

# Attachment C

## EX29.12

# TORONTO POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY



2017 Report  
to Community

*“Over the last three years, we have worked to address poverty in the city and ensure everyone in Toronto has a decent standard of living. We implemented the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy to make sure we continue building a city that is affordable for everyone. We’re proud of what we have accomplished and we are determined to accomplish much more.”*

*- Mayor John Tory*



## Poverty in Toronto

Newly available Census data shows that 20.2% of Toronto’s population, or 543,390 people, live on low incomes.<sup>i</sup> This percentage is higher than in Canada (14.2%), Ontario (14.4%), and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (11.9%).<sup>ii</sup> Currently, Census data on low income

among specific population groups is only available at the level of the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), which includes Toronto and a number of neighbouring municipalities. In the CMA, the overall low-income rate is 15.6% but higher among people in racialized groups (20.4%),<sup>iii</sup> female lone parents (27.8%),<sup>iv</sup> new immigrants (34.8%) and non-permanent residents (43.6%),<sup>v</sup> and Aboriginal people (23.6%).<sup>vi</sup> People with disabilities are also overrepresented among people living on low income, but 2015 data is not available yet.

# INTRODUCTION

Unanimously approved by City Council in 2015, *TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy* is the City's commitment to taking meaningful, concrete action to reduce poverty and ensure all residents can live with dignity. Designed as a 20-year strategy, it contains 17 recommendations divided in six areas: housing stability, service access, transit equity, food access, quality jobs and incomes, and systemic change. Each recommendation is linked to a set of actions to be carried out over a four-year period.

Every year, the City reports on its progress. The conventional, detailed reports submitted to City Council are accompanied by shorter and easier-to-read reports to community. You are reading or listening to the 2017 Report to Community, which talks about 2017 achievements and plans for 2018.

For more information, visit [www.toronto.ca/toprosperity](http://www.toronto.ca/toprosperity).

3 years of Poverty Reduction actions have made a difference:

- Free TTC for children 12 and under
- More affordable houses and housing allowances
- More student nutrition, youth, and library programs
- More recreation centres where programs are free
- More child care spaces and child care fee subsidies
- More employment opportunities for equity seeking groups and marginalized youth
- More wrap around services for social assistance clients
- More voices with lived experience of poverty at City Hall.

That's a good start, but it's not enough. Many Torontonians still cannot meet their basic needs on a regular basis, and even more are unable to build stable economic lives. In 2018, the work will continue, with improvements to key services and bold plans for child care, housing and transit.

# HOUSING STABILITY

The City provides emergency shelter, manages social housing, and invests, with other orders of government, in the creation of new affordable rental and ownership housing. Adding to the City's capacity to impact housing stability for low-income Torontonians is its ownership of Toronto Community Housing and ability to develop programs such as ones that waive development fees and make City land available for affordable housing.



## 2017 Highlights

The City's *Housing Opportunities Toronto 2010-2020* housing plan and new Open Door Affordable Housing Program help address the urgent need for affordable housing by building and repairing affordable homes. These strategies set annual targets of 1,000 new affordable rental and 400 new affordable ownership homes. In 2017, the City oversaw approximately 4,000 affordable homes being built or repaired/modified (to be completed in one to four years), using federal, provincial and City investments of approximately \$330 million. And, in 2017, for the first time, the City exceeded its target by approving approximately 1,200 new affordable rental homes.

Reforming Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is also a top priority. Many of the 110,000 TCHC residents live in units that require repair. Additionally, many tenants do not have access to the services and supports they need. In 2017, Council approved the implementation plan

for the first phase of reforming TCHC, called Tenants First – and invested an additional \$37 million into TCHC's operating budget.

Further, to help support individuals and families struggling with the cost of housing, at the end of 2017, 5,563 households will be receiving housing allowances administered by the City, with funding from all orders of government.

Finally, total shelter capacity was increased by 30% from October 2016 to October 2017. During 2017, the City will have added 279 beds to the shelter system and 825 motel beds to programs serving families, mostly refugee claimants.

## 2018 Plans

In 2018, the City will continue to aggressively pursue its annual targets of 1,000 new affordable rental and 400 new affordable ownership homes. New affordable rental homes will be approved through the second annual Open Door Affordable Housing Program Call for Applications. Federal,



provincial and City investments will be dedicated to new supportive homes for low-income Torontonians.

Funding of \$160 million requested by TCHC is under consideration for the 2018 budget. This additional funding will enable TCHC to address its state of good repair backlog and prevent permanent unit closures. City staff will report back in 2019 on a permanent funding model for TCHC.

## SERVICE ACCESS

The City provides a broad range of important services ranging from water, to Ontario Works, to child care, to recreation programs, to name but a few. In determining what services it provides and how it provides services, the City has the opportunity to play a significant role in ensuring Torontonians have access to effective services that help individuals, families and communities thrive.



### 2017 Highlights

Affordable, accessible, high quality child care supports children to develop and thrive. It also gives working families, especially mothers, the opportunity to do paid work and/or participate in training and education opportunities. This year, City Council approved an ambitious plan to significantly expand Toronto's child care system. With investments from the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Canada, Toronto plans to transform the licenced child care system to serve 50% of children ages 0 to 4 by 2026 and reduce parent fees by 25 to 40%. As a first step, 162 spaces and 2,916 fee subsidies were added to the child care system in 2017.

For the 20% of Torontonians living on low incomes, recreation centres and libraries provide access to spaces and programs that foster healthy living, social inclusion, and valuable skills. Since Council approved the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2015, 17 recreation centres became free for all users. In 2017, the York Recreation

Centre – a new, large, fully-accessible facility offering a wide range of programs – was added to the list of centers where programs are free.

Library services were also increased. Today there are 1,169 more library hours annually than there were in 2015. In 2017, the Toronto Public Library extended year round Sunday service to 14 district branches and added Sunday service to six more neighbourhood branches, bringing the total number of branches to 33. Expanding Sunday service is responsive to changing





patterns of school, work and leisure and is one of the most requested services. Open hours promote access to computers, internet, study and work space, collections, and programs in neighbourhoods across the city.

The City is also doing more to connect residents to benefits and important opportunities. For example, in a successful event organized by Toronto Employment & Social Services, 500 low-income families opened Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) for their children, enabling them to receive up to \$2,000 for each child from a federal program called the Canada Learning Bond. (The Canada Learning Bond is money the Government of Canada deposits into an RESP to help parents save for a child's education expenses after high school.) Assuming these families were and remain eligible for the CLB grant in each applicable year, cumulatively these 500 new accounts would secure \$1M in federal benefits.

## 2018 Plans

In 2018, the City will continue to implement its ambitious plan to increase access to child care. The plan will be rolled out over several years. The first target is, by 2019, to reduce parent fees by 10%, add 2,000 new physical child care spaces, and increase the wages of Registered Early Childhood Educators by 6%. Achieving these targets will depend on provincial and federal investments.

Pending 2018 Budget approval, the City will also expand Sunday service to an additional 25 library branches serving current and former neighbourhood improvement areas (NIAs).

## YOUTH PROGRAMS

To thrive, youth need education, training, strong life skills and confidence. Supporting youth development along these lines is critical to both reducing and preventing poverty. While the City offers and funds a broad range of programs for children, youth and families, the Toronto Public Library and Parks, Forestry & Recreation



have launched targeted youth programs, as part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The programs, which have been developed based on research and consultation with Toronto youth, are focused on providing youth in low-income neighbourhoods with tutoring, homework help, access to technology, leadership development opportunities, training, employment support and a safe, engaging space. In 2016, these programs offered 11,219 hours of structured programs and roughly 1,800 hours of workshops, and received a total of more than 95,000 visits.



# TRANSIT EQUITY

Public transit allows people to take advantage of public services, economic opportunities, and culture. However, Toronto's public transit is unaffordable for most residents living on low incomes. In building an affordable and accessible public transit system, the City has a role to play in ensuring all Torontonians can benefit from the connections and opportunities provided by the transit system.



## 2017 Highlights

Because access to transit is so vital, one of the first Poverty Reduction Strategy actions was to make the TTC free for children 12 years of age and under, creating free, universal access for an estimated 266,000 Toronto children. Building on this initial step to make public transit more affordable, in December of 2016, Council approved the creation of the Fair Pass: Transit Fare Equity Program for Low-income Torontonians. This program will extend to low-income adults, ages 20 to 64, the same reduced fare currently available to youth, post-secondary students and seniors. In 2017, City staff prepared a plan to launch the first phase of this program.

## 2018 Plans

Council will consider the Budget request for the first phase of the Fair Pass program as part of the 2018 Operating Budget process. If approved, the first phase will provide the reduced fare to city residents receiving support from Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Transit equity is also about availability. With that in mind, the TTC has started developing an equity assessment tool to ensure the needs of low-income riders and other transit-dependent groups inform all decisions about proposed changes.



## FOOD ACCESS

Every day, one in eight Torontonians struggles to access adequate, healthy food. This is most often due to the lack of financial resources, but lack of accessible and affordable food options also has a significant impact. While there is no City division focused on food access, some City programs and initiatives have a positive impact on food access, notably the Student Nutrition Program and initiatives led by the Toronto Food Strategy. More can and should be done.



### 2017 Highlights

With 26.3%<sup>vii</sup> of children in Toronto living in low-income households, and 14% of children whose families use food banks reporting they go hungry at least once a week,<sup>viii</sup> child hunger and nutrition requires attention.

In recent years, the City and the Province have expanded the Student Nutrition Program. In 2017, the program provided healthy food at 621 sites, serving over 208,000 children and youth. This program provides essential energy and nutrients to students from kindergarten to grade 12, supporting learning and healthy development.

In 2017, the Toronto Food Strategy enhanced its FoodReach web portal – in partnership with the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC) and Student Nutrition Toronto – to provide City agencies and community organizations the ability to purchase fresh, healthy food at wholesale prices.

In addition, the Toronto Food Strategy created a new stream of the Community Food Works program,

which provides food handler training and certification as well as training in food skills and employment support. This new stream, Community Food Works for Newcomer Settlement, is designed to support Arabic speaking newcomers. The Food Strategy received the international Milan Urban Food Policy Pact award for this new program in October, 2017.

### 2018 Plans

In 2018, pending Budget approval, the City will further expand the Student Nutrition program.

The Food Strategy will expand the Community Food Works for the Newcomer Settlement program, and will work with the Toronto Food Policy Council and the Toronto Agriculture Program Steering Committee on a work plan for the expansion of urban agriculture.

The Toronto Food Strategy is also developing a pilot project to launch social supermarkets in Toronto. Social supermarkets are places where residents living on low-incomes can

purchase food below market value and access community programs. Found in several cities in England, social supermarkets are a non-stigmatizing option for residents who might otherwise visit food banks.

The Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy Office is presently developing a food strategy and the Government of Canada is carrying out consultations on a national food policy. In 2018, the City will monitor these developments closely, and conduct its own research and consultations, while expanding existing programs, and piloting promising approaches. More can and should be done to address food insecurity in Toronto.



## QUALITY JOBS & LIVABLE WAGES

The City has a key role to play in driving economic growth and supporting Torontonians who have been economically disadvantaged. Impelled by the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the City is leveraging its economic power to create good jobs, connect low-income Torontonians to career pathways, and bring development opportunities to neighbourhoods.



### 2017 Highlights

The City of Toronto is the first municipal government in Canada to implement a Social Procurement Program. This Program has two components. The Supply Chain Diversity component gives businesses owned by equity-seeking groups – such as women and Aboriginal people – increased access to bidding on City contracts. Between February and September, the City awarded \$250,000 in contracts through the Supply Chain Diversity component. The Workforce Development component creates training, apprenticeship and employment opportunities for people experiencing economic disadvantage. To date, this component has leveraged commitments for 23 jobs and apprenticeships.

The City needs partners to increase the impact of social procurement. In collaboration with the Atkinson Foundation, the City has led a network of 18 public sector institutions to work together in championing social procurement practices. In 2017, the

network created a model of social procurement that any large, stable public sector institution can adopt, called the AnchorTO Blueprint.

Youth unemployment in Toronto remains at a high of 18%. The City is vigorously tackling this issue with targeted programs that connect low-income and marginalized youth to training, entry-level jobs and employment opportunities that lead to career pathways. Between January and October of 2017, two major programs – Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE) and Youth Employment Partnerships (YEP) – have supported more than 4,200 youth to connect with employers at recruitment, learning and networking events across the city, helping hundreds of youth to obtain work based learning opportunities and employment.

Poverty Reduction Strategy efforts also focus on social assistance clients with complex needs. Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) is now providing many high needs Ontario Works clients with wrap-

around supports through new (intensive case management) program pilots, expanded use of peer-to-peer approaches, and collaboration with City, community and employment partners. In 2018, this work will continue by building key learnings from the program pilots into divisional practices and pursuing new approaches.



## 2018 Plans

Next year, if Council approval is given, a pilot project will be launched to explore how the City can promote decent work standards in its contracts. The City is also going to explore how a Community Benefits Framework can be best implemented. A Community Benefits Framework will create mechanisms for the City to achieve social, economic and environmental benefits for the local communities impacted by proposed development and infrastructure projects.

In 2018, the AnchorTO Blueprint will be launched to provide concrete tools to maximize the potential of social procurement.

## SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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The City is a large organization that touches the lives of Torontonians in multiple ways. The way the City does its business and how the City delivers services have a profound impact on city residents. Making strategic change to City systems is fundamental to the City's efforts to reduce poverty.

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### 2017 Highlights

For poverty reduction to be a priority in what the City does and how it does that work, the voices and perspectives of low-income Torontonians must be central. In February, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) was launched. After several intensive orientation and training sessions, LEAG members began to provide advice on the development of various programs and policies across the City. More about the work of the LEAG can be found on the next pages.

The City is also transforming its approach to the Budget process. The City's 2018 Operating Budget process has been enhanced to include an equity analysis of all proposed Budget changes. This significant change provides Council and Torontonians with greater information and analysis to support Budget debates.

### 2018 Plans

In 2018, the LEAG's priority will be housing. The group will participate in consultations with Shelter, Support and Housing Administration and the Affordable Housing Office and will engage in advocacy to bring more attention to this critical issue, as well as to issues related to the City Budget and other priorities in the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This model is attracting the attention of other jurisdictions regionally and nationally.

In the coming years, the City will expand its equity analysis of the City Budget process to develop more robust and far-reaching analysis.



## PERSPECTIVES AND VOICES FROM THE LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP

This special section of our report was written by the newly formed Lived Experience Advisory Group

### The Purpose of the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG)

The purpose of the LEAG is to collaborate with City divisions and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Office (PRSO) on the implementation of specific economic, social, and structural policies and processes over a 20 year action plan. The LEAG works to monitor, advocate, raise awareness, and to educate the City on issues of poverty and collaborates to help inform policy based on the lived experiences that each member brings to the group.

### How was the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) formed?

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) was created through collaboration with City Council, City staff, community agencies, and residents with lived experience of poverty. The Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy was approved in November 2015 and in 2016 the City undertook a consultation process to inform what the LEAG would look like. City Council agreed that residents played a vital role in the development stages of the PRS and should also be a key part of its implementation. More than 350 residents applied and 20 were selected by a panel of City staff and volunteer residents. The LEAG started meeting in February of 2017. These members serve as representatives for communities across the city who have experienced poverty.

“  
I am passionate about social justice and it is my belief that people are our greatest investment. What affects one affects all. I endeavour to use my life in service for the betterment of our community, our society and the world at large.

-Ann-Marie

I am delighted to be part of such a dynamic group, to positively impact this very important and complex Poverty Reduction Strategy.

- Dennis

I joined the LEAG because I wanted to give a voice to the chronically ill living in poverty on ODSP.

- Kaarina”

## Who are the members?

Members are residents from various equity-seeking groups including those from diverse ethnic-cultural backgrounds, those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, and those who identify as Aboriginal. Members also include new immigrants, racialized people, and people with experience of the criminal justice system. Members have diverse educational and professional experience, include academics, people from the arts community, and those who have done anti-poverty work. For a full list of the LEAG members and to see their bios please visit: [www.toronto.ca/povertyreductionstrategy](http://www.toronto.ca/povertyreductionstrategy)

## LEAG WORKING GROUPS

Part of the work of the LEAG happens in two working groups outside of regular monthly meetings: the Evaluation working group and the Communications working group. The assessments conducted by the Evaluation working group will help LEAG members to reflect on the work that the group has done overall and what steps could be taken to improve. The Communications working group was formed to establish effective strategies of communication for the LEAG, both internally and externally. The other role of this group was to create the initial draft of this report.

## LEAG activities and involvement to date

*Orientation, Capacity Building, and Training (February – May 2017)*

The LEAG has been hard at work since its first meeting and orientation in February 2017. As a group, the LEAG has received training in skills such as conflict resolution, facilitation, anti-oppression, and how to be an ally.

As part of the Neighbourhood Micro Grants Review Panel I advocated for mindfulness and wellness yoga events that address trauma and crisis in communities, youth forums that would provide youth with a platform to discuss issues of poverty in their communities, and the unveiling of murals that reflect the culture of each community.

My concern is that there are many other neighbourhoods that have been excluded from the micro grant program. In future, I would like to see the grants extended to more neighbourhoods in need.

- Lindsay

### *Consulting and Facilitating in Collaboration with City Divisions (June – November 2017)*

#### *Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS)*

Seven members participated in training with Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and helped to facilitate consultations with TESS clients and caseworkers on the implementation of the new design for accessing Ontario Works that is currently being rolled out.

#### *Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA)*

- One member participated in an advisory to the Neighbourhood Micro Grants program, which makes small grants of \$1000 available to resident-led groups to help them inspire their neighbourhoods with events held between August and December.
- LEAG members participated in consultations for the finalization of the Seniors Strategy 2.0.
- One LEAG member participated in the Identity and Impact Funding Program Grants Review Panel, which reviewed applications to support up to ten, \$10,000 grants, for youth to lead and deliver projects of up to one year in length that promote youth engagement and broader community safety in the City of Toronto.
- One LEAG member participated in a review of the equity impacts of the 2018 Operating Budget.

#### *Economic Development and Culture (EDC)*

Members have participated in focus groups on the formation of the Economic Development and Culture Divisional Strategy.

#### *Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS)*

Members participated in a consultation with Municipal Licensing and Standards on the review of Multi-Tenant Houses (rooming houses) in Toronto.

*I joined the LEAG because poverty goes beyond a lack of food or housing. Poverty is isolation, loneliness and can be a thief of self-worth. A person should experience belonging, community and self-empowerment in this life, with these we may all reap riches.*

- Kelly

*While it seems almost impossible to measure the full impact of poverty on our society in monetary terms, we can suggest that the cost in terms of stress, emotional turmoil and corresponding physical illness places an expensive burden on our social services and healthcare supports.*

- Dennis

## Beyond the City of Toronto

A few LEAG members participated in the Cities Reducing Poverty conference in Hamilton, where the focus was to examine the role of business and multi-sectoral approaches to poverty reduction in cities across Canada.

The LEAG also has a member who is participating on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Poverty for the Government of Canada.

Members work to report their activities, involvement, and progress with the LEAG back to their communities.

## Future of the LEAG

The LEAG has an important relationship with the City of Toronto. LEAG members are working closely with City staff to represent communities living in poverty and marginalized populations as policies and programs, such as policies around housing, are being developed. As the LEAG continues to advise the City on the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy many LEAG members would like to have a greater role in the political side of the conversation, to build on their advocacy skills, and to ensure that the lived experiences of the members of the LEAG are represented on a variety of fronts. LEAG members would like to be a resource for City Councillors and the Mayor on issues of poverty and be a voice for the communities that LEAG members represent at Council. The LEAG continues to grow and work together, to face challenges and successes, and to build their work plan to ensure that LEAG members are taking on work that is important to them individually, to their communities, and to the City.

“We know we have a long way to go. But we not only have a map of where we are going, we are already moving in the right direction. We need to deepen our analysis of the dynamics of poverty in our city and re-commit to a vision of Toronto that includes opportunity for all—a city where the weight of poverty is no longer a burden on too many of us. Inspired by the leadership of my colleague, Deputy Mayor McConnell, who sadly passed away this year, I am committed to ensuring we continue to move in smart and bold ways to reduce poverty in our city.”

- Councillor Joe Mihevc, Poverty Reduction Advocate

# ENDNOTES

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i There is no official definition of poverty in Canada, but there are some widely accepted measures of low-income, notably the Low Income Cut Off, the Low Income Measure, and the Market Basket Measure. The level of low income or poverty differs depending on the measure used and whether it considers income before or after tax.

ii Census Profile. 2016 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. All data cited in this section refer to the Low Income Measure After-Tax.

iii Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016211. It is also important to note that this rate varies significantly across visible minority groups in the Toronto CMA.

iv Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016124.

v Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016206.

vi Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016173. However, it should be noted that there are concerns that Indigenous persons living in urban areas may not be well captured by the Census, and that low income figures may also be underestimated for this population. See, for example, Our Health Counts Toronto (2016) Interim Report May 2016: <http://www.welllivinghouse.com/what-we-do/projects/our-health-counts-toronto>

vii Statistics Canada. 2017. Toronto, CDR [Census division], Ontario (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.

viii Daily Bread. 2017. Who is Hungry: 2017 Profile of Hunger in Toronto. Available at <http://www.dailybread.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Whos-Hungry-2017.pdf>