



**Bissell Centre**

**Business Plan  
2016-2017**



## Message from the Chief Executive Officer

“Eliminate poverty in our community.” When simply stated, it sounds as though there is a simple solution. However, as one begins to look at the problem more deeply, the realization comes quickly that poverty is not a simple problem, in fact it goes beyond even a difficult problem, fitting comfortably into the category of a complex problem.



*Gary St. Amand, CEO*

I choose the word “comfortably” intentionally. In one sense, I mean what is likely the obvious reading – the many and multifaceted issues that are related to poverty are such that it fits well within the definition of a complex problem. In another sense however, poverty fits so well within the category of complexity because it often lives in juxtaposition with the comfort of a society as a whole.

Eliminating poverty demands a society that is willing to sacrifice for the benefit of the greater good. Not just financial sacrifices – it asks us for our time, our openness to new relationships, our willingness to advocate for our fellow brothers and sisters. My

daughter told me a joke the other day, “Dad, what do the poor have that the rich need?” The answer: “nothing.” A clever twist on words when you are eight, but the issue is more complex than that. How one defines poverty will dictate how truthful this statement is seen to be.

Having worked with families and individuals who have been deemed “poor” for most of my career, I have learned that they have much to offer – even if not materially – and more often than not they are more than willing to offer freely what they do have. In fact, new staff are often surprised to discover the level of generosity and community that exists among those who access our services.

One of my favourite quotes, reflecting on the current tenor of our society and the growing disconnect we are experiencing as humans reads: “We are in a crowd, all alone. We are like a group of porcupines huddling together for warmth.” Consider that the average persons per household was 4.2 in 1961. In 2011, that number dropped to 2.5. At the same time, house sizes have more than doubled in roughly the same period from, on average, about 1,000 square feet to 2,300 square feet.

This may seem like interesting but trivial data on the outside but, increasingly, studies conducted on social isolation have demonstrated that it has a significant bearing on health outcomes. In fact, there is evidence pointing to the fact that social integration has more impact on health outcomes than income.

Here's the catch: the more concentrated the poverty, the less benefit that social integration has. In other words, when all of your family and friends are also very poor, they don't have much to share, and so the benefits of pooling resources diminishes. So if we allow poverty to concentrate, we effectively undermine the very natural ability for communities to support each other organically, and the more we are forced to look towards formal institutional supports – which often leads to feelings of shame and increased social isolation.

As we look towards the coming year and our long term work, Bissell Centre is committed to looking not only at the whole range of needs for a family or individuals, but also the health of the communities in which we serve. If we are going to eliminate poverty, this is a must – but in order to achieve this, it will take all of us to be engaged in our communities and neighbourhoods, be willing to break out of our comfort zones, and be intentionally inclusive of those who might seem different from us on the surface.

This coming year, with the development of the EndPovertyEdmonton initiative, there are the beginnings of a movement in the City of Edmonton, and now more than ever an opportunity for all of us to join together and make a profound impact in our community on the depth of poverty that needlessly exists here.

The plan that follows outlines our work and objectives for the coming year, and shows some of our early steps in this next season of our journey. I hope that you are encouraged by the good things that are happening here at Bissell Centre, and I want to invite you to join with us in the journey. Who knows, you might even make some new friends while you're at it and leave a little richer!

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary St. Amand', written in a cursive style.

Gary St. Amand  
Chief Executive Officer  
Bissell Centre

## 2015-2016 At A Glance

2015-16 was a year of many new and exciting changes for Bissell Centre: new leadership, new ideas, new programs, and new partnerships. To further align with our vision of ending poverty, we continued developing programs that have proven to have had a measurable impact on the people we serve.

### Housing

Last year we housed more people than ever before, thanks to the creation of the Outreach Housing Team (OHT).

In July 2015, Bissell Centre launched its Outreach Housing Team. Team members actively locate, engage, and house any person experiencing homelessness, in any area of the city. In order to deliver housing services to underserved areas, partnerships were developed with organizations and agencies around the city, including: Edmonton Public Library, The Neighbour Centre, Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton, All Saints' Anglican Cathedral, and more. Once housed, team members work with clients to overcome personal barriers and adjust to their new community. Our dedicated team members successfully housed 132 adults and children last year, demonstrating the need for and success of this outreach initiative.

Bissell Centre's Homeless to Homes (H2H) program, which operates under the mandate of the Homeward Trust Foundation, housed 159 children and adults in 2015-16. 79 of these individuals were part of the Urgent Families Initiative, which helped families living in motels or other temporary locations move to stable, permanent housing.

Additionally, our Community Bridge Fund prevented over 210 imminent evictions from occurring, thus keeping families safely housed and ending the threat of homelessness for them.

### Hope Terrace

In November 2015, Bissell Centre began operating Hope Terrace, a 15-unit Permanent Supportive Housing Facility for individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This housing facility is only the second of its kind in Canada for people with FASD.



Hope Terrace's 24 permanent residents are provided with onsite support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Here, they have the structured, stable home environment needed to thrive. Support workers assist our clients with attending appointments, goal setting, conflict resolution, and mental health support.

Because of our housing services, these people are no longer living on the streets, where they are physically vulnerable and unsafe. With permanent shelter, people are able to make real, lasting changes in their lives.

## Employment

Despite the economic downturn and above average winter temperatures, the Casual Labour team provided 9,366 placements to people in need of work and developed partnerships with 187 new employers, including Prestige Home and Construction, Edmonton Lighting Ltd., and Economy Muffler Auto Repair. Through our Jobs First pre-employment support program, 71 people found full-time work at jobs that provide valuable work experience and a living wage.



In December, Employment Services conducted a Job Fair for community members. Partners included A & W, Red Robin, McDonald's, PCL Construction, Arpi's North, and Norquest College. The response from our participants was overwhelming, with over 200 people attending the event. The Job Fair resulted in 12 confirmed jobs awarded to our community members.

## Child and Family Services

Bissell Centre's Childcare Program, which provides free care to children from low-income families ages 0-5, received 7,025 visits from 500 unique children. This service gives parents the time required to look for work, attend our Employment Services training sessions and access other Bissell Centre or community supports. Childcare staff members also worked hard to achieve their 3-year accreditation from the Government of Alberta. We are very proud of their dedication and the hard work that went into the accreditation process.



In the summer months, Child and Family Services hosted two family camps and one childcare camp out at Moonlight Bay Centre on Wabamun Lake. Bissell Centre camps are offered free of charge to participants of our various child and family services. At Moonlight Bay Centre, campers enjoyed swimming, canoeing, hiking, arts and crafts, and being in nature. In 2015, 43 adults and 78 children had the opportunity to enjoy a camp experience, explore the great outdoors, and create memories that will last a lifetime through our Moonlight Bay Centre Family Camps.

## Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Team worked to connect with participants, donors, volunteers, businesses, community groups, and other stakeholders to engage them in community life.

Operating out of the Drop-In Centre, our Community Participation Program (CPP) provided free arts, cultural, and educational opportunities to participants on a drop-in basis, including courses on computer basics, financial literacy, and reading hours. With funding from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, five artists in residence were hired to provide instruction to our Drop-in Centre participants on various art forms, including: pour-painting, traditional fan and rattle making, embroidery, silk screening and relief printing.

Last year, 1,649 dedicated volunteers contributed 13,471 hours to assist with administrative tasks, programming, and special events. The time and talents of our volunteers are incredibly valuable and we could not do what we do without them.

We continued to engage and communicate with the general public on our various social media sites. Between Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, we gained over 3,000 new followers and ended the year with 17,386 followers on our different social sites.

We received an overwhelming amount of financial and gift in kind support from the community. We received \$900,000 worth of in-kind items, which included clothing items, household goods, diapers, etc. Through grants, contracts, and the generosity of our donors, our fund development team raised over \$1.8 million to fund our programs. Bissell Centre is incredibly grateful for the generous individuals and organizations who have donated their time, money, or talents that make this great work possible.

## Foundational Statements

### Vision

We eliminate poverty in our community.

### Mission

Working with others, we empower people to move from poverty to prosperity.

### Values

At the very core of Bissell Centre is the development of positive relationships. This is inclusive of relationships with people who access the agency, who volunteer and work here, and those in the greater community committed to addressing the issues surrounding poverty.

# 2016 – 2017 Annual Business Plan

## Governance

Bissell Centre has been continuing to increase its range of services to better align with our vision and mission. In 2016-2017, as part of the processes involved with being a registered charity, we will update our objects and bylaws to reflect the growth and changing realities of our organization. These adjustments to our bylaws are a regular part of accurately identifying and describing the work that we are engaged in, and are essential to maintaining our charitable status with the Canada Revenue Agency.

Concurrently, our existing strategic plan is coming to a conclusion in 2017 and, as a result, the Board of Governors has committed to developing a new strategy framework to guide our work into the future.

In today's world, change has become the constant and, consequently, strategies can no longer be based simply on a set of conditions that exist at a given point in time. Shifts in the economy, changes in government and other fluid elements have significant impact on non-profits and the ability to thrive in this context requires a unique approach to planning. As such, we will aspire to develop a strategic process that provides a clear trajectory forward, but allows for the flexibility and nimbleness to respond to an ever-changing landscape.

## Collaborative Initiatives

Collaboration is a core value of Bissell Centre, and one that is lived out in the many partnerships and initiatives we have across our community. Approximately two years ago, Mayor Don Iveson initiated the Mayor's Taskforce to End Poverty in a Generation. Bissell Centre has been involved throughout this process, being represented both on the Taskforce and later on the EndPovertyEdmonton Roadmap Team.

Bissell Centre's Board has committed to a continued partnership with EndPovertyEdmonton (EPE) as we move toward the implementation of this plan and seek to end poverty together as a community. This will entail sustaining and aligning our current work with EPE while also providing opportunities to enhance existing work and participate in new initiatives in the community.

A key project that we will be participating in is a cooperative effort being led by United Way of the Alberta Capital Region called "1000 Families." The intention of this work is to assist 1,000 families out of poverty using a geographic Community Economic Development model. Pooling the resources of a variety of partners and the assets of the target community, this collaborative will seek to make a measurable difference in a range of areas, breaking down barriers and empowering the community to realize its aspirations.

## Child and Family Resources

Supporting families has been part of Bissell Centre's DNA for decades. One of the ways that we do this is through our Child and Family Resources Program, which provides assistance to parents with everything from basic needs, to housing, to employment. Alongside this, families can access our fully accredited childcare on a respite basis to attend employment interviews, doctor's appointments, or even simply to get some rest.

This service has had such a positive impact on the lives of our families that we have decided to expand our services so that we can make this great resource available to even more families in need.

Healthy families support healthy children, which in turn means healthier communities in the future. If we are going to end poverty, this must continue to be a critical aspect of our work and we believe that investment in this area is vital.

## Housing

At the core of a healthy community is appropriate housing. Our experience here at Bissell Centre has taught us that the lack of a home is a key contributor to many other challenges that people and communities face. Much evidence has shown that people who are homeless face higher rates of mental health and addictions issues, have much higher interactions with the justice and health care systems, are more likely to be victims of violence, and ultimately have a lower quality of life with a shortened life span.



This is why we continue to be steadfastly committed to doing all that we can to house families and individuals quickly and compassionately – and, as importantly, to help those who are at risk of losing their housing to stay in their homes.

From prevention, to early response, to chronic homelessness, Bissell Centre works to ensure that no matter the situation, we will work to find a housing solution that is appropriate. This year we are seeking to grow both our Outreach Housing team program and our Community Bridge program. Both programs have shown themselves to be not only highly effective in supporting people, but remarkably cost effective in providing effective supports.

We are seeking to move from five to seven full-time staff in our Outreach Housing team, which will allow us to support an additional 160 people annually. The goal for our Community Bridge program is to add two additional staff members and increase our available loan pool by \$630,000. This will allow us to support an additional 480 applicants.

## Drop-in Centre

Over the past year, Bissell Centre has developed a new service delivery model for its Drop-In Centre. This new approach moves from a sanctuary-based model where people come to meet their basic needs and be safe for short periods of time, to one that empowers participants to

make changes through access to better information and receive supports to successfully navigate community resources.



## Starting Point

As reported previously, Bissell Centre has been in the process of developing a comprehensive client, reporting, and evaluation information system that will significantly enhance our ability to support clients, track outcomes, and understand the effectiveness of our work moving forward.

A core component of this work will be the launch of a new initiative called “Starting Point.” Starting Point is a process that involves engaging with all participants, regardless of how or where they connect with us, to ensure that we are able to understand the whole range of their strengths and their needs. This allows us to connect them to the best supports available at the time, and coordinate supplemental resources as necessary.

## Finances

In spite of the economic realities of the past year, Bissell Centre managed to raise more funds last year than in any year in our 106-year history. We were still shy of our target for the year, but given the fiscal pressures and the unfavorable economic climate, it is still an outcome worth celebrating. This coming year, we have taken a more measured approach with our fund development goals, setting the goal to raise \$1,980,000 in 2016-17. With our new Hope Terrace contract, we have increased our total budget from \$8.6 million to \$9.5 million for the coming year.