



# **Building Toronto, Creating Community**

**The City of Toronto's Investment in  
Nonprofit Community Services**

**SOCIAL  
PLANNING  
TORONTO**



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Nonprofit Community Services**

**October 2014**



## **Social Planning Toronto**

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The City of Toronto makes a vital, and often unrecognized, investment in critical community services delivered by hundreds of nonprofit organizations across the city. From after-school programs, crisis counselling and seniors' health programs to youth leadership, newcomer civic literacy and community food programs, nonprofit community organizations – with the financial support of the City of Toronto – are building Toronto and creating communities. Through the City's investment, community services make Toronto more liveable, equitable and inclusive. Organizations are able to stretch those dollars, and leverage City funding to bring new investments from other orders of government, foundations and private fundraising to expand programs and services in local communities. But when City funding is stagnant – or worse, under threat – nonprofit organizations are hard pressed to respond to important community needs.

This report documents how the City of Toronto invests in nonprofit community services, how community organizations use those dollars to transform our communities and our city, and looks at where we go from here to safeguard services and respond to emerging and urgent needs in our communities.

## **CITY OF TORONTO'S INVESTMENT IN NONPROFIT COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The City of Toronto invests in, engages with, and partners with nonprofit community organizations in a variety of ways. Its major vehicle for investment is the Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP), its community grants program. The City also contracts with organizations through purchase of service agreements to deliver specific programs and services. It facilitates access to affordable rental space through its Below Market Rent policy, waives the cost of waste collection for charities, offers a property tax rebate program for charitable organizations, and facilitates access to data through its leadership of a local data consortium. Beyond these mechanisms, the City of Toronto engages extensively with the nonprofit community sector in the development of public policy and program delivery.

## **1. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AND INVESTMENT PROGRAM (CPIP)**

Through CPIP, the City of Toronto invests almost \$50 million annually in nonprofit community services and arts and cultural programs. In 2014, the City of Toronto's allocation to nonprofit community services (i.e. non-Toronto Arts Council portion) was over \$35 million. CPIP includes several programs administered by multiple City divisions:<sup>1</sup>

- **Social Development, Finance and Administration** administers two types of community grants: Partnership and Investment grants. The Community Service Partnerships (CSP) grant constitutes the City's Partnership funding stream. CSP "supports a strong community based sector and facilitates access to services that improve social outcomes for vulnerable, marginalized and high-risk communities." This program provides core funding to organizations through multi-year arrangements. The Community Funding Investment Program provides "short-term grants to projects that contribute to the City's social, economic and cultural goals." This funding stream includes several community grant programs: Community Festivals and Special Events, Community

Recreation, Game On Toronto! (sports development), Access, Equity and Human Rights (programs that promote the City's access and equity goals), Community Safety Investment, and Identify 'N Impact (youth-led initiatives). The City's Social Development, Finance and Administration division administers these community grants programs, as well as the Social Development Investment Program (SDIP). SDIP grants "increase the capacity of organizations in high needs, under-served communities to effectively respond to community needs." The program helps small organizations in under-resourced areas to build their capacity in the areas of "governance, organizational management and community engagement in order to respond effectively to community needs," and assists in the development of effective partnerships to better serve under-resourced communities.

- **Economic Development and Culture** administers cultural funding programs for Museums, Cultural Build Investment Program, Toronto Arts Council, Major Cultural Organizations, Local Arts Service Organizations, Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, Music Garden and Glenn Gould Foundation.
- **Toronto Public Health** administers the Student Nutrition Program.
- **Shelter, Support and Housing Administration** is responsible for the Homeless Initiative Fund.
- **Transportation Division** administers the StrArt: Street Arts program.

- **City Planning and Heritage Preservation** is responsible for Heritage Grants.

Together, the City of Toronto's CPIP grants improve the quality of life of Toronto residents.

### CPIP NON-ARTS FUNDING LEVELS SHOW MODEST INCREASE OVER PAST DECADE

Figure i shows the annual CPIP budget, inflation-adjusted in 2014 dollars, not including funding to the Toronto Arts Council (TAC). Between 2003 and 2014, the overall allocation level increased by 6.5% after taking inflation into account.<sup>2</sup> This is similar to the rate of population growth in Toronto over the same period.<sup>3</sup> Over the years, there have been both periodic funding freezes and inflationary increases.<sup>4</sup> In 2014, Toronto City Council included a \$390,000 inflationary increase for CPIP non-arts programs, and made a historic increase of \$300,000 for new high priority programs.<sup>5</sup>

### OTHER CANADIAN CITIES MAKE LARGER PER CAPITA INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY GRANTS

In 2010-11, the City of Toronto conducted a survey of municipal grant programs in Canada.<sup>6</sup> Figure ii shows the differences in grant levels for participating cities and regions. Other Canadian cities like Calgary at \$66.72, Winnipeg at \$45.20, and Ottawa at \$40.73 invest far more per capita on community grants than Toronto at \$17.70. These cities also invest more on community grants as a percentage of their total budgets. Winnipeg allocates 2.7% of its total budget to community grants, followed by Calgary at 2.57%, and Ottawa at 1.62%. Toronto allocates 0.506% of its budget to community grants.

### 2. BELOW MARKET RENT PROGRAM

For decades, the City of Toronto has provided some City-owned property at below market

**City of Toronto's Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) Non-TAC Annual Allocations Inflation-Adjusted (2014 Dollars): 2003-2014, Selected Years**

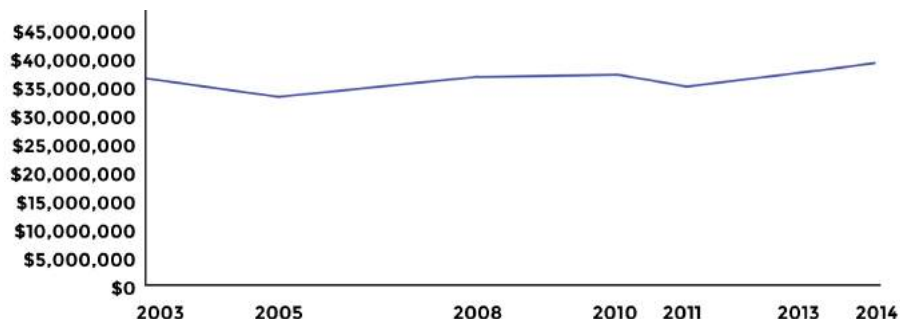


Figure i



### 2011 Municipal Grant Levels for Selected Cities and Regions, Per Capita and as a % of Total Budget

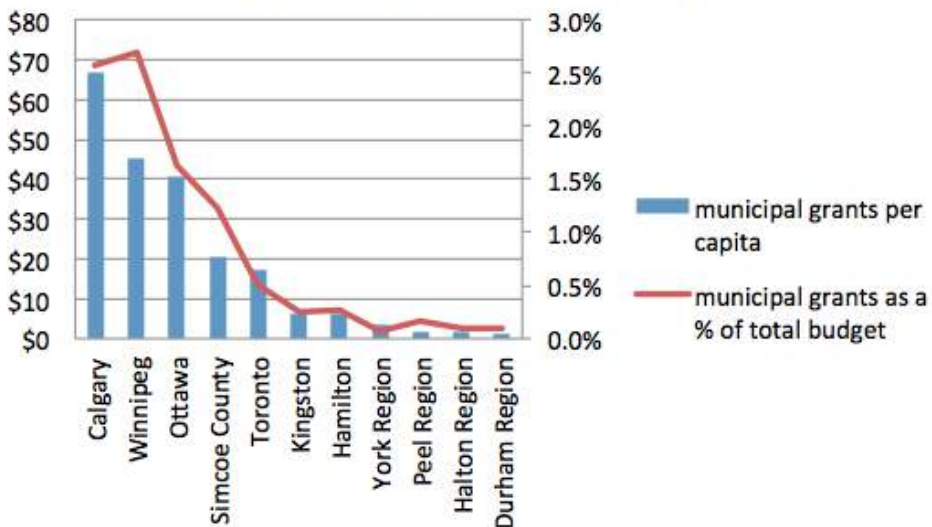


Figure ii

rent for nonprofit community organizations.<sup>7</sup> Prior to amalgamation, which took place in 1998, these arrangements were largely informal. After amalgamation, the City developed a policy on the use of City-owned property for nonprofit use at below market rents, and has refined that policy many times over the years. Eligibility criteria are:<sup>8</sup>

1. Organizations must have non-profit status;
2. The programs and services provided by the organization must be aligned with a City of Toronto divisional mandate;
3. The organization must provide services for Toronto residents; and
4. The mandate of the organization must not be the sole responsibility of a senior order of government.”

Less than 1% of City-owned properties are leased under the Below Market Rent program. Over 99% of City-owned properties are occupied by City Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Divisions. Under the Below Market Rent program in 2012, ninety-three nonprofit organizations were located and provided services in City-owned properties in 31 of 44 city wards.<sup>9</sup> These groups pay a nominal amount in rent, but cover the full operating costs for the space, including the cost of utilities. Presently, the City of Toronto is developing a return on investment (ROI) measure to assess the Below Market Rent program. This measure will consider the City’s investment against the value of the programs and services that nonprofit organizations provide that would not be possible if they had to pay full market rents.

### 3. WASTE COLLECTION FEE POLICY

For many years, the City has provided free solid waste collection for approximately 1,000 charities and nonprofit organizations. In recent years it has worked to reconcile this practice with the City’s new fee-based model for solid waste collection. In 2014, Toronto City Council passed a motion to implement the Waste Diversion Rate Waiver Program for charitable organizations that receive non-residential waste collection services. The new program replaces a more limited one, called the Reduced Rate Donated Goods Program. Through the new program, charitable organizations with non-residential waste collection services can apply to have their waste collection fees waived. “For charitable organizations that implement waste diversion practices, as demonstrated through an audit, 100% of their waste collection fees will be waived. The new program, to be implemented in April 2015, “recognizes the contributions that charities make to the City; mitigates the additional financial pressure that the new rate presents to the sector; encourages the sector to strengthen their waste reduction strategies and participation in the City’s diversion program; and decreases the administrative burden to the City to implement.”<sup>10</sup>

It’s not glamorous. But the Waste Diversion Rate Waiver Program will save charitable organizations approximately \$1.4 million annually. It is particularly important for charitable organizations that receive large volumes of donated goods, such as Goodwill. If the donated good cannot be used



for some reason, the organization must dispose of it. Those costs can quickly add up. The City's support will allow organizations to direct scarce resources to under-resourced and high priority work in local communities. At the same time, the program provides a financial incentive to encourage waste reduction.

#### **4. PROPERTY TAX REBATE POLICY**

The City of Toronto has a property tax rebate policy for registered charities. Registered charities that fulfill program requirements are eligible for a 40% rebate on their property taxes.<sup>11</sup> In the 2014 City budget, Toronto City Council set aside over \$6.5

million to cover the estimated rebate value for registered charities in the commercial and industrial property classes.<sup>12</sup> This policy helps organizations to direct more of their resources to critical programs and services in the community.

#### **5. PURCHASE OF SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

The City of Toronto enters into purchase of service agreements with many nonprofit community organizations to provide specific programs and services on a city-wide or local basis. In addition, the City delivers many services directly. This mixed approach to service delivery has evolved over

many decades, and is now used extensively to provide a wide range of services to support healthy, inclusive and economically vibrant communities, including: shelters and services for people who are homeless, employment services, recreation services, social housing, after-school and summer camp programs, child care programs, homes for the aged, health promotion and prevention, and environmental programs. In 2013, Toronto Public Health took over responsibility for administering the City's AIDS prevention and drug prevention grants. These grant programs are no longer part of CPIP and are now administered as purchase of service agreements.

## 6. COMMUNITY DATA PROGRAM

The City of Toronto plays a leadership role in the Canadian Council on Social Development's Community Data Program.<sup>13</sup> Through the Community Data Program, nonprofit community organizations and municipal governments in more than 20 communities across Canada are able to affordably access a large volume of population data, essential to community planning, service delivery development and social research. As the lead partner in Toronto's local data consortium, the City of Toronto administers the program locally,

holds regular partner meetings, provides training and capacity building workshops, and lends its expertise to the direction and data purchase arrangements at the national level. Nonprofit organizations pay a small fee to participate in the local data consortium, and gain access to CDP data. The City of Toronto's leadership has made it possible for nonprofit organizations to participate and benefit from this program. In turn, these organizations have used CDP data to benefit the broader community and community sector.

City investment supports a wide range of social programs that

promote inclusion, community education and civic engagement. The strength of this system lies in the extensive City-community partnerships that support it. Working with community service organizations, ethnoracial groups, cultural organizations and many others, the City has developed a service system more responsive than it would have been able to achieve on its own. It has been able to reach out to all parts of Toronto to work with changing populations, identifying evolving community needs and developing flexible, innovative and cost-effective ways to meet them.

# Methods

Social Planning Toronto (SPT) used a variety of methods to gather data about the work of Toronto's nonprofit community sector, the City of Toronto's investment in the sector, and the impact of the City's investment in the sector. An environmental scan was conducted to identify relevant literature, studies and government documents pertaining to the sector and the City's investment. City of Toronto staff in the Social Development, Finance and Administration division provided documentation and statistics regarding the Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP). SPT staff developed and launched a questionnaire for community organizations that received City of Toronto funding

through CPIP in 2013. Community agency staff members were consulted in the development of the project. SPT forged a partnership with the Toronto Arts Council to engage artists and arts organizations in this project. The questionnaire was modified slightly for use with artists and arts organizations that receive funding through the Toronto Arts Council (TAC). Results of the arts questionnaire are the focus of a separate report.

## DATA

The City of Toronto provided historic data on CPIP funding levels, information about the development of the CPIP program, and data on

the Community Service Partnerships (CSP) grants, the City's largest non-arts community grants program. Through the City of Toronto's open data initiative, SPT accessed the organizational names of 2013 CPIP grant recipients, information on whether the program was delivered on a local, area or city-wide basis, ward location of the organizations' headquarters and the amount of funding that each organization received under specific City of Toronto grant programs.

### Primary Function of Organizations

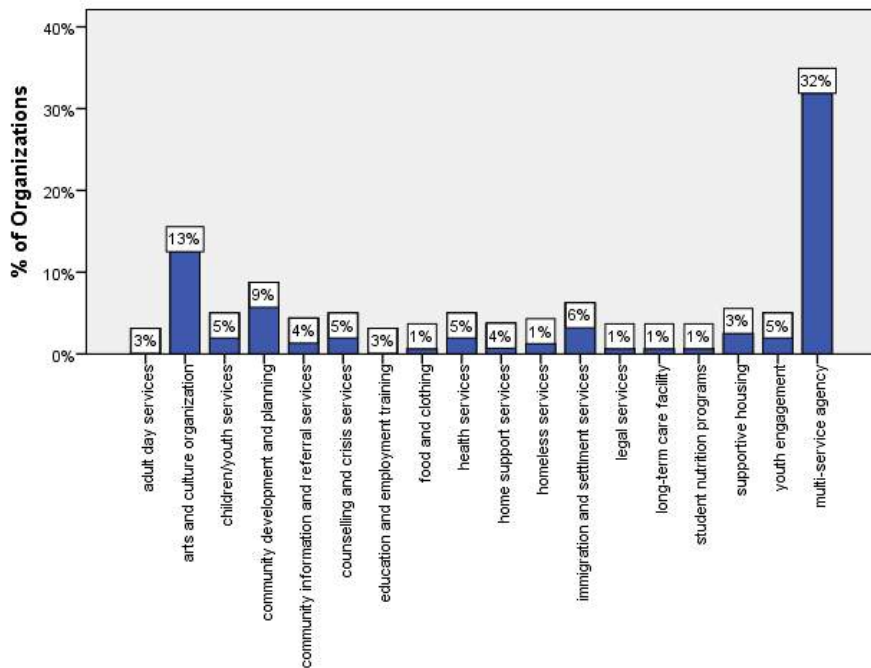


Figure iii

### Population Groups Served by Organizations

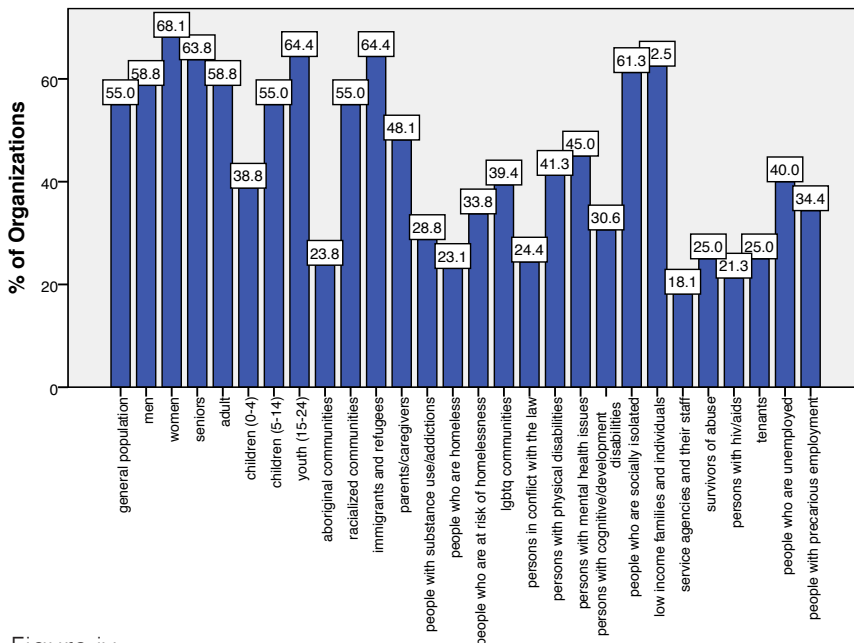


Figure iv

### QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire items included: organization name, contact name, contact information, main activity of the organization, services provided, geographic areas served (city-wide and ward information), population groups served, domains of well-being supported through CPIP funded programs, examples of individual, family and community impact of the organization's CPIP supported work, and information about evaluation practices and results. Questions on the organization's main activity and services provided were derived from a previous community services survey conducted by the City of Toronto.<sup>14</sup> The Canadian Index of Well-Being (CIW) was used to define eight domains of well-being: community vitality, democratic engagement, education, environment, healthy populations, leisure and culture, living standards and time use.<sup>15</sup> The CIW is an index that incorporates a broad range of indicators, taking into account the multiple factors that reflect and contribute to the quality of life of Canadians. Short descriptions for each domain were created based on longer definitions included in the CIW.

SPT staff used the City's 2013 CPIP grant recipient list to develop a database. SPT used its organizational contacts and conducted online searches to gather contact names and information for each organization. Out of a list of 338 organizations, contact information was obtained for 313 organizations. Twenty-five grant recipients were excluded due to lack of contact information. These recipients included groups receiving small, one-time grants,

and heritage grants. The City of Toronto's list includes Toronto Arts Council grant recipients. Organizations that received a TAC grant and no other City grants were included in the arts questionnaire rather than the community services survey.

An online survey was developed for data collection using SurveyMonkey. A letter was emailed to each organization describing the project and asking the organization to take part in the questionnaire, with a link provided. Extensive follow-up was conducted by phone and email to encourage participation.

**PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

One hundred and sixty organizations took part in the community services questionnaire out of 313 contacted for a response rate of 51.1%. A broad range of community service organizations participated. Multi-service agencies made up about one-third of participants, followed by arts and culture organizations representing 13% of participants and community development and planning groups representing 9% of responding organizations. (Most arts and culture organizations that receive City of Toronto funding do so through the Toronto Arts Council [TAC]. A separate report documents the results of the arts questionnaire with TAC recipients.)

Participating organizations are engaged in a broad range of service provision. Outreach, general community services, information and referral and advocacy were among the most common types of programs and services reported. Advocacy work, in this context, largely refers to individual

**Number of Participating Organizations Providing Services by Ward\***



Produced by Social Planning Toronto, 2014  
 Source: City of Toronto ward shapefile  
 Social Planning Toronto, Community Services survey

\* 79 participating organizations provide services on a local level as reflected on the map. In addition, 81 provide services on a city-wide basis.

Figure v

**Types of Programs and Services**

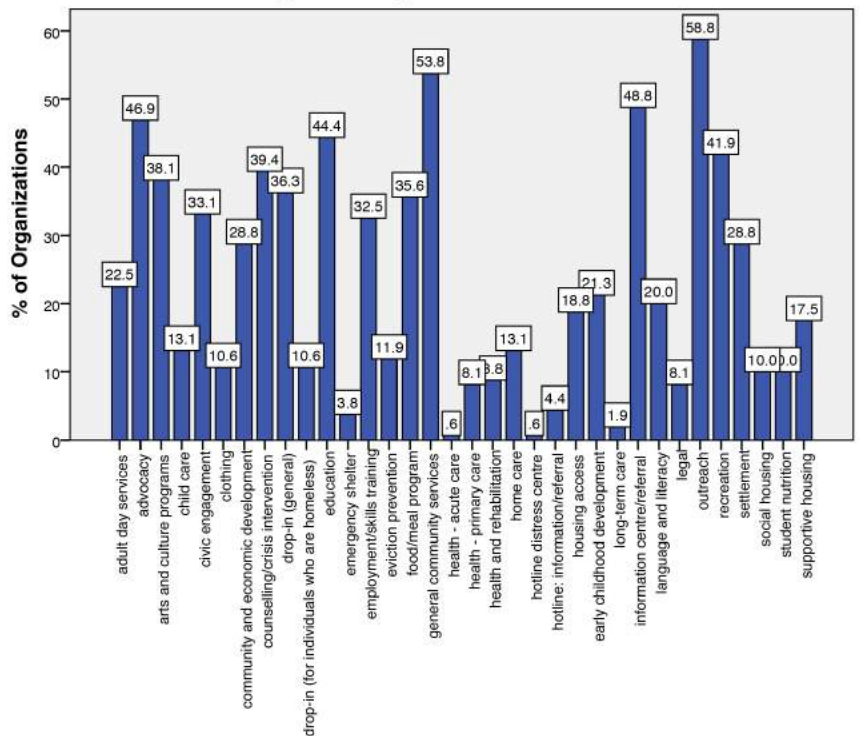


Figure vi



advocacy where workers support residents to navigate social services, health care services, and other government systems to access needed programs and services, and remedy problems that residents face in accessing programs and services.

Just over half of participating organizations provide services on a city-wide basis, with the other half working on a local basis in different areas of the city. In figure v, the map shows the number of organizations working on a local basis in each of the city's 44 wards. Survey respondents included a good mix of agencies operating on a city-wide and local basis, with all 44 wards represented.

Participating organizations work with a wide range of population groups and communities. Over half reported working with the general population. Women, low income families and individuals, immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors and people who are socially isolated were among the most common groups served by participating organizations.

## IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The City of Toronto's community grants go a long way. Through new investment from other orders of government, foundations and private fundraising efforts, community organizations leverage \$6.30 for every \$1 that the City contributes in grants.<sup>16</sup> That's more programs, more services, and more community needs met.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the nonprofit community services sector. In 2012, a total of 38,629 individuals volunteered their time, energy and expertise to the work of community organizations that are recipients of the City's Community Service Partnerships (CSP) grants. CSP is the City's largest non-arts community grants program.

These organizations reported 9,257,666 client contacts, 1,977,063 individuals served, and 1,549,175 program participants in 2012.

## DOMAINS OF WELL-BEING

In our survey of community organizations, participants were asked to identify all of the domains of well-being supported through their programs and services that receive funding from the City of Toronto. The Canadian Index of Well-Being's eight domains were used to categorize areas of impact. Through their City funding, participating organizations support many of the domains of well-being. Over 90% of agencies supported more than one domain of well-being. Over four out of five participating agencies identified community vitality and healthy populations as two domains of well-being supported by their City-funded work. Only a few

participating organizations had City-funded programs that supported the environment domain.

City of Toronto analyst notes from the 2012 City budget provide further details on various program areas under the CPIP umbrella.<sup>17</sup> In 2012, \$17.2 million was allocated for community services grants which supported 777 programs/projects and engaged 60,000 volunteers. Grants in the public health realm received \$6.343 million which supported 669 student nutrition programs serving 129,147 children and youth. In economic development, grants of \$387,000 supported 8-10 projects. In 2011, 146 projects under the Shelter, Support and Housing Administration division supported households with housing issues. This work supported 4,915 households with help accessing housing, 3,845 households with social housing applications, 3,621 households who were able to remain housed through stabilization services, and 995 households avoided eviction through program assistance. In 2011, \$260,000 in heritage grants supported 26 projects. A total of \$8,000 was allocated in 2005 to cover property taxes from 2005-2010 for several community organizations located in City-owned space under the Below Market Rent program.

According to our survey of CPIP-supported community organizations, 48,347 individuals volunteered in 148 organizations in 2013. These volunteers contributed almost 1.8 million volunteer hours – the equivalent of 892 full-time positions. TD Economics has used the average hourly wage to calculate an economic value for volunteer contributions, suggesting

that the hourly rate is still likely to underestimate the true value of volunteerism.<sup>18</sup> In August 2014, the average hourly wage in Canada was \$24.45. The economic value of volunteerism in our 148 participating organizations alone amounts to over \$43.6 million. While the dollar figure is impressive, the value of volunteer contributions goes well beyond the economic factor. The participation of residents in the nonprofit community sector is central to our work in creating community and fostering a strong civil society.

Organizations were asked to provide up to three examples from their programs supported through City of Toronto community grants and describe how these programs are making a difference in the community. Participants shared compelling stories describing the wide-ranging impact of community programs and services on individuals, families and communities across the city. In this section, we highlight the major themes emerging from our analysis, provide examples from participating organizations and link issues raised by respondents with other research. Respondents described the impact of 291 different programs and services.

While varying widely in terms of focus, activities, population groups engaged and locations of service, many common themes emerged from our analysis of these programs and services.

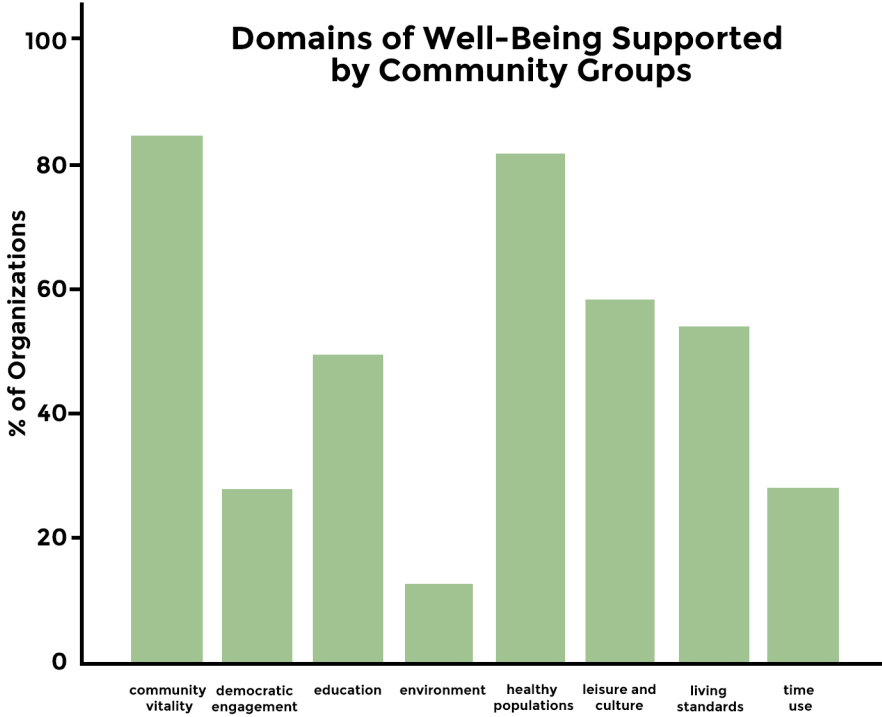


Figure 1

**WHAT ARE DOMAINS OF WELL-BEING?**

- Community vitality (fosters a sense of belonging and friendship, promotes volunteering and community participation, reduces crime including violent crime, improves safety and builds trust)
- Democratic engagement (supports the participation of residents in elections, public policy and political decision-making)
- Education (provides education and training to improve literacy and skill levels for children, youth and adults)
- Environment (works to improve the physical environment)
- Healthy populations (supports the physical, mental and social well-being of the population)
- Leisure and culture (supports forms of human expression including the arts and recreational activities)
- Living standards (works to reduce poverty and inequality, and improve access to economic security, good jobs, healthy food, safe and decent housing and a strong social safety net)
- Time use (works to promote good work-life balance to support health and well-being, access to leisure and family time)

	Adult drop-in program for people who are homeless and precariously housed	Civic literacy workshops on how to participate in political decision-making at City Hall	Health promotion programs to support healthy choices, stress reduction, work-life balance
Community vitality	X		X
Democratic engagement		X	
Education		X	X
Environment			
Healthy populations	X		X
Leisure and culture	X		
Living standards	X		
Time use			X

Figure 2

Refer to Figure 2 for a few examples of programs related to specific domains of well-being.



### **COMMUNITY SERVICES ARE MULTI-FACETED AND PROVIDE ENTRY POINTS TO OTHER SERVICES**

A single community program can lead to many positive outcomes. For example, a community food program facilitates people's access to nutritious food and support for healthy living. It also provides opportunities for participants to make friends, build support systems, gain knowledge, develop food preparation and leadership skills, obtain food handling certification to assist with employment access, take part in civic action to support community food programs or challenge public policies that undermine food and income security, reduce food costs to free up income for other necessities, and decrease social isolation and stress. A person's access to a single program can also be an entry point to access other important community resources through connection with program staff and other participants.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES FOSTER BELONGING, REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION**

Many service providers described how their programs foster a sense of belonging, community, and family among participants while reducing social isolation. Examples include:

- a sports program that builds positive and caring relationships with low income families and youth
- a variety of community garden, food and cooking programs including programs with a focus on immigrant women, Toronto Community Housing

- residents, newcomers and ethnoracial Francophone youth
- seniors programs including programs with newcomer, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Tamil, Tibetan and LGBT seniors; several are provided in the participants' native tongue
- seniors programs to prevent and respond to elder abuse and neglect
- a program to teach ASL to families in their homes in order for them to better communicate with their Deaf child
- a young women's empowerment group to discuss issues, learn coping strategies, find ways to overcome challenges, develop healthy relationships and body image and support LGBT communities
- a community development program with the Filipino community in Toronto to address workplace abuse, isolation, family separation and economic hardship
- volunteer programs that support local community engagement
- support groups for people with mental health issues, trauma survivors, survivors of torture and Aboriginal women leaving prison
- programs that reconnect individuals to their culture and connect people across cultures
- regular follow-up and engagement of a multi-disciplinary health team with residents living in supportive housing
- an adult drop-in program that provides a welcome haven for people who are homeless and under-housed
- a volunteer program that creates accessible materials for people with visual impairments

- a street art mural project that engages local communities and creates a sense of stewardship of the neighbourhood
- a program that supports and connects individuals with aphasia
- a program for newcomers that promotes a sense of belonging in their new country
- neighbourhood and cultural festivals that bring residents together, connect residents with employers and service providers, and celebrate cultural holidays
- community programs offered in various languages to facilitate access and inclusion

In small and large ways, community services are creating community and reducing social isolation across the city.

## SENIORS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

Several participants emphasized how community programs reduce social isolation for seniors, and the importance of addressing isolation among seniors including older, frail and vulnerable seniors, and newcomer and LGBT older adults.

According to a 2012 Statistics Canada study, 20% of seniors do not participate in weekly or even monthly activities.<sup>19</sup> In Toronto, many seniors, especially women, live alone. In 2011, 26.8% of Toronto seniors aged 65 and over reported living alone - over 95,000 seniors.<sup>20</sup> Among senior women, 34.1% live alone compared to only 17.4% of senior men. Senior women make up almost three-quarters of seniors living alone. The gap is wider among seniors aged 75 and over where 41% of women and 18.8% of men live alone.

There are serious health consequences to social isolation among the elderly, including earlier death. According to a recent UK study, social isolation is associated with long-standing illnesses

such as chronic lung disease, arthritis, impaired mobility and depressive symptoms.<sup>21</sup>

A study conducted in California found that loneliness contributes to a decline in the ability to carry out activities of daily living, as well as difficulty in achieving everyday tasks such as reaching for items in upper cupboards and stair climbing. In extreme cases, social isolation can be deadly. A review of studies of social isolation concluded that social isolation is as strong a factor in early death as alcohol consumption and smoking more than 15 cigarettes a day.

Our population is aging. Forecasts estimate that the number of adults aged 55 and over will increase from 680,945 in 2011 to 1.2 million people by 2041.<sup>22</sup> Community services that reduce social isolation, contribute to the physical and mental health of seniors, and are linguistically and culturally appropriate are integral to meeting the current and future needs of our aging population.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES PROVIDE A LIFE LINE

Several organizations provide critical programs and services for survivors of trauma, including

survivors of psychological, physical and sexual violence, war trauma and torture, women escaping intimate partner violence, and adult and child survivors of childhood sexual, physical and psychological

abuse. Community services are truly a life line for residents struggling with the damaging effects of trauma. Program examples include:

- a partnership with arts and community service organizations to provide a trauma-informed art therapy group
- a support group for survivors of torture
- programs and services for Aboriginal women leaving prison including housing help; once housed women are better prepared to address substance use, trauma, unemployment, parenting and heal from trauma
- intensive individual and group counselling to help survivors develop coping strategies and heal from trauma
- a program to protect and support children who are testifying against their abusers in the courts
- an assessment directed therapy program for children to address sexual, physical and psychological abuse and its effects including post-traumatic stress disorder
- a psycho-educational support group for women who have experienced violence or abuse to strengthen coping and healing strategies and develop strategies to reduce the risk of future violence
- a program to support newcomer women experiencing spousal violence
- a number of programs to acknowledge, prevent and address elder abuse in the community, including a Chinese elder abuse hotline, programs with Tamil seniors and South Asian seniors
- a 24/7 helpline that provides

access to mental health support, crisis and suicide prevention; providing most of its support in hours when other organizations are closed

Community programs play a critical role in supporting trauma survivors through the healing process.

Many community organizations provide programs and services that respond to the basic survival needs of people who are homeless, precariously housed and living in poverty. Due to the failure of our public policies to ensure access to safe, decent and affordable housing or an adequate income to allow people to make ends meet and live in dignity, many of our neighbours struggle with basic survival needs. Community agencies play an important role in responding to those needs. Program examples include: emergency food assistance and meal programs, and showers and laundry for people who are homeless.

Many agencies extend beyond the provision of support for basic survival needs to include a range of programs and services to support longer term needs such as housing stability and employment access. Program examples include:

- an innovative program for young, sole supporting mothers receiving social assistance that provides tools, support and opportunities to become self-sufficient; women have had great success in this program, increasing their activity in the community, becoming stronger role models for their children and gaining employment
- drop-in programs including social support, and employment and housing help
- a community development program with Filipino migrant

and immigrant workers to address workplace abuse, family separation, social isolation and economic hardship, and support social change work to improve related public policies

- workshop resources for education and community organization workers to reduce barriers to school success for children who are homeless
- an art program for precariously housed women
- a distress hotline providing regular and after-hours support when other community services are unavailable
- a harm reduction program for people who are homeless and substance users
- a program to support the health of sex trade workers
- homeless outreach program to provide long-term support for people with complex needs
- one stop referral and direct services for women escaping violence and at risk of homelessness
- drop-in program to support physical, mental and social well-being of marginalized queer and trans people who are homeless
- initiatives to support self-advocacy among program participants
- programs working with people who are incarcerated to plan for release, promote reintegration into the community, help with housing, promote public safety and reduce recidivism
- advocacy calling for systemic change to address poverty, inequality, precarious employment, discrimination, housing instability and homelessness

In addition to the provision of emergency supports, community organizations provide and link residents with services to address their longer term needs, and advocate for policy change to address these human rights issues at a systemic level.

### THE HIGH COST OF VIOLENCE

Violence, in its many forms, has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. Violence against women represents a threat to women's lives, physical and mental health, family and personal relationships, sense of safety, well-being and self-esteem, and employment earnings from time taken to respond to physical and mental health issues and criminal court matters. It costs us all as a society, including in financial terms. The financial costs associated with spousal violence in Canada are estimated at \$7.4 billion.<sup>23</sup> In related research, the economic costs of child abuse in Canada are estimated at \$15.7 trillion, associated with judicial, social services, education, employment, and personal costs.<sup>24</sup> Investments in prevention, early intervention, counselling, and mental health support are critical to the well-being of community members. They also make good economic sense.



## POVERTY, PRECARIOUS WORK, HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING NEED ON THE RISE

It is no wonder that the demand for community services to respond to the consequences of homelessness and economic hardship is on the rise. Poverty and homelessness are increasing; almost half of Toronto workers are in precarious employment; and the waiting list for affordable housing is at an all-time high. Unemployment rates hover around 10% with much higher rates for youth. Unemployment and underemployment disproportionately affect racialized and Aboriginal groups, as well as, people with disabilities. Beyond the provision of emergency services, a concerted effort is needed to address the roots of poverty, homelessness and economic insecurity. Social Planning Toronto and the Alliance for a Poverty-Free Toronto in "Toward a Poverty Elimination Strategy for the City of Toronto" called on the City of Toronto to introduce a poverty elimination strategy for the city.<sup>25</sup> Toronto City Council has directed staff to develop and present a strategy for consideration by early 2015. To reduce the need for emergency programs and services to alleviate the consequences of poverty, we must dramatically reduce and work towards the elimination of poverty.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

It is difficult to find a single community program that does not support the physical and/or mental health of community members. The vast majority of participants identified positive health outcomes as an impact of their programs. Community services support healthy living through health promotion and disease and injury prevention workshops, food, gardening, cooking and nutrition programs, sports, fitness and recreational activities, mental health and addiction programs and emotional support, and health services such as foot care, blood pressure testing and support for living with chronic conditions, as well as support to caregivers to allow them to take care of their own health and wellbeing.

Several participants described programs focused on issues other than health but where health and well-being are also supported. In one program, Deaf instructors provide ASL training to families in their own homes to allow families to better communicate with their Deaf child. The program also promotes health and well-being by reducing stress, frustration and anxiety among all family members. An after-school homework program supports children's educational achievement. At the same time, the program reduces stress for busy parents. Transportation and accompaniment programs help seniors get to medical appointments, reducing health emergencies. Telephone reassurance and medication reminder programs have a similar impact. As mentioned previously, community-based

programs provide opportunities for social connection, an important factor in health promotion. Building a social support system is key to our health and well-being.

The social determinants of health recognize the powerful structural factors that shape health outcomes. Canadian researchers Juha Mikkonen and Dennis Raphael identified fourteen social determinants of health: income and income distribution, education, unemployment and job security, employment and working conditions, early childhood development, food insecurity, housing, social exclusion, social safety network, health services, Aboriginal status, gender, race, and disability.<sup>26</sup> While community services respond to and support many of the social determinants, broader public policy at the provincial and federal level has profound effects on our physical and mental health that are often unacknowledged in discussions of health and well-being. For example, the message might be "eat your fruits and vegetables." But with no acknowledgement of the effect of poverty on people's food choices, the message rings hollow for many families who cannot access fresh produce.

Structural factors such as the lack of a national affordable housing strategy, woefully inadequate income support programs, lack of access to Employment Insurance for the majority of unemployed workers, the lack of high quality, affordable child care, a poverty-level minimum wage and poor enforcement of employment standards, effects of racism and discrimination on access to employment, housing and health services, and the widespread and

growing trend of precarious and low wage work substantially determine our health outcomes.

Participants identified public policy and social change work as critical to health outcomes. One organization provided the example of public education and advocacy work pertaining to refugee health. During Refugee Rights Day, community organizations brought attention to the federal government's decision to dramatically reform the Interim Federal Health Program, Canada's health insurance program for refugee claimants. Community organizations conducted public education work and advocated for policy change in response to the 2012 federal decision to deny certain groups of failed refugee claimants access to critical health services including basic, preventative and emergency care. (In July 2014, the Federal Court declared the cuts unlawful and unconstitutional, describing the federal government's actions as constituting "cruel and unusual treatment or punishment" and stated that the targeting of vulnerable adults and children "shocks the conscience and outrages our standards of decency." The federal government plans to appeal the ruling.) Community agencies are important actors in drawing upon front line knowledge to inform community engagement in public policy processes.

Several organizations identified public education and engagement initiatives to address income security as key to improving community health. In addition to assisting individuals to access income security programs, organizations also supported



### **STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS: GETTING OUR KIDS OFF TO A GREAT START**

The City of Toronto is an important partner in investing in the health, well-being and school success of Toronto's children and youth. Along with the provincial government, local school boards, parents and private donors, the City invests in Toronto's student nutrition programs. Each week, 149,000 students across the city take part in breakfast, lunch and snack programs.<sup>27</sup> Student nutrition programs help children and youth get off to a good start, making them better prepared to learn and participate in school. These programs help prevent obesity, support the development of healthy eating habits, and contribute to higher academic performance and reduced behavioral problems.

With 29% of Toronto's children living in poverty, our city has the

dubious distinction of having the highest rate of child poverty in the GTA, and shares the top rate for Canadian urban centres with Saint John.<sup>28</sup> Rates are even higher for children from Aboriginal and racialized groups. With many families struggling to make ends meet, student nutrition programs are a critical support for families. Toronto Public Health has adopted a five-year investment plan to expand student nutrition programs to more high-needs neighbourhoods. In 2014, Toronto City Council supported the second year of increased investment in the program.<sup>29</sup> Using a welcoming, inclusive and non-stigmatizing approach, community organizations and local schools ensure access to these essential programs.

### **TORONTO DROP-IN CENTRES TAKE A REFLEXIVE APPROACH**

Toronto has a strong network of at least 49 drop-in centres operating across the city. Drop-ins work with people who are homeless, precariously housed and socially isolated. By engaging people who access service in independent, responsible activities that are valued in the daily operations and structured activities of drop-ins, these centres are able to support people to achieve positive outcomes in a number of domains. The success of drop-ins is not only in what they do, but also in how they do it. This reflexive approach leverages and maximizes resources to underpin a layering of positive outcomes for both organizations and for service recipients satisfying both fiscal rationality and community building perspectives.

increase to social assistance and disability support rates and the minimum wage as important measures to improve food security, nutritional status and physical and mental health.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES SUPPORT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Several participants identified community development programs that facilitate civic engagement and leadership development in the community. These programs included a focus on youth, young women, newcomers from a variety of communities and linguistic groups, seniors and adults generally. These programs supported democratic participation, civic literacy, community-led program development, community leadership on boards of directors and advisory committees, leadership skills training, and neighbourhood building. Participants had opportunities to increase their skills, knowledge, confidence and social networks, expand expertise to increase employment options, make positive social change in the community, support community cohesion and expand resources, services and opportunities for members of the broader community. Program examples include:

- community planning of events and program evaluation, and advisory group participation in the creation of new programs
  - a neighbourhood building program to engage residents in collaboration on local issues
  - a volunteer and community development program that brings people together across ages and immigration status;
- connects community with elected representatives, provides opportunities to build personal networks
  - a Filipino community development program that facilitates community engagement in policy analysis and social change work; the group's work informed federal changes to the Live-In Caregiver program
  - community engagement with residents with disabilities from racialized groups; working to ensure under-represented groups are represented in community development initiatives including crime prevention, literacy, civic literacy; including recommendations to improve access to City services
  - a youth community development program including mentoring and training opportunities; built skills and leadership capacity, worked to reduce barriers for youth in accessing resources and services
  - civic engagement with community members to increase participation in the democratic process, support newcomers to become citizens and volunteers to take part in community life
  - civic literacy project with people with disabilities; provided the ABC's of non-partisan civic involvement primarily at the municipal level
  - deputation training and civic literacy education in under-resourced neighbourhoods; supported residents to participate in the City budget process to raise their concerns with elected representatives
- civic engagement with newcomers to increase their knowledge and participation in civic life; including community meetings with elected representatives, visits to City Hall and the legislature, workshops on political system; fosters sense of inclusion in civic affairs
  - civic engagement skills building with Francophone community regarding HIV prevention
  - a justice education project for newcomer women and girls; including visits to civic institutions like the courts and police to address misconceptions
  - participatory action research with the Latin American community in Toronto to better understand various forms of engagement in the democratic process and support participation
  - leadership training with workers to encourage participation in activities to improve working conditions
  - community ambassadors training program engages youth and newcomers to develop leadership skills and implement projects in the community
  - providing volunteer leadership roles; participants share their skills with the community
  - empower children to take leadership roles in arts, social, recreational and cultural activities
  - summer camp leadership training for youth
  - coaching and mentoring programs to build leadership skills for youth

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION, AND EMPOWERMENT

City of Toronto investment supports the development of young leaders in neighbourhoods across Toronto. Youth leadership programs provide young men and women with opportunities to develop important skills and expertise, explore new ideas and directions, examine self and cultural identities, build confidence and self-esteem, connect and contribute to community, and play meaningful roles in civic life. Programs can empower young people to challenge injustices and work collectively to make social change. These programs recognize the potential of young people and their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Programs

focused on young women and racialized youth recognize and challenge the gender-based and racial inequities and discrimination reflected in systems of power and decision-making. Programs offer positive environments for young people to get support, make connections and build camaraderie.

In “The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence,” Dr. Alvin Curling and the Hon. Roy McMurtry stated that *“youth most likely to be at immediate risk of involvement in serious violence if they: have a deep sense of alienation and low self-esteem; have little empathy for others and suffer from impulsivity; believe that they are oppressed, held down, unfairly treated and*

*neither belong to nor have a stake in the broader society; believe that they have no way to be heard through other channels; have no sense of hope.”*<sup>30</sup>

The report identifies the powerful structural inequities that contribute to youth violence and puts forward many recommendations for change. Six years since the report’s release, we still have a long way to go to realize the changes envisioned by the authors. Certainly youth leadership, youth empowerment and youth-led programs are one important vehicle to engage and amplify the voices of young people, particularly those marginalized.

- employing young women as youth leaders to co-facilitate workshops

Community organizations provide the opportunity and support for residents to develop and use their leadership skills and have a voice in the democratic process. This work has ripple effects, benefiting the broader community through new program development, program expansion and public policy change.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER

Community programs contribute to safer communities in a variety of ways. Participants identified programs that increase safety for individuals at risk of violence and harm from others, as well as self-harm. Organizations described programs that provide safe spaces from the streets for people who are homeless or precariously housed, safe spaces from racism, homophobia and discrimination, and safe spaces to discuss hard issues like abuse and trauma.

Safety was a major theme for children, youth and seniors programs, for vulnerable workers, for people with disabilities and cognitive conditions, for LGBTQ youth, for young women, for Aboriginal women, and for tenants. Program examples include:

- employment, housing, mental and physical health services and support for Aboriginal women leaving prison; support reduces chances that people will re-offend; having stable housing allows women to better address issues of trauma, violence, addiction



## MAKING TORONTO SAFER

In 2010, the John Howard Society of Toronto commissioned a cost-benefit analysis of transitional housing and supports (THS) for two groups of ex-prisoners: homeless ex-prisoners, many of whom were charged with offences such as petty crime, drug possession and public disturbances; and s810 sexual offenders who have conditions, under Section 810 peace bonds, tied to their release in order to protect public safety.<sup>31</sup>

The research is clear. Transitional housing and supports reduce recidivism, increase public safety and are much cheaper than the cost of incarceration. On the financial side, the public savings are \$350,000 per homeless

person and \$109,000 per Section 810 prisoner. Most importantly, transitional housing and supports have a dramatic impact on public safety. For Section 810 prisoners that did not receive THS, 42.5% re-offended, of which almost one-third of cases involved violent crime. In comparison, only 2.2% of Section 810 prisoners with THS re-offended.

It can be difficult to build public support for programs and services for ex-prisoners. However, modest investments in public safety pay off in big ways. Effective solutions protect public safety and save public dollars.

- intergenerational volunteer program increases seniors' sense of safety and security by developing new networks beyond the family and acquaintances
- housing help that facilitates access to safe, affordable housing
- program that engages street-involved Aboriginal women and youth in examination of safety concerns and solutions, and development of community safety plan for front line agencies if women go missing
- hearing care counselling program for seniors and other adults with hearing loss; outfits home with safety devices to allow people to make and receive calls, know someone is at the door without having to leave the door open, addresses fire safety concerns and have better visual access to safety in the home
- program for people with aphasia; provides welcoming, safe and supportive environment
- sex trade workers program to increase safety; promotes bad date booklets, peer-based training, outreach, education and support
- Somali parents group provides opportunities to learn about rights and strategies for supporting their children in the education system
- community safety program that brings together youth and police to improve communication and trust
- programs that respond to issues of fire safety for seniors
- counselling programs with children who have experienced

- and employment
- new meeting space for community in area with high rate of gang violence, supported by City of Toronto capital investment
- positive spaces for queer and trans youth to explore issues, connect with others and promote cross-cultural understanding in Toronto's inner suburbs
- an arts-based program that provides a safe space for LGBTQ youth
- a community program to develop a neighbourhood

- safety plan
- volunteer programs for older adults in diverse communities; builds connection and trust, allowing seniors to disclose elder abuse and neglect
- safe inclusive Toronto streets program provides forum for people with disabilities to learn self-defence skills and self-advocate on street navigational hazards
- seniors assistance home maintenance program matches seniors with brokered workers to provide affordable help with home maintenance issues

sexual abuse, providing safe environment to disclose abuse

- primary prevention programs with children and youth to reduce vulnerability to exploitation and violence and provide advice on how to report abuse
- safe, supervised programs for children and youth
- outdoor programs that promote connection with nature in safe, supervised settings
- advocacy initiatives that support public policy that build a strong and cohesive community and address basic issues of safety such as access to safe and affordable housing

Safety and security are basic human needs. In a myriad of ways, community organizations are making our communities safer.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES OPERATE AS COMMUNITY HUBS**

Several participants described their agencies as community hubs, providing space for community programs, and for groups to meet and hold community events. Community access to public space is a critical issue in Toronto, particularly in under-resourced neighbourhoods. In addition to offering important programs, these centres are a gathering place for residents and provide the physical space for community initiatives. In some instances, the City of Toronto has provided capital dollars to invest in the development and renovation of community spaces, as well as program funding. Outdoor spaces were also mentioned as sites for residents to connect with nature. Physically accessible, warm and welcoming space is an essential resource in communities.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES ADVANCE EQUITY, CHALLENGE INJUSTICE**

Advancement of equity issues, challenges to injustice and promotion of human rights are at the heart of the community sector's work. A number of participants described the impact of advocacy initiatives – providing training to support individuals in self-advocacy, advocating at an individual level with and on behalf of program participants, and working collectively with community members and other agencies to advocate for systemic change at the public policy level. Research and public education are important components of systemic social change work. This work may be aimed at advancing human rights on the ground, safeguarding vital programs from budget cuts, expanding much needed services to address unmet needs, and transforming decision-making processes to become more inclusive and participatory. Usually, it requires engagement over the long haul. Program examples include:

- Refugee Rights Day facilitates important public education work to advance access and equity goals for immigrants, refugees, migrant workers and non-status immigrants
- individual advocacy and support for self-advocacy with community members experiencing racism, discrimination and problems accessing programs and services; including letter-writing and referrals to organizations such as legal services
- advocacy on behalf of children who have experienced sexual abuse and for children who testify against abusers in court

- building self-advocacy skills with Tibetan seniors
- youth programs that provide opportunities for self-advocacy to improve their well-being
- Filipino community development program to advocate for better public policies including changes to Live-In Caregiver program and the minimum wage
- training to support self-advocacy for people with disabilities and advocacy for social inclusion
- a civic engagement project that supports advocacy to address inequities in immigration and refugee law
- youth engagement leadership program that advances community food justice for people of colour
- justice education program to increase awareness of discrimination and decrease stigma
- leadership project to address inequities that street-based sex trade workers face
- work to address structural and systemic inequities for racialized groups
- townhall, workshops and reports focused on inequities faced by people with disabilities
- art-based workshops on rights
- workers' rights education with Mandarin-speaking newcomers
- train-the-trainer workers' rights program to increase knowledge of labour legislation for self-advocacy and to share with others
- tenant rights workshops
- civic literacy programs to better understand rights

Community services engage diverse groups of residents in discussion, training and action to create a more just society.



## **PUBLIC POLICY, THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

When we lack strong public policies – social assistance, disability support, public pensions, affordable housing, minimum wage, job creation, employment standards, migrant worker protections, immigration and refugee policy, for example – community members suffer. Nonprofit agencies are frequently left to respond to the crises that result, the fallout for individuals and families in the community, and compounding issues where

one problem grows and snowballs into others. For example, how many people, and how much time and resources are dedicated to providing emergency food support, emergency shelter and other crisis response because social assistance and disability support rates don't cover basic needs, wages and working hours are insufficient, employment standards are often not upheld, and affordable housing is scarce?

Social change work aims to work collectively with residents to push for strong public policies that improve the quality of life in our communities. In turn, strong public policies would lessen demands on organizations to respond to immediate and multiple crises, and would allow agencies to turn more attention to the medium and long term work of community building, outside of the realm of crisis response.



### **THERE IS NO TORONTO WITHOUT THE ARTS**

The arts play a multi-faceted role in the lives of Toronto residents. Arts and culture is a powerful contributor to Toronto's economy, contributing \$11.3 billion to the city's GDP.<sup>32</sup> For every \$1 the City of Toronto invests in nonprofit arts programs, organizations are able to leverage another \$12.46 from other levels of government and the private sector. For every \$1 invested by the City, the nonprofit arts sector brings in another \$8.26 in earned revenues.

The arts enrich the lives of residents and provide a pathway for creative expression. Arts

programs bring residents together, offer opportunities for people to utilize and develop skills, and help individuals to explore, heal and recover from trauma. Trauma-informed arts programs can offer individuals alternative and complementary ways to examine and recover from experiences of psychological and physical violence, including intimate partner violence, child abuse, war trauma and torture. Many multi-service organizations integrate arts programs in their services to the community.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES FACILITATE CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND EXPLORATION

Many organizations offer arts-based programs. These programs provide an avenue for creative expression, support conflict resolution, teach pro-social communication skills, offer leadership opportunities, aid in personal and community healing, support literacy initiatives, enable individuals with low income to access art programs, and help build strong bonds in communities. Participants identified a range of arts-based programs, working with every age group, across cultures and in every corner of the city. Program examples include:

- drama programs for children
- literacy initiative through the arts
- arts project engaging large number of students in the production of murals, mosaics, street furniture and public art
- pottery and painting with older adults
- arts programs with youth that promote pro-social communication skills and conflict resolution
- expressive arts program with people living with HIV
- intergenerational arts program with students and seniors
- a cultural hub that is home to dozens of artists and arts organizations; a vibrant meeting place
- arts programs at boys and girls club
- women's arts program
- after-school programs including the arts
- arts-informed approaches with youth
- arts program with Mandarin speaking seniors



"This past year [at community organization] has allowed me to function in a supportive environment, to get answers to my questions from caring staff and find out about community resources, e.g. housing, mental health issues, food program, etc."

"I came in for a bag of food and also found much needed peer support and opportunities to be engaged, to become a volunteer and to contribute to the community. I was referred to other programs that also helped me rebuild my life."

"I received the help I needed, and now I volunteer to help others. These services changed my life. I implore you to ensure help is there for others."

"The CSP grant from City of Toronto is crucial to our program as it allows us to subsidize many of the children in our community. Our community is predominantly new immigrants, low income families, single parents and we are in a high crime neighbourhood. It is important to keep the children in a well supervised nurturing environment where they can learn and grow to become the future of this community. Through this grant, we are able to outreach to more families who need our services."

"The funding from City of Toronto has been vital in moving our organization from a centre of addressing immediate concerns (short-term) to engaging all women to come up with our own solutions (and funding!) to support the positive work in our community, heal from trauma, and assist others."

"Our City of Toronto funded work supports community programs that help seniors remain independent, safe, and live fulfilling lives. The funds are leveraged with many volunteer hours to help vulnerable citizens stay safe and healthy. The funds not only help to make our city a better city, they are essential to many people across the city!"

"Many thanks to the City of Toronto for funding programs provided to the Deaf community. Without it fewer disadvantaged Deaf adults and families would access goods and services, information and communication, education, housing, employment, and engagement in their families and in the community."

"City of Toronto funding is vital to our in-depth work with our local communities. It allows us to be both specific and targeted, and open and general in our program delivery. It has been stable and flexible and allowed us to grow and adapt to meet our communities' needs. The City is responsive and trusting in what we want to do, it understands what we want to achieve. Our goals are the City's goals."

"We would like to offer our thanks to the City of Toronto for providing valuable resources in the community to support survivors of abuse and their healing process. The communities are stronger, healthier, and more inclusive because of the City of Toronto's support."

"CPIP funding is vital to the continuation of our work - it leverages funding from United Way Toronto, other foundations and orders of government, and donations of time and money to enable our organization to be an effective support for local and city-wide community organizations."

# Next Steps

## **TAKING A PAGE FROM THE ARTS COMMUNITY**

It's been a long road to achieving new investment in Toronto's arts and culture sector. Over the past 13 years, Toronto artists and arts organizations campaigned vigorously for new investment.<sup>33</sup> The Beautiful City campaign was born, calling for the introduction of a billboard tax to generate new revenue for arts in the public sphere. In 2009, the billboard bylaw was passed, introducing this new revenue source. In 2010, Toronto City Council voted for a multi-year plan to increase per capita arts funding to \$25, up from \$18 at the time. But the billboard industry challenged the new tax in court, and it took until 2013 for new investment to begin to flow to Toronto's arts and culture sector. In 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the billboard tax. In 2013, Toronto City Council committed an additional \$22.5 million to arts and culture, including an increase of \$6 million in the first year. Following a 5-year investment strategy, the City of Toronto's contributions to the arts are increasing annually and set to reach \$25 per capita by 2017.

Similarly, Toronto Public Health is in the second year of a 5-year investment strategy to expand student nutrition programs throughout Toronto. Despite population growth and mounting demands on community services, Toronto City Council has no such plan for investment in nonprofit community services. Political commitment to safeguarding and enhancing nonprofit community services has been less than solid. For example, in 2012, community grants were slated for a 9.8% cut in the City of Toronto's budget. In the final

moments of the City budget process, a motion to safeguard several public and community services, including community grants, from budget cuts passed by one single vote. In 2013, a motion that resulted in a historic increase to community grants passed by one single vote as well! These recent votes demonstrate the instability of the funding environment for our vital community services.

## **IT'S TIME FOR A NEW INVESTMENT PLAN FOR NONPROFIT COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Our city's capacity to ensure the continued safety, leadership, inclusion, engagement and opportunity for all its residents is greatly impacted by the levels of investment in community services. Despite the important work facilitated through the City's investment, major service gaps remain and organizations struggle to meet the needs in local communities. City of Toronto and Social Planning Toronto research studies have documented the challenges faced by community organizations to meet local needs, operating in a constrained funding environment. The City of Toronto's 2003 Community Agency Survey documented problems for the sector that undermine service access in the community, including restrictive and time-limited funding, funding arrangements that fail to cover core costs, high rates of staff turnover and burnout, and concerns regarding long-term sustainability and capacity of organizations.<sup>34</sup>

In 2009 and 2010, Social Planning Toronto, working with its social planning partners across Ontario, conducted surveys with

nonprofit community organizations studying the impact of the Great Recession.<sup>35,36</sup> In 2009, 135 Toronto agencies took part, and in 2010, 109 did. Toronto results revealed the dramatic impact of the economic downturn on agencies and their capacity to meet local needs. In 2010, 60% reported experiencing greater demand for services since the downturn. Among these agencies, 94% experienced an increase in the number of residents seeking services, 48% reported an increase in the need for crisis management and less time for prevention work, and 64% reported an increase in the number of people with complex needs requiring assistance. Almost half were unable to respond to the increase in community needs, citing a difficult funding and fundraising environment.

The recovery has been slow in coming. Today, many people continue to struggle with low wage and precarious work, poverty, high housing costs, unemployment, and underemployment. Toronto's unemployment rate continues to hover around 10%, with much higher rates for young people.<sup>37</sup> The waiting list for affordable housing is at record levels with over 92,000 households on the list.<sup>38</sup> Since 2010, the number of poor children in the city has increased by more than 10,000.<sup>39</sup> Food bank use is up by 11% since 2008, and food bank clients are using food banks for longer periods of time today compared to four years ago.<sup>40</sup>

The tough economic times continue, and these realities weigh on residents and the front line agencies struggling to respond to community needs. In 2014, City of Toronto staff identified \$1 million in high priority programs



that were unfunded due to budget constraints.<sup>41</sup> Toronto City Council added \$300,000 to the budget - a good first step.

We need Toronto City Council to champion community services and work with community organizations to develop an investment plan to expand community services in under-resourced and high needs neighbourhoods across the city. Many of these neighbourhoods are located in Toronto's inner suburbs. The City has made important strides, developing multi-year investment strategies in other key areas. Now it's time to create a nonprofit community services investment plan that responds to pressing needs in our under-resourced neighbourhoods.

"Our waiting lists are increasing due to increased interest and demands for our programs and services. We are working with culturally diverse groups of seniors and there is limited funding available to meet the growing needs of the aging population."

"Community donations have diminished markedly due to the economic conditions, which puts a heavy strain on our operating budget."



- <sup>1</sup> See City of Toronto CPIP webpage:  
<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=4b16ba2ae8b1e310VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>
- <sup>2</sup> In 2013, the administration of the AIDS Prevention and Drug Prevention grant programs was transferred to Toronto Public Health. These grant programs are no longer considered part of CPIP. They are now treated as purchase of service agreements. However for purposes of this analysis, the allocated amount for both programs is included in the 2013 and 2014 figures in the graph.
- <sup>3</sup> City of Toronto (2013). Population Estimates (intercensal) – Table 051-0062 Estimates of population by census division, sex and age group for July 1, based on the Standard Geographical Classification (SGC) 2011, annual (persons) City of Toronto. Toronto, ON.
- <sup>4</sup> City of Toronto, Social Development, Finance and Administration provided CPIP allocation files for 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013. The 2014 figures are based on the City of Toronto budget as the allocation file was not yet available.
- <sup>5</sup> Toronto City Council (2014, January 29). Minutes for EX37.1 2014 Capital and Operating Budgets. Toronto, ON.  
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.EX37.1>
- <sup>6</sup> City of Toronto (2011). 2010 City of Toronto Survey of Select Municipal Grants Programs in Canada. Toronto, ON: Social Policy, Analysis and Research Unit, Social Development, Finance and Administration.
- <sup>7</sup> Office of the Ombudsman (2013). Promises Made, Promises Broken: An Investigation into the City's Below Market Rent Program. Toronto, ON.  
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