

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 27, 2015

## **HARD WORK DOESN'T GUARANTEE SUCCESS**

**Inequality is undermining fairness and access to opportunity in Toronto**

**TORONTO, ONTARIO** — United Way released new research today that provides an alarming look at growing income inequality in Toronto — and the serious impact it has on people, neighbourhoods, and access to opportunities.

The report, titled *The Opportunity Equation*, analyzes data to reveal that income inequality is growing faster in Toronto than other major Canadian cities — and surpasses both provincial and national averages. It also includes a first-ever survey that shows how Torontonians are feeling about their current situation and prospects for the future. These findings are equally troubling. Hard work is not seen as a guarantee of success. Torontonians believe that a person's background and circumstance have a far greater influence on their future.

"This report shows not everyone has the same access to things they need to build a good life — like a quality job, affordable housing, or meaningful social networks," said Susan McIsaac, the President and CEO of United Way Toronto. "This divides Torontonians. It threatens to unravel the social fabric that ties us together."

The research includes some sobering findings:

- From 1980–2005, income inequality among households in Toronto grew by 31%. Since 2000 inequality in Toronto has surpassed other major Canadian cities.
- Toronto's neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly divided by income. From 1980–2010, inequality among neighbourhoods grew by a shocking 96%.
- An incredible 86% of respondents think the income gap is too large — a sentiment consistent across income level, age, level of education, and ethnicity.
- Survey findings also reveal that 73% of Torontonians think hard work is no guarantee for success. And 78% believe that some people have to work much harder than others of equal basic talent to overcome obstacles.

Despite the fact that just over half of all people worry the next generation will be worse off, the report includes positive findings that can be built on. Toronto isn't as divided as we might expect — in fact, 95% of those surveyed feel like they can make a difference in the communities where they live.

“Our findings on inequality are worrisome, but they also prove there’s something we can do about it,” Mclsaac said. “There’s goodwill and there are good ideas we can build on to turn things around.”

Mclsaac pointed to *United Way’s Blueprint for Action* — a call for people in Toronto to come together, to forge partnerships and to build momentum for addressing income inequality and improving access to opportunity.

The blueprint concludes the report with a commitment from United Way to do its part, and emphasizes three main goals that all sectors can play in role in championing:

- Ensuring young people have the opportunities they need to build a good life.
- Promoting jobs as a pathway to stability and security.
- Removing barriers to opportunity based on background and circumstances.

To read the executive summary and full report visit [www.unitedwaytoronto.com/research](http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/research). United Way’s research department is available to answer questions about the research and its findings.

Join the conversation on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) using #buildingopportunity

### **About United Way Toronto**

United Way Toronto is a charity dedicated to creating opportunities for a better life for everyone. Working in partnership with others, we mobilize people and resources to support a network of agencies that help people when they need it most. United Way also addresses the root causes of social problems, working to change community conditions for the better over the long term.

### **Media Contact:**

Michelle Yao  
United Way Toronto  
Tel: 416-777-1444 ext. 340  
Cell: 416-557-8508  
Email: [myao@uwgt.org](mailto:myao@uwgt.org)