

September 2024

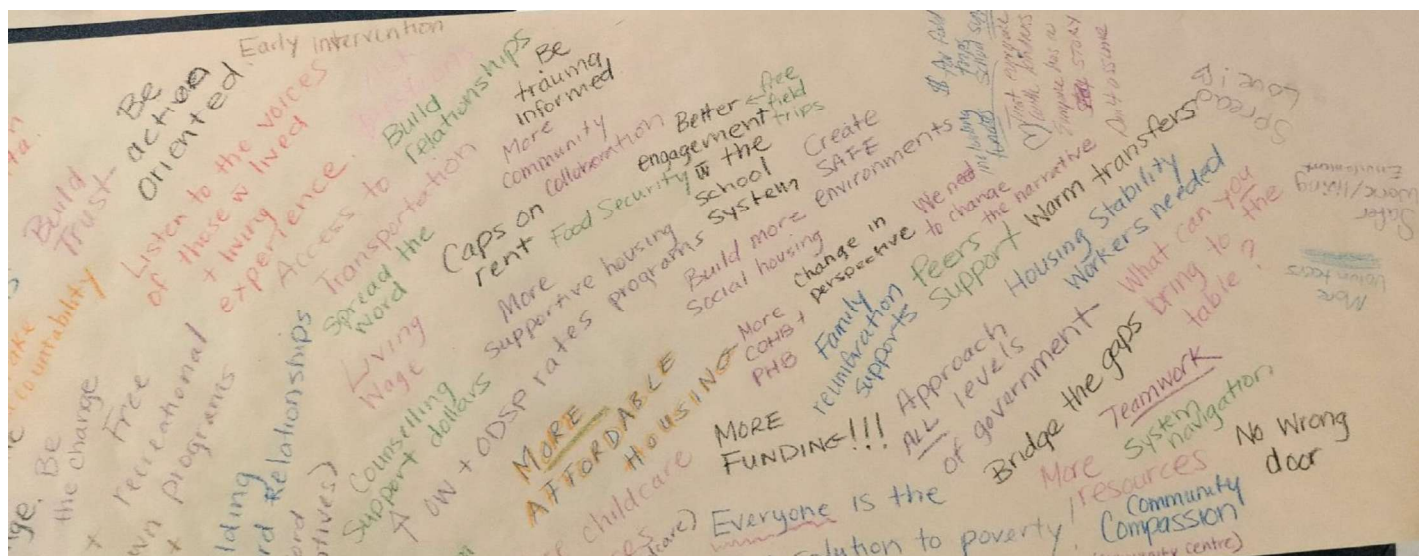
Report to Our Community: June 12th Community Consultation Day Summary



On June 12th, 2024, approximately 130 members of our community came together to discuss poverty in Elgin St. Thomas and how we can work together as a community to affect change. People in attendance represented multi-sector participation with members of the business community, social services, community volunteers, municipal government, and people living through the experience of poverty. We came together in conversation, shared a meal, listened to each other with meaning, and built the foundation for collective action.

People were invited to attend the event based on their area of expertise and connection to the community. We were intentional in making sure that community members from many different sectors were invited. We started brainstorming and planning who should be in attendance based on four categories: Social Sector, Volunteer Sector, Business Community, and Lived Experience. This helped us to generate a starting point for invitations to build from. Our goal was for equal

We also worked together with community leaders to invite members of our community to the event. Paul Jenkins, CEO of the St. Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce, Liz Windover, lived experience expert and coalition leadership table member, Kelly Ziegner, President and CEO of United Way Elgin Middlesex, and Mayor Joe Preston of the City of St. Thomas were our signed inviters and openers for the day.



Our inviters opened our day by sharing their experiences and why it was important that they were in attendance. We heard about the importance of multi-sector collaboration, upstream efforts to end poverty, and the personal importance of this issue to each inviter.



We then moved into our first presentation from coalition chair Randie Gregoire, discussing poverty in Elgin St. Thomas. We discussed what the data tells us, what these experiences may

look like, and most importantly that doing this work protects and cares for everyone in the community.

Our second presentation for the day was from Sean Dyke, CEO of the Economic Development Corporation for the City of St. Thomas. Sean discussed recent economic changes to our region, including new opportunities for prosperity, and a shift in housing builds to reflect the needs of our changing community.

Our third presentation was led by our facilitator Paul Born. Paul discussed recent successes in both our community and others, inspiring change and reiterating that working towards ending poverty is something that we CAN do! We also heard about the importance of understanding the economic opportunities that are on the horizon in our region, and the importance of taking meaningful action now so that everyone has the opportunity to benefit and access prosperity.



After our data sharing presentations – we were all set to move into conversation about what we heard. Paul Born, co-founder and previous CEO of the Tamarack Institute, leader in community conversation, changemaker, and author led us into our first conversation. We encouraged attendees to find two other folks who they did not know, did not look like them, and perhaps were from a different sector. The groups were led by Paul through a 'Tri-Ad' exercise to get to know who each other were, and why it was important that they were in attendance. This was an exercise in storytelling, listening, and cross-sectoral relationship building. Conversation was plentiful and it was a great way to get up and move and start our day off in the spirit of collaboration.



We then moved into a series of round table conversations around three specific questions:

1. **What is happening now?** – understanding what we are already doing in our community to affect change and reduce poverty
2. **What is the change we want to see?** – thinking forward to a place where we have reduced poverty even further, what would this look like?
3. **How can we work together?** – exploring partnerships and connections that will support this work

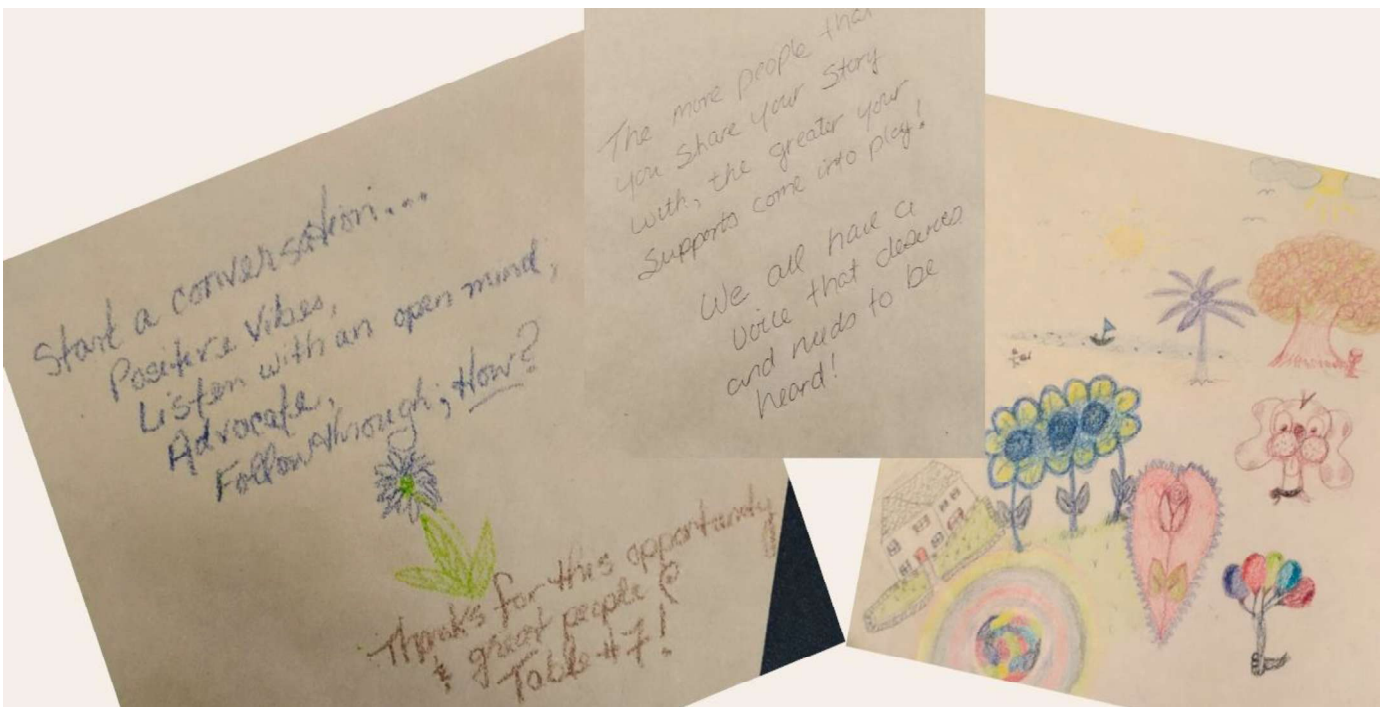


Table conversations were interspersed with large group 'fishbowl' conversations led by Paul in the center of the room. During these conversations, members from multiple tables came to the center of the room and were interviewed by Paul about what they heard, what surprised them, and any personal takeaways. During these conversations we saw strong leadership and passion emerge from folks with lived experience who were able to share their firsthand stories,

challenges, and opportunities for improvements. We heard about the importance of communication, information sharing, peer support, and the value of everyone's voice being heard.



After lunch, we were ready to continue the conversation. Our afternoon was opened by a keynote speech from Paul Born. Paul discussed his work in Ireland and Cambridge, ON focused around, the importance of building community and belonging among groups who were historically segregated from each other due to political unrest and colonization, and the importance of lived experience in conversations around change. He discussed the impact that coming together as a community can have to remove barriers and foster collaboration and belonging. Attendees were engaged in listening and learning from Paul's experiences and expertise and it was a great way for us to move into our afternoon conversations around action.



The afternoon was then spent moving through 5 themes for action as a collective. Prior to the event, five themes were identified that could allow us to focus our conversation on action and potential solutions.

The five themes were as follows:

Theme 1: Innovative Solutions - What else do we need to do? What other ideas do we have that don't fit into the other themes

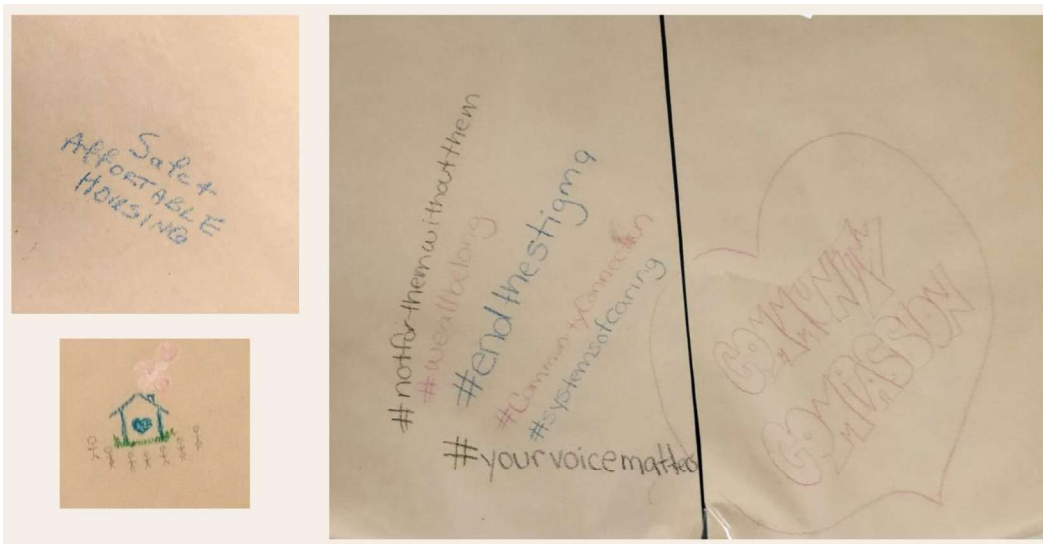
Theme 2: Income, Education and Employment Solutions - How can we create situations where people have access to prosperity, adequate incomes, education opportunities, and meaningful employment.

Theme 3: Housing Solutions - How do we create housing solutions that work for all members of our society. How do we support everyone to have access to adequate and affordable housing?

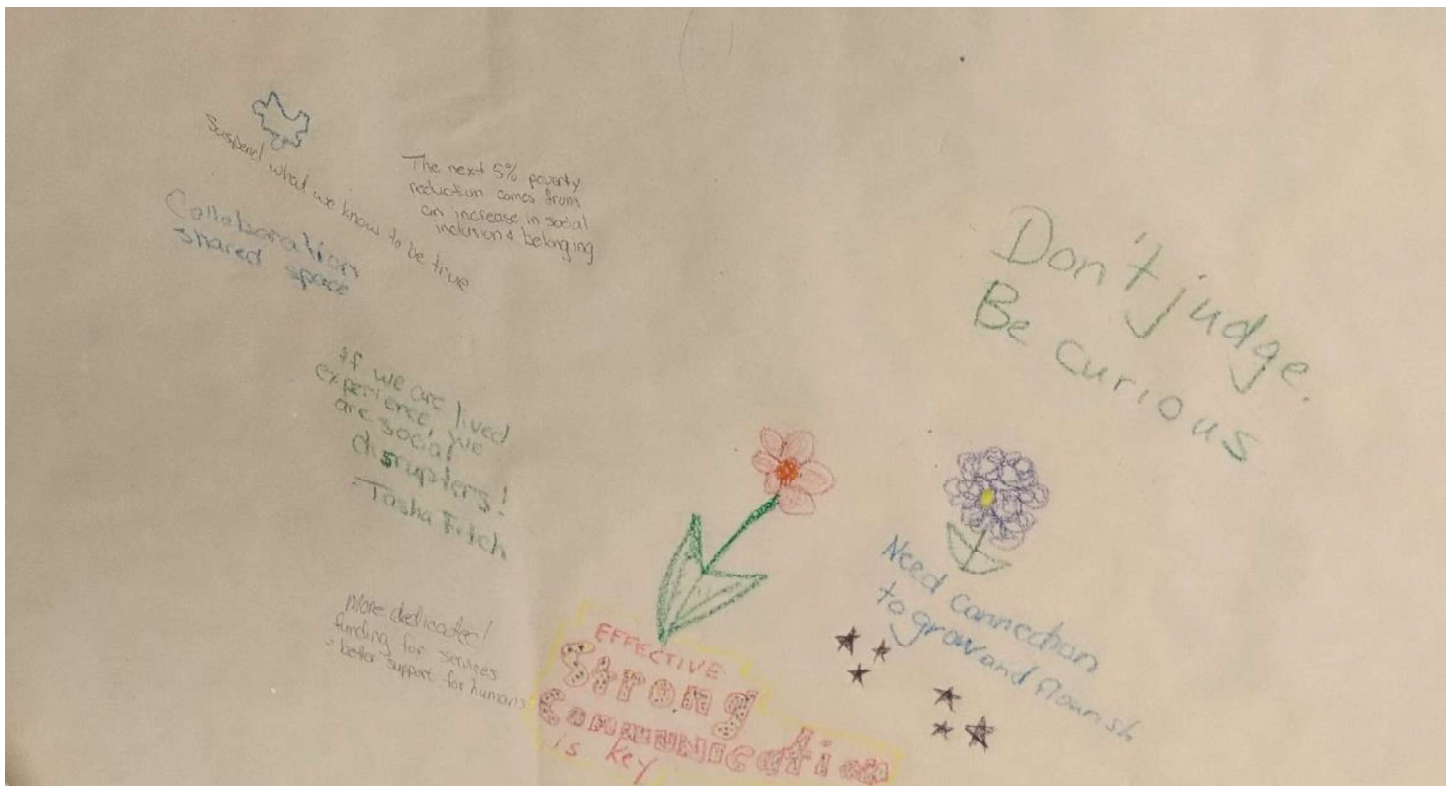
Theme 4: Community Well-Being - Access to services such as childcare, emergency support, social assistance.

Theme 5: Belonging and Connection - Transportation, participation in community, fees, barriers to accessing connection to others, loneliness, creating a welcoming community for newcomers, those made most marginalized.

Participants started by selecting the theme that was most important to them and attending that station. At the station, facilitators were present to guide the conversation around the topic at hand and potential solutions or actions we could take as a community. After spending time at the first station, participants rotated around to each station to have a chance to have their ideas captured and listen to multiple perspectives.



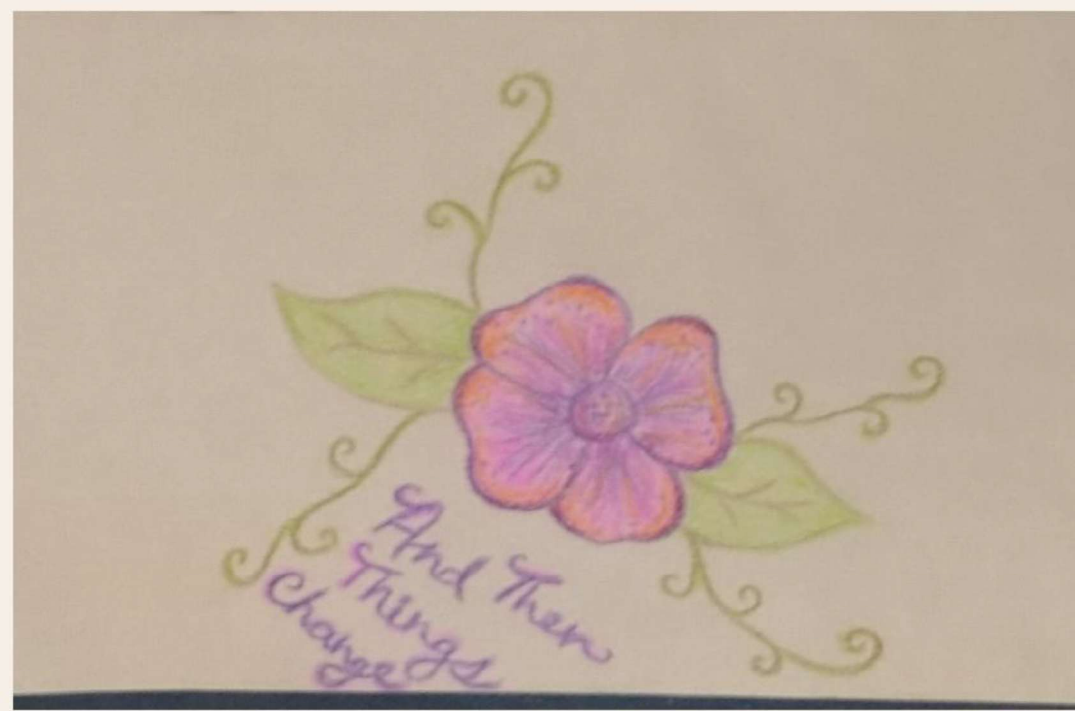
After participants visited each station, we came together again in fishbowl, with attendees coming to the center of the room. Attendees from various organizations sat in a circle to discuss what they heard at each station, key take aways, and meaningful learnings.



We ended our day with meaningful reflection, and an expression of thanks to all who supported and attended the event. We discussed next steps for the Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty, as well as the importance of continuing to come together in the development of a whole of community plan to reduce and end poverty in our region. We discussed that the data and ideas collected belonged to all of us, and we all had a role to play in this important work.

As a coalition, we plan to review data, share it back with our community, and work together to develop a plan for action. This is only the beginning of our next phase in working to end poverty in Elgin St. Thomas.

Authored By the Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty Leadership Table



Acknowledgements

A special thank you again to everyone involved including coalition members and the planning committee. Thank you to those with lived experience for extending trust to us as a safe space to share your experiences. Thank you to Paul Born for facilitating our day. Thank you to Sean Dyke and the Economic Development Corporation for presenting, thank you to all the organizations who were able to send staff and members to listen and be heard, thank you to each of you who volunteered to be table note takers, thank you to our 5 folks who facilitated our afternoon discussion stations, and thank you to our inviters (Paul Jenkins, Liz Windover, Mayor Joe Preston, and Kelly Ziegner).

An additional thank you to everyone who was able to support us through a venue to host us and supplies (City of St. Thomas), food to feed us (Kathy's Catering), water to hydrate us (Simply Pure Water), YWCA for your multiple contributions, United Way Elgin Middlesex for contributing to supporting folks with lived and living experience to attend, The Inn, Community Volunteers, Southwestern Public Health for expertise, data, and printing materials, CTV London for covering the day, Hometown St. Thomas for writing about and promoting our event, the St. Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce and all who have been part of this work in any way in previous years. **Most importantly, thank YOU for attending and supporting this work. It is evident that we will always get further when we work together.**

[CTV London Coverage of our day is available here.](#)

Community Consultation Day Expenses Breakdown

Expenses	Amount
Preparation meetings with Paul Born	187.56
Advertising on Facebook	43.63
Lunch and snacks for participants	1,570.47
Event Supplies (paper, markers, table covers, napkins/plates, etc.)	308.55
Guidance/planning, full day facilitation and Keynote speech – Paul Born	5,716.70
Stipends for participants with lived experience	7,080.00
Travel for participants with lived experience	34.50
Water	No Cost
Venue	No Cost
Total Cost for Entire Day:	\$ 14,941.41

We are happy to report we are \$1578.59 under our initial budget thanks to in-kind donations from our community. The event was funded through our partners via coalition membership fees and contributions, as well as a previous contribution by the City of St. Thomas. A special thank you to the United Way Elgin Middlesex who contributed funds towards supporting people with lived experience to attend.