



Dear Mayor John Tory & The Executive Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of ACORN members across Toronto in support of the proposed Poverty Reduction Strategy (EX10.1). As you may know Toronto ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) has been an organized outlet for low and moderate income communities to fight for social and economic justice for over a decade.

Through community organizing and empowering members into leaders on issues important to them, Toronto ACORN has developed, fought for and won important campaigns that combat poverty and build power for low and moderate income people.

We wanted to provide some specific feedback on issues important to our membership.

Housing Stability – ACORN members are often struggling to afford rent in Toronto, at risk of harassment from negligent landlords or more recently being offered buyouts or experiencing renovictions. The destruction of Toronto's affordable housing stock is a major issue.

Therefore, ACORN members support increasing capacity of Toronto's RentSafe program, creating a strong renoviction strategy at the city level and changing the official definition of affordable from market based to income based.

Furthermore, the creation of a strong inclusionary zoning bylaw and maximizing affordable housing in developments on public land, as well as redevelopments of TCHC.

Service Access – ACORN supports increasing service access for low and moderate income communities. Access to services is vital in addressing systemic issues in our communities.

Therefore, we would support the implementation of a sliding scale subsidy, or expansion of the city's 'Welcome Policy' at community recreation centers.

We also renew our call for a sliding scale, income based, \$10 a day childcare program in Toronto and the expansion of childcare subsidies.

Transportation Equity – ACORN members support TTCriders demands around Fair Pass, allowing low income residents to access transit and move around their city.

Fully fund the Fair Pass immediately; Implement deeper low income discounts, and lower fares for all; Continue to sell TTC tokens and seniors tickets until an adequate replacement and distribution network is in place; Use the latest research to inform equity-based transit performance measures, so that the poorest neighborhoods in Toronto see service improvements; Implement all six Considerations identified in the Phase 1 Evaluation Report.

Internet Affordability – In an increasingly digital world, low and moderate income communities are being left out and suffering from the digital divide. ACORN members have been fighting a National campaign for \$10 a month internet, with significant victories over the past 6 years.

ACORN calls upon the city to do as much as possible to address the lack of affordable internet access in Toronto. Publicly owned buildings should be wired to provide free wi-fi. Private companies should be encouraged to provide low cost internet access as well.

Community Benefits Agreements – ACORN members support strong, legally binding community benefits agreements in all projects that involved public funding. The focus of the benefits agreements should look towards good jobs, living wages, affordable housing and affordable childcare, as well as other priorities identified by the community. Real community engagement should be part of the public procurement process in order to identify local needs.

Fair Banking – ACORN members were overjoyed when the city stopped issuing licenses to new payday loan outlets. ACORN continues to fight a multi-jurisdictional campaign to rein in predatory lenders who offer instalment loans, cash for gold, title loans, and other high interest fringe financial services.

As part of a poverty reduction strategy the city should look to creating solutions to the lack of low interest short term loans available to low and moderate income residents. Working with credit unions, investigating the rent bank model and how to create a public bank, or engaging with non-profits on financial literacy work as well as using all municipal powers to clamp down on predatory lenders is essential.

On Behalf of Toronto ACORN,

Marva Burnett, President of ACORN Canada