

January 21, 2008

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: Board of Health

Subject: Losing Ground: The Persistent Growth of Family Poverty in Canada's Largest City

The Board of Health on January 21, 2008, amongst other things, forwarded the report (January 7, 2008) from the Medical Officer of Health, respecting the report released in November 2007 by the United Way of Greater Toronto entitled "Losing Ground: The Persistent Growth of Family Poverty in Canada's Largest City", to the Community Development and Recreation Committee for information.

Decision Advice and Other Information:

The Board of Health:

1. endorsed the following recommendations from the United Way of Greater Toronto report Losing Ground: The Persistent Growth of Family Poverty in Canada's Largest City and communicate their endorsement to Premier McGuinty and Prime Minister Harper:
 - a. that a poverty reduction strategy for Ontario be developed by the Provincial government that sets clear poverty reduction targets and aggressive timelines for achieving those targets, with specific targets and timelines for Toronto;
 - b. the strategy take into account the unique low income challenges facing the City of Toronto and the poor social and health outcomes associated with them;
 - c. all levels of government and other community stakeholders engage in the development of this strategy, so that all components of the social safety net are examined and funded, including policies and programs focused on housing security, employment security, and child care;
 - d. the strategy address the significant decline in employment insurance coverage for unemployed workers and the related decline in access to employment

- supports and training and better protect and support employees in precarious employment;
- e. the Federal government, through Statistics Canada, work with representatives from municipal and provincial governments and research and labour organizations to develop strategies for the routine collection of precarious employment data at the city level; and
 - f. the provincial government develop rigorous new regulatory measures to protect consumers from usurious rates of interest, set interest rate caps and limits on fees and charges, and prohibit practices that trap people with low incomes in a debt cycle;
2. commended the United Way of Greater Toronto for drawing attention and calling for action regarding the diminishing capacity of Toronto families to meet the high cost of living in Toronto;
 3. applauded the Ontario Government for its commitment to a comprehensive poverty strategy and recommends that this be a top government priority; and further that the Cabinet Committee be encouraged to move quickly in reversing the alarming increase in poverty rates by immediately increasing the minimum wages and social assistance rates indexed to true costs of basic needs;
 4. requested the Ministry of Health Promotion to fund research to develop a tool that Boards of Health can use to identify the annual real costs associated with raising a child/children and that the tool be used to promote policy change;
 5. advocated to the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development to review the eligibility of Employment Insurance for unemployed workers;
 6. decided to join forces with the Toronto City Summit Alliance and other City bodies urging reform of Employment Insurance;
 7. requested the Medical Officer of Health to collaborate with local Non-Profit Organizations in developing strategies to reduce the gender gap and family poverty in the City of Toronto;
 8. recommended to Statistics Canada that disaggregated data from Statistics Canada be available to public policy organizations without fee;
 9. forwarded this report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee and Children's Services Advisory Committee for information; and
 10. forwarded this report to the Toronto Best Start Network, Child Health Network, Family Services Association, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Jewish Child and Family Services of Toronto, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, United Way of Greater Toronto, provincial Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Health Promotion, and Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario Public Health Association, Canadian Public Health Association, Campaign 2000, Canadian Paediatric

Society, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian Labour Congress, Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and Workers' Action Centre, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest, and the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud.

Background:

The Board of Health on January 21, 2008, considered a report (January 7, 2008) from the Medical Officer of Health, respecting the report released in November 2007 from the United Way of Greater Toronto entitled "Losing Ground: The Persistent Growth of Family Poverty in Canada's Largest City", and submitting recommendations.

Speakers:

Frances Lankin, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way of Greater Toronto, and filed a copy of her presentation material.

Secretary,
Board of Health

C. Davidovits/jd
Item HL11.3
Attachment

Sent to: All Interested Parties

- c. Medical Officer of Health
Frances Lankin, President and Chief Executive Office, United Way of Greater Toronto