategies that address suburban poverty.

3.1 Introduction To Suburban Poverty In Peel

Peel has one of the fastest-growing populations in Canada, and poverty rates appear to be growing at the same rate. In 2006, 15% of Peel's population (or 167,000 people) was living below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO), which is an 11.5% increase from 2001. These figures are concerning because this growth was occurring amongst vulnerable groups in the region such as recent immigrants, single parents, racialized communities, unattached seniors, women and children. (Region of Peel, 2008).

Beyond the LICO, there are other indicators that poverty exists in Peel. The region lacks the social services to serve the growing population. The Fair Share for Peel Task Force estimates that the region is underfunded by 350 million dollars per year, in comparison to regional municipalities in Ontario (Mendleson, 2013). Linda Jeffrey who was an MPP in the region and is the current mayor of Brampton said, “People think that we’re a wealthy suburban community, that we’re sitting in deck chairs, drinking piña coladas” (Mendleson, 2013), which may partially explain why the area is underfunded. Another partial explanation for the underfunding is the “GTA pooling” program implemented under former Premier Mike Harris’ government. This program pooled Peel’s property tax dollars along with property tax dollars from other GTA municipalities, to be spent in Toronto, predominantly on social services (Mendleson, 2013).

It is evident that there is a mismatch between Peel’s needs and the services that are being delivered to adequately serve the population. Understanding the needs of Peel residents is key to combatting poverty in the region. Some of the specific issues in Peel region are addressed in *Portraits of Peel* prepared by The Region of Peel’s Fair Share for Peel Task Force. The report describes the relationship between vulnerable populations and the social services in the region. In the report, children and youth, immigrants and visible minorities, persons with disabilities and seniors are identified as the vulnerable groups in the region (Region of Peel, 2011).

Children and Youth

Peel has a fairly young population in comparison to the rest of the province and the rest of Canada. According to *Portraits of Peel*, children and youth in Peel are lacking mental health support, are experiencing child abuse, are involved in violent crime and are unable to meet the academic demands of their schools in higher capacity than other regions in Ontario (Region of Peel, 2011).

Recent Immigrants

Thirty-three percent of Peel's recent immigrants live in poverty, which is three times the rate of the non-immigrant population. Yet, the percentage of recent immigrants who hold a bachelor's degree or higher is more than double than that of Peel residents born in Canada. It is evident that there is a lack of support for the integration of immigrants, as 60% of newcomers do not work in the same occupational field as they did prior to arriving in Canada. The report does not go into detail about non-immigrant visible minorities, but it does note that 20% of minorities in Peel live in poverty, which is approximately double the rate among non-visible minorities (Region of Peel, 2011).

Persons with Disabilities

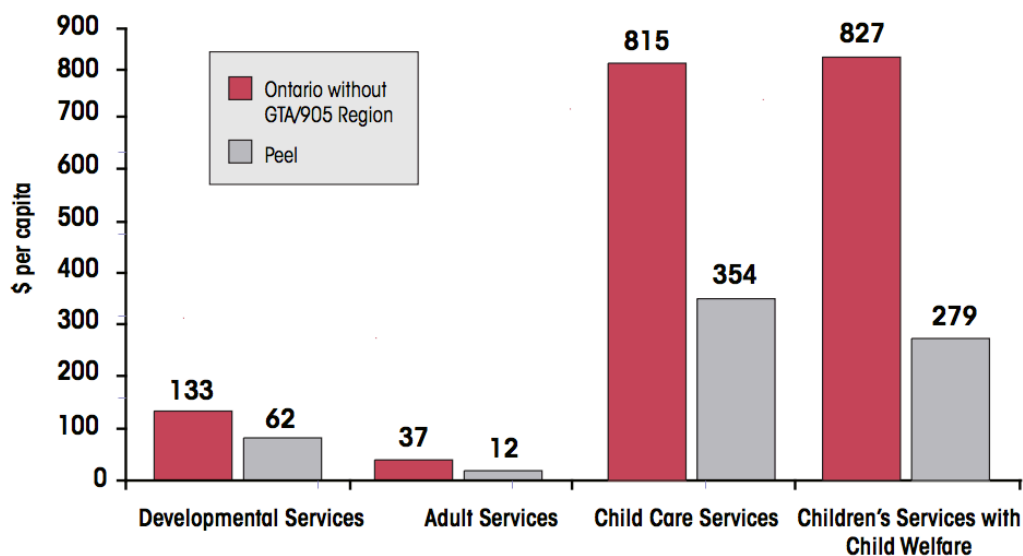
About 30,000 residents with disabilities in the region live in poverty and about half of the persons with disabilities in the region are employed or actively pursuing employment. Peel's population of persons with disabilities has continued to rise because of an ageing and growing population. Peel region is underfunded as it

receives half the provincial average in funding per capita for developmental services. Evidently, there is a lack of funding and support for persons with disabilities in the region (Region of Peel, 2011).

Seniors

In 2006, seniors represented 9% of the total population and is growing at a rate that is almost three times the provincial average. It is predicted that by 2018,

Figure 6: Lack of Funding for Social Services in Peel Region
Per Capita Funding of Social Services
Peel vs. Ontario (without GTA/905 Regions), 2008 - 2009



Sources: Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services & Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, letter dated Dec 10, 2009;
<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/table10gta.html> and
<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/table10.html>

Source: Region of Peel, 2011

Peel's senior population will double to over 200,000. The percentage of seniors living alone in the region is more than three times the provincial average, and of these seniors, 40% are living in poverty. Additionally, 10% to 25% of Peel seniors

have mental health disorders. Housing affordability is a challenge for seniors as 30% of that population is spending nearly half their income on housing. In summary, seniors in Peel are lacking financial aid, affordable housing and mental health services (Region of Peel, 2011).

Families

Finally, the report identifies families as a group that face unique challenges such as a lack of childcare, a lack of support for single parent families and families with children with disabilities. Overall, vulnerable groups are lacking the appropriate services to support their needs. It appears that the lack of services is a symptom of insufficient funding and awareness. However, awareness does appear to be gaining momentum through various strategies and collaborative efforts by the Region of Peel and United Way of Peel Region, including the publication of *Portraits of Peel*. (Region of Peel, 2011).

Table 2: Statistical Indicators of Suburban Poverty in Peel

	Toronto	Peel	Other GTA Suburbs Average ²
Population			
% of Visible Minorities	49.1	56.8	20.5
2001-2011 Population Growth Rate (%)	5.4	31.1	31.7
Recent Immigrants as a % of population	16.0	15.5	10.0
% of Households Below LIM	19.3	12.6	9.5
Median income \$	27,371	29,449	33,862
Average income \$	44,517	39,428	46,568
In bottom half of the Canadian distribution	53.0	48.8	38.1
Housing			
% Of tenant households in subsidized housing	16.5	13.5	14.7
% Of tenant households spending 30% or more of household total income on shelter costs	43.5	41.5	42.4
% Of owner households spending 30% or more of household total income on shelter costs	27.6	28.1	23.8
% Of Single-parent economic families	18.8	14.1	13.1
Percentage of private households living "not suitable" housing	13.8	11.9	5.0
Employment			
Employment rate (%)	58.3	62.6	64.4
Unemployment rate (%)	9.3	8.9	7.4
% Of Whitecollar employees*	57.0	52.0	58.5
% Of Bluecollar employees*	43.0	48.0	41.5
Education			
% Of population without a certificate, diploma or degree	10.6	10.4	7.8
% Of population with high school diploma or equivalent	20.5	23.6	23.0
% Of population with a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree	68.9	66.0	69.3
Modal Share in Transportation			
Car, truck or van - as a driver	48.3%	76.8%	79.4%
Car, truck or van - as a passenger	4.5%	6.2%	5.9%
Public transit	36.5%	13.6%	10.5%
Walked	7.3%	2.0%	2.8%
Bicycle	2.2%	0.4%	0.4%
Other methods	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%

Source: 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011)

² Other GTA suburbs averages are the average statistics from Halton, Durham and York Regions.

These statistics illustrate the relationship between Toronto, Peel and other GTA suburbs, along with the indicators of poverty. Table 2 provides some of the statistical indicators of poverty for Peel from the National Household Survey (2011). Many of them are consistent with the image of suburban poverty presented by Berube & Kneebone (2013), Walks (2001) and United Way (2004). In relation to poverty, Peel and Toronto have similar statistical indicators. A high percentage of visible minorities, population growth, recent immigrants and high unemployment rates are some of the important characteristics that are indicative of poverty in the region. Moreover, Peel appears to have stronger indicators of poverty than other suburbs. It has a larger share of low-income populations, a higher percentage of lone-parent families, households living in unsuitable housing, population in the bottom half of the Canadian income distribution. The next section of the report discusses how Peel addresses this issue.

3.2 Addressing Suburban Poverty In Peel

Though poverty was an issue in Peel for many years, 2008 is when the Region of Peel and the Government of Ontario began to address poverty in the region. *Breaking the Cycle* which was Ontario's 2008 poverty strategy, was a vehicle for the creation of many other strategies such as: *The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy*, *The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy*, *The Mississauga Poverty Committee*, *The Second Units Bill*, *Inclusionary Zoning* and *The Big Move*. These strategies will be further discussed in this section.

Breaking the Cycle

In 2008, the Government of Ontario introduced its first Poverty Reduction Strategy, titled *Breaking the Cycle* (2008). *Breaking the Cycle* is a comprehensive strategy that addresses poverty with an emphasis on children and households with children. The major goal of the program was to reduce child poverty in Ontario by 25% in five years. The program identifies key areas beyond income, such as school readiness, educational attainment, healthcare and housing. Also included in the strategy is an increase in the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) that would provide low-income families with up to \$1,310 annually. A number of financial commitments are made to address youth mental health, youth poverty, childcare, student nutrition and high-risk youth. Furthermore, the provincial government has also made financial commitments to affordable housing, social housing and increasing the minimum wage. The strategy also makes financial commitments to vulnerable groups including: people with disabilities, seniors and the homeless (Breaking the Cycle, 2008).

In order to measure progress, the strategy outlines eight important indicators: school readiness, educational progress, high school graduation rates, birth weights, depth of poverty, low-income measure, Ontario housing measure and the standard of living. Moreover, the strategy makes commitments to future legislation, annual reporting and collaboration. In relation to the partnership with the federal government, the government of Ontario highlights that the federal government needs to improve the Employment Insurance Program, continue to

deliver on its commitment to the 2005 Affordable Housing Program, and aid in the reduction of quality-of-life gap between Aboriginals and other Canadians. The role of municipalities is significantly different as the provincial government expects municipalities to create poverty strategies that emphasize transportation and recreation, as well as mobilize diverse stakeholders around poverty reduction strategies (Breaking the Cycle, 2008).

‘An act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario’, converted all the strategies outlined in *Breaking the Cycle* into provincial law. The act states that the strategy shall be updated every five years and that high-risk groups such as immigrants, women, single mothers, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and racialized groups be recognized. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of treating low-income individuals with respect and dignity (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2009).

Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy

The momentum at the provincial level coupled with the demand for a regional strategy addressing poverty encouraged the creation of the 2012 *Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy*. The program was a three-year strategy with a focus on five key issues: economic opportunities, income security, affordable and accessible transportation, food security and safe and affordable housing. (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

The objective of economic opportunity is “a stronger regional economy that provides adequate wages and progressive employment opportunities for Peel residents” (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012). The potential outcomes are: increased employment opportunities for people at risk of or living in poverty, and increased and adequate training opportunities for vulnerable populations. Indicators for this measure include the Low-Income Measure (LIM), depth of poverty, high school graduation rates and Peel’s unemployment rates. (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

The objective of income security is “a progressive, seamless coordinated system that ensures Peel residents are income secure” (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012). The potential outcomes of this intervention are: increased awareness of income supports by people and community agencies supporting clients, and increased awareness and access to income supports by vulnerable populations. The plan outlines developing a guide to help low-income residents understand all income security programs, as well as increasing financial literacy and developing and expanding initiatives that connect low-income families and individuals with tax credits and programs for which they are eligible. To measure the success of this measure, the LIM, standard of living and depth of poverty measures will be used (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

The strategy proposes “a more connected, accessible and affordable transportation system in Peel” (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012). The potential outcomes of this measure is an increased number of residents

experiencing poverty being able to purchase transit passes and have increased access to employment, essential services and basic needs. The plan discusses creating an affordable transit program in Mississauga and/or Brampton by 2015, and to create partnerships with local grocers to create a free or discounted pick-up and drop-off program. Indicators of the success of this measure are the standard of living, and the cost of a transit pass as a percentage of a minimum wage salary in Peel (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

The strategy also highlights food security with the goal of creating “a food system that meets the needs of all Peel residents” (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012). Potential outcomes of this intervention are: a more food-secure community, more accurate data on food need, increased capacity of food programs and the increased capacity and diversity of food security programs that go beyond the provision of food. These objectives will be achieved by actions such as: creating a Peel food charter that outlines Peel’s commitment to being a food secure community, increasing food programs in neighbourhoods, developing a consistent measure food security, and promoting partnerships and programs that support rural-urban food links. The standard of living and the percentage of households experiencing food insecurity in the last 12 months will be the indicators used to determine the success of this measure (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

The last section of the strategy proposes a goal of establishing “a sufficient supply of safe and affordable housing in Peel region” (Peel Poverty

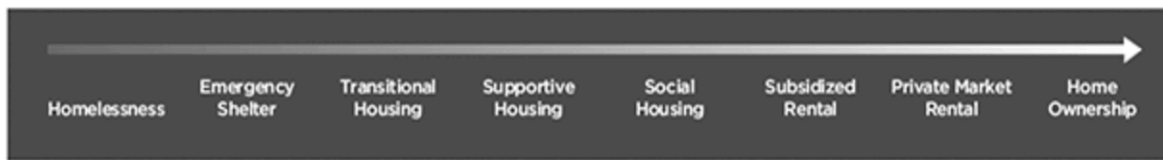
Reduction Strategy, 2012). The desired outcome is increased support for and investment in affordable housing. This outcome will be achieved by supporting ongoing advocacy efforts with all three levels of government to increase the supply of affordable housing, raising awareness of residents and the community about the need for housing, and providing input into the region's affordable housing strategy. The housing price index, expenditures on housing as a percentage of income, and the percentage of waitlisted families placed into subsidized housing will all be used to determine the success of this measure (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

A task force comprised of stakeholders, individuals with first-hand experience (people living in poverty), community organizations and elected officials will be created to the comprehensive success of the measures of this strategy. Keys to the success of this poverty reduction strategy are creating awareness and collaboration with all community stakeholders (Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2012).

Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

The *Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy* released in 2010 (and amended in 2016), addresses affordable housing and homelessness in Ontario partly from a land-use perspective. The goals of this strategy include: an appropriate and sustainable supply of housing; an equitable, portable system of financial assistance; people-centred, efficient housing programs; and an

Figure 7: The Housing Continuum



Based on input from Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Source: Ontario's Poverty Strategy (2014)

Indigenous Housing Strategy. Also, this strategy includes people-based initiatives, such as an income-based portable housing benefit, as well as a simplified rent-geared-to-income framework. This will allow residents to have affordable choices so that they can reside in communities that are conducive to meeting their needs. This housing strategy proposes to help move people along the continuum from homelessness to (Fig. 7). Overall, it appears that this strategy is appropriate for the needs of Peel region but requires successful cooperation from the private, governmental and non-governmental sectors in order to be implemented (Province of Ontario, 2016).

Mississauga Poverty Committee

The Mississauga Poverty Committee was established in 2015 to address poverty issues specifically related to Mississauga. This committee has yet to report any specific findings, but they are instrumental in advocating and creating awareness for poverty in Mississauga. They also played an advisory role in the

completion of a draft of Mississauga's first housing strategy. This strategy is a spinoff of the provincial and regional housing strategies which places an emphasis on affordable housing that is unique and specific to the residents of Mississauga (Mayor Crombie, 2015).

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan

The Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan (2014-2024) puts forth a ten-year plan to end homelessness and to provide a stable housing solution in the region. The provincial government's *Long-Term Housing Strategy* mandated this plan to be administered at the regional level. The goals of the plan are for everyone to have a home and for homelessness to be eliminated in the region. This plan is described as: people-centred, partnership-based, sustainable, transparent, innovative and accountable (Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan, 2014). This plan addresses the regional housing needs identified by municipal officials in Peel. The expected impacts of the plan are an adequate supply of housing, an increased socio-economic capacity for individuals and families and an integrated system of key stakeholders in the housing market. However, it is too soon to evaluate these impacts in reality.

Secondary Units Bill

The *Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011* resulted in the amendment of the *Planning Act* to assist in the creation of secondary units. It

became mandatory for municipalities to include “official plan policies and zoning by-law provisions for second units in single, semi and row houses, as well as in accessory structures” (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2015). This legislation complements the many strategies devoted to affordable housing at all levels of government, and addresses the need for affordable housing stock in Peel.

Inclusionary Zoning

Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016 resulted in changes to the Planning Act. Now, municipalities can demand that developers include affordable housing in their residential developments. Inclusionary zoning would help achieve outcome that include: increasing the supply of affordable housing for low- to moderate-income families, creating inclusive communities and meeting local affordable housing needs. This is another tool that builds upon the *Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy* to meet the housing needs of Ontario residents (Taye and Fischler, forthcoming).

The Big Move

The Big Move is a plan developed by Greater Toronto’s Transportation Agency, Metrolinx, to improve transportation infrastructure in the GTA. As previously discussed, affordable and accessible transportation and regional interconnectivity relate to suburban poverty. The vision for *The Big Move*

is for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area to have an integrated transportation system that enhances the quality of life; contributes to a thriving, sustainable and protected environment and contributes to a strong, prosperous and economy (Metrolinx, 2008).

Overall, these policies, strategies and plans address many of the needs in Peel Region. *Breaking the Cycle* and *The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy* focus on increasing the socio-economic capacity of vulnerable groups. The *Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy*, *Secondary Units Bill* and *Inclusionary Zoning* are place-based strategies centered on making housing affordable, which has been identified as one of the main remedies to the problem of poverty. *The Big Move* proposes affordable and accessible transit to enhance the quality of life for all residents. The combination of these strategies addresses many of the poverty issues in Peel. In the next section, we ask municipal officials their opinion on these strategies and we examine ways of improving them.

4. Interview Results And Discussion

For this research, interviews were conducted with four professionals to answer aforementioned research questions: what are some of the causes and implications of poverty in Peel Region? How do Mississauga and Brampton address poverty? How can Mississauga and Brampton improve their poverty strategies? Respondents were asked a series of related questions to answer the research questions.

After contacting planners at the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton and The Region of Peel, planners who specifically worked on housing policies were selected. Also, an advisor on the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee was also selected. In total, four individuals were interviewed: a planner from Mississauga, a planner from Brampton, a planner from the Region of Peel and an advisor on the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee.

4.1 The Respondents

When the first planning respondent was asked, “how important is poverty to your work?” She explained that she does not directly work with poverty, but she understands the impact that housing has on poverty. She does not directly address poverty in her work, but understands that poverty issues are “not written down, but they are top of mind.”

When the second planning respondent was asked, “how important is poverty to your work?” He replied,

the question of poverty does not really come to mind for us. We deal with the land-use aspect of affordable housing.

Further, he indicated that poverty is a regional responsibility and is not addressed by lower-tier municipalities. He emphasized the importance of the housing continuum – moving people from homelessness to affordable home ownership,

but holds that poverty does not relate to his work as, “poverty hasn’t been something that has been addressed by the City of Brampton.”

When the third planning respondent was asked, “how important is poverty to your work?” She responded,

poverty is extremely important because it affects many of our residents. Planning for housing and services is a part of my job.

She also indicates the importance of affordable housing stock, access to services for vulnerable populations, and comprehensive community planning. From her perspective, poverty is substantial to her work.

The final respondent was not asked about the importance of poverty to her work, because it was implied. Her work revolves around generating awareness, engaging a wide array of stakeholders and ultimately reducing poverty within the Region of Peel.

The following sections present an analysis of the respondents’ responses to the research questions. They were asked a variety of different questions in order to identify: the causes and implications of poverty in Mississauga and Brampton, the ways the municipalities address poverty, and the manner by which they can improve these strategies.

4.2 What Are The Causes And Implications Of Poverty In Mississauga and Brampton?

The causes and implications of poverty in Mississauga and Brampton were identified as being no different than the causes and implications discussed in the literature. All planners identified the lack of affordable housing as a central cause and implication of poverty and Peel. Because of the lack of affordable housing, people are poor, and because people are poor, they cannot afford housing. The third respondent explains: “centralized waitlists have over 12,000 households waiting for housing assistance – that makes it evident that there are people living in poverty”. The lack of affordable housing is an important element in the picture of poverty in Peel.

The general consensus was also that vulnerable populations in Mississauga and Brampton did not have access to the services they need, which may be for a variety of different reasons. Some of the reasons identified were lack of affordable transportation, food insecurity and lack of income. But the biggest reason identified by the second respondent was the fact that poverty is “invisible and we don’t see it the way we do in Toronto.” This lack of awareness partially explains why regional services are not being adequately distributed.

4.3 How Do Brampton And Mississauga Address Poverty?

One of most difficult questions to answer was: how do the two municipalities address poverty? This question is difficult to answer because in the

Region of Peel, there are many different strategies in place that directly and indirectly address poverty. Planners face difficulties answering the aforementioned question because many of these strategies work independently of each other.

When planners were asked, “how important do you think the question of poverty is to your own work?” they provided an array of different answers. All acknowledged that poverty related to their work through housing, but the second respondent acknowledged, “it is not something that directly applies to my job”. This statement appears to be consistent with the cities’ Official Plans. Both Brampton and Mississauga do not have any language that pertains to poverty in their official plans. All planners state that this language is “implied” in their housing policies and that the Official Plan is not the appropriate vehicle to address poverty. The first respondent goes on to state, “it’s a part of how we structure our nodes, how we structure our transit and how we structure our community services.” Still, they all agree that poverty is directly addressed at the regional level because that is where the funding is allocated.

Secondly, all respondents identified a range of different policies from different levels of government that are used to address poverty: at the local level, the *Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy*, *Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy*, Mississauga Poverty Committee and *Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan*; at the provincial level, the *Secondary Units Bill*, *Inclusionary Zoning*, *Breaking the*

Cycle, and *The Big Move*; at the federal level, the *Canada Child Benefit* and the *Income Credit* were mentioned³.

Significant emphasis was put on the *Secondary Units Bill* and its importance to the affordable housing stock in Peel. The planners believe that this bill gives many Peel residents better access to housing, but the planner from Brampton believes that there is still a “stock gap” for affordable housing in the Region. The planners appear hopeful that municipal housing strategies and the *Peel Housing and Homeless Plan* will address this shortage of affordable housing.

Aside from the planners, the interviewee from the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee also discussed some of the other ways that Peel is addressing poverty. Mississauga’s transit system (Mi-way) has launched an affordable transit program to make transit more affordable for vulnerable population groups. Further, the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee has launched a Peel food map, to give vulnerable population access to nutritious and affordable foods, to address the food security issue in the region.

The proposed LRT additions in Peel Region have also been a part of the poverty reduction discussion in Peel Region. Its expected benefits are better interregional and intraregional connectivity and improved access to employment, but the direct impact on poverty is still unclear. Although addressing poverty

³ These strategies will be further discussed and analyzed in the following section

requires a comprehensive strategy, officials from Peel emphasize that housing is an essential part of the poverty solution in the region.

4.4 Is Peel Doing Enough?

This section discusses some of the policies and strategies identified by interview respondents and in the literature. This section discusses some of the implications of these strategies while assessing whether or not Peel is doing enough on the question of poverty.

Breaking The Cycle

This strategy was identified by all respondents as being vital to the improvement of poverty conditions in the Region of Peel. From the planners' perspectives, the strategy was instrumental in the formation of a regional poverty reduction strategy and in the creation of regional housing strategies. Ontario's poverty strategy required municipalities to address poverty, and all respondents indicated that it was an important first step. The advisor from the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy mentions that the strategy was an important step, but does not address all vulnerable populations. She believes that the strategy focuses too closely on families with children, excluding other vulnerable populations.

Tiessen (2015) indicates that *Breaking the Cycle* was a failure because it did not meet the specified targets. The projected target for child poverty reduction was 25% in 5 years, but the child poverty rate remained the same as it was

before the implementation of the strategy. It is acknowledged that the 2008 recession played a role in the increase of child poverty rates, but Tiessen (2015) believes that the lack of funding is a significant part of the problem. Tiessen also states, that the federal government has an important role to play when it comes to ending the cycle of poverty in Ontario (Tiessen, 2015).

Overall, Tiessen (2015) acknowledges that this strategy was an important first step for poverty reduction in Ontario and within the Region of Peel. For *Breaking the Cycle* to become more effective, additional collaboration and funding is required, while governments need to be accountable for meeting specific targets (Tiessen, 2015).

Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy

To date, *The Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy* has made significant headway in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in Peel Region. The advisor for Peel Poverty Reduction committee indicated that Peel has made progress in addressing issues pertaining to food security and affordable public transit. Unfortunately, monitoring and evaluation do not appear to be a priority, as there does not appear to be any public documents that monitor the progress of the strategy. Still, the advisor for the Peel Poverty Reduction committee stated that the committee will update the 2012-2015 *Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy* during the course of 2017.

Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

The strategy appears to propose the appropriate framework to address many of the issues identified by regional officials. The shortage of affordable housing is one of the major issues identified by planners in the Region of Peel. In the housing and homelessness strategy, this need is addressed by building more affordable housing, introducing inclusionary zoning and second units legislation, and encouraging small landlords to provide rental housing.

Inclusionary Zoning and Secondary Units Bill

Legislation pertaining to both of these strategies directly addresses the need of affordable housing units in Peel Region. But the language in both of these legislative documents gives municipalities discretion in the implementation these tools, which may lead to inconsistencies throughout the province. These inconsistencies may simply allow developers to invest in municipalities with looser inclusionary zoning regulations.

The Big Move

All planners identified *The Big Move* as being instrumental to poverty reduction efforts in Peel. Yet, it has faced some criticism because it is not linked to a specific housing strategy. Policy makers are concerned because they fear that the plan will end up benefitting higher-income residents, leaving low-income residents without regional transportation options. Overall, the plan complements

the other initiatives that all levels of government have in place to improve the quality of life for residents in Peel Region.

All of the aforementioned plans and strategies do address the fundamental land-use issues that cause suburban poverty. Specifically, housing and transportation are discussed in the aforementioned plans and strategies. It would be appropriate to conclude that Peel Region and the government of Ontario have the necessary strategies and legislation in place to adequately address suburban poverty. However, municipal officials raise concerns about the execution and compatibility of these plans and strategies. Strategies and plans are difficult to execute without the necessary systems and resources in place to ensure their execution. The next section discusses suggestions and recommendations to ensure the execution of poverty reduction strategies.

4.5 How Can Mississauga And Brampton Improve Their Poverty Strategies?

In regard to improving poverty strategies in Peel, all respondents had very similar responses. All agreed that a comprehensive, systematic approach is required. The second respondent believes that the current system is broken partially because of the consistent “duplication of efforts”. The system to which he is referring is the lower-tier municipal, upper-tier municipal, provincial and federal system of governance. It is important that all levels of government play a role in addressing poverty. Further, he believes that poverty should be addressed

through a “coordinated, collaborative partnership approach”. He went on to state that:

The poverty question is local, let the cities handle it. Affordable housing, homelessness and poverty should be handled by the municipality from an on the ground perspective. Regional staff should handle it from a higher policy perspective.

The final respondent makes a similar case:

Local governments are the closest on the ground and should be intentional about issues of poverty. They deliver social services such as recreational [facilities], communal space and libraries, but through the current system, we are adding additional barriers.

They believe that the higher levels a government do have a responsibility to provide funding, but the lower levels of government should take responsibility for poverty issues closer to home.

The respondents also emphasize the importance of awareness and advocacy in relation to suburban poverty. They believe that increased levels of awareness will positively affect the way in which poverty is addressed. Additional information should be available for planners and residents about poverty and its implications in their communities. Also, municipalities should advocate for

vulnerable populations to generate awareness of suburban poverty. The advisor on the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee gave the example on how John Tory (the Toronto mayor) continually advocates on Toronto's behalf for transit funding from the provincial and federal governments. Mississauga and Brampton should advocate in the same manner for resources and funding for poverty issues.

Interestingly, all respondents believed that the current legislation and strategies in place adequately address the poverty issue. The legislation and strategies are fairly recent, and their effects have not yet been quantified. However, they all say that a change in the system of governance will be instrumental to breaking the cycle of poverty in the region. One respondent gave a specific example about why a systems change is required: a homeless person with a mental health issue goes into the emergency room with high blood pressure; the hospital will treat the health issue, but does not address the mental illness or the poverty issue. This happens because the current systems are inefficient and do not interact with each other. These are the kinds of issues to which the respondents are referring.

To adequately address poverty in Peel, further research is required to evaluate the current systems of governance, to generate an understanding on how to better allocate government resources to address suburban poverty in the region.

The literature, statistics and interview respondents, have provided useful information about the strengths and the weaknesses of current strategies that

address poverty in Peel. The next section further outlines recommendations from improving strategies in the region.

4.6 Recommendations

Based on the literature review and input from interviewees, this section presents a series of recommendations to help alleviate poverty in the Region of Peel. These recommendations include: creating more efficient systems of governance, encouraging collaboration and being explicit about poverty in policy documents. These recommendations along with the current legislation and strategies will be strategic to improving conditions for suburban residents living in poverty.

Creating More Efficient Systems of Governance

The inefficient systems of governance have had a large impact on poverty rates in municipalities all over North America. In what they describe as “scaled approaches,” Berube and Kneebone discuss how policy makers need to maximize the value of every dollar spent (Berube & Kneebone, 2013: 117). The amount of red tape and duplication of tasks at all levels of government decreases the efficiency of government systems. The Region of Peel receives funding from the provincial government and then must allocate the funding to its lower-tier municipalities. This is one example of the inefficiencies to which they are referring. To reduce some of these inefficiencies Berube and Kneebone (2013)

propose:

Government can begin to remedy these systemic shortcomings by aligning data and reporting systems and requirements across programs and, where possible, across agencies. Reducing the number of data systems required for multiprogram providers and standardizing the way programs define terms or ask for relevant information would provide immediate savings in administrative costs. (Berube & Kneebone, 2013: 118)

Such changes would allow municipal governments to directly request funding from the provincial government – bypassing red tape and additional administrative costs. Municipal governments would be able to efficiently allocate resources and simultaneously improve the quantity and quality of their service delivery to low-income residents. Monitoring and evaluation tools are also fundamental to efficient governmental systems. Governments must evaluate what is working and what is not working, and be accountable for the successes and failures of different plans, policies and strategies.

Further, rethinking the division of suburban municipalities may also decrease inefficiencies within the governance system (Berube and Kneebone, 2013). Planners in Peel have said that they are concerned that the current system of upper and lower-tier municipalities has not been optimal for the delivery of services for vulnerable populations. It would be worth re-evaluating

the division of municipalities or even the division of responsibilities between upper and lower-tier municipalities to find the most efficient allocation of the region's resources (Berube and Kneebone, 2013). Planners in Peel believe that poverty reduction should be directly handled at the local level, by low-tier municipalities.

Encouraging Collaboration and Partnerships

Municipal officials in the Region of Peel have identified collaboration and partnerships as essential to poverty reduction measures. They believe that different organizations within government, the private sector and the non-profit sector must work together to meet targets and create innovative solutions. Governments must investigate to find the barriers to regional collaboration, and propose solutions to these barriers. In turn, policy-makers should reward collaborative efforts between the three sectors (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). Collaboration between the three sectors, will generate solutions that are outcome-based, innovative and conducive to wide range of stakeholders.

Explicit Language in Policy

Many of the respondents indicated the absence of language concerning poverty in municipal planning documents. The words "poverty" and "low-income" do not appear in the official plans of Mississauga or Brampton. Planners have indicated that the official plans are not the right vehicles to

address poverty, yet they do include text about economic growth and existing economic prosperity (City of Mississauga, 2015; City of Brampton, 2015). It is imperative that an emphasis be placed on outcomes for low-income residents in order to counter the effects of poverty in the long-term (Berube & Kneebone, 2013). Policies in official plans often disregard low-income populations, because they are not specifically mentioned in the language. Official plans should include explicit language to address poverty.

These recommendations were derived from the literature, policy documents and interviews with municipal officials in the Region of Peel. It appears that the appropriate legislation and strategies are in place to address poverty in Peel. However, the system of governance appears to hinder the execution of the legislation and strategies. A re-evaluation of the governance system is necessary at all levels of government, and in the private and non-profit sectors. To adequately address poverty in Peel, it must be made explicit by residents and policy makers that ending poverty is a priority for the Region of Peel.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Limitations of the Research

The goal of this research was to examine strategies addressing suburban poverty. However, it is difficult to understand and evaluate strategies without gaining insights from multiple perspectives. For this research, only three planners and a policy advisor were interviewed and provided perspectives from the public sector. Gaining insights from low-income residents, higher-level policy makers, lower-level planners and policy makers working in a large number of different fields would have been useful to obtain a more comprehensive outlook on poverty in Peel.

Also, the current strategies addressing poverty in Peel cannot be evaluated because of their recent implementation and because of the lack of monitoring and evaluation tools. Many of the strategies have been released after 2010 and have yet to show results. Also, the 2016 census has not yet released data pertaining to income levels, which is why it is difficult to evaluate the impact of current strategies.

People-based strategies such as low- income tax credits and employment insurance were not specifically discussed within this report. This is a limitation because these strategies are important poverty reduction measures. Yet this report focuses on place-based policies.

5.2 Summary Of Findings

Over the past two decades in North America, poverty conditions have continued to worsen. As major cities continue to gentrify, the geography of poverty also continues to shift. As poverty has shifted to suburban areas, so have the implications. Poverty in the suburbs presents a different challenge to policy-makers, because the land-use makeup is significantly different than that of inner cities. Vulnerable populations face challenges, as the services they need are more difficult to access in suburban communities.

As discussed in the research literature, suburban poverty has three main causes: the economy, population change and housing. These causes have a negative impact on the suburban population, as they affect people's ability to access essential services, employment and recreation. This often causes vulnerable populations to become poor.

Land-use planners play an instrumental role in dealing with the causes of poverty. Since land-use plans can affect the housing market, the economy and population distribution, land-use planners must be aware of the causes and implications of poverty, while taking the necessary preventative measures.

In Peel, policy-makers have become aware of suburban poverty. Through initiatives related to housing and transportation, they address the importance of building inclusive communities for vulnerable populations. Building accessible and affordable housing and transportation are now priorities for planners in the region, but the system of governance threatens these priorities.

Municipal officials in Peel are concerned with the current system of governance. It explains why Brampton and Mississauga do not have the tools to address suburban poverty. Instead, the Region of Peel is responsible for addressing poverty as well as allocating funding and creating policies and strategies. This system of governance does not allow Brampton and Mississauga to directly address the problem. Instead poverty is dealt with by the Region of Peel, which creates inefficiencies.

Poverty is an issue that is best dealt with at the grassroots level. At this level, policy-makers are able to act on the ground and interact directly with vulnerable populations. But, the provincial and federal governments also have an important role to play in poverty reduction. These levels of government deal with redistributive policies that are able to impact impoverished populations. It is at this level where people-based strategies such as low-income credits, employment insurance, child benefits and other social services are implemented. Hence it is essential that all levels of government act within their jurisdictional responsibilities to address poverty.

As changes in population, housing and the economy have been identified as the central causes of poverty, it is imperative that all levels of government work collaboratively to address these causes. At the grassroots level, planners are able to interact with populations to understand current trends and to assess, socio-economic and housing needs. With this information, planners are able to guide community plans, official plans and local strategies. At the higher levels of

government, policies and legislation are vital to influence population change, housing and the economy. Although the literature has specified that poverty has three central causes, respondents indicate that planners at grassroots level are best equipped to understand these causes as they apply to the region. The collaboration between planners at the grassroots level and policy makers at higher levels of governments is vital to the formulation of effective poverty strategies.

Specifically, to improve poverty conditions in Peel, governments need to do more than invest in housing, transportation, employment and social services. They need to invest in monitoring, evaluation, accountability and efficient resource distribution. Policy-makers have to set specific targets, and be held accountable for those targets. More research is required to improve systems of governance and to evaluate the current legislation and strategies. Until the government focuses on governance, poverty will continue to be an issue in Peel.

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Interviews

Advisor on the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy, Telephone interview, March 24, 2017.

Planner from Brampton, Telephone interview March 17, 2017.

Planner from Mississauga, In-person interview, March 10, 2017.

Planner from the Region of Peel, In-person interview, March 10, 2017.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions for Planners:

1. How would you describe your mandate or responsibilities at your municipal organization?
2. How important do you think the question of poverty is to your own work at your municipal organization?
3. When you think of your municipal organization, does suburban poverty or poverty come to mind? Why or why not? If so, when did you become aware of it?
4. When I say suburban poverty or even just poverty, what part of your job comes to mind?
5. I'd like to talk about the your municipal organization's official plan. It does not appear to have any language pertaining to poverty or vulnerable populations. Was the question of poverty raised in the debates about the Official Plan? If so, in what way.

6. I understand that the upper-tier municipality has adopted policies that address poverty in their official plan. How are these policies addressed within the lower municipality's official plan?
7. Have there been any major infrastructural developments within affordable housing and public transit since the last official plan?
8. If lower-tier municipalities were to adopt its own policies to address the question of poverty, what issues or strategies do you think should be prioritized?

What about:

- Densification
- Walkability and multimodal transportation
- Inclusionary zoning
- Accessible public transportation
- Regional connectivity
- Affordable housing
- Youth employment
- Access to employment
- Access to community services and facilities

9. Based on what you know about policies at all levels of government, are there any policies that have resulted in the improvement in poverty conditions in your municipality?
10. This is my last question and I want to talk about the way you may see things in the future, what your recommendations might be. What do you think your municipality should or shouldn't do on the question of poverty?

Do you think the town should devote more attention to that question, or do you think it should leave that in the hands of the Region and the Province?

Appendix 2

Interview questions for Peel Poverty Advisors:

1. How would you describe your mandate or responsibilities as an advisor on Peel Poverty Reduction Committee?
2. How and when did the topic of poverty become an issue in Peel?
3. What were the driving factors for the establishment of a Peel Poverty Reduction Committee?
4. I'd like to talk about the Region of Peel's *Breaking the Cycle Poverty Strategy*. What are some of the outcomes achieved by this strategy? Were any of the goals achieved? Why or why not
5. What issues or strategies do you think do you think should be prioritized when it comes to poverty?

What about:

- Densification
- Walkability and multimodal transportation
- Inclusionary zoning
- Accessible public transportation
- Regional connectivity
- Affordable housing
- Youth employment
- Access to employment
- Access to community services and facilities

6. Based on what you know about policies at all levels of government, are there any policies that have resulted in the improvement in poverty conditions in Peel?
7. What do you think Peel Region needs in terms of resources to be able to adequately address the poverty issue?
8. This is my last question and I want to talk about the way you may see things in the future, what your recommendations might be. What do you think Peel should or shouldn't do on the question of poverty?

Do you think the city should devote more attention to that question, or do you think it should leave that in the hands of the Region and the Province?