

September 30, 2020

**Re: Response to September 23, 2020 Administrative Inquiry Regarding the Poverty Reduction Strategy**

**Background**

Development of the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) began in 2014 through multiple rounds of engagement and policy development that involved residents with lived experience, community organizations, and other key partners to address poverty in Toronto. The development process included engagement with all standing committees of the City of Toronto, including Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC)

On September 17, 2015, as part of this input process, CDRC requested staff to consider several recommendations in the preparation of the final Poverty Reduction Strategy report to be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on October 20, 2015 (2015.CD6.6).

These recommendations, in addition to continued stakeholder engagement with residents and key partners were assessed for inclusion in the final strategy. The number of proposals for inclusion in the strategy was significant and efforts were made to incorporate as many feasible proposals as possible.

On November 3, 2015, City Council as a whole unanimously adopted the final version of the strategy, TO Prosperity, which identified 17 recommendations to be carried out over 20 years, as well as a specific 2015-2018 Term Action Plan.

**Status Updates**

In response to an administrative inquiry submitted on September 23, 2020, work status updates are being provided for the following 10 proposals submitted through CDRC:

**1. Working in partnership with postsecondary institutions and other stakeholders advance with the Toronto District School Board, pursuant to the TDSB Alternative Schools policy (PR.584 CUR) a high school that specializing in public administration, related disciplines and other frontline careers to operate as a pathway to a career in municipal government at the City of Toronto. That consideration be given to housing such a school in the Old City Hall, when vacated by existing court offices.**

Action on this item was not included in the Council-adopted 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan.

**2. Through community and private sector partnerships expand the personal free tax preparation clinics in areas of high poverty to ensure that low income residents leverage and maximize all tax credits and deductions under the federal Income Tax Act and Ontario's tax regimes.**

As part of the 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan direction to increase access to financial literacy and advocacy tools that support people to achieve financial stability, Toronto Employment and Social Services engaged, trained, and mentored 176 Ontario Works volunteers to work at 15 tax clinics. 15,116 tax returns were filed with approximately \$3,802,955 in refunds and over \$61,955,229 in total tax benefits accessed. Toronto Employment and Social Services also established a partnership with Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to offer year-round tax clinics, and established a partnership with Prosper Canada to identify financial empowerment interventions that could be incorporated into City service delivery practice

**3. Working through Toronto Employment and Social services, require each division, in the City of Toronto to expand job fairs, whenever possible, in our Strong and Emerging Neighbourhoods and publicize such.**

During the 2015-2018 term action plan, Toronto Employment and Social Services worked with other City divisions to identify and seize opportunities to better promote City of Toronto and other employment opportunities to residents in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and Emerging Neighbourhoods. Between 7,000 and 8,000 people, including individuals in receipt of Social Assistance, participated in multiple job fairs and employment information sessions.

**4. Hire for a period of not less than three years a Director of Poverty Reduction to implement the recommendations of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.**

In 2016, the City of Toronto's Social Development, Finance and Administration Division established the Poverty Reduction Strategy Office (PRSO). The PRSO is responsible for coordinating the implementation strategy and leading its various accountability structures. This includes the Lived Experience Advisory Group and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Steering Committee. The Manager of the PRSO reports to the Director, Social Policy, Analysis and Research and leverages the resources of the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division accomplish its mandate.

**5. Identify based on existing studies medical conditions that are prevalent in low income or racialized groups and identify "code blue" strategies that can be implemented on a local basis for early detection, education and medical intervention, including EMS and fire response to heart attacks and strokes.**

Action on this item was not included in the Council-adopted 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan.

**6. Build a student nutrition program to be offered from City of Toronto Recreation facilities in Strong and Emerging Neighbourhoods outside of the standard school year.**

Action to explore opportunities to provide nutritious food in City of Toronto summer programs for children and youth in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and Emerging Neighbourhoods was included in the 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan. In 2017, this action was re-assessed after finding an absence of evidence or consensus on whether this approach is the best strategy to improve child and youth nutrition. As part of its work to advance the PRS food access recommendations, the PRSO is continuously identifying opportunities for collaboration with community partners to improve food access and security outcomes for vulnerable residents.

**7. Expand and support FoodShare's Mobile Good Food Truck Market to bring fresh produce to low income areas that are in "food deserts".**

Action to invest in community-based food infrastructure that increases access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food was included in the 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan. Between January and September 2017, the Mobile Good Food Market held 271 markets across nine low income neighbourhoods, selling 25,000 pounds of affordable, fresh and healthy vegetables and fruits to residents.

**8. Create or designate and furnish quiet work spaces in Toronto Community Housing buildings for students to do their homework and/or distance education. The program could include a mentoring and/or volunteer tutoring program for at risk youth in TCHC buildings with the local high school and universities.**

Action on this item was not included in the Council-adopted 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan.

**9. Build a supportive corridor – effective seamless linkages between local schools and City of Toronto destinations that would include but not be restricted to recreation programs with a special needs lens, mental wellness supports, nutrition program and homework and study supports.**

Action on this item was not included in the Council-adopted 2015-2018 PRS Action Plan.

**10. Work with local school boards, to develop an employment pipeline to better connect students in trades pathways and specialized programs such as plumbing, electrical, HVAC, carpentry, and masonry with employers and leverage the City of Toronto social procurement policy and strategy to advance.**

In 2016, the City of Toronto adopted a Social Procurement Policy, which includes the inclusion of workforce development requirements in select City procurements that are assessed to have the potential for targeted hiring. Since then, City staff have engaged with trades training and employment partners to identify pathways to construction jobs created by City procurement. In 2019, the City adopted a Community Benefits Framework which provides a formalized structure within the City to develop and pursue these opportunities

Sincerely,

Denise Andrea Campbell  
Executive Director  
Social Development, Finance and Administration