



April 21st, 2026

**Re: EC27.3 City of Toronto Inclusive Economic Development Framework**

Dear Toronto City Council,

North York Harvest Food Bank has been a member of the City of Toronto's Inclusive Economic Development working group since March 2025. As the primary food bank serving the northern part of the city, we support more than 30,000 individuals each month through a network of partner agencies and direct service programs.

Through this work, we see clearly that food insecurity is fundamentally an economic issue. The primary drivers in our communities are insufficient income and limited access to meaningful economic opportunities. As income and wealth gaps continue to widen across Toronto, more residents are turning to food banks to meet their basic needs. This trend persists despite broader economic growth, highlighting a "K-shaped" recovery in which gains are not shared equitably across the city.

We commend Mayor Chow and City Council for declaring food insecurity a state of emergency. This recognition underscores the urgency of addressing not only the symptoms, but also the structural economic factors that perpetuate poverty. Food insecurity is not only a moral concern; it is part of a costly cycle that increases demand on public services and undermines the long-term resilience of our communities.

The Inclusive Economic Development framework presented today represents an important step forward. By considering the type and quality of economic growth, it encourages all City departments to integrate inclusive economic principles into their decision-making. This approach has the potential to shift policy toward outcomes that create decent work, support local businesses, retain wealth within communities, and strengthen Toronto's economic sovereignty.

Our experience with community-based workforce initiatives demonstrates that when barriers to participation are reduced, individuals are better positioned to succeed. These models show the tangible impact that inclusive policies can have when they are intentionally designed and implemented.

As Council considers this framework, we emphasize the importance of clear accountability and measurement. This initiative should serve not only as a guiding framework, but also as the beginning of a broader, ongoing conversation about how Toronto can build a more equitable and inclusive economy.



Toronto City Council has an opportunity to lead by advancing policies that ensure economic growth benefits all residents. We encourage you to adopt and strengthen this framework with a continued commitment to equity, accountability, and long-term impact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Sahar Ghafouri', is written in a cursive style.

Sahar Ghafouri  
Senior Director, Operations  
North York Harvest Food Bank