



United Way's Community Impact and Research History Highlights

For 50 years, United Way of Greater Toronto has worked to create sustainable change in the lives of Torontonians. Through research, partnerships with business, labour, government and volunteers, and by funding a network of 200 health and social agencies, United Way identifies needs and takes action to support people and develop strong communities. Here are some highlights from the past 50 years:

Research and Advocacy

- 1961** The United Community Fund (present-day United Way) supports an 18 month long study by the Social Planning Council to provide a five-year blueprint of social welfare, health and recreation in the city. Released in 1963 and funded by Metro Toronto, the Atkinson Foundation and United Community Fund, the study is cited as being "unique" in Canada, possibly North America.
- 1971** The Re-examination Study Project, a major research initiative, looks at addressing emerging new problems and needs in a changing society, improving relationships with participating organizations in the United Appeal and developing closer relations with municipal and provincial governments.
- 1988** United Way's statement on housing receives considerable attention. The Board joins a broad-based community coalition, calling on the government of Ontario to implement recommendations contained in the report regarding the Social Assistance Review Committee.
- 1997** Advocacy takes on a major focus as United Way demonstrates leadership around the issue of downloading social services with the proposed municipal amalgamation; the organization partners with Metro and the Board of Trade to speak out.

United Way's research report on social trends, *Metro Toronto: A Community at Risk*, is released. *Beyond Survival: Homelessness in Metro Toronto* raises awareness of homelessness and leads to the formation of the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force by Mayor Mel Lastman.

- 1998** President Anne Golden chairs the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force. United Way intervenes on the issue of business occupancy tax for charities and provides input to government on the impact of downloading, community use of schools and other issues.
- 2001** *A Commitment to Care: Community Support Services for Seniors* is released.
- 2002** United Way's *A Decade of Decline* report highlights income polarization, and the racialization of poverty within the inner suburbs of York, East York, North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke that took place during the "booming" 1990s.

Frances Lankin, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Toronto, co-chairs the Toronto City Summit. Civic leaders from across Toronto came together to address challenges regarding the future of Toronto, such as the expanding knowledge-based industry, poor economic integration of immigrants, decaying infrastructure and lack of affordable housing.

2002 United Way's Task Force on Access to Space is struck. The *Opening the Doors* report is released to raise public awareness about space issues, and to influence public policy by calling for increased investments to support community use of public space.

2003 In *Torontonians Speak Out*, a result of extensive consultations with more than 800 residents and community leaders across the city, respondents sound the alarm regarding the lack of opportunities for Toronto's youth.

Toronto City Summit Alliance's report *Enough Talk: An Action Plan for the Toronto Region* is released. United Way calls for action to address the infrastructure gaps in high-needs neighbourhoods through a tripartite agreement with all levels of government.

2004 The *Poverty by Postal Code* report details the dramatic increase in the number of 'poor' Toronto neighbourhoods, and the increased concentration of 'poor' families in the inner city suburbs.

The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force is launched.

2005 United Way and the City of Toronto release *A Call to Action ... A Report of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force*. Building on previous research findings, the Strong Neighbourhood Task Force identifies nine Toronto neighbourhoods where community investment is most urgently needed. The strategy recommends that a new neighbourhood structure be established to evaluate and reshape government policies, programs and funding mechanisms to better respond to the changing face of Toronto neighbourhoods.

Meeting Community Needs

1956 On May 10, 450 key civic, business, labour, religious and education leaders create the United Community Fund. The fund consists of 73 agencies, including Canadian National Institute for the Blind, John Howard Society, Boy Scouts and Woodgreen Community Centre.

Simultaneously, the Red Cross forms an Association of Red Cross Branches of Metropolitan Toronto, agreeing to participate in partnership with the United Community Fund in a United Appeal.

1963 Priority guides are launched to help evaluate community needs and act as a guide for allocating funds. A study is launched for a national priority guide.

1971 The Innovation Fund supports programs such as breakfast projects, positive parenting programs and welfare counselling. Interim support is established for non-member organizations to meet newly identified immediate needs.

1972 Approximately 500,000 Torontonians use, or have used, United Appeal-funded agencies during their lives. A committee is formed to develop a priorities system for the United Community Fund and its agencies.

1982 The organization commits itself to a new vision of a more inclusive, more responsive and more dynamic United Way with increased ethnocultural examination of different communities and how to bring United Way to them.

- 1983** Ethnocultural and suburban services, as well as services to isolated people and those hurt by unemployment, are named top priorities. Thirteen new agencies are admitted, including several ethnocultural agencies such as Tropicana Community Services and Toronto Chinese Community Services. This is tangible evidence of the United Way's commitment to reach out and meet the changing needs of the community.
- 1987** United Way becomes more inclusive in funding emerging needs. Priority is given to agencies that represent and serve Toronto's ethnocultural and native communities; meet service gaps in Metro's high-need, under-serviced geographic areas; direct services towards reducing social isolation for vulnerable individuals/groups; are consumer-led where the primary focus is advocacy and self help, and support high risk groups affected by the housing crisis.
- 1989** Troubled youth are identified as a further priority this year. United Way's leadership role in multiculturalism and anti-racism is widely acknowledged. Twenty-seven agencies participate in the Multicultural Development Program.
- 1993** Homelessness and food banks become more visible. Predictions of Metro's descent into an "uncivilized, uncaring urban jungle" are commonplace, and comparisons are made to the worst aspects of the American urban experience.
- 1997** Three priority areas are identified through *The Way Ahead* priority-setting process: addressing hunger and homelessness, giving young children a healthy start, assisting abused women and their children, and helping newcomers settle and integrate. More than 10,000 volunteer hours are devoted to the allocations process.
- 1998** Success By 6 is launched to provide programs for kids aged 0-6 and increase funding for at-risk young children.
- 2001** United Way and Community Information Toronto launch the first 211 service in Canada, helping people get information on community services by calling one simple telephone number.
- 2002** The *Strong Neighborhoods, Healthy City* strategy is unveiled in June in response to *A Decade of Decline* research report. The strategy seeks to address growing social needs in the inner suburbs by encouraging partnership at all levels and working together to find community solutions.
- 2003** *Community Matters*, a strategic planning process to reaffirm and redefine United Way and to shape the organization's future, is launched. The new priority-setting process, *Mapping the Way*, is also released.
- 2004** New priorities are identified: building strong neighbourhoods, supporting youth on pathways to success, and improving opportunities for newcomers.
- United Way partners with the Toronto District School Board in a Community Use of Schools initiative to give five high-needs neighbourhoods access to school properties that were otherwise closed to the public after school hours.
- 2005** The *Action for Neighbourhood Change* (ANC) neighbourhood engagement initiative is launched in five urban areas across Canada with funding from the Government of Canada. Scarborough Village is the Toronto location.
- 2006** United Way will launch its Neighbourhoods Strategy.

