

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Poverty Reduction

By Chris Ballard, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

Two exciting poverty reduction projects in our area

As the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy, I was honoured to bring some great news to the riding of Newmarket-Aurora this past week.

Ontario is investing in two projects in York Region to help children, youth and seniors affected by poverty.

Through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, The Boys and Girls Club of York Region and Community & Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS) ? both headquartered in this riding ? will receive funding.

The Local Poverty Reduction Fund is a \$50 million, six-year initiative that supports community-driven projects that will measurably improve the lives of those disproportionately affected by poverty, including women, single parents, people with disabilities, youth, newcomers, visible minorities, seniors and Aboriginal Peoples.

The Boys and Girls Club of York Region will receive approximately \$571,600 over three years and Community and Home Assistance to Seniors will receive about \$205,000 over two years through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund.

With support from the Fund, The Boys and Girls Club will implement and evaluate Project V.I.C.T.O.R.Y. (Vibrant & Innovative Community Taskforce Offering Resources for Youth). The after-school program will offer nutrition, recreation and skills-building programs to local youth from newcomer and single-parent families, to help them succeed in school and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. The program will operate in six locations across York Region.

The CHATS project will help vulnerable seniors, at risk of increased poverty and homelessness due to hoarding, to remain safely in their homes and improve their quality of life and their health.

By grouping together traditionally distinct services, this initiative will provide seniors with a range of integrated supports, including home support workers and cleaning services, mental health support and rehabilitation services to reduce their risk of losing their tenancy.

Project results will be measured and shared with others so that successful projects can be used in other parts of the province in support of poverty reduction programs.

Fighting poverty is part of the government's economic plan for Ontario. The four-part plan is building Ontario up by investing in people's talents and skills, building new public infrastructure like roads and transit and is creating a dynamic, innovative environment where businesses thrive.

The Boys and Girls Club of York Region has been a leader in the delivery of child and youth services across our communities for many years. Recognized nationally for its program excellence, the organization continues to provide valuable life experiences and healthy relationships for children, youth and families throughout York Region.

The mission of Boys and Girls Clubs in Canada is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life.

Celebrating more than 18 years of operation, the Boys & Girls Club of York Region has delivered programming to each of the nine municipalities across York. Its work in partnership with communities and private/public sector has enabled the organization to touch the lives of over 25,000 individuals. The club's very capable and innovative staff, together with a unique club model, have led the charge in the delivery of successful provincial and national programming.

Launched in 1980 by a caring group of community members, CHATS originated as a grassroots, not-for-profit, charitable organization providing a few basic services to help seniors continue living in their own homes. Over the years, CHATS has grown and evolved, and now offers a full range of home care and community programs that meet the changing needs of more than 7,300 York Region and South Simcoe seniors and caregivers each year. CHATS is headquartered in Aurora on Edward Street, in the former Canada Law Book building.

With more than 520 volunteers, a Board of Directors chaired by Aurora resident Graham Constantine, and 335 staff, CHATS embraces professional best practices in home care and our other services with caring, compassionate dedication. This unique combination ultimately benefits our clients, our community partners, and the community overall. The group's achievements and service delivery model have been commended by Accreditation Canada.

CHATS is a group that, largely, has flown under the radar while slowly growing in accomplishments. I've followed CHATS for

years and am astounded at its growth. Current CEO, Christina Bisanz, is no stranger to the needs of seniors, having been the CEO of the Ontario Long Term Care Association and Executive Director of the Consumers Council of Canada, a consumer advocacy organization.

I look forward to working with both these organizations to help our youth and our seniors. We make a difference when we work together at the community level.