

CD27.9.4



**Canadian Union of
Public Employees**

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Vice-President Equity:
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Bridgepoint Hospital
- Nurses & Paramedical
Units
- Service Units

City of Toronto
- Full-Time
- Long-Term Care Homes
& Services Part-Time
- Recreation Workers
Part-Time
- Unit B Part-Time

*Toronto Community
Housing Corporation*

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March 17, 2014

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Anthony Perruzza, Chair and
Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee
c/o Clerk's Office
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillor Perruzza and Members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee:

RE: CD27.9 - Developing a Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy

On behalf of CUPE Local 79 members who deliver front-line services and know first-hand how hard life is for people living in poverty in Toronto, I applaud Councillor Mihevc and the Committee's efforts to develop a poverty reduction strategy that is comprehensive and far-reaching. Our members in public health, 311, employment and social services, child care, shelters, housing, who deliver essential public services and see the face of poverty daily, welcome the prospect of the City actively trying to reduce poverty and address social exclusion.

CUPE Local 79 has, on many occasions, deputed at the City's Standing Committees on cuts to front-line city services and the large number of front-line positions that are vacant or gapped. City Divisions and Agencies, Boards and Commissions must have the resources in place to help those most in need.

Looking to other levels of government to take on their fair share is long overdue. The Province's poverty reduction promises have not been realized. Social assistance rates are inadequate. People often have to choose between putting food on the table and paying rent. A minor raise in the minimum wage still leaves people living in poverty. Federally, cuts to employment insurance, pensions, and public services have done a lot of damage to middle-class wage earners, the working poor, seniors and retirees.

Fair and equitable access to employment is fundamental to lifting people out of poverty. The United Way Toronto's 2013 report "*It's More Than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being*", exposed that in 2011 for the Greater Toronto Area – Hamilton Region, barely half of those working were in permanent, full-time positions that provided benefits and a degree of employment security.

The recent study by Social Planning Toronto and Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto: *Toward A Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto (November 2013)* gave some insight into income inequalities in Toronto:

- 1 in 4 Torontonians live in poverty
- 1 in 3 youth (15 years and younger) live in poverty
- 37% of Aboriginal people and 33% of racialized groups live in poverty
- 30% of people with disabilities live in poverty
- A shocking 46% (nearly) half of recent immigrants live in poverty

Integrating and focusing City resources on helping people who are struggling to cope with many complex challenges is work that must be done. A full-out effort to fold in the work already in progress in the Divisions will hopefully produce a strategy that benefits everyone equally:

- the Workforce Development Strategy;
- the new Youth Equity Strategy, once adopted, should help to address the high youth unemployment rate in the city;
- the much-needed Aboriginal Employment Strategy being put forward by the Aboriginal Affairs Committee;
- the City's Response to the Requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), as it pertains to City Divisions Recruitment and Employment Strategies;
- the Newcomer Strategy is urgently needed;
- the Seniors' Strategy.

These initiatives are significant and put the City on the right course of action to deal with the complex range of poverty issues. As the City begins to develop a Toronto-made poverty reduction strategy, I hope the discussions and consultations will remain open in order to explore other options and solutions as they arise.

There are so many individuals, families and communities in need that we must act, together, to make a better life for all our citizens.

Yours truly,



Tim Maguire
President