

## Speech Conference on Women and Poverty

Saturday October 21, 2015

As your local City Councillor, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to participate in today's conference on "Women and Poverty". I am committed to this community as we reflect on the challenges facing women and how poverty impact their lives.

The City of Toronto has developed a poverty reduction strategy after working with over 60 organizations and hundreds of citizens across the City. Through this work a vision was created with 17 recommendations and 71 actions to address the current needs of low-income residents, and the services required to help individuals out of poverty by identifying and tackling the causes.

In Toronto, 19% of adults live in poverty, 37% of those are female lone parent families, 25% are children. We need to fix this. The path to a good standard of living are jobs. Unfortunately 1 in every 4 individuals who graduate from college are working in low-wage jobs, part-time jobs, have no benefits, and no stability. If this continues our City will experience an inadequate standard of living affecting all. This is why we are here today, this is why it is important that the City move forward on implementing the 17 recommendations to address immediate needs, create pathways to prosperity and to drive systematic change.

The recommendations in the City's strategic plan focus on:

***Housing Stability:*** As part of the City's "Close the Housing Gap" campaign, we are working toward providing quality, affordable housing. Toronto Community Housing is making significant Capital investments across the City. In Ward 43 work is set to begin to renovate 3939-3947 Lawrence Ave East, with a capital investment of \$20 million; with a completion date of 2017. The renovation is focused to address all the buildings needs at once instead of addressing one need across the City. Now projects will renovate the entire building to create a better living environment.

***Service Access:*** to help you find the services you need when you need them.

***Transit Equity:*** ensuring that public transit is affordable and reliable.

***Food Access:*** to help you access affordable, nutritious food across the City no matter where you live.

***Quality Jobs and Livable Wages:*** The City with the Help of the Province and Federal Government needs sustainable jobs with good wages. We will have to welcome new business into our communities to ensure sustainable employment. Without quality jobs our vision cannot be reached.

***Systemic Change:*** This will take all of us to accomplish. It is a new positive way of problem solving to reduce and try to end poverty. We will all need to be creative and participate to make this happen.

In 2015, City Council invested \$25.9M for 28 initiatives:

1. Free transit for children 12 and under. There are approximately 87,595 children from low-income families in Toronto.
2. 198 new beds in our shelter system which account for 4,405 bed nights
3. Two women's 24-hour drop-ins
4. Expanded warming centres;
5. 27 new student nutrition programs serving 8,205 more children and youth
6. An increase of 184 child care subsidies and after-school care. 530 more children received after-school recreation care.

The city continued to address: quality jobs; social procurement; youth employment; and intergovernmental advocacy with the Province.

In 2016 the City will recommend an additional \$26.1 – Base funding for 75 City Initiatives and additional programming through 28 policy and regulatory changes for long term impacts. Among them are:

- Community benefits program
- Social procurement strategy
- Options for fare geared income transit
- Community investment strategy – for new and revised programs
- Job quality assessment tools and livings wage standard
- Student nutrition expansion program
- Youth employment – expand the partnership of Advance Incentive Program
- Quality opportunity Jobs – expand job incentive program
- Senior Services – expansion of homemakers – nursing services program

The City has a goal, by 2035, to have opportunities for all residents. As the 4<sup>th</sup> largest City in North America, Toronto needs to be a leader where everyone has access to good jobs, adequate income, stable housing, affordable transportation, nutritious food, and supportive services.

Poverty is not something that we can ignore. We need to work towards a better financial future for a prosperous City with strong communities with strong individuals. Working with the Province and Federal Government to receive the funding that Toronto needs to support our poverty reduction efforts is key.

Women, often the backbone of our family structure – have a profound effect on our youth in particular how they view the world. Having confident successful women as mentors, will encourage our youth to prosper into active citizens.

Confident mothers and sisters will raise confident boys and girls who will become our future leaders and contributors to ensuring a strong economy.

Thank you for inviting me today.