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Members of the Economic Development Committee

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**Writing you today to urge this committee's support for the motion raised by Councillor Matlow called *Making Toronto a Tech-Friendly City and Bridging the Digital Divide*.**

Affordable access to high speed internet at home - for all residents of Canada - is a public policy issue that takes every level of government seizing policy opportunities to do what it can to bridge the digital divide. It is Toronto ACORN's position that municipal governments are currently underutilizing their existing powers to grant internet access to all of their residents.

A report recently published by Statscan reports that 42% of households in the lowest quartile of \$30,000 or less do not have home Internet access; compared to 98% with access in the highest income quartile. This "digital divide" excludes low-income individuals and families from what the United Nations now considers to be a human right, comparable with freedom of speech.

Access to reliable high-speed internet has become increasingly important for participation in many facets of life, from job searching to homework. However, accessing internet has become a hardship for many Canadians. ACORN Canada members believe that low income families should not be penalized because of the exorbitant rates of high speed internet.

By simply passing this motion you will allow city staff to explore how it can effectively connect Toronto residents – specifically those living in TCH communities – to the digital world. The potential impact created by providing Wi-Fi in Toronto's low income communities would be massive, and something that needs to be fully researched and discussed.

ACORN Canada has been championing a National Internet for All campaign that seeks to end the Digital Divide in Canada. Our organization has been invited by the CRTC to be a stakeholder during its historical review of Basic Telecommunications Services. We are exploring and pushing for internet access for all Canadians, and hope that the City of Toronto will take a bold step towards this goal.

Sincerely,

Marva Burnett

President, ACORN Canada

N.B.: Please reply to [Toronto@acorncanada.org](mailto:Toronto@acorncanada.org) and 647 204 2767