

For more than 60 years Community Living Toronto has been a source of support for thousands of individuals who have an intellectual or developmental disability and their families. Community Living Toronto has grown into one of the largest organizations of its kind in North America, supporting over 6,000 individuals and families each year. It has a membership of almost 1,000 individuals, more than 900 dedicated volunteers and over 1,300 staff. The organization operates more than 80 locations across Toronto.

Our ever-changing and adapting range of supports and services focus on each individual's needs, goals and aptitudes, and is reflected in our vision that we change the lives of people with an intellectual disability by giving them a voice, and supporting their choices where they live, learn, work and play. People who have an intellectual disability require some level of support throughout their entire life. At Community Living Toronto we support individuals of all ages, from birth through their senior years.

Toronto's logo, 'Diversity, Our Strength' is a vision of inclusion and acceptance that needs to ensure that everyone has a place, and has every opportunity to succeed. People with disabilities need to be part of that vision. It is recommended that the 2016 budget:

- Begin to apply the 71 recommendations outlined in *TO Prosperity*
- A fare-gated-to-income reduction be implemented January 1, 2017.
- A strategy to address AODA requirements so that Toronto's transit system is fully accessible by the required deadline of 2025.
- A long-term strategy be developed to address the long waitlist for affordable housing, and partner with government, agency providers and the private sector to build more affordable units.

### **Poverty Reduction Strategy**

On November 4, 2015 Council unanimously approved *TO Prosperity*, the city's first poverty reduction strategy, which includes 71 actions to create good jobs and improve access to transit, housing, child care and other services. It is essential that for Toronto to thrive, and for every person to have a valued, contributing place, Council needs to commit to implementing all 71 actions within the timeline created in the plan.

However, the 2016 budget falls far short of the \$75million recommended by civic leaders to begin implementing the *TO Prosperity* Plan, despite the report stating that:

46% of new immigrants live in poverty  
37% of single female parents live in poverty  
33% of people in racialized groups live in poverty.

In addition, *TO Prosperity* indicates that 30% of people with disabilities live in poverty. It is estimated that almost 75% of people with a developmental disability live in poverty. Most earn a monthly stipend from the provincial Ontario Disability Support Program. People receiving ODSP find competitive employment difficult, limited or unavailable due to physical or

developmental disabilities. A single adult living on ODSP receives a maximum of \$1100.00 per month, or just over \$13,000 per year. Most people with a developmental disability will receive ODSP for their entire life, making living in Toronto very challenging.

While the investment in affordable housing, TCHC repairs and employment are all good first steps, much more is needed to lift people out of poverty so that they can start contributing to and participating in the life of the city.

### **Transit and Quality of Life**

Access to transit means an individual with a developmental disability can participate in their community and can contribute to the city's economy. It also fosters a sense of independence, confidence and added security.

#### Reduced Fare Is Necessary

In *TO Prosperity*, it is recommended that transit be made more affordable (recommendation #7), through a fare-gated-to-income capacity with the new Presto card. A reduced fare for people with a developmental disability will not only increase a person's quality of life, it could generate more riders as more people with disabilities could afford transit. However, the increase in fares on January 1 made transit even more unaffordable for people.

Toronto lags far behind other cities in making public transit accessible and affordable: Calgary, Ottawa, Montreal, Oshawa, Vancouver, Windsor and Kingston all have reduced fare programs for people on permanent government assistance.

### **Affordable Housing**

The first recommendation of the *TO Prosperity* plan is to improve affordable housing options for Torontonians. Affordable housing continues to be one of the most pressing issues in Toronto, and with a waitlist of approximately 90,000 it is critical for the City to build new affordable units that help those living in poverty, or near the poverty-line access safe, clean housing and get ahead financially.

The budget recommends an investment of \$40 million to offset loss of provincial funding for social housing, however, it fails to include needed rent supplements and supportive housing creation recommended in the plan.

Community Living Toronto is a proud partner with Toronto Community Housing and has successfully moved over 45 individuals with intellectual disabilities into affordable units in the new builds in the Fort York area at Dan Leckie Way, and in the retirement buildings at West Donlands on King St. East. Affordable housing has enabled these individuals to live more independently, access their community and participate in activities and events they were not able to before. In addition, we have partnered with Seaton House and have secured 18 units at the new development planned for 200 Madison.

By partnering with the city and developers at the planning stages of a development, agencies can plan ahead to create new supported housing models that are community based, affordable and have a positive impact on people's lives.

It is important that Toronto work with agencies, developers and the private sector to increase the number of affordable rental units to make living in the city more affordable for everyone.

### **Recommendations**

The City of Toronto has a wonderful opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of people with an intellectual disability and all Torontonians by implementing *TO Prosperity's* recommendations. The 2016 budget needs to consider the needs of those who are the most vulnerable and most profoundly impacted socially and economically.

It is recommended that:

- The 2016 budget increase investment in implementing the recommendations outlined in *TO Prosperity*
- A fare-geared-to-income reduction be implemented January 1, 2017.
- A long-term strategy be developed to address the long waitlist for affordable housing that includes investment in rental supplements, and partnering with government, agency providers and the private sector to build more affordable units.