



TCBN Letter EC11.2 - A Framework to Advance Inclusive Economic Development in Toronto

March 27, 2024

The TCBN is encouraged by the City of Toronto's leadership to advance a new Framework for Inclusive Economic Development, and agrees with the pressing need for a paradigm shift in the City's approach to economic growth. The reality, as evidenced by the growing body of research and stats referenced in the staff report, is that economic prosperity has not been equitably shared among Toronto residents and neighborhoods.

While Toronto has undeniably thrived economically in the recent past, cementing its position as a global city-region hub, this prosperity has not been inclusive, with many residents and communities left behind. This increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots is exacerbated by a pattern of economic polarization, with the middle-income bracket dwindling as low-paying and precarious jobs become increasingly prevalent in the Toronto economy.

The TCBN recommends that the City take into consideration the following measures as it develops its approach and Framework for Inclusive Economic Development:

1. Acknowledgement of **systemic racism and discrimination that permeates our society as a first step towards dismantling the barriers that hinder the progress of equity-deserving groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities in building community wealth**. The disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on these communities have highlighted the entrenched inequalities that have long existed. **Disaggregated data tracking, monitoring and reporting must be a critical component of this Framework**
2. The City must be **clear and intentional in setting goals and targets** for what change it intends to achieve to ensure decent work and inclusive economies by:
 - a) **improving employment standards and working conditions** for local residents, especially in precarious sectors of the economy
 - b) developing tools to **remove barriers to economic participation** like access to capital, access to procurement opportunities, training and affordable child care
 - c) **improving the quality of life of Toronto residents** through local pathways to good jobs, business opportunities and housing options across the affordability spectrum
3. The City must acknowledge the **intersections of the climate crisis, housing affordability crisis, and economic inequality**, recognizing that these issues are intrinsically linked and require holistic solutions and the development of new and innovative tools/approaches.
4. The City must **identify immediate opportunities to update, monitor, report on and strengthen existing City levers** like the Social Procurement Program, Community Benefits Framework, Fair Wage Policy and advocate to other levels of government to be part of the solution in strengthening the local economy, promoting and protecting good local jobs and building community wealth, equitably.



Toronto Community
Benefits Network

TCBN Community-Labour Coalition Celebrates 10-Years this Month

Last week, the Toronto Community Benefits Network celebrated our 10-year anniversary, marking an important milestone in our advocacy to advance economic and racial justice in Toronto. The TCBN network has now grown to over 121 member organizations across Toronto.

Since our inception, the network has been focused on ensuring that as the City grows through public investments in transit infrastructure like the Eglinton Crosstown LRT and through large scale private developments like the Casino Woodbine expansion, that local communities and equity deserving groups benefit from Community Benefits Agreements that ensure good jobs, targets for local and equity hiring, measures to ensure procurement opportunities for local businesses, diverse owned businesses and social enterprise, neighbourhood improvements and environmental protections.

Currently, TCBNs community engagement work spans across the City of Toronto in many neighbourhoods and areas facing massive redevelopment and neighbourhood change such as Little Jamaica, Mount Dennis, Golden Mile, Jane and Finch, Downtown East and Downsview.

Public transit, local benefits and impacts on low-income communities

Of concern is the significant impact of these public transportation projects on Toronto's low income, working class and diverse communities with **no commitment from the provincial government to ensure Community Benefits Agreements are included in the four new priority transit projects**, a measure that can ensure some positive benefits and access to good jobs, apprenticeship and business opportunities for local impacted communities.

As all levels of government strive to improve public transit infrastructure across Toronto, they must also ensure that harm is not done to the very communities that are aimed to benefit from these new public investments. This necessitates the City's leadership in undertaking **a comprehensive study of transit-impacted neighborhoods**, with a focus on place based monitoring and public reporting on the development and investment activity, loss of business and commercial impacts, housing affordability, food security, affordable child care availability, community services and facilities and local environmental impacts.

It is imperative that the City has robust tools in place to protect low income and working class neighbourhoods from displacement of local residents, commercial businesses and preserve cultural spaces and the environment. Collaborative, resident-informed approaches like the Jane-Finch Initiative that ensure Secondary Plans and Community Development Plans in transit impacted neighbourhoods should be further expanded across the City.



Toronto Community
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Centering Community in Community, Economic, Neighbourhood Development

All plans related to community, economic and neighbourhood including this Framework for Inclusive Development must **centre and be developed in collaboration with the affected communities, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs addressed.**

Community-based planning approaches are essential for fostering inclusive economic development. By partnering, collaborating and supporting community-based planning approaches, the City can empower local residents to actively participate in **shaping the future of their neighborhoods, local economy and City**, thereby ensuring that development efforts and plans are truly reflective of community needs and aspirations.

It is time for our city to embrace a new paradigm of inclusive economic development—one that prioritizes economic investment, equity, sustainability, affordability and building community wealth. **We know this will require bold leadership from the City, collaborative partnerships, and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders to reverse course and build a Toronto that works for everyone.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R Powell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long tail on the final letter.

Rosemarie Powell,
Executive Director
Toronto Community Benefits Network



Key Stats - 2021 Canadian Census

- Close to 35% of Toronto residents struggle to survive on an after-tax income of less than \$30,000 a year, while only an estimated 10% enjoy incomes exceeding \$120,000¹
- Toronto's Poverty Rate - CFLIM-AT (21.7%) ranks highest of all urban centres in Canada and compared to surrounding regions like Peel (around 18%), York (around 16%), Durham (around 13%), provincially (16.1%) and Nationally (15.5%)²

Additional Data

- Black Canadians are over-represented in precarious, temporary and low-paying employment and are underrepresented in high-paying managerial positions³
- The unemployment rate for racialized youth stood at 20.5% compared to 15.7% for non-racialized youth, a difference of 4.8 percentage points. The unemployment rate for Black youth in Toronto and Ontario is 28%, which is two times higher than the national average of 14.3%
- As per the 2016 Census data, only 28% of Black residents in Toronto lived in a dwelling owned by a household member, compared to 54% of residents who are racialized and 64% of non-racialized residents⁴
- Houses in Toronto cost about 9.5 times the median income, far surpassing the threshold of severe unaffordability. The hourly minimum wage would need to rise to \$33.60 — more than double its current level — for a single minimum wage worker to afford an average one-bedroom apartment.⁵

¹ 2021 Census Data

² 2021 Census Data

³ Block & Galabuzi (2011), Ng & Gagnon (2020)

⁴ TO Foundation Vital Signs Report (2023)

⁵ TO Foundation Vital Signs Report (2023)