

Economic and Cultural Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the local, national and global economy in profound ways from supply chain challenges to the closure of valued small businesses to a re-imagining of how, and where, we work. The City's COVID-19 recovery strategies focus on **economic recovery and renewal**, in collaboration with other governments and our partners such as the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

Corporate/Strategic Commitment

The City has prioritized supports to Toronto's residents, business and communities as part of our foundation for longer-term recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes actions that acknowledge, consider and address the disproportionate impacts COVID-19 has had on racialized and vulnerable communities

The City Manager's End of Term achievements **report** highlights and recognizes the accomplishments of the Toronto Public Service over the 2018-2022 Council term and progress towards the **Corporate Strategic Plan priorities**.

To view more achievements, visit toronto.ca/successto.

Supporting Small Businesses

The City's support to small businesses throughout the pandemic included innovative projects and programs such as [CaféTO](#), [ShowLoveTO](#), [StrollTO](#), [ArtworxTO](#) and the introduction of a small business property tax subclass. These actions and others have positioned small businesses and communities to respond, recover and rebuild from the impacts of the pandemic.

[Digital Main Street](#), a program initiated by the City, is now delivered by a third-party and supported by funding from the provincial and federal government.

The program supports businesses to expand their online presence through grants, one-on-one assistance, training and advice, and a platform to create online stores for independent small businesses and artists. In 2022, the Digital Main Street Program was **extended through 2023**.

The [2020 Toronto Employment Survey](#) counted 73,080 business establishments in 2020, a net decrease of 3,480 establishments (-4.5 per cent) from 2019. Monitoring the next Employment Survey to determine how well businesses rebound will be a key indicator of Toronto's recovery.



Supporting Arts & Culture

To support the recovery of our cultural sector and revitalize the downtown core and neighbourhoods, the City has increased arts and culture funding, significantly exceeding the \$25 per capita

investment target that had been set by Council pre-pandemic. An additional \$500,000 for artists is being provided through the Toronto Arts Council in 2022, for a total of \$25 million annually.

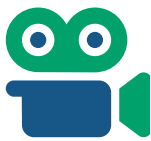
Working with other governments and partners

The City worked with other governments and partners to advance economic stability and recovery goals including promoting federal and provincial business supports, City-led measures and direct partnerships including the [Toronto Main Street Recovery and Rebuild Initiative \(MRRRI\) programs](#).

Six programs are assisting Toronto's small businesses recover from the impacts of the pandemic, through funding from the Government of Canada and its Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario to support small business operators, community business associations, streetscape animation and retail innovation.

- [The Retail Accelerator Program](#) provides small retail businesses with access to training and micro-grants of \$10,000.
- [The Main Street Innovation Fund](#) offers funding for organizations to address challenges and animate main streets.
- [The Commercial Space Rehabilitation Grant Program](#) offers funding of up to \$20,000 to cover 50% of the cost of eligible interior improvements to vacant commercial properties and storefronts.
- [The CaféTO Property Improvement Program](#) offers funding of up to \$7,500 to business operators to cover 50 per cent of the cost of eligible improvements to café spaces on City or private property.
- [PlazaPOPS](#) facilitates the development of community gathering spaces in strip mall parking lots through features and programming.

City Actions



We announced the development of a [state-of-the-art media hub](#) on City-owned land in [Toronto's Port Lands](#) to support continued growth in the film industry with [CreateTO](#).



After two summers without festivals, the [City resumed celebrations](#) of the major festivals and events in 2022.



In 2022, the City made a program [to reduce property taxes for every eligible live music venue](#) launched during the pandemic permanent in Toronto.



City Council adopted a [small business property tax subclass](#), which provides a 15 per cent reduction in the municipal tax rate for eligible small business properties starting in 2022. The Province of Ontario provided a matching 15 per cent reduction in the provincial education portion of property taxes for eligible properties.

Building Back Stronger

The [Toronto Office for Recovery and Rebuild report](#) identified key actions to respond to the needs of Toronto residents, communities and businesses given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic including addressing racism and supporting vulnerable communities through targeted interventions. The City adopted the [Building Back Stronger: Report of the City of Toronto's Economic and Culture Recovery Advisory Group](#) to make meaningful structural changes and to ensure that Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities have better access to economic and cultural benefits and opportunities post-pandemic.

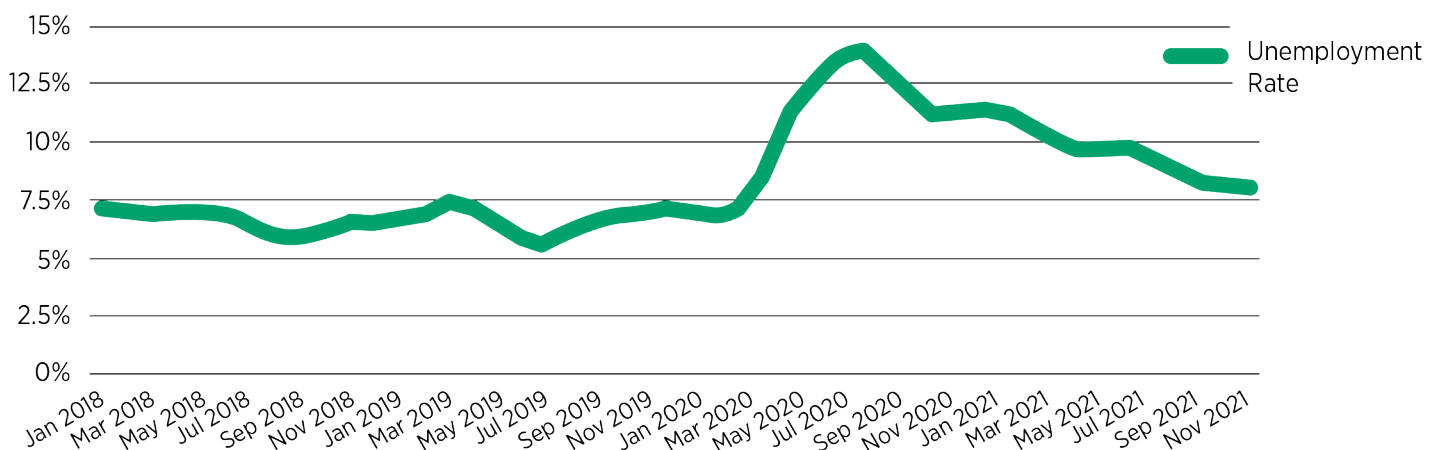
[CaféTO](#) was launched in June 2020 to support restaurants and bars facing indoor dining capacity restrictions by providing expanded outdoor dining space on the street and sidewalk. In 2021, it saw a 51 per cent higher uptake compared to 2020, with over 1,200 restaurants participating. The program will continue through 2022.

During the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, [the City's unemployment rate](#) soared from a 6.7 per cent in Feb 2020 to 13.9 per cent in Aug 2020 primarily due to public health closures that impacted business across Toronto. With the re-opening of many businesses alongside structural changes to the [labour market](#) from the impact of the pandemic, demand for labour has increased significantly and the unemployment rate in Toronto fell back below the Feb 2022 level to 6.4 per cent by April 2022.



“Toronto like many cities around the world has been impacted by COVID-19. Families have lost loved ones, many workers have been laid off and businesses have closed their doors. The social and cultural fabric of our neighbourhoods has been stressed by the cancellation of events and the challenges of not seeing each other in person. But we are a strong, diverse and resilient city; we have deep and powerful community, cultural and economic foundations. We will build back and we will build back stronger.”
Blake Goldring, Co-Chair, City of Toronto's Economic and Culture Recovery Advisory Group on Building Back Stronger, December 7, 2020 at Economic and Community Development Committee

Monthly Values for Unemployment Rate (Toronto Residents)



Seasonally Adjusted three-month moving average (Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey)

Spotlight on Equity and Reconciliation

In 2022, City Council unanimously adopted the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#), a 10-year plan to advance truth and justice for Indigenous People in Toronto. This term, City Council approved the development of an [Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#) to provide business resources by and for the Indigenous community. Construction of the ICIE is expected to begin in Q3 2022, with operations to commence in late 2023.

In 2020, we invested [\\$1.2 million](#) towards Toronto's Black arts and culture community and business sector to address systemic economic barriers. The City also created a [Cultural Districts program](#) to support businesses and economies, with a dedicated focus on Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+ and racialized communities. One example, the [Little Jamaica Initiative](#), will support and celebrate this cultural planning area and is informed by a Working Group of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Partnership and Accountability Circle.

A [\\$2 million partnership](#) between the City of Toronto, the Slight Family Foundation and Advance, Canada's Black Music Business Collective, will support the entry, retention, and advancement of Black professionals in Toronto's music industry.

[ArtworxTO: Toronto's Year of Public Art](#) is injecting close to \$12 million into the arts sector, supporting 1,500 artists, 85 per cent of whom are Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), delivering more than 350 projects to every corner of the city.

[Awakenings](#) is a series of art projects created within Toronto History Museums by Black, Indigenous and artists of colour, operating under the principles of anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism. The program was the recipient of the 2021 [Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award](#) for Community Leadership.



Spotlight on Partnerships

The City of Toronto's Music Office and the [Toronto Music Advisory Committee](#) continued to partner and exchange ideas to support and promote Toronto's music industry.

To attract more foreign direct investment, City Council approved Toronto's continued participation in GTA Region Investment Attraction. As borders reopened, international trade missions with government and industry partners resumed in person, including a mission to [Los Angeles](#) to build on record-level investments in Toronto by LA-based production companies.

The TTC has received \$1.453 billion in funding relief through the Safe Restart Agreement from the other orders of government, which recognizes the importance of public transit as an essential service and the critical role it plays in the City's environmental, social and economic well-being and vitality, particularly in post-COVID recovery.

In partnership with the [Metcalf Foundation](#) and [Work in Culture](#), \$500,000 is being provided for a new [Catalyst and Transformation Fund](#) to help arts organizations make the structural adaptations necessary to thrive as Toronto recovers.

The [Toronto Public Art Strategy \(2020-30\)](#) advances key equity goals such as Indigenous place-making and addressing the gaps in Toronto's public art that have left some communities under-represented. The strategy includes activities across three public art programs – the [City of Toronto Public Art and Monuments Collection](#), the [Percent for Public Art Program](#), and [StreetARToronto](#) (StART).

