



TORONTO FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

November 21, 2016

To Mayor Tory and Toronto City Council,

I write today on behalf of the members of the Toronto Food Policy Council, and many other community members who regularly participate in the TFPC, to express serious concern regarding the implications of motion EX16.37 and the across the board budget cut of 2.6 percent net below the 2016 Approved Net Operating Budgets.

The proposed 2.6 percent cut will significantly affect those Torontonians who are most marginalized, and most affected by poverty. It will also dramatically limit any possibility of successfully implementing the 2015 Poverty Reduction Strategy – which is needed more than ever as Toronto is experiencing growing poverty and food insecurity. The fact that child poverty is increasing, with 1 in 6 children in Toronto living in poverty, means there are thousands of children going hungry today. The fact there are so many children living in poverty and in a state of scarcity will mean long term detrimental effects on the health and prosperity of our city.

TFPC members were very pleased to have access to food and addressing food security issues as one of the key pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, not only because of the urgent need to address food insecurity, but because we believe that food is a dynamic tool for building community, local economic development, environmental sustainability and social cohesion. Budget cuts will affect overall support for organizations who are already struggling to address complex issues and increasing need.

The proposed cuts will jeopardize both the already precarious ability of organizations to access space to operate food programs and the very funding that goes to service agencies and food programs. Toronto Public Health, the Toronto Food Strategy, the Toronto Food Policy Council, and many community organizations have initiatives that address barriers to food access. The proposed cuts for the Student Nutrition programs, that work to address issues of child hunger and poverty, Peer Nutrition programs, and food handler training through the Community Food Works program will further jeopardize those who are most vulnerable and at risk of not being able to put food on their tables. Programs like the Mobile Good Food Market and Grab Some Good markets connect Torontonians directly to more accessible, fresh food in areas where that is often difficult to do. Urban agriculture projects and urban farms empower residents to access and grow their own food within their neighbourhoods and provide key infrastructure for food access within the City at the neighbourhood level.

The City of Toronto needs to commit to its own Poverty Reduction Strategy and to finding alternative sources of revenue to address food insecurity, grow urban agriculture throughout the City, and make space available to community organizations working with food. The vision of food as a community building tool is one we hope the City will embrace, and that Council will adopt alternative revenue streams that help grow the infrastructure of Toronto – making us a resilient, cohesive and healthy city.

Sincerely,

Rachel Gray, Chair,
Toronto Food Policy Council



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