



## **Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry**

The Existence of Poverty is Shameful - To be Poor is Not

# 2023 Annual Report

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### **Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry**

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### **Mission Statement**

Rooted in God's radical love, expressed through compassion and action, the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry advocates and educates with and for those seeking social and economic justice.

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

I have been privileged to chair the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry for the last six years. My time on the Board is coming to an end in June. It's been an amazing nine years of learning for me. I've been so blessed to be able to serve as an encouragement and support of our staff as they deliver poverty advocacy services to thousands of clients. 2023 has been another year of blessings. This past year, we have worked on ways to collect stories from clients with a view to better educating the community about poverty. We are also in the process of becoming an Affirming ministry. I am grateful to our Affirming ministry committee who have been doing the work to educate us and work through this process on our behalf.

Peter Gilmer continues to offer his expertise in a full-time role on our staff. Colleen Taylor has now been with us for two years, also working in a full-time role. These two are the backbone of this ministry. This past year, we were also blessed by the assistance of our practicum students: Cara Focht and Rashad Haque and our summer student Konnor Shannon.

As always, we greatly appreciate all the support we receive from Knox-Metropolitan United Church here in Regina, as well as from our other support partners, The United Church of Canada, the Living Skies region, the G. Murray and Edna Forbes Foundation and our monthly givers, whom I like to call our RAPM heroes, without whom we would not be able to provide these services. Working towards the end of poverty requires patience and

determination but it also requires the support of our community.

We are always looking for more RAPM volunteers and donors. If you would like to become part of this work, please visit our website at [www.antipovertyministry.ca](http://www.antipovertyministry.ca), to find out how you can help. If you would like to be considered for a spot of our Board, please contact me or either of our staff members at the RAPM office.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kate Berringer, Chair

## **STAFF REPORT**

The work of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry (RAPM) is done in three areas: individual advocacy, public education and social justice. Here are some of our activities in each of these areas for 2023.

### **Individual Advocacy**

Individual advocacy involves providing support for low-income people and households to ensure that they are receiving those benefits that they are eligible for and that they are being treated fairly by the institutions that they are engaging with. RAPM attempts to mediate conflict between individuals and institutions so that there are mutually agreed upon resolutions, but we represent people through the appeal processes which are in place to resolve conflicts.

Most of our casework involves responding to decisions made by provincial income security programs due to the loss of other welfare rights services around the province.

Our income security advocacy includes handling income assistance cut-offs and denials, shelter and utility coverage, underpayments and overpayments, as well as income and asset verification and exemption cases. We help people with the eligibility process for the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) as well as accessing special needs.

In 2023, RAPM continued to handle a high number of cases related to problems with and inadequacies of the Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program. This included a large number of cases regarding utility arrears and cut-offs as SIS, unlike previous programs, and SAID does not cover the cost of basic utilities. The inadequate shelter allowance also meant that we were dealing with many cases of rental arrears and evictions. We also helped many people unable to access SIS benefits.

In total, RAPM handled 2394 cases in 2023. We successfully resolved a significant majority of these cases. This does not mean that persons necessarily received everything that they would have liked but that their situation was made better after having made contact with our office.

RAPM also acts as a referral agency and intervenes to help meet immediate needs such as food, shelter and clothing. We navigate systems and refer people to appropriate services.

Furthermore, RAPM provides pastoral care for persons who are dealing with issues or crises that are not advocacy or charity related. In all of our casework we follow a client driven process and seek to uphold the dignity of those

requesting our help. We also maintain strict confidentiality.

During the past year, the RAPM staff conducted four advocacy training workshops for volunteers, clients, service providers and practicum students. These workshops develop advocacy skills in the province and help us keep up with the demand for this service. We present a recognized certificate to those who take the workshop and then provide 30 hours of advocacy service.

### **Public Education**

RAPM's public education work involves providing educational workshops and producing educational resources on anti-poverty issues. Our public education campaign is aimed at the provincial public, with a focus on faith-based, community and educational groups and institutions as well as interested individuals.

Within the faith community, RAPM conducted eight anti-poverty services of worship in the past year. We also gave presentations to congregational, ecumenical and multi-faith groups and gatherings.

In the wider community, RAPM provided many workshops and presentations on a range of poverty issues to community and labour groups as well as a broad cross section of high school and post-secondary classes. We presented to multiple conferences including on income security to a provincial housing and homelessness conference hosted by the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan.

RAPM facilitated two practicum

placements through the Faculty of Social Work in 2023. We have now supervised 75 placements as the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry. We also supervised a summer work placement and were a site for high school community service days.

RAPM continues to be a media resource on poverty issues and was quoted on 45 occasions in 2023 through interviews and press events.

A key educational activity continues to be RAPM's monthly study circles with low-income volunteers and activists. These study circles offer low-income people the opportunity to discuss poverty concerns that impact their lives. While our staff may provide resource materials or line up speakers, the topics are decided upon and often led by members of the group. In 2023 our circles included discussions regarding concerns with the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) legislation, mental health in the workplace and problems with the SIS program. These study circles influence RAPM's policy and tactical direction. They are also a meaningful way for low-income people to connect with and empower each other.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice work involves anti-poverty lobbying and activism as well as community consensus building around key issues. It also includes joint projects and campaigns with community partners.

RAPM frequently makes presentations to politicians and other government representatives. We know that there are many powerful interests which carry considerable influence in policy making

circles. The concerns of low-income people and the issues of the anti-poverty movement must also be heard by decision makers. In the past year, RAPM has met with the Minister and senior officials of Social Services. We also met with Opposition Caucus members and the Critic for Social Services. We gave a presentation to the Campaign 2000 consultations for the UN Social Development Goals in Canada and multiple presentations to Regina City Council.

RAPM chairs End Poverty Regina and is on the Steering Committee of Poverty Free Saskatchewan. These are networks of organizations and individuals working on poverty issues. In the past year they have been focused on affordable housing and houselessness concerns as well as problems with the SIS program. We were also a part of the Warm Welcome Coalition which pushed for supports for a warming centre in Regina to operate during the winter months.

RAPM continues to be active with the Disability Income Support Coalition (DISC) which worked with the Government of Saskatchewan on the development of the SAID program. We are working with DISC on greater adequacy measures for SAID benefits and exemptions.

In March 2023, RAPM filed a charter challenge against the Government of Saskatchewan for forcing SAID beneficiaries to take out their CPP at age 60 as this discriminates on the basis of disability. Early withdrawal of CPP is of no benefit to those receiving SAID in the short term as it is clawed back and means less CPP income after the age of 65. This challenge will be

heard and decided by the Court of King's Bench in 2024.

Since 1997, RAPM has identified its anti-poverty proposals through extensive consultation with low-income people and community groups dealing with poverty issues. These proposals have been passed through the courts of The United Church of Canada. They fall under the categories of adequate income security benefits, a living wage, quality and affordable housing and childcare, equity initiatives and fair taxation. We continue to promote these proposals along with our call for an Act to End Poverty in Saskatchewan which would ensure basic social and economic rights committed to under international law.

<b>RAPM STAFF</b>
<p><b>Peter Gilmer</b> <b>Designated Lay Minister</b> Bachelor of Arts (Sociology), Master of Theological Studies, Doctorate of Divinity (honoris causa), 35 years advocacy experience, 2005 Saskatchewan Centennial Medal and QEII Platinum Jubilee Medal Recipient.</p> <p><b>Colleen Taylor</b> <b>Anti-Poverty Support Worker</b> Bachelor of Arts (Sociology), Bachelor of Social Work, 35 years of experience in advocacy, social justice and human services.</p>

**Regina Anti-Poverty  
Ministry**

	2022 Actuals	2023 Actuals	2024 Budget
<b>Income</b>			
<b>Donations</b>			
Canada Helps Donations	10,890	6,776	6,900
Churches & Other Groups	9,619	9,775	9,000
Gift in Kind - Rent	13,000	13,000	13,000
Individual Donations Pledge	16,980	16,595	16,200
Individual Donations - Other	27,081	16,763	16,800
NGOs & Community Orgs	2,000	200	300
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>79,640</b>	<b>63,109</b>	<b>62,200</b>
Fees for Service	222	45	
Fund Raising	194		-
<b>Grants</b>			
Endowment Fund	7,065	6,965	7,000
G. Murray and Edna Forbes Fdn	15,000	11,250	11,250
United Church M&S	32,500	32,500	35,000
Other	500	3,805	500
<b>Total Grants</b>	<b>55,065</b>	<b>54,520</b>	<b>53,750</b>
Interest Income	2,041	4,865	4,800
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>137,092</b>	<b>122,539</b>	<b>120,750</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
Board of Director's Expenses	405	600	500
Fund Raising Expenses	-	238	-
Insurance	477	477	500
Office	1,484	1,604	1,500
Payroll Allow/Reimbursement	420	420	420
Payroll Expenses	117,726	143,576	147,400
Rent - Knox Met UC	13,000	13,000	13,000
Telephone & Internet	2,305	2,257	2,400
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>135,819</b>	<b>162,172</b>	<b>165,750</b>
<b>Net Income/(Loss)</b>	<b>1,275</b>	<b>(39,633)</b>	<b>(45,000)</b>