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Charitable # 1191-92763-RR0001

June 29, 2015

Dear Mayor Tory, Deputy Mayor McConnell, Executive Committee Members, and City Councillors,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and community members of The Stop Community Food Centre, I want to commend Mayor Tory, Deputy Mayor McConnell and all of Council for committing to implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Staff and community members from The Stop are pleased to have been part of the consultative process in the lead up to the release of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy. It is with great urgency that we encourage the Executive Committee and full City Council to approve the 24 recommendations and 74 actions outlined within the Interim Strategy.

We welcome the articulation of “driving systemic change” in the Strategy’s Vision and Objectives and the acknowledgement “that Governments can make ongoing choices that reduce poverty.” Indeed without that leadership, Torontonians will continue to face the gendered and racialized outcomes we now face - with racialized individuals and families 1.5 to 3 times more likely to live in poverty.

There can be no doubt that Torontonians need and want new and effective pathways out of poverty and we welcome the Strategy’s recommendations regarding affordable housing and housing stabilization, income supports, living wages and community benefits and social procurement programs. In our community advocacy offices and civic engagement work, income and housing are consistently the issues raised by community members who want to live their lives with dignity, and contribute to making Toronto a prosperous city for everyone.

Finally, we at The Stop applaud the inclusion of food access as one of the key pillars in the Strategy. Hunger is a daily reality for the growing number of Torontonians living in poverty, including 29% of our children. A recent survey of Stop community members revealed that 80% of them had an annual income of less than \$20,000, and 24% of them don’t eat for an entire day at least once a month. Toronto’s commitment to prosperity cannot come quickly enough.

We all pay the high cost of poverty and inequality – in the billions of dollars we spend on health care, social services and the devastating loss of hope. It is time to redirect that investment into our collective future and prosperity for all.

We urge City Council to approve the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy at its July meeting, and in November to approve a final strategy that includes clear targets and timelines that reflect the leadership needed to build the fair, just and prosperous city Toronto should be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Gray", written in a cursive style.

Rachel Gray  
Executive Director