

Widespread support for bold action and new investments in Budget 2016 ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

On the eve of the 2016 Toronto Budget release, residents and city-building organizations across Toronto have come together to urge City Council to implement the city's recently adopted Poverty Reduction Strategy and kick-start action in four priority areas: jobs, children, housing and transit.

In a letter signed by leaders from over 50 civic organizations, including United Way Toronto & York Region, CivicAction, Toronto Foundation, and endorsed by the Toronto Region Board of Trade, groups urged Mayor John Tory and members of Toronto City Council to move on 49 recommendations that will advance the city's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The recommendations came from hundreds of residents and community groups taking part in consultations through the Commitment 2 Community coalition and other networks, and by people who are seeing the impact of poverty on the ground and know what it's going to take to tackle it.

Implementing these actions in 2016 would have concrete outcomes, including:

- Providing supportive housing for 1,000 individuals and families and making rents affordable for 7,000 households at risk of homelessness.
- Providing access to subsidized childcare for 1,500 children and families.
- Freezing adult fares until a low-income transit pass is introduced in 2017.
- Ensuring that people delivering city services, either directly or through contractors, have decent, stable jobs.
- Creating opportunity for people with lived experience to guide and work in city programs to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

As city councillors debate the budget, community leaders say it is critical that funding for poverty reduction build on programs that serve our communities, without cutting to the proven, effective services we need. City government should continue to work with the private sector, labour groups, and community organizations to restore hope, fairness, and opportunity for everyone in our city.

What business and community leaders and advocates are saying:

"Improving the economic success of everyone and creating stronger communities are crucial to the success of the Toronto region's economy. Poverty reduction is a critical ingredient of a prosperous Toronto region where no one is left behind." Janet De Silva, President and CEO, Toronto Region Board of Trade.

"United Way research shows there is a growing divide within our city. Bold, collaborative action is needed to unite our city with access to opportunities and investments in our neighbourhoods." Susan McIsaac, President and CEO, United Way Toronto & York Region.

"No one is more invested in ensuring that every dollar expended on poverty eradication is used wisely and to best effect than those who want to work and contribute to the prosperity of the city. We will be vigilant in our oversight and identification of what is truly effective, always conscious of public accountability." Pat Capponi, award winning mental health and poverty advocate.

"We understand that decisions need to be made within the broader backdrop of the city's fiscal situation, but our most vulnerable people can't fall to the " Sevaun Palvetzian, CEO, CivicAction.

"We need a poverty screen for the budget to look at each decision and ask, does this help reduce poverty in our communities, or does it make more of us vulnerable?" Leila Sarangi, Community Program Manager of Women's Habitat Etobicoke.

"City Council made history and sent a strong message last month when it unanimously adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy. But now, we are looking for continued leadership from the city and real action on the ground." Sean Meagher, Executive Director of Social Planning Toronto.

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Region: Ontario ^[3]

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