



Deputation

To: Executive Committee December 1, 2016

From: Elis Ziegler, Manager

RE: EX20.10 – TO Prosperity - Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy - 2016 Progress Report and 2017 Work Plan

Good Day, Mayor Tory and City councillors. Thank you for taking the time to listen to all of the deputants today speaking about poverty, budget cuts and what you've been asked to do. I am here as a Manager of the Toronto Drop-In Network, which supports 55 drop-ins across the city. Those drop-ins are tasked with helping the people our system has failed. Those people are youth and seniors, men, women, transgender and people with disabilities. Those people are living in poverty because they don't have enough income, whether it is from employment or a fixed income. Those people can't find housing, can't afford housing or the housing doesn't provide the simplest thing like living in privacy or cooking a meal. Thousands are helped daily in drop-ins funded by donations and our tax dollars.

I am here today to talk about to the poverty reduction strategy you all support, and one part in particular, which is transit equity. TDIN, along with Young Parents No Fixed Address, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy and the LGBTQ Service Providers Network - over 130 agencies - want Council to address transit equity in a real and cost savings way, particularly in light of the elimination of tokens which the TTC is implementing.

What I am asking you to do, in addition with others, is to do the right thing, to provide free and unlimited transit passes to people with fixed and low income and listen to the three reasons why.

1. You already have all of the evidence that it's the right thing to do.

- In 2013, you paid for a transit and health equity study, which showed transit supports pays dividends in better health for people living in poverty.
- In 2015, all of you approved a Poverty Reduction Strategy, also backed by evidence, which said more money has to be spent to improve the lives of people living in poverty.
- Just last week the Fair Pass report, being tabled today outlines the needs and benefits of improved transit equity.
- Toronto, for all its wealth, has a third of its children living in poverty

You don't need to pay for one more report, study or consultation. You just have to do the right thing.

2. You will save money in the long run

- Toronto experts just released the results of research which shows that the costs of poverty runs in the billions of dollars we are already spending on the symptoms of poverty but nothing to reduce the cause – lack of funds in the hands of those who live in poverty
- At least four of your City's Divisions spend millions of dollars providing tokens, or contracting community based agencies to do so. Shelter Support and Housing Administration alone distributed \$1.49 million dollars in token support last year. If you add that to the amount spent by Toronto Public Health, Social Development and Finance Administration, Children's Services, Parks, Forests and Recreation and Employment and Social Services, those funds could go directly to people who need transit equity without costing more. **You don't need a complicated system. You just need to do the right thing.**

3. **The City needs to follow policies that work for everyone's benefit.**

- Toronto needs to stop treating its residents and children who live in poverty like second class citizens. Toronto can join other Ontario Cities like Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton, Guelph (as well as Calgary and Vancouver) to make transit equity happen. So many other cities recognize the systemic benefits of providing real transit equity so people can get to their jobs, child care, food, medical appointments and all the other reasons Torontonians who are better off use transit.
- Poverty can only be eliminated when people have enough money in their hands. When people who live on lower incomes spend their money locally. That means local economic stimulation for local businesses in Toronto neighbourhoods. Reducing poverty is about real gains for everyone.

You already know full transit equity works. You just have to decide to do the right thing.

I urge Council to implement full transit equity with unlimited metro passes for people living with fixed or no income to coordinate with the elimination of tokens. In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Work Plan, I also urge Council to put public funds where it belongs, in the hands of people living with poverty. When you do, you will save tax payer dollars, actually reduce poverty, and deliver your promise to do the right thing.

Thank you.