

**TORONTO
POVERTY
REDUCTION
STRATEGY**



Year 1 Report
to Community



In November of 2015, City Council unanimously approved *TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*. This strategy draws on the experiences and ideas of hundreds of Toronto residents from all parts of the city, and sets a bold vision to build a city with opportunities for all.

TO Prosperity is a 20-year strategy focused on six key areas: Housing Stability, Service Access, Transit Equity, Food Access, Quality Jobs & Livable Incomes, and Systemic Change.

As we end Year 1, we are pleased to provide an overview of what has been achieved and look ahead to what is planned for Year 2.

Visit www.toronto.ca/toprosperity for the complete 2016 Progress Report and 2017 Work Plan.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Toronto is committed to reducing poverty

In Year 1 of *TO Prosperity*, the City of Toronto made new investments in poverty reduction initiatives, maintained investments made in the previous year, approved key policies, and expanded and improved essential services to vulnerable residents.

Here are some examples of our progress in 2016:

- The City invested in student nutrition programs, employment programs, shelters, child care fee subsidies, and the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, among others.
- The City maintained 2015 investments, including the expansion of Recreation Centres Where Programs Are Free, the expansion of Library services, and free TTC for children 12 years of age and under.
- City Council approved the Social Procurement Program, which will increase access to City contracts for businesses that are owned by, employ, or provide employment training to equity-seeking communities and low-income residents.
- City divisions introduced innovative approaches to program development and delivery, including launching pilots that will use intensive case management strategies to improve services and outcomes for Ontario Works recipients facing barriers to employment.

The next pages present other 2016 achievements and list initiatives planned for 2017.



HOUSING STABILITY

Close to 1,500 new affordable rental homes and 700 new affordable ownership homes under development.



2016 Highlights

In Year 1, the City continued to take action to increase the supply of affordable housing by implementing the Open Door program, which fast-tracks approvals for developments that include affordable housing and expands City incentives, under certain conditions, to the private sector. Open Door also makes surplus City land available for affordable housing. Through federal, provincial and City programs, close to 1,500 new affordable rental homes and 700 new affordable ownership homes are in development.

The sub-standard quality of much of Toronto's social housing also undermines the quality of life of low-income residents. The state of repair at Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) has long been a concern. In Year 1, the Mayor's Task Force put forward recommendations to improve TCHC, and a staff team

(Tenants First) was created to implement these recommendations.

Using federal and provincial funding, the City also continues to provide grants and loans for private low-rent landlords and lower-income homeowners to make health, safety and energy efficiency repairs or accessibility modifications.

2017 Plans

Improving the quality of affordable housing will continue to be a priority in Year 2. Specifically, action will be taken towards improving the quality of TCHC housing units.

Action will also be taken to further leverage City investments to build more affordable housing and to seize opportunities presented by the federal and provincial governments' investment of \$154 million in social and affordable housing.

SERVICE ACCESS

- **312 new licensed child care spaces**
- **184 new child care fee subsidies**
- **Sunday library services increased by 30%**



2016 Highlights

In Year 1, the Toronto Public Library launched programs to make resources more available to low-income residents. Sunday library services were increased by 30%. Internet WiFi Hotspot lending was piloted at six library branches, and five Digital Innovation Hubs and two Youth Hubs were launched in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs).

312 new licensed child care spaces and 184 new child care fee subsidies were added in Year 1. Toronto Children's Services also submitted to Council a study with detailed information about the affordability barriers faced by families trying to access licensed child care.

Policy changes are also essential to improving service access. The Toronto Public Library launched a highly successful fines forgiveness campaign at selected library branches.

The success of this campaign led to policy change that removes barriers to service, including the establishment of a lower fine structure.

2017 Plans

A key priority in Year 2 will be the development of a child care strategy to address availability and affordability. The City will work with the federal and provincial governments to ensure recently announced funding is used to support this priority.

Additionally, as the goal of poverty reduction becomes more firmly entrenched throughout the various City divisions, opportunities will be identified to transform services to make them easier to access and more relevant to low-income residents' lives.

TRANSIT EQUITY

3,588 low-income residents consulted during the design of a discounted low-income transit pass program.



2016 Highlights

At the launch of *TO Prosperity*, the City took bold steps towards transit equity by making the TTC free for children age 12 and under, and by restoring service cuts that had negatively impacted the inner suburbs. These actions had a huge impact for low-income residents in all four corners of the city.

In Year 1, with the support of external experts, six City Divisions and the TTC designed a discounted low-income transit pass program, which could be

launched once the implementation of PRESTO is completed. The proposal is based on a survey with 3,588 low-income residents and lessons learned from 17 Canadian cities that already have similar programs. The proposal will be reviewed by Executive Committee on December 1st, 2016.

2017 Plans

In Year 2, the City will continue to work with the TTC and Metrolinx to make sure the needs of low-income residents are considered in capital and service planning.



FOOD ACCESS

Student Nutrition Programs benefit 179,853 students.



2016 Highlights

In Year 1, Council approved funding for 49 new Student Nutrition Programs, increasing the number of students benefiting from these programs to 179,853. The Food Reach Portal, an online tool, registered an additional 80 users, many of which are agencies directly serving vulnerable populations, and who are now able to purchase nutritious food at wholesale prices.

The City is also increasing low-income residents' access to affordable, healthy food. The Mobile Good Food Market initiative and community gardening programs have been expanded in 2016.

2017 Plans

In Year 2, the City will continue to support and strengthen these initiatives, all of which have an immediate and concrete impact on the health and well-being of city residents.

In partnership with the Wellesley Institute, the City will also draft a policy options paper to inform discussions about other roles the City can play in addressing household food insecurity.

QUALITY JOBS & LIVABLE WAGES

Innovative partnerships have connected thousands of youth from marginalized communities with jobs and opportunities.



2016 Highlights

In 2015 and 2016, the City expanded the Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE), a program that is run in collaboration with the private sector and community organizations. PAYE has successfully connected thousands of youth from marginalized communities with jobs and opportunities. The Youth Arts Employment and Training Program and the Youth Employment Partnership Program combined engaged more than 2,500 youth in employment-related activities.

In Year 1, the City took action to improve the quality of and access to income supports and social services. A collaboration between Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) and Toronto Public Health (TPH)

allowed the expansion of emergency dental services for Ontario Works (OW) clients. OW clients can now use 23 TPH clinics whereas they previously could access these services in only five clinics. This has resulted in more people getting emergency dental care.

Also in Year 1, TESS partnered with Voices from the Street to work with OW clients to offer peer-based supports that help new service users navigate the TESS offices and services.

2017 Plans

In Year 2, the City will build on the momentum generated in 2016, continue to advance social procurement and finalize a job quality assessment tool.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

AnchorTO brings together 18 large institutions interested in collaborating to reduce poverty.



2016 Highlights

In Year 1, the City started new business practices to support good jobs and better access to economic opportunities for low-income residents. A key development was the launch of the City's first Social Procurement Program, which will increase access to City contracts among businesses that are owned by, employ or provide employment training to equity-seeking communities and low-income residents. Directing as little as 2% of the City's business toward social procurement represents an investment of \$30 million per year.

The City is also providing leadership to Toronto's major public institutions to help them leverage their own purchasing power to contribute to poverty reduction. In 2016, the City of Toronto and the Atkinson Foundation founded *AnchorTO*, which brings together 18 "anchor institutions" including universities,

colleges, and public service providers that combined spend billions of dollars annually to purchase goods, services, and infrastructure. Working collaboratively and learning from each other, Toronto's anchor institutions are designing social procurement strategies of their own that will support the creation of good jobs, training opportunities, and prosperous businesses in Toronto.

2017 Plans

In Year 2, the City will actively work with *Anchor TO* institutions, develop a Community Benefits Framework, and continue to look for more ways to leverage its economic power to support low-income communities, integrate its services and programs from a client-centered perspective, and monitor and measure its work to ensure the City seeks out and seizes opportunities to reduce poverty and foster prosperity.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION: IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Office

Another important achievement of Year 1 was the creation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Office (PRSO). The PRSO will harness expertise and resources in the City and across the public, private and community sectors to support poverty reduction initiatives and ensure they are strategic and sustained.

Lived Experience Advisory Group

In 2016, in partnership with community organizations, staff engaged hundreds of community members to help shape the structure of the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG), which will help guide the City's poverty reduction work. The recruitment of LEAG members is under way. The first advisory meeting is expected to take place in January, 2017.

Learn more about how to participate in this and other community engagement opportunities at www.toronto.ca/toprosperity.





THE WAY AHEAD

TO Prosperity is a 20-year strategy. Year 1 included successes with concrete impacts, the testing of new approaches that can now be expanded, and the development of policies that will have long-lasting impact. Combined, these actions will create momentum that will allow small, highly impactful changes, as well as transformational change.

TO Prosperity is also a call to action to all of us who make Toronto our home. To build the prosperous city we envision requires businesses, labour, community organizations and public institutions to take concrete actions. From revising procurement strategies, to committing to progressive hiring and training practices to paying a living wage, there are many opportunities to drive change.

In Year 1, we have begun. The work will continue. Join us.
