

November 27, 2017

To the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) to express our strong support for the work of TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), and to suggest a way in which the TFPC can contribute its expertise to the PRS in an on-going way.

By way of introduction, the TFPC was established by City Council in 1991, in an effort to develop food system-basedⁱ policies and programs which could respond to the then-emerging crisis of hunger, which led to the rise of foodbanks during the 1980s. The TFPC is a 30-member citizen council, composed of City Councillors and citizen-experts on food issues affecting the residents of Toronto. The TFPC advises the Board of Health on issues relating to creating a just and sustainable food system, and acts as a reference group for the Toronto Food Strategy. It is widely recognized as the leading food policy council in the world.

The TFPC has contributed its expertise in food systems-based policies and programs designed to address poverty and food insecurity in Toronto on at least three occasions.

First, TFPC staff co-chaired the City's Food and Hunger Action Committee from 1999-2003, and contributed significantly to its three reports, and to the development of the Toronto Food Charter, which was adopted unanimously by City Council in 2001.

Second, in 2009-2010, TFPC staff played a leadership role in the development of the Toronto Food Strategy, which contains significant material on food insecurity and poverty reduction.

Third, in 2016, the TFPC launched the Food By Ward Asset Mapping Project, the first effort to map food assets and deficits across all wards of the city, combined with a citizen engagement process. This project is on-going.

At the TFPC's meeting of November 22nd, the Council unanimously requested that the TFPC be identified as a reference group for the food pillar of the PRS. In light of the TFPC's work in producing key reports for the City, and in light of its 26 years of experience working on a wide range of food security policies and programs, we believe this request is reasonable. We would like the opportunity to meet regularly with relevant staff of the PRS.

In addition to our request that the TFPC be given standing as a reference group for the PRS, on numerous occasions the TFPC has voiced support for the following initiatives, and asks that they be considered for inclusion in the 2018 PRS work plan.

- That City staff identify spaces for use by community-led initiatives (both growing spaces, and office, program and cooking spaces), based on current inventories of surplus space, and that staff focus on NIAs in identifying these spaces;
- That the TFPC's Food By Ward food asset mapping project be made available to the public through an accessible online platform, and be adequately maintained and kept up to date;
- That communities identified as NIAs be supported specifically by having their local food initiatives coordinated by staff through a community food animators program.

We look forward to working with you on reducing poverty and food insecurity in Toronto.

Sincerely,

as per:
Rachel Gray
Citizen Chair, Toronto Food Policy Council
Executive Director, The Stop Community Food Centre

ⁱ The term “food system” refers to the full life cycle of food, from seed to compost, and to the many connections between food and major issues faced by residents of Toronto such as poverty reduction, food security, health equity, economic development, food culture, social inclusion, newcomer settlement, waste management, emergency preparedness, climate change resilience, green infrastructure, and access to green space.