

**For Immediate Release:**

**Thunder Bay Counselling Leads Community Strategy to Reduce Poverty.**

**Thunder Bay, Ontario; September 19, 2017:** - Thunder Bay Counselling is taking a lead role in partnership with the Lakehead Social Planning Council to address the priorities of the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy for Thunder Bay residents. With support from Prosper Canada and funding from the Ontario government, Thunder Bay Counselling and the Lakehead Social Planning Council will now be offering expanded and free financial counselling services to improve the wealth of individuals and families living in Thunder Bay.

Thunder Bay Counselling will offer free financial services aimed at improving financial outcomes and social stability in Thunder Bay, and particularly for low-income households. Thunder Bay Counselling will also lead the training of local employers, community service providers and others to help them better identify people who could benefit from financial empowerment solutions.

Says Nancy Chamberlain, Executive Director, Thunder Bay Counselling: "With support from Prosper Canada and generous support from the Ontario government, we are proud to be recognized as a Financial Empowerment Champion organization in Thunder Bay in partnership with the Lakehead Social Planning Council to reduce local poverty. Evidence shows that financial vulnerability is often the root cause or an aggravating factor when people are facing life challenges. Typical problems include lack of financial literacy, poor access to neutral financial information, inability to afford financial counselling, failure to file taxes and lack of awareness about relevant government benefits. Thanks to this new partnership, every household in Thunder Bay will now have access to the services they need for improved financial security."

The enhanced services include helping people to open bank accounts, file taxes, access income supports and even explore opportunities to develop a financial plan, and delivered at no cost by accredited financial counsellors. Lakehead Social Planning Council has also joined the local strategy to continue to provide free Tax Clinics to a broader community.

Says Marie Klassen, Director of Services at Lakehead Social Planning Council; This new partnership will

compliment other practical poverty reduction services and improve their outcomes. Many people previously faced barriers to accessing financial services and didn't understand their eligibility for tax credits and other government benefits that could boost their household income for the long-term."

Says Adam Fair, Vice President, Strategy and Impact at Prosper Canada; "Prosper Canada has found an innovative community partner in Thunder Bay Counselling. Together, we will make solutions widely available to improve financial inclusion, opportunities, behaviour and outcomes for people living in poverty in Thunder Bay."

Thunder Bay Counselling has been a trusted provider of financial counselling services since 1972 when the agency first introduced Credit Counselling.

The Lakehead Social Planning Council has provided free income tax filing services for over two decades. For more information visit: [www.tbaycounselling.com](http://www.tbaycounselling.com).

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#### **Notes to Editor:**

##### **About Prosper Canada**

Prosper Canada is a national charity dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for Canadians living in poverty through program and policy innovation. Prosper Canada works with government, business and community partners to develop and promote financial policies, programs and resources that remove barriers and help more Canadians to prosper. To learn more about Prosper Canada, and the Ontario Financial Empowerment Champions project please visit [www.prospercanada.org](http://www.prospercanada.org).

##### **About Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Ontario's new 5-year Poverty Reduction Strategy focuses on breaking the cycle of poverty for children and youth. In doing so, we can create employment opportunities, improve income security and work to end homelessness. Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy will support working families, youth and vulnerable populations through financial and employment assistance.

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