



**United Way**  
Toronto & York Region

# EX29.12.8

November 27, 2017

Mayor John Tory, Chair, and Respected Members  
Executive Committee

Via email to [exc@toronto.ca](mailto:exc@toronto.ca)

Re: EX29.12 – TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy 2017 Report and 2018 Work Plan

*TO Prosperity* has helped the City and its partners make progress against poverty. This includes renewed fiscal commitments to homelessness, child poverty and student nutrition, as well as transit. Just as importantly, the strategy has developed a cross-divisional approach to city building that is critical to addressing the systemic causes of poverty; including, but not limited to, neighbourhood revitalization, economic development, youth employment and alignment with strategies at other levels of government.

Therefore, it is critical that this momentum be maintained through the adoption of this item. The five recommendations address both urgently needed fiscal commitments in the 2018 budget, but also a systemic roadmap to smart and strategic solutions for poverty reduction. As an organization that funds community agencies to meet the urgent needs of the people of Toronto and York Region and works with partners to address the root causes of poverty, we are encouraged to see the progress made so far and the work ahead as laid out by S DFA staff. We are particularly looking forward to working with the City on community benefits, social procurement, income security and the portable housing benefit, as well as strong neighbourhood strategies.

Adoption of this item by members of Executive Committee would also be an important first step in encouraging City Council to follow through on financial investments in the 2018 budget. In addition, we would make the following recommendations to further strengthen the goals of *TO Prosperity*:

1. **Continued and meaningful consultation with people with lived experience of poverty and agencies and non-profits dedicated to this work is critical.** The establishment of the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) is a good first step. We encourage the City to establish an

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ongoing mechanism for residents and organizations to review and provide feedback on the work plan. This would help ensure that *TO Prosperity* responds to the needs of those who are living in, or could fall into, poverty, while also leveraging the resources that other organizations are investing in poverty reduction.

2. Precarious employment continues to be a growing concern for workers across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), as illustrated by our research. While the recent passage of Bill 148 provincially is an important milestone to addressing the negative impacts of a changing labour market on workers and their families, **the City should commit to the full adoption of the Job Quality Assessment Tool** that was developed with input from United Way, amongst other partners.
3. **Adoption and expansion of Community Benefits and Social Procurement**, so that Toronto can truly be at the forefront of the fight against poverty. In the city of Toronto, the percentage of low-income neighbourhoods has increased from 26% in 1980 to 49% in 2015. Community Benefits and Social Procurement are proven systemic pathways to addressing income inequity and opportunities for success for historically disadvantaged and equity seeking groups. The City and United Way are already partners in these solutions through:
  - a. Co-funding the Toronto Enterprise Fund (TEF), which has resulted in the hiring of 3,200 individuals who would otherwise have diminished chances of success in the labour market.
  - b. Partnering on the Community Benefits framework for the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown Line. In the first year of implementation, between trades and administration, 130 people—youth, women, indigenous, LGBTQ— have already been hired fulltime. In 2016/17, the 18 social enterprises funded by TEF made \$5.5M in sales, and paid almost \$2.5M in wages to employees from marginalized populations.

*TO Prosperity* continues to be a historic strategy that has the potential to make our city a place where everyone belongs and has the resources to contribute to our economy and communities. We look forward to continuing our work with all relevant City divisions to make *TO Prosperity* a success.

Yours sincerely,



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Cc: Councillor Joe Mihevc, Poverty Reduction Advocate.