

**Councillor Anthony Peruzza, Chair, and
Councillors Maria Augimeri, Paula Fletcher, Josh Matlow, Joe Mihevc and
Kristyn Wong-Tam**

Community Development and Recreation Committee
City of Toronto, 100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

March 17, 2014

Honourable Chair and Members, Community Development and Recreation Committee:

We are writing to urge Toronto City Council to develop and implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy for the City of Toronto.

Even though Toronto ranks as one of the wealthiest cities in Canada, poverty is undermining our prosperity and well-being. More than 1 in 5 Toronto residents live in poverty and that number rises to 1 in 3 for racialized groups. United Way Toronto research shows poverty is especially concentrated in the inner suburbs of the city. A University of Toronto study predicts that 60% of Toronto households could be low income by 2025. And, in Toronto Community Foundation's annual *Vital Signs* report, Toronto received a C grade on equality of income distribution, as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow.

The cost – economic and social - of not taking action is too high and will continue to go up unless action is taken. While the City of Toronto supports a range of programs to prevent and alleviate the negative impacts of poverty, including housing, nutrition, recreation and child care services, the City lacks a comprehensive strategy to reduce and eliminate poverty amongst children, youth, working-age adults, immigrants, racialized groups and seniors.

Municipal governments can play a key role in reducing poverty through the coordination and delivery of front line services, citizen engagement, cross-sectoral planning and advocacy for action by higher levels of government. Municipalities can also align and mobilize partnerships across all sectors – private, community, labour and academia. Jurisdictions across Canada, including Ontario and the Region of Peel, have developed and implemented strategies to reduce poverty. It is time for the City of Toronto to step up.

We, the undersigned, urge City Council to instruct staff to consult on and develop a poverty reduction strategy by the end of 2014, that is:

- **Comprehensive:** staff from all relevant departments should be brought together to align ideas and objectives under the strategy.

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- **Targeted:** the strategy should set clear targets and identify measureable indicators.
- **Grounded in Community:** a broad-based community advisory committee should be set up to help align the strategy with the needs of Toronto's neighbourhoods.
- **Adequately Resourced:** the City should work with other levels of government to make investments that help meet the targets.
- **Accountable:** the progress of the strategy should be reported publicly on an annual basis.

Council should adopt and start to implement this strategy in early 2015.

As partners of the City in research, economic development, community engagement and service delivery, we are also committing to supporting this strategy in our respective roles and to collaborate towards its success.

Thank you for your commitment to reducing and eliminating poverty in Toronto, and for working to build a prosperous city where everyone has the chance to succeed and contribute.

Sincerely,

Jehad Aliweiwi
Executive Director, Laidlaw Foundation

Sheila Block
Director, Economic Analysis, Wellesley Institute

Alan Broadbent
Chairman of Maytree Foundation and Chairman and CEO of Avana Capital Corporation

John Brodhead
Former Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Cabinet Affairs, Office of the Premier of Ontario

Andrea Calver
Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

John Campey
Executive Director, Social Planning Toronto

John Cartwright

President, Toronto and York Region Labour Council

Debbie Douglas

Executive Director, OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants)

Diane Dyson

Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto

Debbie Field

Executive Director, FoodShare

Rachel Grey

Executive Director, The Stop Community Food Centre

Margaret Hancock

Executive Director, Family Service Toronto

Sandy Houston

President and CEO, Metcalf Foundation

J David Hulchanski

Professor, University of Toronto

The Most Reverend Colin R. Johnson

Anglican Archbishop of Toronto and Metropolitan of Ontario

Mary Marrone

Director of Advocacy and Legal Services, Income Security Advocacy Centre

Susan McIsaac

President and CEO, United Way Toronto

Dr. Rosemary Moodie,

Board President, YWCA Toronto

Gail Nyberg

Executive Director, Daily Bread Foodbank

Patricia O'Campo

Director, Centre for Research on Inner City Health

Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto

David Rivard

Chief Executive Officer, Children's Aid Society of Toronto

John Stapleton

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