

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE (for mid-May, 2009)

Anti-Poverty activism gets a boost

Researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE) are part of a team that has developed a unique joint initiative to examine a new wave of anti-poverty community organizing. D. W. Livingstone and Peter Sawchuk of OISE's Centre for the Study of Education and Work (CSEW) will lead this new study, along with Sharon Simpson of Labour Community Service Toronto.

Over the next five years, this community-university research alliance will strengthen the networks of anti-poverty activism, by providing a chance to reflect on and reinforce their learning processes. The participatory action research project Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL), has received five year funding from the federal Social Science and Humanities Research Council.

“The current economic meltdown is presenting a chance to reverse existing gaps in wealth in our population and we are seeing many community groups forming to take advantage of these opportunities to reduce poverty,” says Peter Sawchuk. “We hope that anti-poverty organizations will be strengthened, and that a new generation of students will have developed understanding and commitment to building a Canada without poverty.”

The research will focus on campaigns around Nutrition/ Food Security, Housing, School Completion, and Jobs/Vocational Training /Living wages. Over the five year funding period, *APCOL* will document and analyze eight campaigns in Toronto neighbourhoods identified as low income areas, matching this research with general neighbourhood surveys. From this, the alliance hopes to identify the strengths, weaknesses and above all the learning through anti-poverty organizing.

The group will work with community partners including the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Black Action Defence Committee, Chinese-Canadian National Congress (Toronto chapter), Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, United Way Canada and others. These community groups will be joined by college and university researchers from Ryerson, York, George Brown College and the University of Toronto.

For further information, contact the project coordinator, D'Arcy Martin, at the CSEW office (416-978-0518); cell (416 807-5595), or email: [darcymartin@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:darcymartin@oise.utoronto.ca) or [darcymartin@sympatico.ca](mailto:darcymartin@sympatico.ca) or OISE media relations at (416 978-1127).