

2019-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy Mid-Term Update

April 1, 2021

Presentation to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory
Committee



Poverty Reduction Strategy

- The Poverty Reduction Strategy contains recommendations to address immediate needs, create pathways to prosperity, and drive systemic change across 6 themes:
 - Housing Stability
 - Service Access
 - Transportation Equity
 - Food Access
 - Quality Jobs and Liveable Incomes
 - Systemic Change
- For each term of Council, staff prepare an action plan to advance work on poverty reduction.
- The current 2019-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan contains 89 activities to be carried out by the end of this term of Council.

Mid-Term Update Cycle

- Staff will be providing a regularly scheduled update on the status of these activities at the June 1 Executive Committee.
- Through this presentation, we are giving the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee, as well as the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee later this month, the opportunity to provide feedback early in the update process.
- Feedback will inform the June 1 staff report to Executive Committee.

Housing Stability Highlights

- Actions related to housing are being carried out through the City of Toronto's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan, adopted by Council on December 17, 2019.
- The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan sets out 13 key strategic directions and 76 actions
- Updates on HousingTO are provided regularly to the Planning and Housing Committee

Service Access Highlights

- In partnership with community-based organizations, the City of Toronto continues to provide modified, safe community services and emergency supports for vulnerable residents during the pandemic.
- This includes coordinating with community agencies and 2-1-1 to connect residents with mental health supports. From April 27, 2020 to February 26, 2021 there were:
 - **14,251** calls for referrals to mental health supports with an average wait time of 44 seconds
 - **116,490** mental health support contact sessions
- Over **400** community agencies engaged as part of Community Coordination Plan

Food Access Highlights

- Priority is on providing emergency food supports and coordination as part of COVID-19 emergency responses.
- As of March 5, **49,093** food hampers have been delivered by the Red Cross to physically and socially isolated residents who are unable to access other food security supports
- Upcoming Policies and Reports:
 - Report on Black Food Sovereignty is scheduled for the April 12 meeting of the Board of Health
 - An update on the COVID-19 Food Access Response, Food Systems Transformation and the Toronto Food Strategy is scheduled for the June 14 meeting of the Board of Health.

Quality Jobs and Liveable Incomes Highlights

- On January 27, City Council adopted the *Advancing the Community Benefits Framework* report with recommendations that will strengthen the City's ability to achieve inclusive hiring and social procurement objectives in City-led projects.
- Resources to implement the Community Benefits Framework were invested as part of the 2021 Operating Budget.
- The City has also secured external funding to advance work to improve equitable access to public sector procurement opportunities across Toronto's public sector anchor institutions.

Systemic Change Highlights

- The second cohort of the Lived Experience Advisory Group will convene starting in May 2021 as part of our continuous engagement commitments.
- **323** residents applied to join the LEAG. **35%** of applicants self-identified as a person with a disability.
- Applicants were asked to voluntarily self-identify from where their lived experience of poverty results from:
 - **37%** identified challenges resulting from issues related to mental health
 - **21%** identified challenges resulting from issues related to physical disability
 - **30%** report relying on income from the Ontario Disability Support Program
- Final group of 18 members has strong representation from residents that identify as having a disability.
- Members will be provided with technology supports to enable virtual engagement.

Fair Pass Restart

- Fair Pass provides a \$1.10 discount on single rides on the TTC and a \$32.75 discount on monthly passes. Currently low-income residents in receipt of social assistance or a child-care fee subsidy are eligible.
- Due to COVID-19 emergency redeployments and responses, new applications to the Fair Pass Transit Discount Program were suspended. Renewals for existing clients continued to be processed automatically.
- Through the Fall of 2020, staff worked to implement back-end improvements that are less vulnerable to disruption.
- On December 15, new applications to the Fair Pass Transit Discount Program were restarted through the Human Service Integration (HSI) Application Support Centre.
- Eligible residents are able to apply online at www.toronto.ca/transitdiscount
- Residents can also apply by contacting the HSI Application & Support Centre at **416-338-8888 (select option 6)**

Fair Pass Usage Statistics

- For the period of December 15 (new application restart) to March 8, a total of **1,023** applications have been processed
- **41%** of all applications since December 15 were active Ontario Disability Support Program clients
- In 2020, the average number of single-use rides per month was **242,677**. This is approximately **65%** of the average monthly single-use ridership in 2019, which we attribute to COVID-19 public health measures.

Fair Pass Next Steps

- Evaluation of Phase 2 will begin this Spring
- The 2021 Operating Budget included funding to expand eligibility to residents in receipt of housing supports
- Work has begun on processes to check eligibility and validate applications to provide the transit discount as seamlessly as possible to low-income residents.
- Collaborating with partners, such as the Toronto Public Library, to provide free PRESTO cards to those who need them



Thank You

For more information, or if you have any further questions, feel free to contact us at :

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www.toronto.ca/povertyreduction