

SPCYR Annual Report 12/15/22 Report of Activities in the Past year

The SPCYR has been in existence since April 2007 and we incorporated in March 2015. We embarked on a Strategic Planning Process in April 2015 that identified key strategic areas of focus for SPCYR: Access and Equity, Education, Housing, Immigration and Settlement, Poverty (Inequality – Inadequate Incomes – Precarious Work) **This report summarizes our activities of the past year April 2021- March 2022.** With a focus on some more recent highlights this year.

Capacity Building and Organizing, Education, Awareness and Advocacy:

York Region Food Network and the Reimagining a Just Recovery Project

The staff at York Region Food Network continue to be strong partners in our work. We began our collaboration on the Reimagining a Just Recovery Initiative in May 2020 and last year applied together for Ontario Trillium Foundation funding that allowed us to hire our Community Mobilization Coordinator from March 2021-March 2022. Our goal was to elevate the conversations happening in relation to COVID, to ones focused more on planning how to recover and move forward in ways that are more just and equitable, recognizing that a return to the status quo, that had never worked for many marginalized individuals and communities, would not be acceptable. Over 30 York Region organizations participated in our townhalls and many of you were part of that work, met with MPs and MPPs in online meetings and put forward the recommendations from our joint report.

This work has continued as we were involved in advocacy leading up to the federal election in 2021 and with an online forum with MPPs in early 2022 where we framed the issues and challenges as policy recommendations at the provincial level to address income insecurity, good jobs, housing affordability and childcare. We have always partnered in this work with Ontario For All, a coalition of organizations/advocates across Toronto, Peel and York Region, funded by United Way, to raise awareness and advocate for just and equitable social policy.

While the Reimagining Work is far from done we recognize that it has played an integral role in building solidarity among organizations across the human service sector in York Region and we look forward to building on that strength as we advocate for the most vulnerable in our communities.

CBTI Project – Mapping Urban and Rural Displacement

In 2021 SPCYR along with 3 other social planning councils across Ontario – Oxford, Kingston and Cornwall, applied together under the banner of the SPNO, for funding from CMHC through the Community Based Tenant Initiative. Our proposal was based on the earlier work of the SDC Waterloo in partnership with University of Waterloo that interviewed an entire community of individuals that were evicted and displaced from their homes when LRT was built in Kitchener. Our applications was accepted

in February 2022 and our projects began in March 2022 with an end date of August 2023. We hired a central project coordinator and each community has hired their Local Engagement Coordinator who connects with individuals in the community who are willing to be interviewed and share their stories of eviction and displacement. This project is even more timely now than when we made the application given the rapid escalation of illegal evictions not only due to lack of rent control in the province, but also the financialization of housing that has ramped up in the past 2 years along with Bill 23 that has made it easier for entire communities of affordable housing to be converted by investment companies and developers. We are also working with the University of Waterloo on this project as well as the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights.

HSYR

Hidden Stories of York Region Podcast

Since August 2019 SPCYR has served as trustee for funds for the Hidden Stories of YR podcast. The podcast interrupts the single narrative of York Region by inviting audiences to explore York Region, the people, the barriers, challenges and also the success stories that reflect the depth and diversity of the region. This past year the podcast team includes partnered with a media professor and students at York University and also applied and received a SSHRC grant to expand our capacity by hiring a part-time coordinator in the new year.

The theme of our second season that launched in November 2021 was Highlighting Community Resilience featuring guests/stories on: Reimagining a Just Recovery, What does a She-covey look like, Youth Leadership on Food Justice in YR and the Live Well, Take Action Ambassador Program for East Asian Youth.

We partnered with the Aurora Public Library in 2022 to produce our 3rd season which was focused on the housing crisis in York Region. You can follow our story on twitter @hidddenstoriesYR and watch for the second season of four episodes that will launch in late November 2021.

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Youth Homeless Prevention Collective Impact Project of York Region

The project has embarked on its 4th year. Approximately 40 organizations across York Region including: York Region District School Board, York Catholic DSB, York Region Children's Aid Society and the York Region Police. SPCYR participates on the steering committee and currently 2 SPCYR board members are on various working groups/committees. In 2021, 360 Kids, the backbone agency for this collaborative work and the Strategy was the recipient of the Making the Shift Youth Prevention Award. We are extremely proud of the work of this collaborative, and in particular the work of the Youth Council, and look forward to continued participation in the strategy.

AHCYR

Since our first Affordable Housing Forum in January 2019 the AHCYR has continued to build momentum. This past year we have changed our structure from monthly meetings of all coalition members for education/networking to meetings every second month. Our Advocacy and Policy SC continues to meet monthly and we have a new Steering Committee that provides direction to the overall coalition activities.

We've published several op-eds for York Region Media Group online again this year to bring attention to the housing crisis in the Region, the need for municipal tools to address the financialization of housing, such as the vacant homes tax. We've build our partnership with the CCHR in their efforts to expand understanding and commitment to the Right to Housing across YR. And various AHCYR members are working on different municipal committees and taskforces.

More recently in the past months, we developed a survey/pledge for all candidates in the municipal and regional elections to complete to demonstrate their commitment to various policy levers to protect and increase affordable housing across the region. This has been an invaluable tool for us to understand which elected officials are allies in the work, to keep them accountable and to find ways to work together to advance solutions.

Region of York Community Action Tables (CATs) – From the inception of these tables in 2021, we participate in the selection of priority issues in four neighbourhoods identified by the Region of York. This was part of the work to develop Community Safety and Well-Being Plans. There are four CAT areas in the Region: Georgina, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Markham. Our participation provides insights on Housing and Employment/Income priority issues; we have also provided support in outreach to members and organizations in various communities that are now serving as valuable members of these tables. In 2022 we were also awarded funding to do some targeted outreach and eviction prevention work in the NM Heights community. This work is ongoing and we will report more on it upon completion.

YCFPE

In 2021 SPCYR was very involved in the work of York Region Communities for Public Education, founded in 2019 in response to the funding cuts to education being proposed by the provincial government. YCFPE is comprised of educators, parents, students, union and community allies committed to equitable and inclusive public education. A great deal of work has been done to advocate for safe schools and fight back against education cuts. In recent months in 2022, SPCYR has not had the capacity to be as fully involved in this work as we'd like to be but we are hoping to return to the table once we have more new board members.

Provincial Organizations

SPCYR remains connected to our provincial network the Social Planning Network of Ontario, participating in various advocacy initiatives and the Mapping Displacement Project. SPCYR also participates in the Ontario Alliance to End Homeless and the Ontario Non-Profit Network.

Youth CIVICSCHOOL

We are very proud of this new initiative taken up by 2 of our current board members Dasha and Rebecca and a newly nominated board member, Gurneet. While this would normally fall into our report for the next AGM, I want so much to share with you the success of this project that was aimed at building civic participation, understanding and youth ownership of political activities at the local level in York Region. They are presenting after the AGM this evening and I welcome/invite everyone to stay to hear about their incredible journey to bring this to fruition.

Thank you to our Board Members

I also want to end by saying a big thank-you to our tireless group of volunteer board members. We lost one of our long-standing board members this year in Kristine Carbis, who moved to Thunder Bay and is now actively involved in her community there. We miss her incredibly and have more work to shoulder as a result. Thanks to all of you for your ground-breaking work on various projects, committees and coalitions that continue to keep the focus on social, economic, gender and racial justice at the forefront of everything we strive for in York Region.

Yvonne Kelly, Co-Chair SPCYR