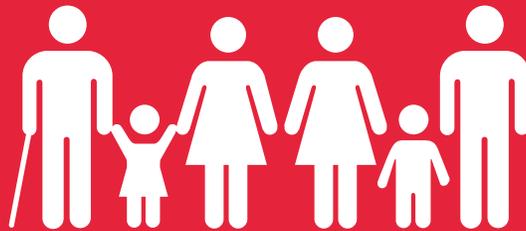




TO POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

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POVERTY



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INTRODUCTION

According to the 2021 Census released by Statistics Canada, **13.2% of the population in Toronto** had an **income below Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT)**. Toronto's low income rate is higher than other cities, including cities in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton which has a **combined average of 8.09%** of those with low income. To address issues of poverty, the city of Toronto developed the **Toronto Poverty Reduction strategy**. This strategy focuses action on Housing Stability, Service Access and Coordination, Transportation Equity, Food Access, Quality Jobs & Liveable Incomes, and Systemic Change. Below you will find a summary of each recommendation and action plan followed by our recommendation.

Housing Stability

1. Improve the quality of all affordable housing

To improve the quality of all affordable housing in Toronto, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1 Increase Investments in Repairs to Existing Social Housing:** Allocating more funding towards repairing and maintaining existing social housing units.
- 2 Strengthen Enforcement of Minimum Housing Standards:** Implementing stricter enforcement measures to ensure that all affordable housing units meet minimum health, safety, and livability standards.
- 3 Expand Incentive Programs for Private Landlords and Low-Income Homeowners:** Introducing or expanding incentive programs aimed at private landlords and low-income homeowners. These programs encourage investments in essential repairs, modifications, and improvements to enhance the quality and energy efficiency of affordable homes.
- 4 Increase Support for Building Energy Retrofitting Programs:** Promoting and facilitating participation in building energy retrofitting programs that reduce hydro costs for residents of affordable housing units.
- 5 Develop Rooming House Policy Framework and Enforcement Strategy:** Creating a policy framework specifically for rooming houses and implementing an effective enforcement strategy



2. Assist low-income individuals and families to secure and maintain affordable housing

To assist low-income individuals and families in Toronto secure and maintain affordable housing, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Increase Investments in Repairs to Existing Social Housing:** Allocating more funding towards repairing and maintaining existing social housing units.
- 2** **Expand Incentive Programs for Private Landlords and Low-Income Homeowners:** Introducing or expanding incentive programs aimed at private landlords and low-income homeowners. These programs encourage investments in essential repairs, modifications, and improvements to enhance the quality and energy efficiency of affordable homes.
- 3** **Expand Incentive Programs for Private Landlords and Low-Income Homeowners:** Introducing or expanding incentive programs aimed at private landlords and low-income homeowners. These programs encourage investments in essential repairs, modifications, and improvements to enhance the quality and energy efficiency of affordable homes.

3. Increase the supply of affordable housing

To increase the supply of affordable housing in Toronto, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Updating and Expanding Funding and Incentives:** Enhancing the city's funding and incentive programs to support the development of new affordable rental and ownership housing.
- 2** **Affirming Affordable Housing as a Priority:** Prioritizing affordable housing as a community benefit in development applications where contributions are proposed under Section 37 of the Planning Act.
- 3** **Advocating for Legislative Amendments:** Lobbying for changes to legislation that would grant municipalities the authority for inclusionary zoning.
- 4** **Utilizing Public Buildings and Lands:** Identifying opportunities to utilize existing or planned public buildings and lands for affordable housing initiatives.
- 5** **Provide Surplus Government Land:** Making surplus government-owned land available for new affordable housing developments, incorporate affordable housing in developments on government lands, or dedicate a percentage of the net proceeds from the land sales to affordable housing.
- 6** **Maintaining and Leveraging Social Housing Assets:** Developing strategies to sustain and enhance Toronto's social housing assets to ensure long-term affordability.



HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

The plans dictated by the city of Toronto closely align with our own recommendations. The municipal government has mentioned focusing on ensuring public funding is invested in housing for low-income residents rather than unaffordable rental buildings and using public land to provide public housing rather than private development. To further this strategy, improvements are needed in the National Housing Co-Investment Fund (NHCF) and Rental Construction Financing Initiative (RCF). The NHCF aims to support the construction, repair, and renewal of affordable housing. This fund focuses on improving outcomes related to energy efficiency, accessibility, and social inclusion through investments in mixed-income, mixed-tenure, and mixed-use housing projects. The RCF encourages the construction of purpose-built rental housing and increases the supply of housing where it is most needed. It achieves this by offering developers fully repayable low-interest loans ([link](#)). Critics argue that despite their intentions to support affordable housing, initiatives like the NHCF and the RCF have failed to provide accessible housing to those in core housing need, and have also overlooked middle-income earners. This criticism highlights the ongoing challenges in effectively addressing housing affordability across various income levels. Therefore, **it is essential for the municipal government to collaborate closely with the federal and provincial governments to address these concerns and ensure that funding initiatives are effectively utilized to benefit those who need it most.** This collaboration is crucial for maximizing the impact of funding in addressing housing affordability and meeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

To address the rental crisis, city staff already have intentions to launch a new Rental Housing Supply Program which calls for \$351 million in funding to 18 affordable rental housing projects. This initiative aims to assist individuals seeking rental properties by increasing the availability of affordable housing options. But, further investments need to be made for affordable housing units. The municipal government, with the assistance of the provincial and federal governments, needs to work towards securing the estimated financial investment of \$9 billion to develop the 65,000 rent-controlled homes already planned by the city. Additionally, there is a need to request an additional \$15 billion to develop more affordable housing and provide financing for affordable home developments. This coordinated effort is critical for addressing the housing needs and affordability challenges faced by communities.

The city should also collaborate with **organizations that help acquire buildings to maintain affordable housing** in communities such as the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC). PARC acquires buildings, often needing significant repair and upgrading to help keep them affordable for those in need. Such collaborations are crucial for preserving affordable housing options without losing them to private development.

As the city is already planning to utilize public buildings and government-owned land to develop affordable housing, it can extend this by **increasing supportive housing units** to help those that need everyday assistance. Supportive housing is an integral service that helps vulnerable individuals and families achieve housing stability, enhance their health and well-being, and maintain independent living within the community. Therefore, it is crucial the city of Toronto increase investments in supportive housing as it will help provide individuals the necessary skills and tools needed to avoid and get out of homelessness while improving their health and wellbeing. This also entails a reduction in interaction with expensive systems such as emergency rooms, corrections facilities, and emergency shelters. According to the Executive Director of the Health and Social Policy at the University Health Network, Ontario contributes \$6,500 to \$7,000 a month per homeless person occupying a homeless shelter. He believes a supportive housing model would cost less than half of those amounts, possibly \$613 per month. Evidence suggests that investments in supportive housing not only benefit vulnerable individuals but also result in cost savings for taxpayers. ([link](#)). For instance, every \$10 invested in these housing initiatives leads to an average savings of \$27.12 across healthcare, social service, and justice systems. With proper planning, budgeting, and collaboration with the provincial and federal governments, long-term funding can be distributed to help support construction of supportive housing.

It is also essential that alongside increased investments in supportive and affordable housing, **the municipal government also prioritizes providing housing options for residents in shelters and those experiencing homelessness**. This includes ensuring access to housing information, supportive services, and programs designed to transition individuals and families into stable housing situations.

Service Access

1. Increase service access and availability

To increase service access and availability, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Expansion of Digital Access and Literacy:** Ensuring residents can effectively access programs and services online.
- 2** **Ensuring User Fees Do Not Create Barriers:** Making sure that fees for social and community services do not create obstacles for low-income users.
- 3** **Revision of Program Registration, Outreach, and Delivery:** Ensuring that services are accessible to vulnerable residents.
- 4** **Integration of Health and Mental Health Services:** Combining health system and mental health services with other city programs in accessible community locations.
- 5** **Expansion of Digital Access and Literacy:** Ensuring residents can effectively access programs and services online.
- 6** **Ensuring User Fees Do Not Create Barriers:** Making sure that fees for social and community services do not create obstacles for low-income users.
- 7** **Revision of Program Registration, Outreach, and Delivery:** Ensuring that services are accessible to vulnerable residents.
- 8** **Integration of Health and Mental Health Services:** Combining health system and mental health services with other city programs in accessible community locations.



2. Improve access to high-quality programs for children and youth

To improve access to high-quality programs, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Increase city's Tax Base Contribution to Child Care Fee Subsidies:** This initiative aims to enhance financial support from the city's tax base to fund child care fee subsidies, making child care more affordable for families.
- 2** **Expand Licensed and Subsidized Child Care Spaces:** By increasing the number of licensed and subsidized child care spaces, the city aims to meet the growing demand for accessible child care options.
- 3** **Support Growth in High-Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs:** The city intends to promote and facilitate the expansion of high-quality programs for children and youth outside of regular school hours.
- 4** **Advocate to Provincial and Federal Governments for Increased Support:** The city will actively lobby the provincial and federal governments to provide additional financial support and funding for child care services.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Service access is a crucial component in poverty reduction plans as well implemented and targeted social security programs can provide the foundation needed to begin seeing real poverty reduction. The best place to start is with **an increase to social assistance rates**. According to Canada's official poverty measure a person in Toronto is considered to be **living in poverty if their income is under \$2,131 a month**. Meanwhile, a single person on Ontario Works (OW) receives \$733 a month, less than half of the poverty line. Given that **cost of living** has increased by more than 17 per cent, it is difficult to justify how OW rates have remained frozen since 2018. If Ontario Works rates for a single adult had been indexed since the mid-1990s, the **benefit amount** would have been \$1,030 per month in 2021, as opposed to the current \$733 per month. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic especially, we have seen the federal government recognize that **\$2,000** is needed to survive, it's time for a sustainable increase to social assistance. This is especially important in reforming the social assistance rate structure to better reflect the high cost of housing in Ontario. The current separation of basic needs and shelter allowances does not adequately address the **housing insecurity** faced by many individuals, preventing them from accessing the full benefit amount needed to overcome homelessness and housing instability.

It is also essential to strengthen federal-provincial collaboration and develop programs that leverage the policy and fiscal capacities of different levels of government. Federal and provincial governments can develop shared policy frameworks that address poverty through a combination of income supports, employment services, and affordable housing initiatives. The **Canada Child Benefit** (CCB) is a successful example of federal-provincial collaboration which played a role in reducing the probability of experiencing food insecurity among recipients by almost 3 percentage points. These benefits should be designed to complement existing income supports without reducing or clawing back Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits as nearly **900,000 Ontarians** rely on ODSP, with significant challenges related to income adequacy and program access. Addressing these issues through enhanced collaboration and support systems is crucial for effective social safety nets.

Additionally, a targeted benefit for working-age single adults is needed as they experience some of the [highest poverty rates](#) at 11.1 per cent in 2022 compared to the Canadian average of 9.9%. This is alongside newcomers who face similar challenges. The requirement for [Canadian experience](#) in many workplaces often traps newcomers in low-wage jobs, making it crucial to create employment programs and support systems that address these specific barriers. Establishing comprehensive employment programs tailored for newcomers can include fast-track processes for recognizing foreign qualifications and experience, provide training programs that align with Canadian job market requirements, or offering job matching and placement assistance to help newcomers secure employment that matches their skills and experience. As a whole [targeted](#) employment programs and support services have been successful in seeing income gains.

Even with strong services in place there can still be many barriers to ensuring service programs are effective. Social assistance programs often face criticism for their complex and opaque eligibility criteria, which can result in delays and complications for those in need. A lack of clear definitions such as disability, addiction, or mental health issues, can lead to inconsistent decision-making and inadequate support. Programs should include clear definitions how medical recommendations are factored in and how issues like addiction and mental health play a role in receiving support through a social assistance program. [Transparency](#) is crucial, especially for recipients who might be cut off from support without adequate notice or explanation. Clear guidelines for social assistance qualifications should also be established to streamline the process and reduce bureaucratic obstacles. Centralising the process for ODSP recipients to receive assistance and determine eligibility is vital for both the efficiency of the program and the ease of access for recipients. Centralizing the administration of social assistance programs can enhance both efficiency and recipient access. Evidence suggests that [centralised systems](#) reduce duplication, streamline eligibility determinations, and improve service delivery. This system should facilitate easier access for recipients and ensure that all relevant information is considered efficiently. Centralization can help streamline operations and reduce wait times for support.

By taking these comprehensive measures, we can create a more effective and inclusive support system that addresses the multifaceted needs of low-income individuals and promotes greater equity and opportunity across communities.



Transit Equity

1. Make transit more affordable for low-income residents

To improve transit affordability for low-income residents in Toronto, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Free Transit for Children 12 and Under:** Implementing a policy where children aged 12 and under can ride public transit for free.
- 2** **Incorporating Fare-Geared-to-Income in Presto Pass Technology:** Ensuring that the rollout of new Presto Pass technology includes a fare structure that adjusts based on income levels.
- 3** **Evaluating Demand Models for Fare-Geared-to-Income Criteria:** Assessing different models that incorporate fare adjustments based on income criteria.
- 4** **Accessibility Compliance:** Meeting the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) by ensuring that all transit stations are fully accessible by 2025.

2. Improve transit services in the inner suburbs

To enhance transit service in Toronto's inner suburbs, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Harmonizing Service and Fares:** Collaborating with the Province to unify service levels and fare structures across public transit systems in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).
- 2** **Restoring Service Cuts:** Addressing previous reductions in transit service that have disproportionately affected inner suburbs with high demand.
- 3** **Improving Reliability:** Enhancing the reliability of bus, subway, and LRT services throughout the inner suburbs.
- 4** **Inclusive Planning:** Taking into account the specific needs of low-income neighborhoods and inner suburbs in both capital investments and service planning.



TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensuring [transportation accessibility](#) across all income levels is crucial as transit affects accessibility to jobs, education, health care and recreational and cultural activities.

The city has already initiated efforts to improve affordability by offering discounted passes for low-income residents and students. They are also developing plans for the Presto Pass, which adjusts fares based on income. However, more improvements pertaining to transit affordability are required. The [Fair Pass Transit Discount Program](#) which helps low-income residents save around 36% on TTC single adult fare rides and 21% on TTC adult monthly passes needs to be expanded significantly. Many riders using the discount program receive financial assistance from Ontario Works or ODSP but are on [limited incomes](#), which means that transit costs still consume a significant portion of their limited incomes. Changes need to be made to ensure those living on low income are not put in a position to choose between one necessity over the other. Furthermore, the city needs to identify new options to help support transit operating costs. In April 2023, Toronto announced a [10-cent fare increase](#) in response to revenue losses stemming from reduced ridership during the pandemic. This decision was aimed at stabilizing the financial situation of the transit system. However, for many low-income residents and vulnerable groups who rely heavily on public transit, this presented them with a [difficult choice](#) between paying for transit fares and covering other essential expenses such as food. This signifies the financial strain faced by underserved communities when transit costs rise. The municipal government needs to create an actionable plan using funding provided by the provincial and federal government to ensure it is distributed equitably so vulnerable populations are not faced between a choice for paying for transit or an essential need.

The municipal government has committed to ensure all transit locations are fully accessible by 2025. More specifically, the city should focus on the infrastructure at transit locations which can greatly affect underserved communities. For example, a mother navigating rainy conditions with a child in a wheelchair must consider factors like bus schedules, wheelchair accessibility, and weather protection. If she is unable to navigate through public transportation addressing these needs, it creates a significant barrier which can prevent her child from gaining access to healthcare. Enhancing the design of walkways, slopes, and pathways is crucial to meet these [diverse needs](#). Moreover, improving basic amenities such as bus shelters and washrooms and prioritising weather-proof bus shelters is essential. These improvements aim to enhance accessibility and comfort for all residents relying on public transportation. Thus, it is integral for the municipal government to use infrastructure funding for public transportation to improve services for equity-deserving groups.

When identifying factors related to transit accessibility and affordability, we must address the potential negative impacts of transit infrastructure on surrounding communities. The government should make sure it does not result in a loss of affordable apartments or displace vulnerable residents when making new developments near transit stations. The Ontario government has established a plan to [build more homes](#) near transit in Toronto. This proposal entails building [5,900 new residential units](#) near future transit stations, which will include affordable housing options. Yet, there is a significant concern from residents about the [destruction](#) of housing and green space . Recently, Metrolinx has been under [criticism](#) for the demolition of affordable housing and green space while constructing the Ontario Line Subway and Eglinton Crosstown LRT. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT, which is currently underway, has already seen [significant negative impacts](#) on independent businesses and has cut into green spaces such as the recreational fields at the intersection of Jane and Eglinton. [Property values](#) have also risen due to the proximity to transit infrastructure developments. These issues highlight the need for careful planning and community engagement to mitigate adverse effects on vulnerable residents and local environments during transit infrastructure development.



Food Access

1. Eliminate hunger

To address hunger and promote food security, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Expanding Student Nutrition Programs:** Collaborating with school boards, community agencies, and other levels of government to broaden student nutrition programs.
- 2** **Developing Mechanisms for Food Procurement:** Creating simplified and cost-effective mechanisms for public sector organizations and community groups to procure healthy food.
- 3** **Expanding Provision of Nutritious Food:** Increasing the availability of nutritious food within city-run and supported programs.

2. Increase access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food

To improve food security and nutrition across the community the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Supporting Retailers:** They plan to encourage business models that facilitate the sale of healthier foods in underserved areas.
- 2** **Investing in Food Infrastructure:** The city aims to invest in community-based food infrastructure, to increase access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.
- 3** **Empowering Residents:** Efforts will be made to empower residents with food skills and information, ensuring they have the knowledge to make healthy choices and prepare nutritious meals.
- 4** **Facilitating Food Initiatives:** Policies and processes will be streamlined to support food initiatives on city-owned land and within city facilities
- 5** **Promoting Urban Agriculture:** Barriers to expanding urban agriculture on government lands will be identified and removed.
- 6** **Clarifying Regulations:** Rules related to commercial food production, preparation, and sales will be clarified and made accessible, ensuring transparency and compliance among businesses and entrepreneurs.



FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS

Food is an integral part of daily life and every individual should have access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food in their city. However, several vulnerable populations in Toronto face challenges: [1 in 10 people](#) rely on food banks to survive and [1 in 4](#) experienced food insecurity in 2022. Food banks cannot be the only resource to rely on to address this issue. As the city already has plans to invest in community-based food infrastructure, they can use this opportunity to use the money to fund community food stores and mobile markets to increase access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. This initiative requires [gaining connections](#) with local leaders and community members and knowledge regarding food safety, handling, and awareness of culturally appropriate foods. Community food stores would help individuals have access to affordable, healthy foods and mobile markets would help individuals facing transportation barriers access fresh produce more easily, especially those living in rural areas. Although this may be a costly endeavour, it would greatly increase access to healthy foods in diverse populations. The [Nourish and Develop Foundation](#), a non-profit supporting the Mobile Food Market, has already made strides by providing affordable, nutritious fresh foods to residents in rural areas. Thus, it is important for the city to fund initiatives that provide food security for underserved communities.

Furthermore, the city of Toronto could develop a program similar to the city of Seattle's Fresh Bucks programme. [Seattle's Fresh Bucks](#) programme provides those who are eligible \$40 each month to spend on fruits and vegetables at farmers markets, neighbourhood grocers and Seattle Safeway stores. This initiative not only helps reduce food costs, but also [supports](#) local businesses. The city of Toronto could implement a similar program that would provide residents with financial assistance each month to purchase fruits and vegetables at local grocery stores and farmers markets. The program should adjust the stipend to account for rising food costs and specify which food items are eligible. This should include nutritious food staples such as fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables, herbs, and edible plants. For the foods in this mix that are not fresh, special attention must be paid to the frozen and non-perishable variety to ensure that they remain viably healthy for sustained consumption. Though the municipal government should fund this program, additional support from the federal and provincial governments may be required to help subsidise the cost of fresh produce.

To slowly help eliminate hunger, the city should invest in and promote community gardens and urban farms. With the increase of individuals facing food insecurity, choosing between what meals to eat, and what to skip, the city could help residents alleviate this stress by providing them the resources to grow and harvest their own foods - with financial support from the city to offset personal hardship. This in turn would help foster long-term household food security. United Way has adapted this approach through Ecosource, which manages ten community gardens in Mississauga, **benefiting over 500 gardeners**, with approximately 250 from low-income backgrounds. These community gardens provide many families with **access** to fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food and excess is donated to local food banks. Gardening not only helps alleviate food insecurity, but is found to also **improve** mental health and create a sense of belonging within the community, providing a space to exchange knowledge about different traditions and foods. This is an integral part of preserving cultural traditions and practices in relation to food within different communities.

Quality Jobs and Livable Wages

1. Improve the quality of and access to income supports

To enhance the quality and accessibility of income supports the city has outlined the following initiatives:

1

Improving Income Support Services: Enhancing income supports and services to better meet the needs of vulnerable residents.

2

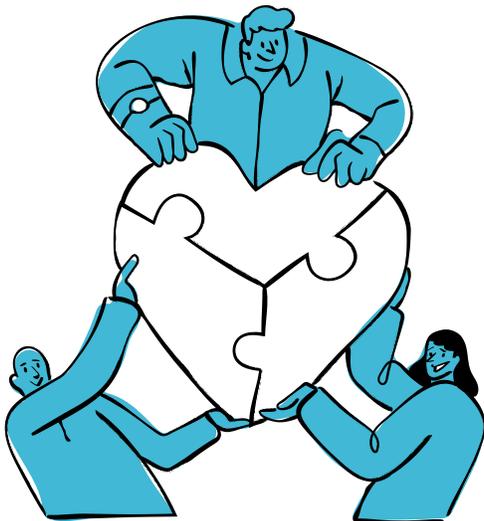
Advocating for Higher Social Assistance Rates: Calling on the Ontario government to increase social assistance rates to better support individuals and families in need.

3

Enhancing Health Benefits: Providing improved health benefits such as dental services, drug benefits, and eye glasses to individuals transitioning from Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program into stable employment.

4

Enhancing Child Care Access: Assisting low-income and vulnerable residents in accessing child care spaces and fee subsidies, thereby supporting their employment and economic stability.



2. Create employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates

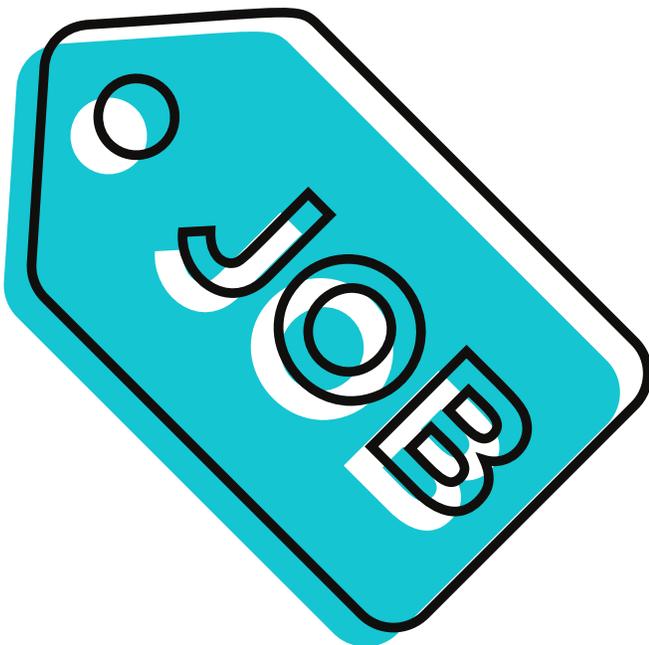
To create employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1 Collaborating with Private and Public Sectors:** Working with both sectors to establish effective pathways to sustainable careers for low-income youth.
- 2 Removing Barriers for Individuals with Justice System Experience:** Addressing and eliminating obstacles that hinder employment opportunities for individuals with prior experience in the justice system.
- 3 Incubating Flexible Child Care Models:** Developing and promoting adaptable child care models that align with current labor market demands.

3. Improve the quality of jobs

To improve the quality of jobs the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1 Championing a Living Wage Standard:** Advocating for and promoting a living wage standard across Toronto.
- 2 Preference for Living Wage Vendors:** Giving preference to vendors who provide goods and services to the city and pay a living wage to their employees.
- 3 Supporting Provincial Employment Standards:** Collaborating with provincial efforts to strengthen employment standards, aiming to enhance worker protections and ensure fair labor practices across all sectors.
- 4 Developing a Job Quality Assessment Tool:** Creating and implementing a tool to assess job quality, which will be applied to city jobs, contractor positions, and procurement processes.



JOB RECOMMENDATIONS

On June 19th, 2023, Premier Doug Ford expressed frustration about Ontario Works, stating, “What drives me [crazy](#) is people on Ontario Works ... It really bothers me that we have healthy people sitting at home collecting your hard-earned dollars. We need to encourage them to contribute back to the province and find gainful employment” . Ford's statement underscores a broader disconnect between leadership perspectives and the actual challenges people face in securing employment. Addressing this disconnect requires policy leaders to explore supportive measures that help residents overcome employment struggles without casting judgement.

One critical area where the government can make a significant impact is youth employment. Many young people struggle with low-quality jobs, often due to their lack of [experience](#) in the workforce. To bridge this gap, it's crucial for the government to educate youth on their employment rights and equip them with the necessary knowledge to navigate the job market effectively. This also involves fostering partnerships between employers, service providers, and educators to create more pathways to meaningful employment. Strengthening local [support systems](#), expanding mentorship and co-op programs, and integrating job literacy and self-marketing into school curricula are essential steps in preparing youth for the workforce and improving job access.

As the city has plans to champion a living wage standard, they also need to help institute better paid leave policies and more accessible benefits. Research has shown that benefits that are well designed help improve all aspects of [quality work](#), including job security, safety and rights, job skills and growth, and social integration. Unfortunately, current benefits in both public and private sectors are [outdated](#) and fail to address the diverse needs of Canadians, including culturally specific care options like ayurvedic medicine or Indigenous healing models. The municipal government should work with the provincial and federal government to advocate for improved paid leave and benefits to ensure equal access to preferred care for all Canadians to help bolster their physical and mental health.

The municipal government must also prioritize research and advocacy for people with disabilities to enhance their access to employment supports and achieve equitable employment opportunities. In Ontario, only about [59% of working adults with disabilities](#) are employed compared to 80% of those without disabilities, highlighting a significant employment gap. Addressing this disparity requires dedicated efforts to engage with individuals with disabilities and provide the necessary support to help them secure employment.

Systemic Change

1. Leverage the economic power of the city to stimulate job growth, support local businesses, and drive inclusive economic growth

To leverage the economic power of the city of Toronto for stimulating job growth, supporting local businesses, and driving inclusive economic growth, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Community Benefits Program:** Designing and implementing a community benefits program that integrates social and economic considerations into city purchasing and capital investments.
- 2** **City Social Procurement Policy:** Developing and implementing a social procurement policy.
- 3** **Connecting Job Seekers and Businesses:** Collaborating with local anchor institutions to facilitate connections between job seekers, start-up businesses, and worker-owned cooperatives with economic opportunities.
- 4** **Enhancing Economic Development in Low-Income Areas:** Developing innovative models and strategies to stimulate economic development in low-income neighbourhoods.

2. Create a seamless social support system

To create a seamless social support system in Toronto, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

- 1** **Stabilizing Funding for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs):** Ensuring stable and predictable funding for CBOs.
- 2** **Integrating Intake and Administration of Means-Tested Programs:** Streamlining the intake and administrative processes of core means-tested programs.
- 3** **Coordinating Seamless Care and Support Across Systems:** Improving coordination among hospitals, the child welfare system, correctional facilities, mental health services, and city services.
- 4** **Engaging People with Lived Experience and Community Partners:** Developing and implementing effective models to meaningfully engage individuals with lived experience, as well as agencies and community partners, in decision-making processes.
- 5** **Removing Barriers to One-Stop Community Access Sites:** Collaborating with the provincial government to eliminate legislative and financial barriers to establishing integrated one-stop community access sites.
- 6** **Protecting and Increasing Service Levels for Vulnerable Residents:** Safeguarding existing service levels and exploring opportunities to expand services and infrastructure that support vulnerable residents).



3. Coordinate and evaluate the implementation of the strategy

To coordinate and evaluate the implementation of Toronto's poverty reduction strategy, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

1

Create a Staff Unit for Support: Establishing a dedicated staff unit to support activities related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of poverty reduction actions.

2

Develop Monitoring and Measuring Processes: Creating robust monitoring and measuring processes along with tools to track progress and outcomes of TO Prosperity.

4. Engage city staff and residents on poverty reduction efforts

To engage city staff and residents on poverty reduction efforts, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

1

Develop Change Management and Staff Training Tools: Creating change management strategies and training tools aimed at fostering a poverty-sensitive culture throughout the organization.

2

Champion Poverty Reduction as a Priority: Advocating and promoting poverty reduction as a top priority to Toronto residents, businesses, and all levels of government (Provincial and Federal).

3

Partner with Community Stakeholders: Collaborating with a wide range of community agencies, residents, labor organizations, private sector entities, faith communities, academia, funders, and other stakeholders. Together, they will contribute to the development, implementation, and evaluation of TO Prosperity.

5. Dedicate funding to poverty reduction action

To dedicate funding to poverty reduction actions, the city has outlined the following initiatives:

1

Embedding Impact Assessment in Budget Choices: Integrating mechanisms into city Council's decision-making processes to assess how budget choices impact poverty reduction efforts.

2

Exploring Sustainable Funding Options: Exploring stable and sustainable funding sources, which may include new revenue tools, to invest specifically in poverty reduction initiatives.



SYSTEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

For the city to effectively reduce poverty, its approach to budgeting and sustainable funding must be deeply aligned with the needs of marginalised communities, particularly women, minorities, and Indigenous peoples. While the city has made strides by embedding impact assessments into budget choices and exploring sustainable funding options, these efforts need to be more targeted.

The city's budget should explicitly prioritise funding initiatives that address [systemic inequalities](#) contributing to poverty. This includes allocating resources to support gender equality, Indigenous rights, and minority assistance programs. By doing so, the city ensures its poverty reduction efforts are both comprehensive and focused on the most vulnerable populations.

To sustain these initiatives, the city must secure stable, long-term funding sources. Exploring new revenue tools and reallocating existing resources will ensure consistent investment in programs that address systemic issues in welfare, education, and healthcare—areas crucial for reducing poverty over time.

Data-driven decision-making is essential. The city should invest in reliable, disaggregated [data collection](#), particularly for marginalised groups like [First Nations](#) communities interspersed across Toronto's neighbourhoods. This data will guide budget decisions, allowing the city to monitor progress, assess impact, and make informed adjustments. Embedding equity considerations into impact assessments ensures that budget allocations support those most affected by [poverty](#).

Finally, the city should foster [strong partnerships](#) with community organisations and Indigenous leaders to ensure that resources are effectively directed and that programs meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. Transparent reporting and accountability measures will further ensure that the city's poverty reduction efforts remain focused and effective. By prioritising these strategies, the city can create a more equitable and sustainable approach to poverty reduction, ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to thrive.

Canada's immigration policy must also adopt a long-term perspective that emphasizes citizenship and sustainable economic development. Balancing short-term labor needs with a focus on fostering full citizenship will enrich Canadian society and ensure that immigrants can fully integrate and contribute to their communities.

Collaboration between federal and provincial governments is essential to effectively address the housing crisis. Clarifying roles and enhancing coordination can lead to more coherent policies and initiatives that benefit all Canadians. Moreover, by addressing the economic challenges posed by rapid immigration, the government can enhance Canada's standard of living and overall economic performance.

Finally, enhancing immigrant integration through employment services and community support is crucial for ensuring that newcomers feel welcomed and valued. Strengthening partnerships between local communities and immigrants will foster a more inclusive society, where diverse experiences and perspectives can thrive.

Currently, Canada stands at a crossroads where the management of immigration can either exacerbate existing challenges or create a more prosperous and inclusive future. By implementing the recommended strategies outlined in this report, the government can turn immigration into a powerful catalyst for economic growth, social cohesion, and national prosperity. The path forward lies in acknowledging the complexities of immigration and actively working to create policies that benefit newcomers and Canadians alike, paving the way for a vibrant, sustainable, and harmonious society.