



Greater Toronto CivicAction • Alliance

BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE WE LIVE

EX 9.5.38

October 20, 2015

**Remarks to City of Toronto Executive Committee by Linda Weichel, CivicAction**  
***Re: TO Prosperity - Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy***

I'm Linda Weichel, Vice President of Initiatives at CivicAction.

For more than a decade, CivicAction has tapped into the entrepreneurial spirit of senior and rising leaders from all sectors to tackle the big urban challenges and opportunities facing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

We have Mayor Tory to thank for helping found CivicAction, and for contributing so much to its impact in the years he was chair from 2010 until the time he announced his candidacy for Mayor in 2014.

And we appreciate the work we've done with many of you in recent years on regional transportation funding, economic development, youth employment, housing affordability, and decreasing our carbon emissions through the Race to Reduce smart office energy challenge.

CivicAction's CEO Sevaun Palvetzian was a member of the City of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy Advisory Group and I am here today on her behalf.

We want to commend Council for committing to implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy, and to advocate for that strategy to move forward.

And we'll urge you to take the macro view, the multi-sectoral view and the long view.

I was pleased to hear that Mayor Tory is heading to London this week for transportation briefings and also to attract greater investment for the Toronto region. New investment and new jobs are a big part of lifting our residents out of poverty.

That's an example of the **macro** view we need to take to tackle poverty, with services and support to those in need, and with actions that drive new economic activity and new opportunities for our residents.

Just as important as the actions recommended in TO Prosperity is the *way* in which City government makes decisions going forward. We applaud the commitment to consider the impact that budget choices and day-to-day planning and decision-making will have on levels of poverty.

True to the CivicAction model of **multi-sectoral** collaboration, we are pleased the Strategy calls for a commitment from all sectors to move forward together.

Cities can play a leadership role in poverty reduction as employers, investors, clients, service providers, public opinion leaders, and advocates for provincial and federal action.

But the City should not be the only tent in the civic camp.

And that view is reflected in the Strategy, for example in its proposal to work with the private and public sectors to create effective paths to good careers for low-income youth.

This builds on the good work the City is already doing and the broader work CivicAction has undertaken with its initiative called Escalator: Jobs for Youth Facing Barriers. These efforts are making the job market more transparent and giving networks to youth who currently don't have them.

We also want to reinforce the need for the **long view** – and to put priority on our *next* generation of residents, and create better conditions at the beginning of life that will set them on the path to success throughout their lives.

We heard this at CivicAction's 2015 Summit in April where we brought close to 1000 people together to tackle the big challenges and opportunities facing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

One of our five themes shone a spotlight on the First 1000 Days of life - from when a woman becomes pregnant to the child's second birthday – and the critical impact of those days on child development and adult life.

Any of us may live to be 100, but there will never again be as concentrated a period of impact as the First 1000 days.

Research shows that income inequality can greatly affect parents' ability to give children the nutrition, physical activity, outdoor time, socializing, nurturing, and safe environment they need to be set up for success.

The fact that one in every four children is living in poverty in Toronto is a chilling reality and, in many cases, has irreversible implications for the rest of their lifetimes.

The Strategy lays out clear steps to address these early days in a child's life, including increasing the support and funding for more childcare, expanding the offering of nutritious food in City-run and supported programs, and better assisting low-income and vulnerable residents to access child care spaces and fee subsidies.

We also applaud the sentiment of governments working collaboratively to succeed.

A number of neighbouring municipalities are showing leadership on developing their own poverty reduction strategies, and we encourage Toronto to collaborate with them and the Province as you move forward with this one.

I'll conclude by urging the Executive Committee and City Council to approve the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and to build on your base operating funding commitment with funds dedicated to the annual work plan in your next budget cycle.

Through political will and collective leadership, we look forward to working with the City so this strategy becomes a reality that gives everyone a fair chance to thrive in this great city-region of ours.

end