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locations

1884 Davenport Road
601 Christie Street, Barn 4

mailing address

P.O. Box 69, Station E
Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E1

t 416 652 7867

f 416 652 2294

e general@thestop.org

w thestop.org

Charitable # 1191-92763-RR0001

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

I am writing today on behalf of The Stop Community Food Centre to urge you to move forward with Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2018.

As an organization that provides immediate food relief to the community, our staff and volunteers are witnessing the impacts of Toronto's rising rates of poverty and food insecurity. The number of people that access The Stop's services is growing, with more people coming to the drop-in for breakfast and lunch, more families relying on our food bank hampers, and more people living in isolation coming to our community kitchen and gardening programs.

Toronto now has the highest rates of child and family poverty of any large Canadian city, with over 540,000 people struggling to sustain themselves on incomes that are insufficient to access adequate food and shelter. This struggle has massive human and societal costs. Poverty creates barriers to the success and well-being of children and youth, and it causes immense suffering, lost potential, and ill health in adults.

We thank you for committing to taking action to reduce poverty in our city by unanimously adopting the City's poverty reduction strategy two years ago. And as with other organizations across the city, our message to you today is two-fold:

1. **Approve the 2018 Work Plan for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.** Doing so will help 1,400 more families access affordable housing 36,000 low-income people access reduced TTC fares, 13,000 more children access school food programs, 3,500 children access free swim classes, 2,300 children access subsidized after-school programs, create 1,000 more child case spaces (half with subsidies), and help 3,000 seniors access free dental care.
2. **Strengthen the Poverty Reduction Strategy by:**
 - a. Setting clear progress targets and timelines for all recommendations in the strategy. Currently, there only appear to be targets for increased access to subsidized housing and childcare, and there is no mention of progress on the finalization of preliminary indicators listed on pages 51 and 52 of the Strategy.
 - b. Re-inserting into the 2018 work plan a commitment to find permanent funding for the Strategy, which is linked to the City moving forward with its new Long-term Fiscal Plan
 - c. Complete the formation of the Accountability Structure for the Strategy in 2018. It's an important step forward that that Lived Experience Advisory Group has been formed, but there is no update in the staff reports on the status of the formation of the proposed Accountability Table, or its components including a Private Sector Roundtable, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group and Senior Staff Steering Committee. Cross-sectoral collaboration is crucial to the development, implementation and monitoring of a strong Poverty Reduction Strategy.
 - d. Including specific support to food-related community initiatives as identified by the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), specifically through formalized identification of surplus space for urban agriculture, program space, offices, and kitchens that can be allocated to community food initiatives—especially in neighbourhoods identified as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), that the TFPC food asset-mapping project be supported with an online platform so it is accessible to the community at large, and finally that staff support be allocated for NIA local food animation projects.

Thank you for your continued commitment to poverty reduction.

Sincerely,
Rachel Gray
Executive Director
The Stop Community Food Centre