

ANNUAL REPORT  
**2018**

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE BY MAKING CONNECTIONS



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# GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) provides Ontario Works (OW) financial and employment benefits, and makes connections to community resources, for thousands of Toronto residents.

In 2018, TESS supported more than 110,000 OW cases representing over 192,000 Torontonians living in every neighbourhood of the city.

Every day, our dedicated staff work closely with individuals and families in need to establish positive relationships, build goal-oriented service plans, and make links to employment, social and financial supports that help them lead their best lives and become financially independent.

In 2018, TESS:

- helped 31,882 OW clients find work
- referred 3,803 clients to contracted employment programs
- supported 1,242 youth to find work and work-based learning opportunities through the Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE)
- connected over 200 low-income residents to a career path in construction, including training, trade union membership and/or employment opportunities that arose from large-scale, publicly-funded infrastructure projects.

Toronto residents who depend on social assistance—OW or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)—face an increasingly precarious labour market. Although OW caseload levels have remained stable over the past few years, the percentage of clients reporting significant and intersecting barriers to employment continues to grow.

For example, 29% report poor health, 26% lack Canadian work experience, and 22% lack the education and skills needed to secure work. Other employment barriers include inadequate housing and/or childcare, social isolation, and weak or non-existent professional networks. As a result, almost half of the OW caseload in Toronto has been receiving financial assistance for more than two years.

Employment is the immediate goal for many TESS clients, but for some the first step is to connect to key “life stabilization” supports—physical and mental health care, housing, and childcare. Or it’s to build the confidence, soft skills and networks needed to pursue education, training and employment opportunities.

To advance Toronto’s Poverty Reduction and Workforce Development strategies, TESS focused on three divisional priorities in 2018 that relate to a typical resident’s journey onto and off of social assistance:

### **1) Streamlining Access**

- Established a new service delivery model that ensures applicants connect with their caseworker and develop a service plan within days of applying for assistance.
- Opened 3 co-located sites with ODSP to improve and streamline services to social assistance recipients.

### **2) Strengthening Service Planning**

- Provided training on a new service planning framework and tools to more than 1,000 front line staff, and created a divisional community of practice to share best practices.
- Introduced a Service Needs Identification conversation guide to help build positive and accountable relationships between caseworkers and clients.
- Updated the Investing in Families service model to support *all* families in receipt of OW.

### **3) Making Better Connections to Services and Supports**

- Successfully launched Phase 1 of the transit Fair Pass Discount Program, with nearly 38,000 passes issued.
- Helped OW clients access up to \$8 million in Federal government grants to support post-secondary educational

and training expenses for low-income children, by supporting Canada Learning Bond registrations.

- Offered dozens of contracted employment programs, with new program opportunities for clients interested in the trades, individuals with criminal justice experience, and people with disabilities.
- Advanced the City's Anti-Black Racism Action Plan by developing services and programs to address personal and systemic barriers to employment for racialized youth and adults.
- Expanded dental services to improve client health and employability.

I am very proud of these accomplishments and service-delivery improvements. I am also grateful to the many partners that TESS works with—employers, training organizations, other City divisions, community organizations, research and educational institutions—to make Toronto a more inclusive, caring and prosperous city.

While helping Toronto residents in poverty live with more dignity and become financially independent, TESS also strives to ensure that resources are managed effectively. That's why TESS initiated or advanced several projects in 2018 to modernize its business processes. Our efforts have resulted in improved customer service, stronger program integrity, and more time for staff to service plan with clients.

In 2018, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced a new direction for social assistance in Ontario, prioritizing accountability, employment outcomes and modernization. While many details are still being finalized, TESS is committed to partnering with the Province to provide accessible, timely and effective support to residents who rely upon OW financial and employment benefits during their family's time of need, crisis or transition.

Our number one focus continues to be on our clients. Throughout 2019 and into the future, TESS will continue to make program improvements that lead to meaningful differences in the lives of Toronto's lowest income residents—and that help achieve the goals of Toronto's Workforce Development and Poverty Reduction strategies.

*Patricia Walcott*

General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services

# A CLEAR FOCUS IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

By many measures, Toronto remains a great place to work and live. With a highly skilled workforce drawn from across the globe, Toronto continues to be recognized as one of the most innovative, inclusive, competitive and prosperous cities in the world.

Yet despite this favourable economic picture, far too many city residents experience employment precarity and struggle to make ends meet. An urban centre of sharp and growing contrasts, Toronto is increasingly characterized by high levels of child and working poverty, insecure employment, and rising income and wealth inequality.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, opportunities across the city are unevenly distributed, with certain neighbourhoods and populations less likely to benefit.<sup>2</sup> And by late 2018, there were signs of a slowing economy, with lower growth forecasts and the potential for dampened employment levels and average hourly wages.<sup>3</sup>

As challenging as current circumstances are for Toronto residents working in low-wage positions, they are even more difficult for individuals and families who rely on social assistance financial benefits—Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)—to pay their bills.

With social assistance benefit rates having failed to keep pace with inflation over the past decade, the OW clients whom Toronto Employment & Social Services supports increasingly live in deep poverty. This means that they often cannot afford the cost of rent, food, transit and other essentials.

In addition, many clients on social assistance report multiple barriers to employment, including poor physical and mental health; lack of adequate or affordable housing and childcare; limited education, skills and/or Canadian work experience; and social isolation.

In this environment, efforts by the City of Toronto—and more specifically TESS—to advance the Poverty Reduction and Workforce Development strategies take on added significance.

In 2018, TESS worked with numerous City divisions, employers and community partners to support the implementation of key City initiatives such as the transit Fair Pass Discount Program, sector-focused training initiatives, community benefits agreements, dental care

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1 Toronto Workforce Innovation Group. (2018). Labour Force Landscape 2017-2018; Stapleton, J. & Kay, J. (2015). The Working Poor in the Toronto Region; Toronto Foundation. (2018). Toronto's Vital Signs.

2 Hulchanski, D. (2010). The Three Cities Within Toronto.

3 [City of Toronto. Toronto Progress Portal Dashboard Data: toronto.ca/progress](https://toronto.ca/progress)

service expansion for Ontario Works clients, and Human Services Integration.

Federal and provincial government action on poverty reduction and employment also shape the opportunities available to Toronto's lowest-income residents. In 2018, the federal government introduced Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy, which established an official national poverty line, measurement indicators, and a target to cut poverty in half by 2030. The federal government also introduced (starting in 2019) the Canada Workers Benefit, a refundable tax credit estimated to lift 74,000 Canadians out of poverty; indexed the Canada Child Benefit;<sup>4</sup> and promoted tax filing to access these and other tax system administered supports.

For its part, the newly elected Ontario government announced a social assistance reform plan to help "more people break the cycle of poverty, re-enter the workforce and get back on track."<sup>5</sup> The key goals of this plan are to improve employment outcomes, modernize service delivery, eliminate unnecessary rules, and adopt integrated approaches with wraparound supports for residents with multiple barriers who rely on OW or ODSP. Confirmed or anticipated social assistance benefit, policy and service delivery changes include:

- a new earnings exemption structure that will increase the amount of income individuals on OW (from \$200/month to \$300/month) and ODSP (up to \$6000/year) are able to keep before benefits are reduced at a rate of 75% (compared to 50% at present)
- implementing electronic document management and a mobile-enabled solution to improve service access and reduce administrative burdens and costs for social assistance clients and staff

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4 Changes to the Canada Child Benefit help families in receipt of Ontario Works, as this income does not trigger reduced benefits.

5 Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. (July 2018). Backgrounder: Helping People with a Plan to Reform Social Assistance.







Job seekers met with employers at the Job and Career Fair held at Scarborough Civic Centre.

- developing a new definition of “disability” for ODSP eligibility determination purposes that is more closely aligned with Federal government guidelines
- integrating social assistance employment services into Employment Ontario over the next few years, and introducing a new, competitive process to select local Employment Service System Managers.

To effectively support Toronto residents in receipt of social assistance, TESS continually monitors and responds to changing policy directions, client needs, and local labour market conditions. Building on this knowledge, TESS then collaborates with employers, training organizations, City divisions and community organizations to connect residents to the supports they require to stabilize their lives and pursue employment with confidence.



# WHO WE SERVE

# 110,373

Ontario Works (OW) cases were served in 2018 representing 192,898 individuals.

This is an increase in the number of cases served in 2016, which amounted to 107,217.<sup>6</sup>

## DEMOGRAPHICS<sup>7</sup>

### GENDER



Male



Female

### AGE



Under 30



30 - 49



Over 50

### PLACE OF BIRTH



Born in Canada



Born outside of Canada

## 2016

49% 51%

28%

48%

25%

38%

62%

## 2018

50% 50%

27%

50%

24%

35%

65%

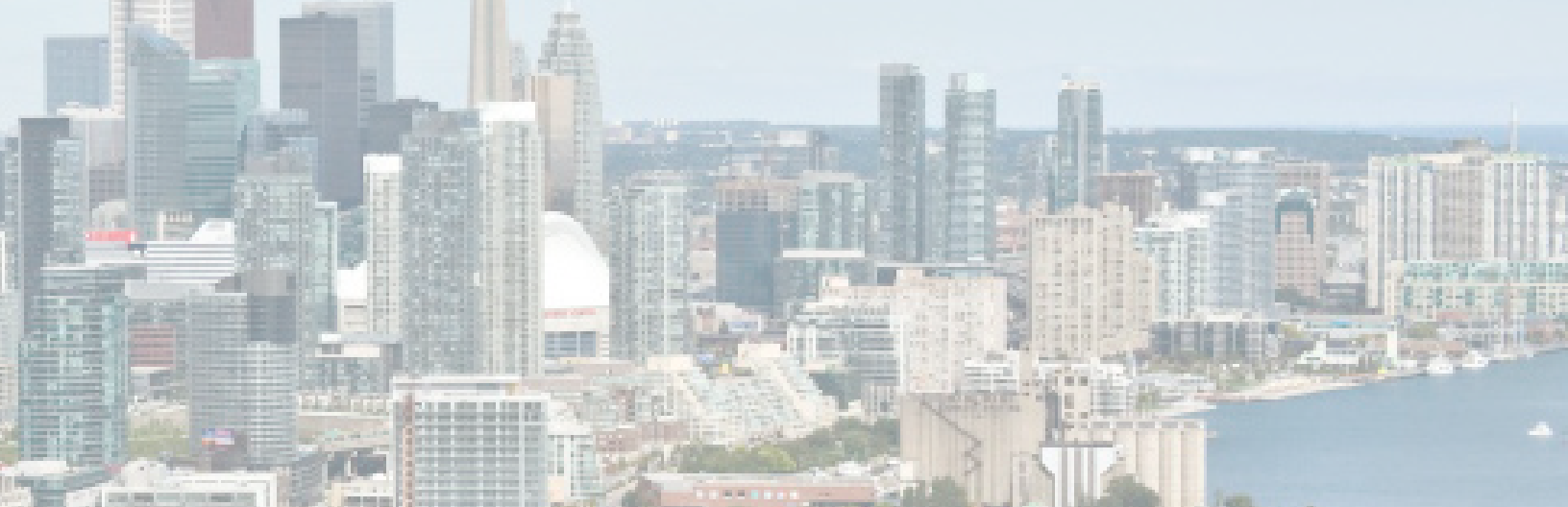
## BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT:

Reported at least one barrier: **85%**

Reported poor health: **29%**

<sup>6</sup> Note: The 2016 case count was amended after the publication of the 2016 Annual Report.

<sup>7</sup> OW caseload statistics represent the number of cases, not the total number of individuals served by TESS at any point during



## Number of employment centre visits: 291,211

### FAMILY TYPE



Single



Single Parents



Couples with children



Couples without children

**65%**   **24%**   **8%**   **2%**

**66%**   **24%**   **8%**   **2%**

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Did not graduate high school



High school as highest level



Post-secondary credentials

**35%**   **34%**   **30%**

**30%**   **36%**   **32%**

Reported lack of Canadian work experience: **26%**

Reported lack of education and/or skills: **22%**

the year (i.e., cases can have more than one family member). Demographic characteristics represent the primary applicant. Percentages may not add up to 100 per cent because of non-response to some variables or rounding.

# CASELOAD TRENDS

**Length of time on OW,  
monthly average:<sup>8</sup> 42.7 months**

**Length of Stay on Assistance:<sup>9</sup>**

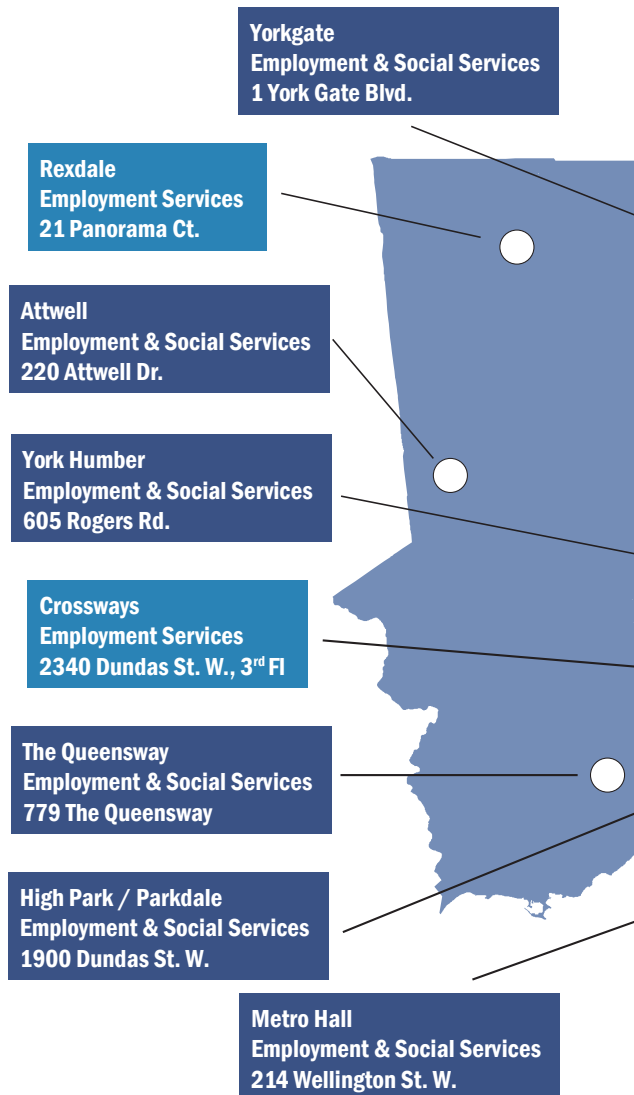
- **12 months or less: 32%**
- **13-24 months: 19%**
- **Over 24 months: 49%**

**Exits from the caseload,<sup>10</sup>  
monthly average: 5%**

**Exits leaving for employment,  
monthly average:<sup>11</sup> 13%**

**Number of OW clients placed  
in jobs: 31,882**

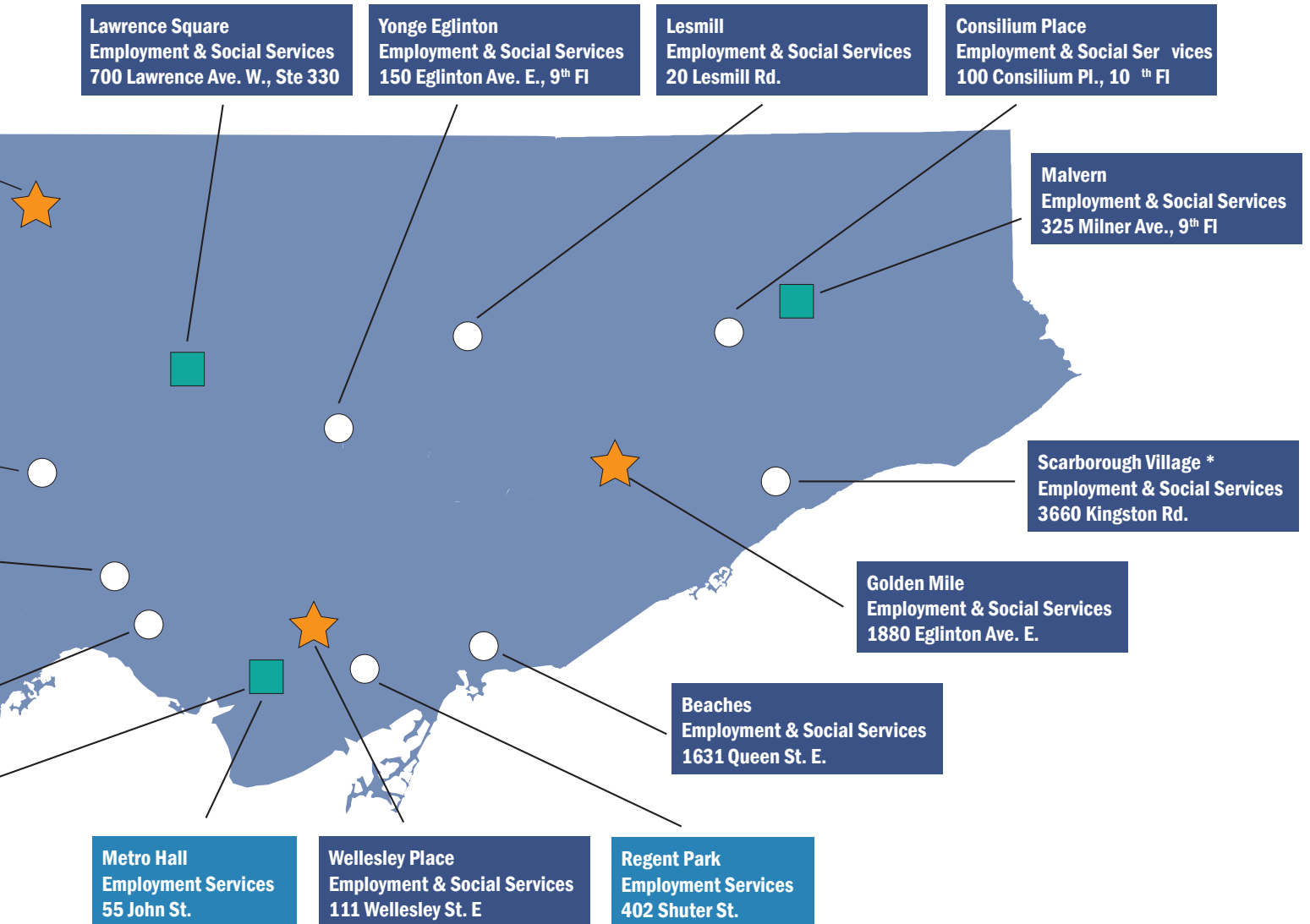
**Clients with employment income,  
monthly average: 11%**



8 This indicator represents the average monthly length of time on assistance for the year. It is not comparable to length of time values in previous annual reports as the calculation for this indicator was changed this year.

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# TORONTO EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL SERVICES LOCATIONS



★ Co-located with Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

■ Co-located with Children's Services

\* Scarborough Village Employment & Social Services opened in February 2019, replacing the former Kennedy office location.

10 Caseload trend statistics are derived from monthly Provincial SAMS Performance Reports. This represents the average monthly value for the year.

11 Caseload trend statistics are derived from monthly Provincial SAMS Performance Reports. This represents the average monthly value for the year.

# SERVICE ACCESS, PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP

TESS recognizes the importance of understanding client needs and linking residents to relevant supports and services to achieve positive results. That's why client-focused research, streamlined access, service planning excellence, and responsible program stewardship are central to the division's work.

## **Understanding Evolving Client Needs**

TESS works to maintain current knowledge about the barriers clients face securing employment and how they enter and leave social assistance. In partnership with the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation, TESS conducted a major research project entitled "Improving our Knowledge of and Responses to Singles on Ontario Works in Toronto." The 2018 study documented the multiple and often interconnected challenges experienced by OW clients as well as their hopes for the future. The results of this study are being used to inform staff training, program design, and service delivery partnerships.

## **Investing in Service Planning: The Heart of What We Do**

Service planning is the practice of working collaboratively with clients to identify their needs and connect them to the services, activities, and benefits they require to move forward. In 2018, TESS improved service planning by introducing:

- a renewed service planning framework that addresses urgent needs, reduces barriers, and enhances client employability—coupled with staff training on the renewed framework and poverty awareness
- a Service Needs Identification guide covering a range of topics linked to life stabilization, employability and the main components of the Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy (e.g. employment, health, transit, housing, food, service access, etc.)
- a dedicated notepad to document the next steps that a client and caseworker will take to achieve service plan goals; and
- a divisional service planning community of practice.

**TORONTO EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL SERVICES CLIENT NOTES**

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Caseworker: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
SAMS Reference #: \_\_\_\_\_

What we talked about today:

My caseworker's next steps:

My next steps:

Our next contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Please contact your caseworker if you have questions or need help before the next scheduled meeting.

**Toronto** Employment & Social Services  
toronto.ca/humanservices

**By prompting caseworkers and clients to discuss a wider range of topics, the Service Needs Identification tool and client notepad are ways to build positive and accountable relationships between caseworkers and clients.**

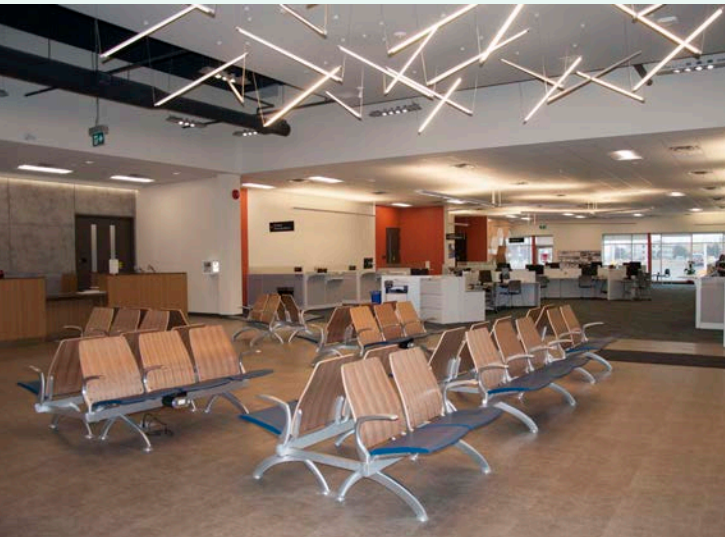
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**My caseworker treated me like a human being when I needed to be treated like a human being. She was a great listener and listened to everything that I had been through and was currently going through. She also gave me a list of places and resources to help me get a job. She treated me like I was her only client.**

**- Singles Study participant**

**My caseworker was very supportive. She said, 'You're not less because you ask for help.' She said everybody falls sometimes, and needs help getting themselves back up. She was very caring. I appreciated that.**

**- Singles Study participant**



To help caseworkers and supervisors focus on high value service planning activities, TESS identified a number of time-consuming tasks to either streamline, push to a digital channel, or assign to administrative staff. Efforts to identify further efficiencies, build staff capacity and promote digital service will continue in 2019.

Along with these new measures to strengthen service planning for all OW clients, TESS updated its principal service delivery program for parents and their children, Investing in Families (IIF). The previous IIF model served approximately 4,000 OW families in designated high needs neighbourhoods across the city. By strengthening partnerships with Parks, Forestry and Recreation and Toronto Public Health, and by creating new linkages with the Social Development, Finance and Administration and Children's Services divisions, as well as the Toronto Public Library, the refreshed IIF model extends supports—tailored to a family's needs and ability to navigate services—to all parents on OW in Toronto. Lessons learned from the new approach to IIF, especially about better matching supports to the intensity of client needs and collaborating with City divisions, will be used to improve service planning for all OW clients over time.

TESS achieved a major service access and partnership milestone in 2018 with the opening of three co-located Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) offices in Scarborough (Golden Mile), North York (Yorkgate) and downtown (Wellesley Place). ODSP clients who visit these offices are now able to access employment supports more easily; residents are directed to the appropriate social assistance program more quickly; and other opportunities to improve service coordination between ODSP and OW are being realized—resulting in better client service. The Wellesley Place office also underwent an extensive renovation in 2018, providing residents with a welcoming, modern space to obtain social assistance support, build skills, and connect with community resources.



Established in 2017, TESS's divisional Community of Practice (CoP) for Service Planning met several times in 2018. The CoP is a forum where staff develop practical solutions to better serve clients, learn from each other, and build service planning knowledge and know-how. To build on this success and involve more staff, local CoPs will be created in each of TESS's 15 offices in 2019.

### **Enhancing Stewardship and Accountability**

Ensuring proper stewardship and accountability for public investment in the OW social assistance program is a top priority for TESS. By introducing modernized business processes and eliminating unnecessary practices that can burden clients or staff, TESS continuously seeks to improve client service, enhance program accountability, and improve results—putting the focus on people, not paperwork, and helping clients to stabilize their lives and find and keep a job.

In 2018, TESS took a number of important steps to enhance stewardship and accountability. With provincial support, the division introduced a risk-based approach to the Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) for reviewing the ongoing financial eligibility of clients receiving OW benefits. This new approach to EVP uses existing data and specific criteria to identify and prioritize cases for review, instead of arbitrarily selecting a number of cases. The new approach is more cost effective, and better ensures that eligible clients continue to receive the correct amount of financial support based on any changes in their circumstances.

The Electronic Document Management (EDM) project, also initiated in 2018, will see TESS move from a paper-based client file management system to a far more efficient digitalized operation. Once fully in place, EDM will significantly reduce the costs and administrative effort associated with file creation, photocopying, filing and retrieval, resulting in better client service at lower expense.

# CONNECTING CLIENTS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

TESS's role connecting low-income residents—especially those who rely on Ontario Works financial benefits—to critical employment supports, training opportunities, and community resources and services, is more important than ever.

While some OW clients have the skills and confidence to effectively compete for a job, an increasing number are not yet ready to enter or re-enter the labour market, given the multiple barriers they face. The best path to independence and dignity for residents in this situation begins with a focus on “life stabilization” supports that enhance their employability and well-being.

In 2018 TESS partnered with dozens of City divisions and community organizations to refer and connect clients to these life stabilization services and resources.



## **Transit Fare Equity**

Launched in April 2018 as a signature initiative of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Fair Pass Discount Program makes public transit more affordable for low-income residents, helping them pursue and retain employment, access services, visit with friends and family, and participate more fully in all aspects of urban life.

Eligible residents receive a 12-month discount programmed onto a PRESTO card, providing either a 33% reduction on the TTC fare for a single ride or a 21% discount on the cost of a monthly pass. In 2018, TESS issued 37,990 Fair Pass cards to eligible Toronto residents in receipt of either OW or ODSP (the target population for the first phase of the Fair Pass program).

## **Financial Empowerment**

Financial empowerment interventions seek to improve low-income residents' financial resilience, security and independence. Key 2018 activities and achievements by TESS staff and clients in this area included:

- Partnering with SmartSAVER to facilitate access to the Canada Learning Bond for more than 4,100 children whose parents are in receipt of OW. At the maximum grant of \$2,000 per child, this could result in these children collectively receiving up to \$8.2 million (at bond maturity) for full- or part-time studies in college, university, trade school or apprenticeship programs.
- Helping 287 families develop a spending and savings plan.

## **Connecting Clients to the Toronto Public Library**

With 100 branches in neighbourhoods across the city, the Toronto Public Library (TPL) offers many important services for low-income residents, including tutoring and homework help, English as a Second Language classes, health and wellness programs, income tax clinics, and computer skills and digital literacy development opportunities. Digital literacy can significantly improve the ability of those receiving social assistance to access tax benefits and other resources, connect with friends or family, acquire in-demand skills, and look for and obtain employment.

TESS staff regularly encourage clients to get a library card and make use of TPL services. In 2018, TESS was proud to support TPL's Community Librarian initiative, which involves librarians working in community settings to expand awareness of and access to TPL's services. The librarians based at TESS's Regent Park and Lesmill offices last year helped hundreds of clients sign up for a library card, locate and connect with their local library branch, and learn about on-line and in-person TPL services.

**The Canada Learning Bond is a federal government grant that provides up to \$2,000 for post-secondary education or training costs. Funds are deposited directly into a child's Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) account.**

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## **Education Savings Week Events at TESS**

**In November 2018, TESS held Canada Learning Bond (CLB) registration events at the Scarborough Civic Centre, Jane Finch Mall, and Yorkgate Employment and Social Services office. The Scarborough Civic Centre event alone led to 1,199 CLB registrations and set a new record in Canada for the most CLB registrations at a single event.**

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**I found the program very positive. I really struggled with anxiety, especially when going out in public. Attending the program helped me deal with my anxiety, and I was able to eventually get there on the bus on my own.**

**- Intensive Case Management program participant**

**The program was fantastic! I found it to be very positive. The caseworkers were so helpful. It helped me increase my self-esteem. As a result, I was able to finish my GED. Now I'm planning to do further upgrades so I may attend college.**

**- Intensive Case Management program participant**

## Digital Literacy Day 2018

Toronto Employment & Social Services actively supported the planning and implementation of Toronto's inaugural Digital Literacy Day, which involved 35 organizations delivering 145 events at various Toronto Public Library branches, TESS offices, City Hall, and other partner locations. About 3,800 people participated in Digital Literacy Day events and activities.

### Intensive Case Management: Innovative Solutions to Complex Challenges

To effectively address new, emerging or especially complex client needs—and advance Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy goals—several TESS offices developed innovative Intensive Case Management (ICM) pilots in 2018. By bringing residents with similar challenges together and connecting them to local community supports and services, these local ICM approaches aim to reduce social isolation, improve well-being and health, and boost participants' confidence, knowledge and employability. In addition to providing immediate benefits to clients, the lessons learned from ICM initiatives inform longer-term planning and program responses.

The 12-week Investing in People program was designed to address social isolation experienced by single OW clients over 30 years of age. Delivered in partnership with a range of community agencies—such as Regent Park Community Food Centre, Yonge Street Mission and Dixon Hall—as well as Toronto Public Library, Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and Toronto Public Health, this initiative connected residents to a range of relevant community programs and resources. Program participants expressed increased self-confidence and valued the peer support that resulted from sharing common challenges. They also reported greater awareness of community

resources, an enhanced ability to self-advocate, and a range of life skills to support health and wellness.

Women Empowering Women worked with women in receipt of OW for more than 3 years. The initiative built resilience, reduced isolation, promoted wellness, and offered career planning. Participants valued the support of their colleagues and caseworkers. As one participant said, “It's sometime easier to open up to people you don't know than your own friends and family, without judgement.”

The High Park/Parkdale Youth Group was launched in 2018 to engage youth clients on OW who are difficult to support through traditional service planning approaches. As well as offering access to information on a wide range of community resources—such as mental health services, library services, volunteer positions and employment opportunities in areas like retail and hospitality—participants were encouraged to consider post-secondary education as a goal, with tours at Humber College and George Brown College.

# CONNECTING CLIENTS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

TESS connects OW clients to work-based learning, training and employment opportunities by developing uniquely targeted programs and collaborating with a range of partners.

## **Inclusive Sector-Based Approaches**

Sector-based approaches provide job seekers with career pathways and employment opportunities in areas of current and anticipated growth. TESS works closely with the City's Economic Development & Culture (EDC) division, employers, and other stakeholders to understand the workforce needs of key sectors and then link clients to relevant job training, recruitment, and preparation activities. As part of this effort, TESS works to ensure that residents from marginalized communities are made aware of and prepared for suitable training and employment opportunities.

In 2018, TESS developed and/or implemented sector strategies in construction, food and beverage manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, retail, technology, and the arts.

For example, Construction Connections—a partnership between TESS, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the YMCA, and the United Way—provides residents experiencing economic disadvantage, discrimination, or barriers to equal opportunity with

access to career opportunities in the construction sector. The initiative also enables employers in the construction industry to meet their workforce needs, community benefits objectives, and social procurement requirements by providing a reliable pipeline of qualified candidates. Construction Connections exceeded its 2018 goal of connecting over 200 residents to a career path in construction, including industry training, trade union membership and/or employment opportunities. This successful model is the result of extensive collaboration across public, private and non-profit sectors, joint governance, and an integrated approach to planning, management and service delivery.





In the retail sector, TESS continues to partner with Oxford Properties and Yorkdale Shopping Centre to develop opportunities for job seekers. Work in this area focuses not only on short-term employment opportunities; it also helps clients build the skills that will position them to develop successful careers in a sector experiencing significant technological change. In 2018, two large-scale recruitment events at Yorkdale resulted in 110 hires. Based on the success of this retail sector initiative, efforts are underway to connect OW clients to new employment opportunities at the Dufferin Mall.

As part of the technology sector strategy, TESS and the Toronto Public Library (TPL) piloted the Let's Learn Tech Learning Circle program in October 2018. The program was offered at three libraries, each targeted at a unique demographic: youth at the Albion branch, mature workers (i.e. 45+ years old) at North York Central Library, and parents at the Scarborough Civic Centre branch. Program participants improved their digital skills, explored new technologies, became more familiar with TPL programs and services, and developed peer support networks. Building on these positive results, TPL is running three additional Let's Learn Tech programs for TESS clients in 2019.

Art Connections helps foreign-trained professional artists on social assistance

pursue careers in the arts and culture sector in Toronto by leveraging partnerships with the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, Neighbourhood Arts Network, and Toronto School of Art. Art Connections uses a cohort approach, which reduces social and professional isolation, rebuilds participants' social capital, and facilitates social, economic and cultural integration. The 35 artists who participated in Arts Connections in 2018 were provided with access to more than 50 professional development, networking, mentoring and work-based learning opportunities, enabling them to exhibit and market their work to a large audience. Program participants also secured \$26,500 in grants.

### **Contracted Employment Programs**

TESS contracts with service providers to provide residents in receipt of OW with targeted employment services and training opportunities, including career planning and assessments, self-employment support, sector-focused career development, and occupation-specific skills training.

In 2018, there was a greater focus on providing enhanced social supports, especially for those facing challenges accessing employment, to help clients build key foundational skills.

## Contracted Employment Programs in 2018

- 3,803 clients were accepted in to employment programs
- 68% of participants who completed programs found employment, self-employment, or transitioned to another structured employment related activity
- 64 organizations delivered 117 programs

## Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Work-based learning in a real work environment encourages learning through practice, and provides a solid pathway into quality jobs and careers. From short-term and less formal workplace exposure opportunities like job shadowing and mentoring, to longer-term and more intensive activities such as internships, TESS continued to support a range of such opportunities in 2018.

Along with the People, Equity and Human Rights division, TESS continues to champion the City of Toronto's Work-based Learning (WBL) Program. This initiative provides a meaningful, paid work opportunity with the City of Toronto to individuals who are ready and able to work but need a chance to demonstrate their skills and gain further experience. In 2018, nine City divisions hosted 20 WBL positions, and four program participants secured employment with the City before completing their placement.

The Job Incentive Program (JIP) provides OW clients with a three- to six-month unpaid work placement with the City of Toronto. These placements provide participants with current, marketable workplace experience, as well as the skills and networks needed to find a job. By leveraging its role as a major employer, the City can provide opportunities through this program that otherwise would not exist for low-income residents and people from disadvantaged communities.

Investing in Neighbourhoods (IIN) connects individuals in receipt of OW with paid work experience in non-profit organizations. IIN builds participants' skills and connections through varied placement opportunities, leading to improved employability and confidence and, for many newcomers, valuable first-time Canadian work experience.

## Job Incentive Program in 2018

- 504 OW clients participated in work experience opportunities in 2018
- 49% of participants obtained employment within six months of completing their JIP placements





In 2018, 255 non-profit organizations offered placements and 1,099 OW clients gained work experience through IIN.

The Partnership to Advance Youth Employment (PAYE) is a joint initiative between private sector employers, the City of Toronto and a network of community-based agencies committed to helping youth find and maintain employment, while addressing workforce needs. PAYE engages diverse and talented youth job seekers, aged 18-29, providing one-on-one support, referrals to training and education, networking and mentoring opportunities, and jobs with career potential.

In 2018, PAYE supported more than 340 employers and over 2,500 youth. Of these, 1,242 youth secured employment and 360 were connected to work-based learning opportunities. Other 2018 PAYE program highlights:

- PAYE worked with CivicAction and LinkedIn to distribute 600 LinkedIn Learning licenses to youth and staff who support young job seekers.
- In collaboration with PAYE financial services partners RBC, TD and CIBC, TESS hosted three workshops for youth on Digital Literacy Day, introducing participants to coding and programming.
- PAYE supported the Opportunity for All Youth event—a coalition of employers including Starbucks, Walmart, HMS-Host, Tridel, Chipotle, The Source, and Cost Capital Savings working with MaRS Solutions Labs and government and social agencies—to address the high unemployment rate of youth. The event helped 131 youth secure employment.

### **Confronting Anti-Black Racism**

TESS is helping to advance the City's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism by supporting black youth in their employment journey. In 2018, TESS helped dozens of youth with criminal justice experience apply for record suspensions and identify employment opportunities in sectors where there is a high demand for jobs (e.g., manufacturing, hospitality, construction, retail, and information technology). As part of this effort, TESS piloted an innovative case management program to connect justice-involved youth to jobs and placements with institutional kitchens, catering companies, and restaurants.

In partnership with SDFA, TESS also hosted two youth job fairs that focused on supporting clients with criminal justice experience.



## Information and Career Fairs

As well as broad initiatives related to specific sectors or demographic groups, TESS also supports numerous locally-focused events.

One notable example is the Scarborough Job and Career Fair. A partnership between the City of Toronto, Progress Career Planning Institute, YWCA Toronto and the Toronto District School Board's Next Steps Employment Centres, the event is designed to connect job seekers with employers from various sectors recruiting for immediate and future opportunities. In 2018, this job fair was attended by more than 2,750 job seekers and almost 50 exhibitors looking to fill 2,050 job openings. As a result of the job fair, 141 participants were successfully hired.

To better connect job seekers to opportunities in Toronto's hospitality and tourism sector, TESS worked in partnership with Economic Development & Culture, the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation and the Hospitality Workers Training Centre to host a number of information sessions. These events allowed job seekers to hear from industry leaders, learn about employment and training opportunities and career pathways within the sector, and network with employers and service agencies. The 140 residents who attended these sessions welcomed the direct engagement with hospitality and tourism professionals, received support from knowledgeable staff, and gained exposure to a vibrant sector with many rewarding career opportunities.

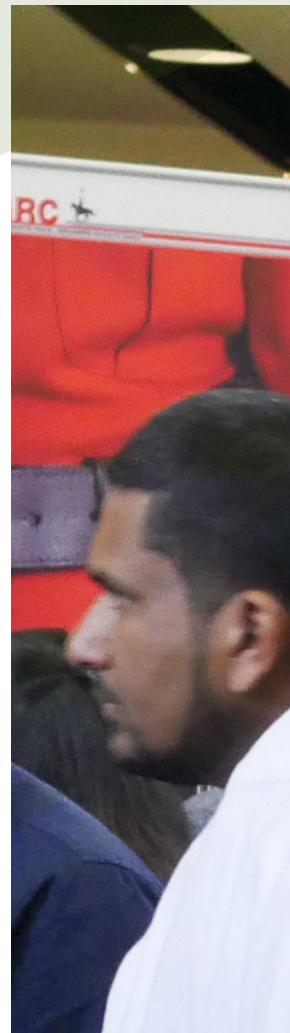
## Workforce Development Month

Building on the success of previous years, TESS hosted its seventh annual Workforce Development Month in October 2018. Events held during this month showcased the wide variety of work that takes place across the City to support and connect job seekers and employers. In 2018, Workforce Development Month included 42 events, attracted over 3,700 participants and 120 employers, and resulted in more than 330 hires.

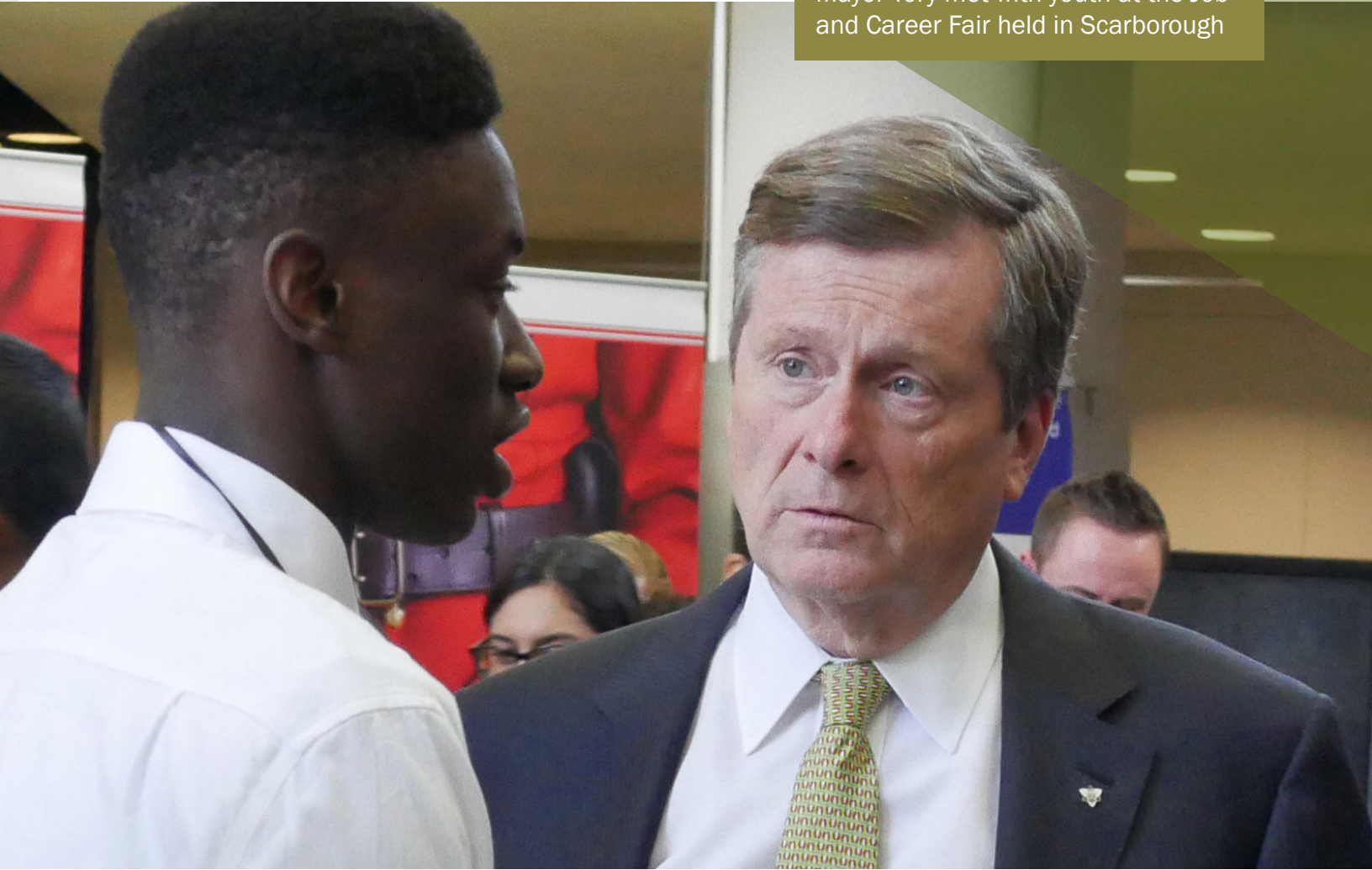
## Inclusive Economic Prosperity

In addition to the numerous initiatives already highlighted that support Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy – and further the goal of inclusive economic prosperity and development – TESS is working with One Toronto Gaming (OTG) to help the Casino Woodbine operator with employment recruitment.

In 2018, the City of Toronto signed a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with OTG that includes requirements that it achieve specific social and economic outcomes—including local and social hiring targets for casino operations expansion and construction-related work. As a result of a series of TESS-supported pathways to employment events, over 600 residents and job seekers obtained employment related to the expansion of table gaming at Casino Woodbine.



Mayor Tory met with youth at the Job and Career Fair held in Scarborough



A range of available jobs, including table gaming positions, were profiled at Casino Woodbine Job Fair.



Workforce Development Month events connected residents to jobs and social supports.

# TESS STAFF EVENTS TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

Food and clothing drives for food banks and community agencies. Writing cards for long-term care home residents who didn't have family visiting over the holidays. Volunteering at the annual Homeless Connect event for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These are some of the ways that TESS staff went above and beyond to support the larger community in 2018.



Mobile Cafe fundraiser for the City's United Way Campaign.



The Program Administration Improvement and Development team collected items for the toy and food drive.



TESS and ODSP staff at the Golden Mile location held a very successful holiday food and toy drive.



The Human Services & Organizational Development team collected items to be distributed at the 519 Church Street Community Centre.

Staff at Metro Hall Employment & Social Services held a winter clothing drive to support St. Felix Centre programs for marginalized people.



TESS staff volunteered alongside colleagues in Shelter, Support & Housing Administration at the Homeless Connect event.



Yonge Eglinton Employment & Social Services staff collected items for the Common Table Drop-in Program at Church of the Redeemer.



**DONATIONS**  
(to The Common Table Drop-in at Church of the Redeemer)

- Men's Jeans (sizes 28 to 42, Clean and folded)
- Women's and Men's Socks (new)
- Sweaters (washed and folded)
- Books (novels and small non-fiction – but no textbooks)
- Toiletries, including toothbrushes, tooth paste, shampoo, soaps. (Travel / hotel sized are best).

**IHC8W**  
8oz. Paper Cups  
White  
20 x 50/cs

**Gobelets à Boisson Chaude**

- Men's Jeans (sizes 28 to 42, Clean and folded)
- Women's and Men's Socks (new)
- Sweaters (washed and folded)
- Books (novels and small non-fiction – but no textbooks)
- Toiletries, including toothbrushes, tooth paste, shampoo, soaps. (Travel / hotel sized are best).

**IHC8W**  
8oz. Paper Cups  
White  
20 x 50/cs

# DIRECTIONS FOR 2019

In 2019, TESS will focus on the following objectives:

- Enhance client outcomes through high-impact activities
- Connect Ontario Works clients to employment opportunities and relevant supports that increase employability
- Modernize social assistance delivery and business processes to improve service and reduce administrative costs
- Streamline access to essential City and community resources and programs through integration efforts

Specifically, TESS will:

- **Continue to improve service planning quality**  
TESS will maintain its work to enhance client outcomes through high-impact activities such as goal-oriented service plans informed by client needs, skills, and interests—and promote staff development with the roll-out of local Communities of Practice for service planning.
- **Modernize client tools**  
Working jointly with the province, TESS will implement the “My Benefits” online portal to increase client self-serve and online service options. An electronic document management system will also be introduced to improve the management and sharing of client files.
- **Contract relevant services and programs**  
TESS will contract for a new suite of employment programs (with social supports) and enhance referrals to mental health and addiction supports to improve client employability and well-being.
- **Launch an integrated contact centre**  
As part of the City’s Human Services Integration initiative, TESS will work with Children’s Services and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration divisions to launch an integrated client contact centre.

- **Promote inclusive economic prosperity**

TESS will support the development and, if approved, implementation of a community benefits framework for the City of Toronto, and will continue to champion the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

- **Enhance the eligibiltiy verification process**

TESS will invest resources and update business processes to better ensure that clients receive the benefits they are entitled to, while complying with legislative standards.

# APPENDIX: OTHER KEY PROGRAM AND SERVICE INDICATORS

In addition to the initiatives outlined in this Annual Report, TESS leads or supports a number of ongoing programs that help low-income Toronto residents. Below is a brief overview of these initiatives.

| <b>Program Name</b>                               | <b>Description</b>  |
|---|---|
| Welcome Policy                                    | A fee subsidy to help individuals and families with low income who live in Toronto access City-operated recreation programs.  |
| Medical benefits for persons not in receipt of OW | The Hardship Fund is available to pay for certain medically-based items/services such as eyeglasses, emergency dental work, medication, medical items (walkers, hearing aids, hospital beds and more) or funeral expenses. Low-income Toronto residents can call the application centre or complete an application at one of TESS's 15 local offices. |
| Homeless Employability Pilot Project              | The Homeless Employability Pilot Project is a partnership between TESS and Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration that provides employment services, supports, and programs for residents in City-run shelters.   |
| Practical Care Paramedic Training Program         | A partnership between TESS, Toronto Paramedics Services and Parks, Forestry & Recreation, the Practical Care Paramedic Training Program trains OW clients who have experience in health care or post-secondary education to be certified paramedics for the City of Toronto.  |



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**2018 Key Program Indicator**

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42,182 households accessed the Welcome Policy.

29,315 of these households were OW recipients.

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1,252 requests for medical benefits were received

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579 one-on-one appointments with shelter residents.

84% of HEPP clients who secured housing within six months of their participation

30% found employment in 2018.

60% of participants were engaged in an employment-related activity (i.e. education, training, and volunteering).

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10 graduates were hired by the City in 2018.

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| Housing Stabilization Fund | The Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) is intended to prevent homelessness by meeting the emergency housing needs of Toronto residents who receive financial assistance from Ontario Works (OW) or income support from Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), so that homeless clients are able to obtain housing or those who are currently housed are able to retain housing or relocate due to a high-rent situation. |
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| Mobile Dental Clinic | The Mobile Dental Clinic is operated by Toronto Public Health and travels to various sites across Toronto to provide free dental care for eligible clients who have difficulty accessing dental services. In 2018, Attwell, Lesmill, and Metro Hall hosted the Mobile Dental Clinic on several occasions. |
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| United Way netWORKS | The United Way netWORKS program is a co-ordinated approach to career-oriented networking that helps young people make meaningful professional connections. |
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| Funerals and Burials | TESS covers basic funeral expenses for those who pass away while receiving assistance from OW or ODSP, as well as deceased Toronto residents who do not have enough money in their estate to cover funeral expenses. Help with funeral expenses include funeral services, burial services, or cremation services. |
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| Transitions to ODSP | TESS has developed a streamlined referral process to refer OW clients who may be eligible for ODSP. Throughout this process, TESS staff support clients in the preparation and submission of a client’s application to ODSP. |
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| Child Care Fee Subsidies | A Child Care Fee Subsidy helps families with the cost of licensed child care. The subsidy assists parents or guardians who are employed, looking for work, or in school, so they can stay employed, successfully look for a new job, or upskill to improve their employability. |
|--------------------------|---|

Approximately 30,500 payments were made to OW/ODSP clients to secure or sustain their housing.

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109 clients screened for treatment/referred to local clinics.

55 patients received treatment through the Mobile Dental Clinic (e.g., fillings, extraction, or cleaning).

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198 youth participated in the netWORKS program.

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2,108 funeral and burial services were provided.

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7,860 clients were successfully transitioned from OW to ODSP.

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5,040 children on OW accessed the child care fee subsidy.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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