



December 01, 2025

RE: EC 25.7 - Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) welcomes this report and update on the City of Toronto's efforts to create meaningful jobs and opportunities for youth, especially those facing systemic and intersecting barriers related to race, gender, identity, sexual orientation, disability, income status, immigration status and family composition, have equitable access to employment, skills development and pathways to economic independence.

As the report highlights, youth across Toronto are facing significant challenges and barriers to meaningful employment and the City needs an all hands on deck approach, utilizing all of its levers, to support youth on to the right path. In October 2025, Toronto's youth unemployment rate was 19.7%, compared to 16.3% provincially and 14.0% nationally.

Below, the TCBN highlights three key recommendations for building on current efforts and to be prioritized as key focus areas for 2026:

- 1. Strengthening City levers to maximize impact and meaningful outcomes for youth**
- 2. Prioritizing decent work**
- 3. Supporting Black and Indigenous-led, focused and serving programming and initiatives**

The staff report highlights a few areas where the City is leveraging its role as an employer, purchaser and funder to create meaningful opportunities for youth. We are encouraged by the City of Toronto's efforts to leverage its role as an employer to create over 16,000 jobs for youth across various divisions, agencies and corporations.

While the report highlights the Community Benefits Framework and unique opportunities like the FIFA 2026 Community Benefits Plan as levers to create meaningful opportunities for youth, it does not report on any outcomes or provide data on such efforts.

Given the City's significant role as a purchaser of goods and services including construction services and development of new housing, the next phase should include a focus on strengthening procurement criteria, establishing community benefits language in all union collective agreements, ongoing monitoring and reporting of outcomes from the Community Benefits Framework on the public dashboard.



Such efforts can both help to enable more equitable pathways for local youth in areas such as apprenticeship training on City construction services, projects and contracts, as well as help to strengthen our local economy in response to tariffs.

1. Prioritizing decent work

Many of the existing initiatives and programs outline jobs and opportunities for youth, however there is currently no priority on job quality or data on the quality of jobs that youth are accessing. Current data outlines that of the 40 youth-specific programs identified at various City divisions, agencies and corporations:

- 48% are seasonal summer jobs in recreation and parks.
- 25% are part-time roles, often in libraries and customer service.
- 22% are full-time opportunities
- 5% are event-based or short-term contracts

While this data is important and should continue to be monitored, tracked and reported, such measures should also extend to job quality for each category (average and median wages).

For example, of the 16,000 jobs at the City, what percentage of youth were paid a living wage or above? Disaggregated data should also be monitored and reported to ensure that specific demographics are not overrepresented in certain job categories and underrepresented in others.

When accounting for the high cost of living in Toronto, it is imperative that the City prioritize equitable pathways into decent work and good job opportunities with living wages so that youth can afford to live and work in the City.

2. Supporting Black and Indigenous-led, focused and serving programming and initiatives

The report and data highlights that youth unemployment is greater for some groups as in May 2025, the national Black youth unemployment rate was 22% and 18% for Indigenous youth, compared to 14% for all youth aged 15–24.

While we recognize and applaud the City of Toronto's efforts to ensure current programs prioritize Black and Indigenous youth through targeted outreach and intentional program design, we would like to ensure organizations that are Indigenous and Black youth-led, focused and serving receive the necessary funding and resources to create and/or enhance programs and services that meet the needs of youth in their communities.



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The TCBN looks forward to seeing these recommendations reflected in the key actions and next steps to improve youth employment in Toronto.

Our network of community, labour and social enterprise organizations looks forward to supporting such efforts including the enhancement, implementation and monitoring of the Community Benefits Framework, an essential municipal policy lever that should be maximized to create equitable pathways whenever the City buys, builds, develops or provides an incentive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R Powell".

Rosemarie Powell

Executive Director
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