

Update on Reducing Barriers to Youth Employment and Expanding the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program

Presentation to: Economic and Community Development Committee
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Youth Face Growing Barriers to Employment



- At **16.8 %**, Toronto's youth unemployment rate in April 2026 was significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate
- Youth unemployment in Canada rose from 10.0% in 2022 to 13.8% in 2025, **the largest three-year increase on record** outside of a recession
- Economic uncertainty, rising living costs, increasing competition for entry-level jobs, and evolving workforce demands are making it harder for youth to access employment and advance their careers

Building a City-Wide Youth Employment System

The City is advancing a coordinated, city-wide youth employment system that connects young people to opportunities through multiple access points across Toronto.

Programs are delivered through a network of community-based partners, employers, schools, and City initiatives across Toronto, helping youth connect to opportunities where they live, learn, and gather.

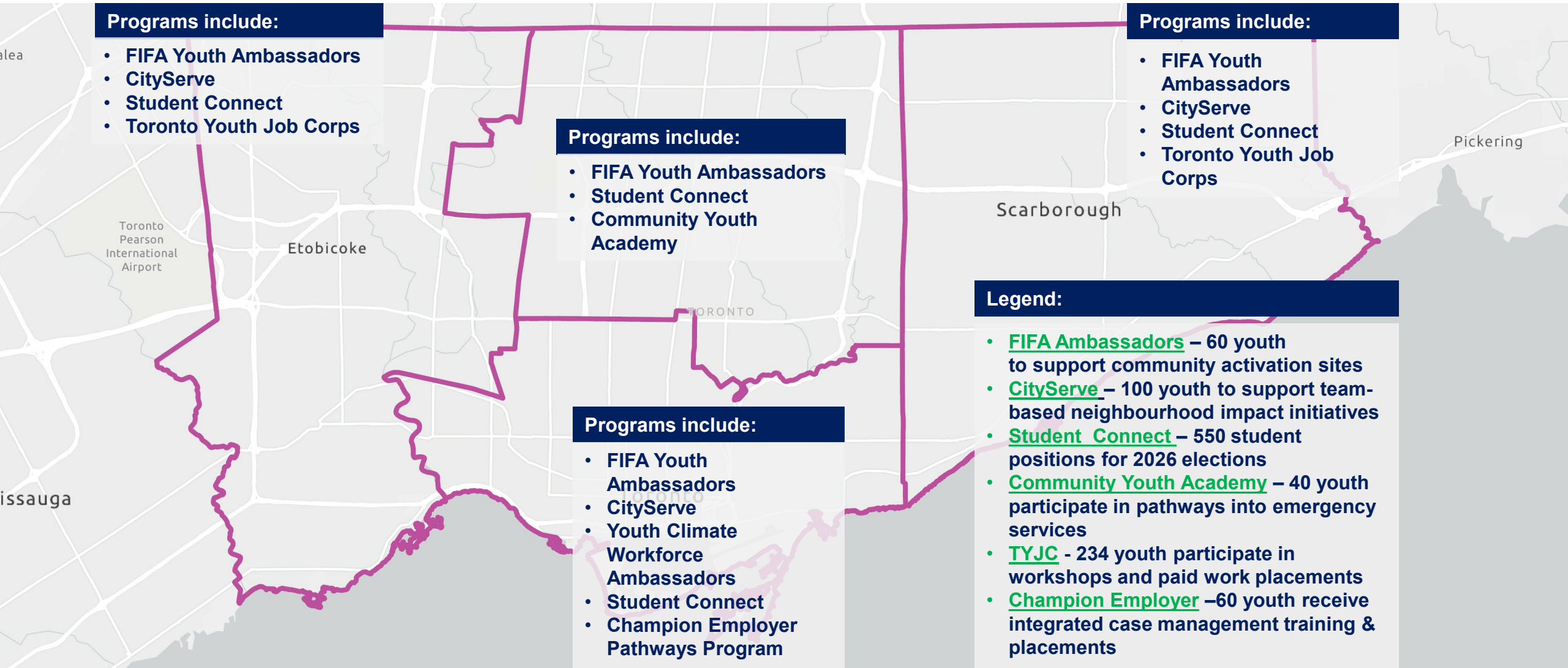
- 16,000+** Youth employment opportunities identified through inventory in 2025, making the City one of Toronto's largest youth employers
- 2,800** Additional youth opportunities identified through City and Youth Employer Table partner initiatives
- 1,085** Youth connected to job and employment supports through 11 Career Activation and Job Fair events in 2026
- 5+** New youth employment initiatives, including CityServe, FIFA World Cup 2026™ initiatives, Community Youth Academy, and Student Connect
- 10+** Partnerships established through the **Youth Employment Table**



Advancing Youth Employment Across the City

(City-wide programs with community-based delivery)

Illustrative examples of how city-wide programs are delivered through community-based access points across Toronto. Programs are delivered through multiple partners and locations across Toronto. Youth can access opportunities regardless of ward.





TORONTO'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM

Youth can connect to opportunities through programs and partners across Toronto, regardless of where they live.



MULTIPLE ENTRY POINTS ACROSS TORONTO

Youth can enter the pathway at any stage based on their needs and goals.



SCHOOLS & POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS
Guidance, programs and supports



CITY PROGRAMS & SERVICES
Employment, training, financial and social supports



EMPLOYERS & BUSINESS PARTNERS
Job opportunities, internships and industry connections



EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS & NETWORKS
Specialized supports and career services



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS & YOUTH SERVICES
Local programs, mentorship and wraparound supports



THE PATHWAY: A flexible journey with many ways to start and succeed.



WHAT MAKES THE SYSTEM WORK



THE IMPACT

When young people succeed, Toronto succeeds.



MORE YOUTH CONNECTED TO OPPORTUNITIES
Stronger awareness and access to the right supports at the right time.



MORE YOUTH EMPLOYED
Increased access to meaningful and sustainable employment.



STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS TORONTO
A connected network of partners creating more pathways and opportunities.



BETTER DATA TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND OUTCOMES
Evidence that informs decisions, investments and program design.



A MORE EQUITABLE TORONTO
Improved access to opportunities for youth across all communities.

Impact in Action – Ashleigh's Story

Ashleigh, a member of Six Nations of the Grand River and the Tuscarora Clan, participated in the Indigenous Youth Fellowship and was placed in a Councillor's office.

Experience

- Through the Fellowship, she gained firsthand experience in municipal government, contributing to discussions on place-keeping, renaming, and Indigenous representation in Toronto.

Skills & Career Outcomes

- The experience helped build her confidence, leadership skills, and understanding of civic decision-making.
- Following the Fellowship, Ashleigh secured a full-time position as a Constituency Assistant, demonstrating the program's role in creating pathways to meaningful employment and public service careers.



Impact in Action – Abdifatah's Story

Abdifatah began his community leadership journey as a youth in Kingston-Galloway, organizing local events and supporting community initiatives.

Experience

- In 2019, he joined the City's Community Healing Project, where he further developed his skills through training, mentorship, and frontline community work.

Skills & Career Outcomes

- The experience helped prepare him for a Community Development Officer role with the Violence Intervention Support Unit and later a position as an Agency Review Officer in the Community Funding Unit.
- In addition to his professional achievements, Abdifatah helped establish Hidaayah House and has received multiple awards recognizing his leadership and contributions to community building in Toronto.





Diversity Youth Fellowship

- Provides equity-deserving youth aged 18 to 29 with paid placements in Council Members' offices as Constituency Assistants.
- Since 2018, the Fellowship has supported more than 120 youth through targeted streams that increase access and representation for equity-deserving communities across Toronto.
- 25% of current and former Fellows have self-identified as having a disability.
- Staff's recommended approach is to strengthen accessibility within the existing Fellowship model through enhanced outreach, accommodations, participant supports, and ongoing engagement with accessibility partners.

Next Steps

- Strengthen city-wide coordination to advance a more connected youth employment system across Toronto.
- Improve data collection and reporting to better understand reach, participation, outcomes, and gaps across communities.
- Evaluate the impact of youth employment initiatives to inform future planning and investment.
- Launch the Youth Employment Charter to increase employer engagement and opportunities for youth.
- Expand partnerships and pathways that support equitable access to jobs, training, and career development across Toronto.



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