

To prosperity: Toronto poverty reduction strategy ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report PDF ^[2]

Introduction

One in four children and one in five adults live in poverty in Toronto.

Fearing eviction, walking to save a token, always choosing the cheapest and least nutritious food, telling government agencies the same information over and over again, and worrying that the opportunities enjoyed by other children will be denied to yours. That's what life is like for too many of us.

It hasn't always been like this. Back in the '70s, one in 10 adults were poor, not one in five; two in three neighborhoods were middle income, not one in three; the majority of people looking for work qualified for employment insurance, not the minority; income supports assisted us in times of need, not food banks.

Toronto remains a prosperous and vibrant city, a global leader across a range of indicators, including livability. While the city still works, it no longer works for many of us.

It used to be that education led to jobs, jobs led to stability, and social supports allowed us to get back on our feet if a crisis struck. That path is broken.

Good jobs are increasingly hard to find. Almost half of Greater Toronto Area workers have temporary, contract, part-time jobs with variable hours, little stability, and no benefits.

Education remains a smart long-term investment, but it offers no immediate guarantees: almost one in four college graduates are working low-wage jobs.

Employment Insurance is less accessible. Ontario Works rates lost more than half of their value in the last 20 years. Child care is increasingly unaffordable.

At the same time, life in Toronto is getting more expensive every day. Housing, transit, and healthy food are costly even to middle-income families with good jobs, never mind to people living on insecure low wages and eroding social supports.

The City of Toronto has been tackling these issues for many years. City strategies, programs, and services provide targeted supports to individuals, families, and neighbourhoods. Some of these initiatives are now best practices adopted by other cities.

We must continue to do the things that work, and do more of it.

But that is not enough. We must also try new strategies to ensure that the benefits of growth and prosperity are widely shared - so that everyone can live in dignity.

TO Prosperity sets a vision for our city, lays out objectives for our long-term fight against poverty, and proposes ways to act on it now.

An inclusive strategy

An effective strategy to address poverty cannot be drafted behind closed doors. It must be written where poverty is real with the people it hurts.

TO Prosperity is based on an inclusive and collaborative process. People in all four corners of the city shared their stories, visions, and solutions. Most significantly, residents with lived experience told us how to make this strategy a truly effective one.

While acknowledging the roles and responsibilities of other orders of government, this broad consultation process focused on what the City and its local partners can and should do to overcome growing poverty.

We can and should address people's immediate needs. It is unacceptable that in a city as prosperous as Toronto people cannot meet their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation. For people living in poverty, the long term is too far off.

We can and should support people to transition out of poverty. Too many residents find themselves persistently vulnerable to poverty, frequently flowing in and out of it, with few prospects of achieving a better, more stable life.

We can and should change the systems that make people poor in the first place. Residents spoke. We listened. Together we crafted this strategy.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: inequality ^[4]

spending ^[5]

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