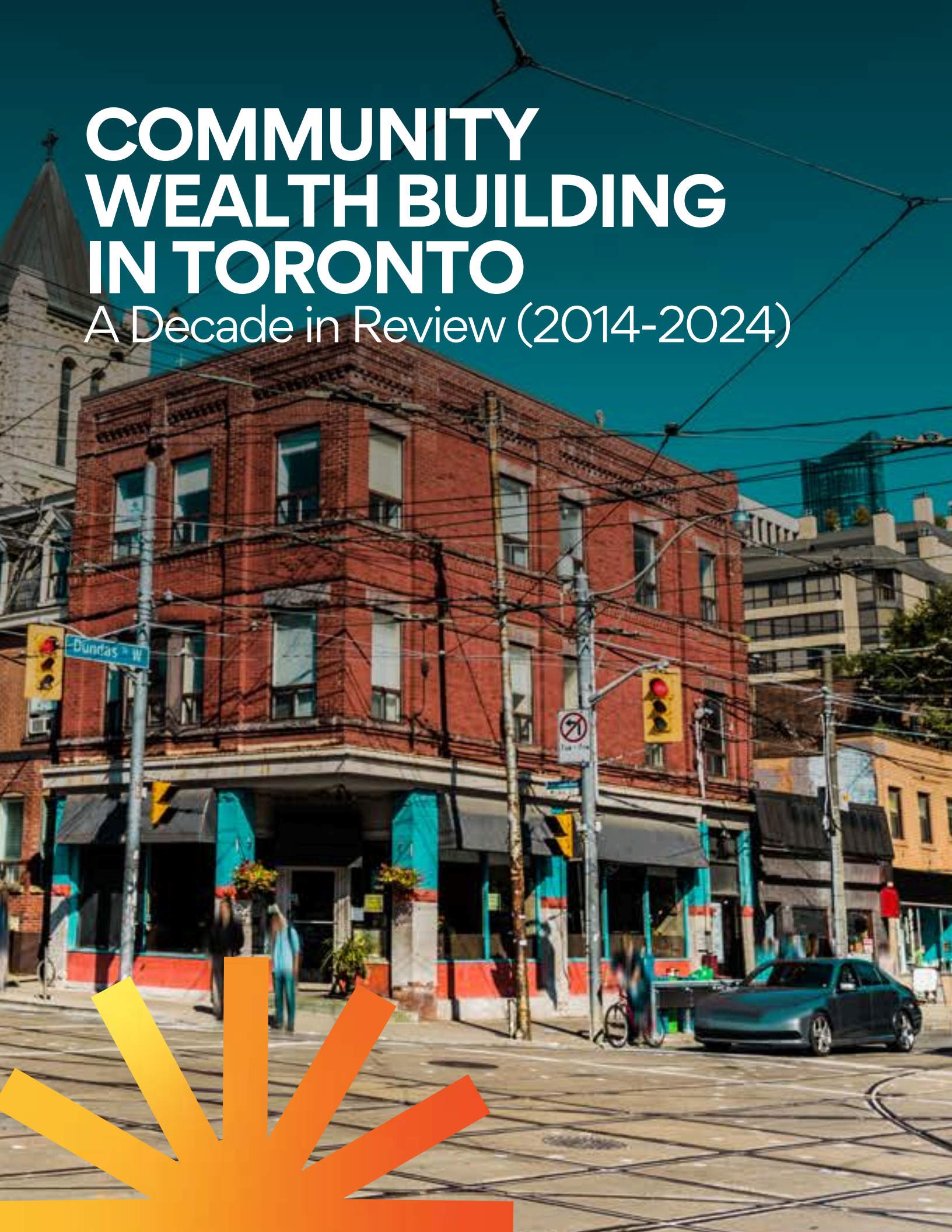


# COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING IN TORONTO

A Decade in Review (2014-2024)



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York University

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# Executive Summary

**Community Wealth Building (CWB)** is a transformative economic development model that promotes democratic control and community ownership of local assets. The model offers an alternative to extractive economic practices by ensuring that wealth remains and circulates within local communities and generates shared economic prosperity, racial equity, and ecological sustainability. Over the past decade, communities and institutions across Toronto have been leading CWB projects that have shifted local material conditions from the ground up. These CWB initiatives have been strategically supported by the community and labour sector, resourced by values-aligned foundations, and further enabled by public sector policies and practices.

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The following report takes stock of CWB initiatives in Toronto over a 10-year period from 2014-2024, and offers high-level takeaways for the City of Toronto, institutions, funders, and community and labour networks to strengthen strategies over the next 10 years. The report showcases five pillars within the CWB ecosystem—**Progressive Procurement, Locally Rooted Finance, Inclusive and Democratic Enterprise, Fair Work, and Just Use of Land and Property**—with each pillar sharing a snapshot of Toronto-based initiatives and policies over the past decade, highlighting future opportunities for strengthening the pillar, and sharing international and national spotlights of inspiring CWB initiatives. The findings of this report aim to inform future municipal and institutional strategies, and strengthen the community-based movement for economic democracy. The takeaways aim to offer a foundation for community members, funders, and policy makers to strengthen the CWB ecosystem in Toronto.

The report calls on the City of Toronto to continue to integrate CWB into policy frameworks, land use planning, and funding tools; while also expanding support into new areas such as workforce development, cooperative infrastructure, and pathways for community and public ownership. It calls on funders to coordinate grants and collective investments to support both backbone networks and place-based CWB initiatives, and it calls on anchor institutions to continue advancing local hiring, social purchasing, and community investments, particularly within health institutions. Finally, it calls on community and labour networks to convene and share learnings and develop an action plan for the next 10 years of CWB in Toronto, with support from the City of Toronto, funders, and anchor institutions and in solidarity with Indigenous communities. Taken together, these actions are key for shifting power within the local economy, taking ownership, and building community wealth.

# Executive Summary

## Community Wealth Building Ecosystem & Pillars

**Definition:** Community Wealth Building is an approach to building resilient local economies that advances local wellbeing, generates community power, and mobilizes a green and just transition.

**Takeaways:** Toronto has a growing yet fragmented CWB ecosystem that needs to strengthen the movement infrastructure of community-based practitioners and backbone networks, while also championing institutions to advance transformative CWB policies and resources.

### Progressive Procurement

**Definition:** Public spending by organizations and institutions that is committed to achieving social, economic, and climate goals.

**Snapshot:** Since 2015, the City of Toronto and local institutions have created policies that leverage their purchasing power to strategically invest in equity-deserving communities through supply chain diversity and workforce development initiatives.

**Takeaways:** Improve accessibility and expand policies into health institutions.

### Locally Rooted Finance

**Definition:** Financial instruments and institutions—such as credit unions and community bonds—that circulate wealth locally and democratically to address community needs.

**Snapshot:** Toronto is home to new social finance tools, like community bonds, that allow individuals and organizations to invest in assets like affordable housing, community space, and renewable energy.

**Takeaways:** Improve investment readiness for local initiatives and leverage institutional endowments to democratically invest in communities.

### Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

**Definition:** Business models—such as co-ops and social enterprises—that prioritize shared ownership, collective decision-making, and sustainability.

**Snapshot:** The last decade has seen a rise of impactful social enterprises and co-ops, yet a decline in policies and resources that support them.

**Takeaways:** Create resources, support, and technical assistance for co-ops and social enterprises, as well as local small businesses.

### Fair Work

**Definition:** Employment standards that improve working conditions such as living wages, worker power and control, and trade union rights.

**Snapshot:** Toronto is home to a strong movement for decent work, which has led to City-wide policies for community benefits and workforce development.

**Takeaways:** Advance living wages and workforce development in key sectors, such as green jobs.

### Just Use of Land & Property

**Definition:** Stewardship of land that transforms property relations as a common good as opposed to a commodity, such as community land trusts.

**Snapshot:** Since 2014, community land trusts have expanded across Toronto to protect affordable housing and community spaces from displacement.

**Takeaways:** Increase acquisition funding, including for commercial spaces, and transform property relationships to respect Indigenous sovereignty.

# Introduction

Over the past decade, neighbourhoods across Toronto have been transforming local economies through **Community Wealth Building** (CWB) strategies. These strategies aim to tackle wealth inequality and democratize the economy through the collaborative leadership of communities, labour, nonprofits, foundations, and public sector institutions, addressing the root cause of inequities by focusing on stewardship and centering economic, racial, and climate justice.

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In Spring 2024, the City of Toronto's Poverty Reduction Office and the Atkinson Foundation invited the following CWB practitioners to engage in a reflective process on CWB strategies that have been seeded in the city over the last decade:

- **City of Toronto** divisions such as Social Development (SD), Economic Development and Culture (EDC), City Planning, and Purchasing and Materials Management Division (PMMD).
- **Funders** such as the Metcalf Foundation, United Way of Greater Toronto, and the Workforce Funder Collaborative.
- **Anchor Institutions** such as York University, George Brown College, Humber College, and Centennial College.
- **Community and Labour Networks** such as Toronto Community Benefits Network, Buy Social Canada, Ontario Nonprofit Network, and the Toronto & York Region Labour Council.

Additionally, community leaders from Black Urbanism TO, Toronto Chinatown Land Trust, Parkdale People's Economy, ACORN, Social Planning Toronto, and East Scarborough Storefront, as well as developers like the Daniels Corporation, Kilmer Group, and Northcrest Developments, were brought together to participate in the process.

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Nine conversations were hosted from April to December 2024 to understand the past, present and future of CWB in Toronto. The project was supported by Evenings and Weekends Consulting and Social Planning Toronto to map key milestones in the CWB ecosystem, share successful examples from other domestic and international jurisdictions, and lift up key tensions, lessons and opportunities for how to build momentum for a bolder and more integrated CWB ecosystem over the next decade.

The following report shares findings from the sessions in four sections:

- **Terminology** - Defining the five pillars of CWB and related terminology.
- **Milestones** - Highlighting significant moments in Toronto's CWB landscape over the last decade.
- **Ecosystem Map** - Spotlighting notable initiatives and promising policies that have emerged over the past decade.
- **Takeaways** - Sharing high level takeaways lifted up by CWB practitioners.

These findings offer a foundation to inform future action planning among practitioners and policy makers to strengthen the CWB ecosystem in Toronto.

# Context



Wealth inequality has hit the highest level ever recorded in Canada<sup>1</sup>. The cost of living has risen sharply through inflation and tariffs, and it is harder for working people and people on social assistance to afford basic necessities such as food and housing. In Toronto, poverty levels for the past decade have remained high and continue to be racialized, gendered, and geographically concentrated<sup>2</sup>. As we enter a disruptive moment in our economy—from geopolitical trade wars, technological advancements like AI, public health disasters, and extreme climate catastrophes—it is an opportune time for us to build a bolder and more integrated democratic economic development strategy for Toronto.

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Community wealth building offers a series of strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and wealth inequality by focusing on two key issues within the economy: ownership and control. These strategies centre communities who have been systemically prevented from building intergenerational wealth—such as Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, as well as low-income communities, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities—to directly confront systemic racism, climate change, and economic injustice<sup>3</sup>. These strategies bring together a wide range of actors from the grassroots to institutional level in order to build collective power and transform local economies.

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Although Toronto’s CWB ecosystem could be described as patchwork, practitioners have been tying the threads and building a more intricate and woven network of support. While initially inspired by CWB projects internationally, there is now an emerging “made in Toronto” approach to community economic development that aims to foster shared wealth for equity-deserving communities. The timing of this work aligns with the creation of the City of Toronto’s first Inclusive Economic Development Framework and broader initiatives that intentionally align social and economic development, offering a unique opportunity to envision the future of CWB and how it can be supported by municipal infrastructure.

# Terminology

**Community Wealth Building (CWB)** is a transformative approach to community economic development that focuses on democratic control and community stewardship of local assets such as land, labour, and money. It creates the conditions for communities and workers to build shared wealth and for that wealth to remain and circulate in the local economy. The model centres community ownership, racial equity and ecological sustainability as key tenets.

The following model and definitions were developed by the Democracy Collaborative—an American research centre advancing economic democracy—and consists of five key pillars<sup>4</sup>:

## Progressive Procurement

*“Local governments and place-based ‘anchor institutions’ should lead with procurement practices that re-localize economic activity, build local multipliers and end leakage and financial extraction.”*

## Locally Rooted Finance

*“Cities and local institutions should redirect money in service of the real economy through public and community banks, credit unions, and targeted public pension investments.”*

## Inclusive Democratic Enterprise

*“Cities should have multiple forms of worker and consumer cooperatives, social enterprises, public ownership, municipal enterprise, and more based on the recognition that the ownership of productive capital is at the heart of where power lies in any political-economic system.”*

## Fair Work

*“Every worker must receive a living wage and real power in and control of their workplace for decent work and conditions, and advancing trade union rights.”*

## Just Use of Land & Property

*“Cities should mobilize land and property assets to build real wealth in communities, bring local land and real estate development back under community control, and combat speculation and displacement.”*

# Terminology

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Community Wealth Building (CWB) offers a framework to tackle inequalities through social investment, advance community control and power, mobilize a green and just transition, and improve wellbeing through resilient local economies. There are many economic development frameworks that overlap with CWB yet employ different principles and practices.

In November 2024, the City of Toronto released its *10-year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy* using the language of **Inclusive Economic Development (IED)** to understand citywide strategies that aim to improve economic outcomes and opportunities across Toronto's populations and neighbourhoods—notably Black, Indigenous, and equity-deserving communities, as well as those furthest from the labour market.

As defined by the City of Toronto, IED seeks to meet the social and economic rights of Toronto residents. This human rights-based framework uses the City's levers and community partnerships to support “accessible pathways to employment and decent work, skills training, and entrepreneurship for residents and communities that have not benefited from economic growth in the past.”<sup>5</sup> According to the City, IED is shaped by and accountable to communities and neighbourhoods, and therefore focuses on ensuring democratic processes for inclusive outcomes. In their definition, **Community Economic Development (CED)** refers to the place-based application of IED.

## Comparing CWB and IED

The core distinction between CWB and IED is the focus on democratic control and community ownership. While this report uses the term ‘Community Wealth Building’, it shares many examples of IED and CED initiatives that may not fully achieve CWB's transformative vision in their current state. These initiatives have been identified as having the potential to grow, adapt, and inform a future CWB ecosystem.

Many CWB practitioners who shaped this report have also helped inform the City's definition of IED and CED and are guiding the development of the IED Framework through a City-led Working Table. The overlap between these two approaches offers a timely opportunity to integrate CWB approaches into the City's IED Framework, along with broader policies and practices, in order to build shared wealth and equitable development.

## Comparing CWB and Social and Solidarity Economies

Grassroots practices of **Social and Solidarity Economies**, such as mutual aid and Rotating Savings and Credit Associations, are foundational practices that often create the conditions for successful CWB initiatives<sup>6</sup>. While these grassroots efforts are not profiled within this report, they foster critical forms of community-based economies that forefront collective care and survival, particularly among Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.

# Milestones



*Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust*

Reflecting on the past decade of CWB in Toronto reveals how much the movement has accomplished, while also highlighting key lessons and room for improvement. The timeline—located in the Appendix—archives breakthrough moments in Toronto’s CWB landscape from 2014 to 2024. These milestones are the result of years of partnership building, policy changes, and organizing, including failures and pivots throughout the decade. While the timeline does not capture initiatives that began before 2014, it builds on the historic foundations—such as early movements for community benefits and land trusts, and enabling funding and research projects—that laid the groundwork for CWB in Toronto<sup>7</sup>.

In the backdrop of the CWB milestones, systemic changes were influencing the wider social and economic landscape of Toronto. Transitions in municipal, provincial, and federal leadership have shifted key policies, strategies, and funding opportunities depending on political priorities—such as the reduction in supportive provincial programs following the 2018 election. Other influences were global in scope, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, as well as the movement for Black Lives and calls to action for Indigenous sovereignty, which have tangibly shifted collective commitments to equity and justice. Each of these moments have shaped the CWB landscape as we know it today.

# Milestones

## Key Catalysts:

### Progressive Procurement

The City launched AnchorTO, a network of public institutions committed to inclusive economic strategies, in 2015 which catalyzed social procurement policies and resources across institutions. As of 2024, social procurement policies were active in five educational institutions, and the City was enhancing its Social Procurement Policy in alignment with the Reconciliation Action Plan and the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

### Locally Rooted Finance

Over the past decade, community investments have expanded to support community land trusts, co-operatives, and social enterprises by groups such as Tapestry Community Capital in 2018. The City of Toronto also launched its own Social Debenture Program in 2020.

### Inclusive Democratic Enterprise

Although there was a robust network of social enterprises well before the past decade, a wave of new initiatives, such as Building Up in 2014, helped shift the landscape of social procurement and workforce development within the public and community sectors.

### Fair Work

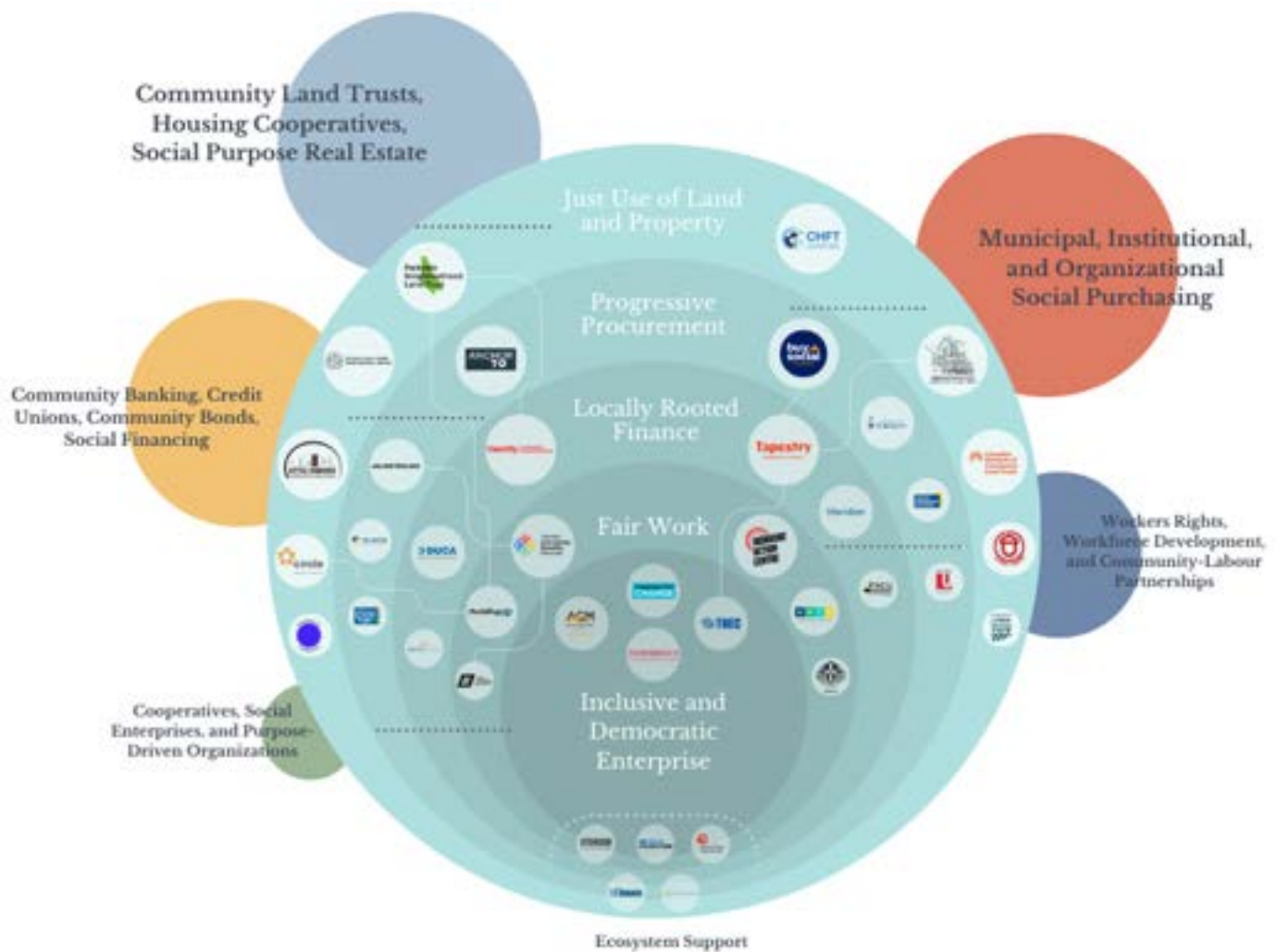
When Toronto Community Benefits Network formed and signed a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with Metrolinx in 2014, it made the Eglinton Crosstown LRT the first large-scale infrastructure project in Ontario to include a Community Benefits Program. The adoption of the City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework in 2019 helped advance systems change by leveraging public infrastructure to achieve fair work outcomes.

### Just Use of Land and Property

The rise of the new generation of community land trusts (CLTs) can be tied to the launch of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust in 2014. There are now at least eight incorporated CLTs in Toronto, and a national network of more than 40. In 2021, the City of Toronto also began embedding support for CLTs through its land use planning, policy, and funding tools.

**The complete timeline of CWB initiatives in Toronto from 2014-2024 is located in the Appendix (Page 48).**

# Community Wealth Building Ecosystem



Progressive Procurement	Locally Rooted Finance	Inclusive Democratic Enterprise	Fair Work	Just Use of Land and Property
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The CWB ecosystem in Toronto is composed of five pillars that form a unique web of relationships aimed at collectively advancing equitable and community-led economic initiatives. The following section shines a spotlight on notable CWB initiatives that have emerged over the past decade, drawing from the research scan and the systems-mapping sessions held with practitioners. Each pillar includes a snapshot of where we are today, along with analysis of how we got here, the gaps that can be filled over time, the policy landscape that can support or hinder the pillar to thrive, as well as local and international examples of CWB to inspire and inform future action.

# Community Wealth Building Ecosystem



## International Spotlight: Community Wealth Building Initiatives

Across the globe, CWB initiatives have been integrated into government strategies at both a municipal and federal scale.

In November 2021, the City of Chicago made a historic \$15 million commitment to invest in CWB as part of the Chicago Recovery Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>8</sup>. Led by the Department of Planning and Development and the Mayor's Office for Economic and Racial Justice, Chicago aims to strengthen the local cooperative ecosystem essential for generating real community wealth.

The initiative focuses on four priority models of CWB to promote local, democratic and shared ownership of community assets:

- Worker cooperatives
- Housing cooperatives
- Community land trusts
- Community investment

The City partners with the University of Illinois Chicago to operate a CWB hub that convenes working groups, connects practitioners, develops tools and resources, and conducts research on the impact of CWB.

Chicago's CWB initiative has three phases:

1. Strengthen the capacity of Chicago's CWB ecosystem
2. Advance emerging projects across the four priority models
3. Invest in more established cooperative pilot projects.

Other municipalities such as Richmond, Virginia (2014) and Rochester, New York (2018) have also created their own dedicated Mayoral Offices of Community Wealth Building<sup>9</sup>.

In 2024, the Scottish Government committed to bringing forward a national Community Wealth Building Bill, which will direct public bodies, such as health boards, to create CWB action plans that prioritize buying goods and services locally and support employee-owned businesses, cooperatives, and social enterprises<sup>10</sup>.

The City of Toronto can learn from these initiatives as strategic government investments that retain, generate, and circulate wealth within local economies.

# Progressive Procurement

## Snapshot

### Progressive Procurement at the City of Toronto

The City of Toronto has been at the forefront of municipalities leveraging their purchasing power to support inclusive economic development. The City's Social Procurement Policy ensures that a portion of public purchases will benefit Toronto's historically-disadvantaged communities—particularly Black and equity-deserving communities—by mitigating barriers to supply chain diversity and workforce development. The City's Social Procurement Framework was first adopted in 2013<sup>11</sup>, emerging out of years of youth advocacy in Flemingdon Park for local work opportunities in City capital projects. In preparation for the 2015 Pan Am Games, Toronto drew inspiration from Vancouver's use of social procurement during the 2010 Olympics as a criteria for awarding municipal contracts. The Social Procurement Policy was ultimately adopted by Council in 2016 and came into effect in 2017. Between 2017 and 2023, the City awarded a total of \$102.9 million in contracts to certified Indigenous, Black and "diverse suppliers"—referring to enterprises owned by racialized communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, women, youth, immigrants, veterans, and communities with disabilities<sup>12</sup>. The City is currently co-developing a First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Policy to increase opportunities for Indigenous businesses and economic development organizations.

### Social Procurement at Anchor Institutions

Key to advancing social procurement in Toronto is the creation of networks that support purchasers and suppliers with implementing these strategies. In 2015, the City's Poverty Reduction Office with support from the Atkinson Foundation formed AnchorTO—a network of public sector institutions working to embed social procurement strategies and maximize economic and employment benefits for Toronto's local communities. AnchorTO has grown to include 19 institutional members representing over \$20 billion in annual operating spending and over \$59 billion in capital assets. Since the formation of AnchorTO, Toronto's three major universities—York University<sup>13</sup> (2019), University of Toronto<sup>14</sup> (2022), and Toronto Metropolitan University<sup>15</sup> (2023)—have all created social procurement policies. Out of the City's four major colleges, Humber Polytechnic created a social procurement policy<sup>16</sup> (2022) and George Brown has a commitment to environmentally-friendly purchasing<sup>17</sup>. Municipal agencies and corporations like the Toronto Public Library<sup>18</sup> (2022) and Toronto Community Housing<sup>19</sup> (2025) have also formalized social procurement at the policy level after practicing it ad hoc through tenders and contracts for many years. Provincial bodies like Metrolinx<sup>20</sup>, through their Community Benefits and Supports program, have committed to supporting businesses impacted by construction through shop local initiatives and local procurement.

**For more information about AnchorTO Members, a selection of member profiles are shared at the end of this section (pages 14-18).**

# Progressive Procurement

## Snapshot

### The Supply Side of Social Procurement

Critical to any social procurement ecosystem is the balance between the demand side—the organizations and institutions seeking social impact when purchasing goods and services—and the supply side—the suppliers that provide goods and services with a focus on social value along with financial profit.

While AnchorTO focuses on the demand side, Buy Social Canada has been supporting the supply side as a national social enterprise that aims to increase the capacity of social value suppliers through consulting, education and advocacy. Buy Social Canada offers a Canada-wide social enterprise certification, a directory for social purchasers to source certified suppliers, and training for social enterprises on navigating procurement processes. They also convene a roundtable for their Toronto members to support the ecosystem.

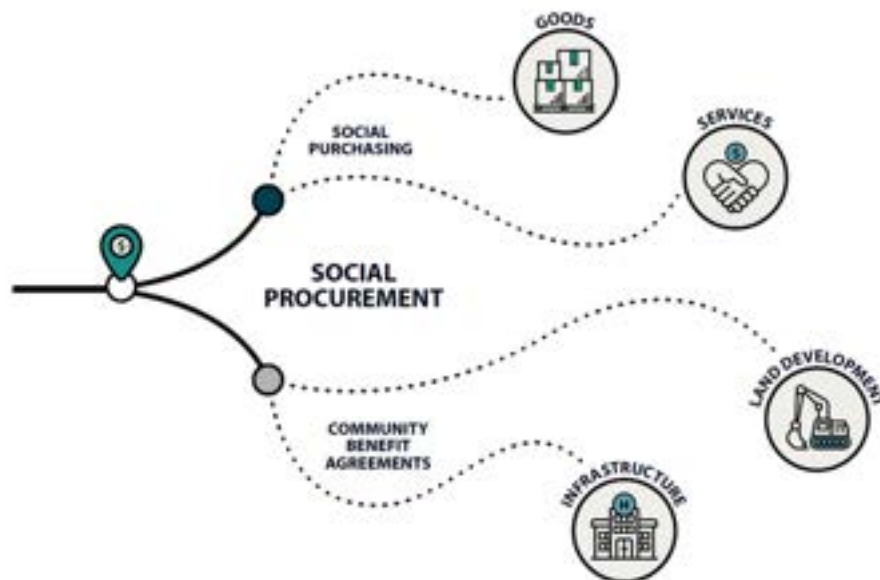


*Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust & Building Up*

### Community-Led Social Procurement

In addition to public institutions, community organizations across Toronto have been launching their own smaller-scale social procurement strategies. For example, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) launched their Social Procurement and Sustainability Action Framework in 2022<sup>21</sup> to ensure that their investments in affordable housing produce important community benefits such as community economic development, decent work, and increased climate resilience. The model prioritizes local procurement in their capital repairs, such as purchasing from neighbourhood-based suppliers and hiring from local equity-deserving groups; as well as social procurement, such as supporting enterprises that are led by and/or hire equity-deserving groups (e.g. Indigenous, Black, and racialized workers, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, individuals living on low-income and/or with experience being underhoused, women and gender diverse individuals), social enterprises, cooperatives, and living wage employers across the city. The PNLT's social procurement strategy offers a model for other community organizations to advance their own community wealth building practices within their purchasing and contracting practices.

# Progressive Procurement



*Buy Social Canada*

## Policy Landscape

### Social Procurement across Canada

At the national level, the federal government has a Social Procurement Policy<sup>22</sup> (2021) and a Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business<sup>23</sup> (2022) mandating all federal departments and agencies to achieve a minimum 5% target for contracts with Indigenous businesses. At the provincial and territorial level, there are Indigenous procurement policies in Manitoba<sup>24</sup> (2020) and Yukon<sup>25</sup> (2023), a Sustainable Procurement strategy in Nova Scotia<sup>26</sup> (2016), and a Social Impact Purchasing policy in British Columbia<sup>27</sup> (2018). The Ontario Nonprofit Network has been advocating that the Ontario Public Sector Supply Chain Strategy should include a province-wide social procurement policy that commits to purchasing from social enterprises and co-operatives, as well as include representatives from the nonprofit sector on Supply Ontario's Stakeholder Advisory Council<sup>28</sup>. At a municipal level, there are social procurement policies in over 20 cities within the provinces that practice social and sustainable procurement, as well as social and sustainable procurement policies in at least 10 cities across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario where provincial policies are not in place<sup>29</sup>. The City of Toronto was one of the first large municipalities in Canada to integrate supplier diversity and workforce development within its procurement processes, leading many municipalities to look to Toronto as a model for building their social procurement policies.

# Progressive Procurement

## Opportunities

Toronto has a thriving landscape of social procurement policies, but more work needs to be done to ensure that these policies are meaningfully advancing equity, reconciliation, and producing material change.

The City of Toronto recently completed a five-year review of its Social Procurement Program, which highlighted the need to further refine its workforce development strategy; expand procurement beyond certifications; and prioritize commitments to Black and Indigenous communities.



*Black Urbanism TO*

The City of Toronto's Purchasing and Materials Management Division is co-developing a First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Policy in partnership with Indigenous businesses, partners, and agencies. The goal is to leverage existing tools and create new mechanisms to improve supply chain access for Indigenous communities in alignment with the Reconciliation Action Plan's<sup>30</sup> (2022) commitment to improving Indigenous economic development and building decolonized procurement processes.

More broadly, the City has been updating its Social Procurement Policy in alignment with Toronto's Action Plan for Confronting Anti-Black Racism<sup>31</sup> (2017). Reports by Black Urbanism TO<sup>32</sup> (2023), Social Economy for Social Inclusion<sup>33</sup> (SETSI) and Buy Social Canada (2022), and the City of Toronto<sup>34</sup> (2024) have also identified systemic barriers for Black business owners to participate in the social procurement process, such as the cost of annual certification fees, access to financing and networking, and solicitation requirements.

Beyond the City's policy, there is still room to grow social procurement policies within broader institutions—such as the City's health institutions and municipal bodies like the Toronto Transit Commission<sup>35</sup>—and community organizations. At the provincial level, Supply Ontario has yet to follow the path of British Columbia and Nova Scotia in embedding a province-wide social procurement commitment within the Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive, which could strengthen supply chain diversity and workforce development across the public sector<sup>36</sup>.

# Progressive Procurement

## International Spotlight



### **Preston, North England, UK — The Preston Model<sup>37</sup>**

Following the failure of an economic development plan based on attracting external corporate and privatized investment, the City of Preston in North England saw the need for a new approach that strengthened the local economy through community, cooperative, and public investments.

Preston was inspired by models that prioritize economic democracy such as Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland—a network of hospitals investing in worker cooperatives—and the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain—a federation of worker cooperatives in the Basque region. In 2013, Preston City Council was advised by the Democracy Collaborative to integrate community, cooperative, and public ownership into its economic development strategy. As a result, Preston became the first municipality in the UK to implement a holistic CWB approach.

To support this vision, Preston has engaged the municipal public pension fund to invest directly in the community and designed planning policies for community members and suppliers to participate in major developments in the commercial and public economy. These shifts led to Preston advancing public ownership of local markets, a movie theatre, and an art gallery, and looking into establishing public broadband and renewable energy. Preston supported the creation of a regional cooperative bank, community land trust, and six worker co-ops including the UK's first union co-op 'Preston Cooperative Education Centre'. Preston is also aiming to develop new council-owned housing for the first time in a generation.

Preston's approach to CWB engaged all five pillars, but progressive procurement was key to democratizing their economy. For example, anchor institutions—including the National Health Service and Civic Universities Network—have engaged in equitable local hiring initiatives that have an economic impact across the UK. Preston has received international attention, and any municipality around the world can approach them to work on capacity-building and implementation. Toronto can learn from this comprehensive vision to leverage public funds and anchor networks to invest in public, cooperative, and community ownership and support the economic livelihood of Torontonians.

# Progressive Procurement

## AnchorTO Spotlight



### York University<sup>38</sup>

York University has emerged as a national leader in social procurement, showing how a post-secondary institution can embed equity into its purchasing practices and act as a powerful anchor for inclusive local growth. Through policy innovation, deep community engagement, and institutional collaboration, York has steadily built a model that is now shaping practices across the province.

The university's commitment to this work began with the creation of its *Anchor YorkU* framework in 2015. That groundwork led to a major milestone in December 2019, when York's Board of Governors approved a formal Social Procurement Policy—one of the first of its kind at a Canadian university. The policy directed institutional spending toward businesses led by equity-deserving and Indigenous communities. In early 2020, it was put into action through capital projects, requiring contractors to include apprentices from equity-deserving communities in residence and facility upgrades.

York's efforts have since expanded. In 2021, York University launched a report in partnership with Jane-Finch community leaders from the Black Creek Fair Economies project to envision a local hiring strategy for all of York's campuses. In March 2023, the university signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce, enabling Black-owned businesses and social enterprises to easily register in York's open-sourced Social Procurement Vendor Portal.

York has prioritized both breadth and depth in its approach. In January 2024, it launched a university-wide working group led by Strategic Procurement Services to build staff capacity and integrate inclusive purchasing across departments. The same year, the construction of York's Markham Campus became a living example of social procurement in action—resulting in \$5.8 million spent with local York Region businesses and apprenticeship opportunities for 15 individuals from equity-deserving communities.

Looking forward, York plans to continue growing its vendor portal and launching open-source toolkits to aid both purchasers and vendors through the social procurement process, enabling other institutions to join the network and adopt similar strategies.

# Progressive Procurement

## AnchorTO Spotlight



### Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)<sup>39</sup>

TMU has taken major steps to embed equity, sustainability, and community-building into its procurement processes. TMU’s social procurement journey began in 2015, when it served as a founding member of AnchorTO, helping to shape the city-wide movement to align institutional procurement with equity and local economic development.

In 2019, the university co-led the “Buying With Impact” innovation project in partnership with the University of Toronto and the City of Toronto. This project resulted in the creation of a Social Enterprise Procurement Playbook—an important resource that provided tools, case studies, and strategies to help institutions engage with social enterprises and diverse vendors.

Building on this foundation, TMU launched a cross-campus Social Purchasing Working Group in June 2022, which allowed for extensive cross-departmental engagement to ensure buy-in and alignment across the institution. The Working Group culminated in the formal adoption of TMU’s Social Purchasing Policy in October 2023.

The shift from policy to practice happened quickly. In early 2023, TMU engaged Indigenous-led vendors on projects totalling over \$1 million—demonstrating the university’s capacity to translate its commitments into tangible results. By February 2024, TMU had launched new internal systems and pilot processes to help departments incorporate social procurement into everyday purchasing decisions, making the approach more accessible and efficient.

The impact of these changes is already visible. TMU has prioritized purchases under \$100,000 for diverse vendors, ensuring smaller equity-driven businesses have a fairer opportunity to compete for contracts. Request for Proposal (RFP) processes and evaluation criteria have been redesigned to be more inclusive of businesses with limited capacity. Recognizing the financial constraints many diverse suppliers face, TMU has introduced faster payment terms to improve cash flow and supplier stability. TMU is also developing internal tracking systems to measure the impact of these practices, report on progress, and continuously refine its approach.

Looking ahead, TMU is focused on scaling its efforts. By continuing to build infrastructure, partnerships, and staff capacity, TMU is not only transforming its purchasing practices—it is helping to reshape how public institutions can build more inclusive economies from the ground up.

# Progressive Procurement

## AnchorTO Spotlight



### University of Toronto Scarborough<sup>40</sup>

The University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) has increasingly integrated equity, sustainability, and community benefits into its procurement and capital planning, positioning itself as a key anchor institution in Scarborough and the Eastern GTA.

After signing the AnchorTO pledge in 2016, UTSC joined with its St. George and Mississauga counterparts, along with other major institutions, in committing to sourcing from diverse and local suppliers. UTSC worked with its food services provider, Aramark, to find ways to source local food. UTSC also partnered with Hammer Heads—an organization that connects young people from underserved communities with apprenticeships in the construction trades—to have local apprentices work on significant campus projects, including the Environmental Science and Chemistry building and Highland Hall.

A significant milestone occurred in May 2023, when UTSC announced a

groundbreaking \$25-million partnership with Scarborough-based entrepreneur Sam Ibrahim to establish the Sam Ibrahim Centre for Inclusive Excellence in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Leadership. This initiative empowers entrepreneurship across identity lines, anchoring inclusive economic growth directly within the Eastern GTA and supporting underrepresented student entrepreneurs .

UTSC has also prioritized sustainable and community-focused construction. In September 2023, Harmony Commons, the campus's new student residence, opened as Canada's largest passive house-certified building. This project, developed in partnership with Fengate and LiUNA, reflects UTSC's deeper environmental and social values—achieving best-in-class energy performance, advancing affordable sustainable housing, and supporting unionized workers.

Today, UTSC is evolving from project-based equity initiatives to a broader institutional role as a community anchor. Beyond being an anchor, UTSC is also home to the Institute for Inclusive Economies & Sustainable Livelihoods, a new research centre devoted to community-driven initiatives and experiential learning advancing alternative economic futures. The Institute is leading a project aimed at repurposing the Scarborough RT by exploring just, sustainable futures for decommissioned transit infrastructure.

# Progressive Procurement

## AnchorTO Spotlight



### Metrolinx<sup>41</sup>

Ontario's regional transit agency, Metrolinx, is demonstrating how major infrastructure investments can serve not just transportation goals, but equity and community inclusion as well. Through its Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs), strategic partnerships, and evolving procurement practices, Metrolinx is working to ensure that its projects across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) contribute to inclusive local economies.

Metrolinx's commitment to shared value purchasing took shape between 2014 and 2017, when CBAs were introduced on projects like the Eglinton Crosstown, Finch West, and Hurontario Light Rail Transit (LRT) lines. These agreements embedded employment, apprenticeship, and local procurement targets directly into project contracts, helping to ensure that public infrastructure spending created tangible benefits for Indigenous, Black, racialized, and other equity-deserving communities.

In 2016, Metrolinx joined the City of Toronto's AnchorTO network. This marked a turning point in the agency's procurement evolution. In 2023, the agency released its first standalone annual report, offering a new level of transparency and accountability on community benefits. The report highlighted more than \$35.7 million spent on social enterprises and local businesses that year alone. Over the past four years, Metrolinx has directed over \$40 million to diverse and Indigenous-owned suppliers. The report also underscored progress on workforce equity: 29.1% of new hires on LRT projects identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC), while subway projects saw even higher inclusion—62.5% BIPOC and 35.7% women among new hires.

Metrolinx's approach combines policy structure with responsive collaboration. CBAs set measurable goals at the outset of major projects. Meanwhile, programs like the Transit Procurement Initiative (TPI), which Metrolinx has led since 2008, allow smaller municipalities to participate in collective procurement efforts—ensuring that procurement benefits are shared widely.

Looking ahead, Metrolinx is deepening its commitment to Indigenous economic inclusion. The agency also plans to continue publishing annual reports, expand electric bus procurement through the TPI, and embed equity into future-facing infrastructure priorities.

# Progressive Procurement

## AnchorTO Spotlight



### Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)<sup>42</sup>

OTF has long been a steward of public investment for public good, and in recent years, it has extended this role into the realm of social procurement. While OTF is not a traditional purchaser of goods and services at the same scale as infrastructure-heavy institutions, its influence as Ontario's public grant-maker lies in how it directs funding and builds ecosystems. Through strategic partnerships, co-investment strategies, and participation in networks like AnchorTO, OTF is shaping a more equitable and inclusive funding landscape in Ontario.

Following its membership to AnchorTO in 2018, OTF formalized its approach to social procurement through the development of a Social Procurement Charter, a Social Procurement Policy, and an internal implementation strategy. In recent years, OTF has expanded its funding strategy to function much like social procurement, using capital strategically to support equity-deserving groups and community resilience.

In 2022–2023, it launched the Partnership Investments program, committing over \$2 million in co-funding for initiatives such as Indigenous-led evaluation networks, youth workforce development, and community finance tools. In 2024, the work expanded with five new multi-sector projects receiving \$1.51 million from OTF and leveraging over \$8.6 million from external partners. These investments are designed to catalyze broader systems change.

While the foundation does not yet have a centralized dashboard for all social procurement data, the results are tangible. OTF saw an increase in social procurement vendor service engagement, with values reaching up to \$3.5 million. The foundation's longstanding equity infrastructure, including its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion framework and Anti-Discrimination Policy, has made it easier to integrate social procurement principles across teams and functions.

As OTF looks to the next ten years, it plans to continue supporting the growth of diverse vendor networks while deepening its own impact in social procurement-aligned investment. This work offers a strategy to help and support in building healthy and vibrant communities in Ontario—and part of giving back to the region.

# Locally Rooted Finance

## Snapshot

### City of Toronto's Social and Green Debenture Programs

The City of Toronto is the first municipality in Canada to establish a social bond program, which is a financial debt instrument used to invest in capital projects with positive social outcomes. The Social Debenture Program was launched in 2020 and leverages the municipality's low cost of borrowing and debt financing to issue "social bonds" for investing in social and affordable housing, affordable basic infrastructure, access to essential services, and socioeconomic advancement and empowerment<sup>43</sup>. To date, the City has issued a total of \$650 million in social bonds to municipal initiatives. Prior to social bonds, the City was also one of the first municipalities in Canada to establish a Green Debenture Program in 2018. The City issued its first green bond to fund capital projects that align with TransformTO, the City's Climate Action Strategy<sup>44</sup>.

### Community Bonds in Toronto

Toronto is also the birthplace of a unique social finance innovation on a community scale—the community bond. A community bond is an interest-bearing investment tool issued by a charity, nonprofit or co-op. Community bonds offer a chance for community members to lend money to an organization and earn a financial return for supporting the organization's social impact. In 2010, the Centre for Social Innovation created the first community bond to help finance the purchase of its first building<sup>45</sup>. The community bond model has since been used in a wide range of initiatives across the community wealth building ecosystem. Tapestry Community Capital<sup>46</sup>—a co-op that raises and manages community investment for other co-ops and nonprofits—is now Canada's leading service partner in community bonds. Tapestry is committed to the idea of raising community investment to support community ownership and has raised over \$100 million in community bonds for CWB initiatives, such as setting up community bonds for the Kensington Market Community Land Trust with the goal of \$2 million to purchase and permanently preserve affordable housing<sup>47</sup>. Tapestry has also been collaborating with Buy Social Canada to break down silos between social procurement and community finance by exploring how to stack community bonds and social purchasing to create more equitable financing terms for social enterprises<sup>48</sup>.



*Tapestry Community Capital*



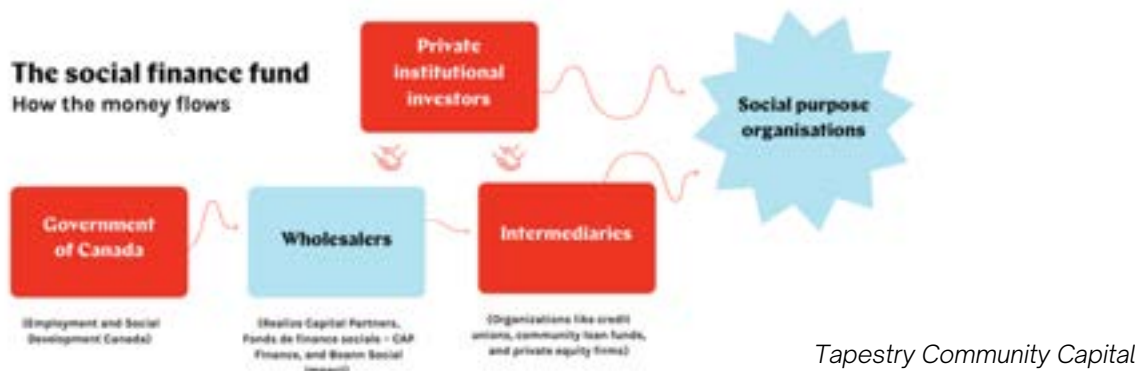
*Kensington Market  
Community Land Trust*

# Locally Rooted Finance

## Snapshot

### Impact Investing and Social Financing in Toronto

More broadly, community organizations, charitable organizations, and community banking institutions have been partnering to advance impact investing, a strategy that directs capital into initiatives that generate social impact. For example, in 2021, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust partnered with Vancity Community Investment Bank to create the Preserve and Protect Guarantee Program<sup>49</sup>. The program was a first of its kind impact investment model that mobilized over \$4 million in capital from the City and eight foundations, including the Metcalf Foundation and Atkinson Foundation, to purchase buildings and permanently preserve affordable housing. Community organizations have also launched their own social finance projects, like North York Community House’s Toronto Impact Initiative<sup>50</sup> that aims to give under-served communities access to social and financial capital. Credit unions are also active intermediaries for social finance and cooperative banking in Toronto, with entities like DUCA Credit Union, Meridian Credit Union, Alterna Savings, and the Pan-African Credit Union<sup>51</sup>.



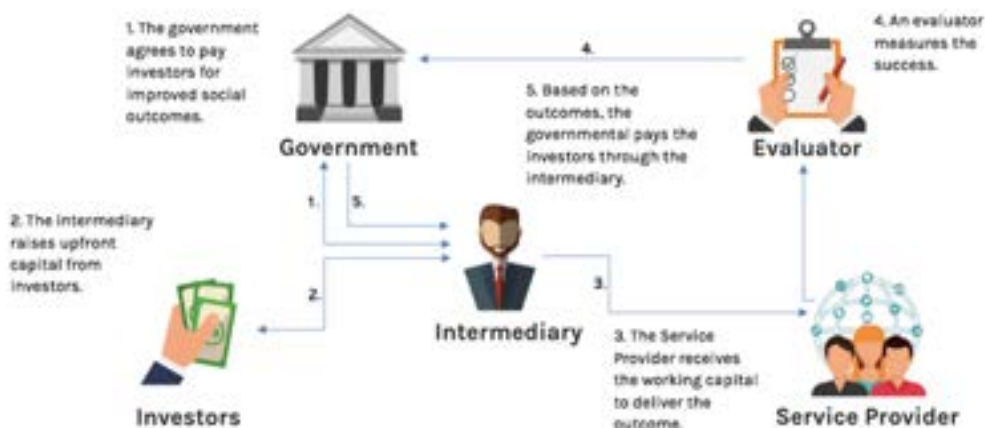
## Policy Landscape

### Federal Social Finance Fund

The Social Finance Fund (SFF) is a \$755 million federal initiative that seeks to accelerate the growth of Canada’s social finance market. SFF supports charities, nonprofits, social enterprises, co-operatives and other social purpose organizations to access flexible financing opportunities. While there are significant strengths to the Social Finance Fund, such as the ability to amplify social finance instruments like community bonds, there are still barriers to ensure that the funds focus locally and track justice, equity, diversity, and accessibility targets<sup>52</sup>. The Social Finance Fund is part of the wider Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy that aims to support social purpose organizations. The strategy also included an Investment Readiness Program, a pilot program that ran from 2019 to 2024 to build the capacity of equity-deserving groups to access social financing<sup>53</sup>.

# Locally Rooted Finance

## Social Impact Bond Model



*Tapestry Community Capital*

## Policy Landscape

### Green Bonds

Green bonds first launched on an international scale in 2007<sup>54</sup> and emerged in Canada in 2014 when the Province of Ontario invested \$500 million in the Eglinton Crosstown LRT<sup>55</sup>. In 2017, the Province of Quebec also established a Green Bond Program to invest in clean transportation<sup>56</sup>. On the municipal scale, Ottawa was the first municipality in Canada to establish a green bond program in 2017<sup>57</sup> and was later followed by both the City of Toronto<sup>58</sup> and the City of Vancouver in 2018<sup>59</sup>. On the federal scale, the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board became the first pension fund in the world to issue a green bond in 2018<sup>60</sup> to support issues such as renewable energy, and the Government of Canada issued its first sovereign green bond framework in 2021 to support issues such as green energy and nature conservancy<sup>61</sup>. Despite issuing green bonds, many of these entities continue to place larger investments in fossil fuels which can undermine Canada's goals of achieving net-zero by 2050<sup>62</sup>.

### Social and Sustainable Bonds

Compared to green bonds, social bonds have a more condensed history. Social bonds became staples in cities like Los Angeles<sup>63</sup> (2017), Barcelona<sup>64</sup> (2017), and Reykjavik<sup>65</sup> (2019) to fund social and supportive housing. The model expanded globally during the COVID-19 pandemic, including in Toronto (2020)<sup>66</sup>. In addition to Green and Social Bonds, there are also sustainability bonds which can be used to finance a combination of both green and social projects<sup>67</sup>. Vancouver launched its Sustainability Bond Framework in 2020<sup>68</sup>, and both the City of Ottawa<sup>69</sup> and the Province of Ontario<sup>70</sup> transitioned their Green Bond Frameworks into a Sustainable Bond Framework in 2024 to issue green, social, and sustainability bonds. It is worthwhile to note that social bonds are not meant to replace long-term, sustainable funding for community services, which would risk advancing austerity by de-publicizing social services in pursuit of revenue generating activities<sup>71</sup>.

# Locally Rooted Finance

## Opportunities

### Institutional Scale

Although Toronto is a hub for community banking and social finance initiatives, there are significant gaps in supporting the community wealth building landscape from an institutional scale. Anchor institutions and foundations have significant investment power through their endowments compared to individual and community-based investors. However, many of these endowments and pension funds are investing in extractive industries, such as fossil fuels and financialized housing<sup>72</sup>. An indicator of CWB, as identified by the Democracy Collaborative, is the divestment of these resources from extractive industries and reallocation towards more just uses such as renewable energy and community investments<sup>73</sup>. For example, in 2021, the University of Toronto committed to divesting from investments in fossil fuel companies in its \$4 billion endowment fund by 2030<sup>74</sup>. By leveraging shareholder power to invest locally, there are significant opportunities to equitably and sustainably redistribute wealth on a community scale. To support the diversion of funds, it will be important to address the current capacity gaps in the ecosystem—both for investors and investees. There is the potential to build an alternative financial vehicle for institutions, foundations, and investors to responsibly invest in CWB initiatives, such as a City-wide fund that can democratically support affordable housing, affordable commercial space, worker cooperatives, and social business accelerators.

### Community Scale

From a community scale, not all CWB initiatives are ready or appropriate for community financing. Further investment readiness support is needed to help more non-profits, cooperatives, social enterprises, and BIPOC-owned local businesses access the capital available through initiatives like community bonds and the Social Finance Fund. For example, reviving the federal Investment Readiness Program could help inclusive democratic enterprises establish business plans that are viable for investment before going into debt, and support non-profit enterprises with cultural shifts on perceived risks<sup>75</sup>. At the municipal scale, the City of Toronto can play a role in supporting community-based finance cooperatives, like Tapestry Capital, in advancing equitable access to social finance through a joint municipal and provincial loan guarantee for non-rated investments as well as a low-barrier tax credit for small and medium size investors. Additionally, there is still room to grow in ensuring that social finance is committed to racial justice in its redistribution of wealth. For example, in 2020, SETSI created a Solidarity Working Group<sup>76</sup> of community leaders in social finance and community economic development to confront anti-Black racism and equity issues in their respective ecosystems<sup>77</sup>.

# Locally Rooted Finance

## International Spotlight



### **Boston, Massachusetts, US — Boston Ujima Project<sup>78</sup>**

The Boston Ujima Project offers an example of an inspiring community investment vehicle that could be replicated in the Toronto landscape. As the first democratically governed investment fund in the United States, the project has invested \$1.9M since 2018 in BIPOC-owned small businesses and co-ops.

The Ujima Fund, named after the Swahili word for collective work and responsibility, is a democratic investment vehicle that has raised \$4.5M and uses participatory budgeting to finance small businesses, real estate and infrastructure projects in Boston's working-class Black, Indigenous, and communities of colour.

The fund has four investment types: accredited investors (partial security), non-accredited investors (partial security), philanthropic investors (partial security and subordinated debt), and donors (non-repayable gift).

Ujima also leverages philanthropic dollars to secure working class investors and support equitable returns for all investors.

Ujima hosts neighborhood and city-wide planning assemblies with grassroots partners, residents, and local businesses to set investment priorities and vote on investments that help achieve shared community goals. Members receive recommendations from an Investment Committee of local finance professionals and Ujima members who conduct due diligence before investments come to a vote.

Ujima's participatory model helps enhance community economics by mitigating investment risk, growing portfolio resilience, and channeling community finance into local initiatives.

The project also supports community-based initiatives such as a time bank for skill sharing; a certification program for businesses that align with community standards such as community ownership, good local jobs, and worker power; a procurement initiative; and an arts and cultural organizing fellowship.

There is an opportunity to build a project like the Boston Ujima Project within the City of Toronto to democratically redistribute funds for BIPOC-owned small businesses, social enterprises, and cooperatives.

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

## Snapshot

### Cooperatives in Toronto

Cooperatives are owned and guided by their membership, which can include either workers, consumers, producers, or a combination known as multi-stakeholder. Toronto is home to a variety of cooperatives that have been building power through democratic control and sharing collective benefits with their communities<sup>79</sup>. Within Ontario, one of the fastest growing areas of community ownership has been the development of renewable energy co-ops<sup>80</sup>.

Cooperatives like the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-op<sup>81</sup> (TREC) have helped house and finance renewable energy initiatives through the community bond model—such as SolarShare<sup>82</sup>, which develops community-financed solar energy projects, and ZooShare<sup>83</sup>, which converts zoo waste from the Toronto Zoo and food waste from local grocers and restaurants into renewable energy. TREC is the parent cooperative for Tapestry Community Capital, which is the leading service provider for community bonds. There are also cooperatives that have emerged to address gaps within the CWB ecosystem, such as the People Design Co-op, a non-profit architecture practice that recently partnered with Circle Community Land Trust and Building Up to retrofit their housing<sup>84</sup>; and the the St. James Town Community Co-op (SJTC) which runs a time bank for resident members to exchange skills and knowledge for access to local food security initiatives like a Good Food Buying Club<sup>85</sup>. The Greater Toronto Area is also home to over 185 housing cooperatives and Ontario is home to at least 50 active credit unions, which are financial co-ops.

### Social Enterprises in Toronto

Social enterprises offer a wide range of goods and services with the goal of achieving social, cultural, and environmental impacts through their earnings. Many non-profits run their own social enterprises to diversify their revenue and support their community's ability to participate in the economy. For example, Working for Change is a charitable organization that operates three social enterprises employing consumer/survivors—the Raging Spoon catering business, Parkdale Green Thumbs horticultural business, and Out of this World Cafe—and has a unique partnership with Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to ensure that hospital retail food services are staffed by people with lived experience of mental health<sup>86</sup>. North York Harvest Food Bank (NYHFB) operates a social enterprise, FoodReach, which offers access to quality wholesale-priced produce, dairy, and bread to Toronto's non-profit sector<sup>87</sup>. Inspired by the Cleveland Model, NYHFB has embedded CWB practices within FoodReach's logistics for the supply and distribution of food. Funding sources, like the Toronto Enterprise Fund through the United Way, and supplier lists, like Buy Social Canada's Certified Social Enterprise Directory, have been important for supporting social procurement services and resourcing social enterprises to train and employ people facing systemic barriers to employment<sup>88</sup>. Buy Social Canada has certified over 50 social enterprises in the Greater Toronto Area.

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

## Snapshot

### Social Businesses in Toronto

Toronto is home to a variety of social businesses that have emerged over the past decade, such as social acquisition enterprises, which are conventional businesses that are converted into social enterprises; community-driven joint-venture partnerships, which are enterprises that are partially owned by community; and B Corporations, which are for-profit businesses that meet verified social, environmental, and governance standards. For example, in response to the redevelopment of the Greater Golden Mile in Scarborough, United Way's Inclusive Economic Opportunity Initiative (ILEO) helped create a 51% community-owned construction company called Aecon-Golden Mile (A-GM). A-GM is a joint venture construction company run in partnership between Aecon, a construction company, and the Centre for Inclusive Economic Opportunity (CIEO), a non-profit organization founded by 10 community organizations<sup>89</sup>. Another social business that operates in Toronto is Chandos Construction, an employee-owned construction company that is the first and largest B Corp certified national technical builder in North America<sup>90</sup>.

### Local and Small Businesses

In an effort to prevent displacement and preserve community space, there is a need to protect small and local businesses—particularly those that are owned by and serve Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. These businesses not only build wealth for communities and future generations, but many operate as vital community gathering spaces, provide culturally-relevant and affordable goods and services, and contribute to the history and preservation of Toronto's neighbourhoods. A recent example of a City-led community economic development initiative to sustain businesses at risk of closure is the Main Street Recovery and Rebuild Initiative with Black- and Caribbean-owned businesses in Little Jamaica, which aimed to address the impacts of historical disinvestment, COVID-19 and the Eglinton LRT construction<sup>91</sup>. Community land trusts in Little Jamaica, Kensington Market, and Chinatown have also been advancing strategies to support community ownership of commercial properties for local businesses at risk of displacement and solidarity economy enterprises.



*Aecon-Golden Mile*



*Little Jamaica*

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise



Employee Ownership Trusts

## Policy Landscape

### Federal Employee Ownership Trusts

On a systems level, worker ownership is being supported by the federal government through tax incentives for business owners to transition ownership to their employees. An Employee Ownership Trust (EOT) is a form of employee ownership where a trust holds shares of a corporation for the benefit of the corporation's employees. EOTs offer a succession planning tool for business owners and help employees purchase the business without requiring them to pay directly to acquire the shares. The model was first proposed in 2023, when the federal government outlined new rules to facilitate the creation and use of EOTs and temporarily exempt the first \$10 million in capital gains tax on the sale of a business to an EOT<sup>92</sup>. It is important to note that EOTs are not inherently inclusive and democratic enterprises<sup>93</sup>, but the 2024 federal budget extended the tax exemption for EOTs that operate as worker cooperatives<sup>94</sup>.

### Montreal's Financial Assistance for Social Economy Enterprises

The City of Montreal has a unique program that Toronto can learn from aimed at growing social economy enterprises. The program provides up to \$200,000 in financial assistance to increase the social, structural, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of social economy enterprises by supporting structure building, cooperation and partnerships, diversification, and replication<sup>95</sup>. The program specifically targets non-profit and co-op enterprises working in the circular economy, housing, bio-food, sustainable mobility, and urban logistics sectors. This project is part of the City of Montreal's 2023-2025 joint economic planning partnership with the Province of Québec in alignment with Quebec's Social Economy Act.

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

## Opportunities

### Social Enterprises and Cooperatives

On both the municipal and provincial scale, Toronto currently lacks a comprehensive social enterprise and cooperative strategy aimed at strengthening community-driven solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges. In 2016, Ontario's Social Enterprise Strategy launched to equip social enterprises with business fundamentals, connect social enterprises to capital, and demonstrate the value of social enterprise and social finance. The provincial strategy was intended to last until 2021, but was cancelled in 2019 following the election of the Progressive Conservative party<sup>96</sup>. In the absence of comprehensive strategies for social enterprise and cooperative development, the gaps have been filled by federal networks such as the Canadian Network of Community Economic Development, Imagine Canada, Buy Social Canada, Canadian Worker Co-Op Federation, and Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada, as well as provincial networks such as the Ontario Nonprofit Network, Ontario Co-op Association, SETSI and Social Enterprise Ontario. As an example of the work of these networks, the Ontario Nonprofit Network is advocating for Supply Ontario to work with the nonprofit and cooperative sector to co-develop a made-in-Ontario social enterprise strategy to sustainably scale up efforts<sup>97</sup>. It is also noteworthy that while there is a wide breadth of social enterprises in Toronto, these models are not inherently democratically run, community-controlled, or equity-driven in their approaches. It is also not guaranteed that these models offer decent work practices for their employees. Tensions can arise between competing priorities such as offering supportive employment to people living on social assistance and offering unionized environments or living wages without systemic barriers such as government clawbacks.

### Cooperative Infrastructure

In reflecting on why there are so few democratic and employee-owned enterprises, despite their impact and survival rates, it is important to recognize that Toronto does not have local cooperative development resources and technical assistance, such as legal, financial, and business support and local networks to support collective action<sup>98</sup>. The resources that do exist also lack an intersectional, culturally relevant, and accessible lens to adequately support racialized and newcomer communities in advancing cooperative development. There are some emerging initiatives that aim to advance equity within cooperatives, such as Freedom Dreams Cooperative, a development and education hub that operates nationally to share knowledge and resources about co-operatives and the solidarity economy from an intersectional perspective<sup>99</sup>. Solid State Community Industries is building a network of cooperatives developed by racialized communities in Surrey, BC, and is currently partnering with Toronto Chinatown Land Trust to support the expansion of local solidarity economy enterprises<sup>100</sup>. Additionally, there is an opportunity to close the gap between inclusive and democratic enterprises and the labour movement. For example, Union Cooperative Initiative in BC is a network that is supporting the development, incubation, and operation of unionized cooperatives to expand fair work practices within the solidarity economy<sup>101</sup>.

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

## Opportunities

### Local and Small Businesses

Local and small businesses are increasingly impacted by the rising costs of rent, particularly due to the lack of rent control under the provincial Commercial Tenancies Act. The Better Way Alliance and Commercial Rent Canada are mobilizing a Commercial Renter Bill of Rights which advocates for rent control, standard lease agreements, affordable dispute resolution, and the right to withhold rent<sup>102</sup>.

Transitioning from leasing to property ownership is another key pathway to preventing commercial displacement, however the financial burden for individual businesses to purchase a property is a significant barrier. The Action Plan for Toronto's Economy aims to support community ownership of commercial spaces by enabling a minimum of three commercial land trusts by 2028. Critical to this plan will be the creation of financial support for the commercial land trust model, such as a commercial acquisition fund, as a pathway for maintaining affordable commercial spaces in perpetuity<sup>103</sup>.

If an existing business is at risk of closing, there is an opportunity for workers to engage in social acquisition as a form of succession planning. With the expansion of EOTs, local businesses can be acquired and restructured into a social enterprise, cooperative, or other form of social purpose organization. For example, Just Like Family Home Care is an example of social acquisition, where a for-profit home care business was acquired and restructured into a social enterprise that is over 51% owned by charities<sup>104</sup>.



*Commercial Renter Bill of Rights*



*Kensington Market Community Land Trust*

# Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

## International Spotlight



### Jackson, Mississippi, US — Cooperation Jackson<sup>105</sup>

Cooperation Jackson is a movement to democratize the economy through sustainable community development and community ownership. Cooperation Jackson's theory of change is centred on organizing and empowering the structurally under and unemployed sectors of the working class, particularly from Black and Latin American communities, to build worker co-ops as a catalyst for democratizing the economy.

The organization's long term vision is to develop a Jackson-based cooperative network consisting of four interconnected and interdependent institutions: a federation of local worker cooperatives, a cooperative incubator, a cooperative education and training center, and a cooperative bank or financial institution.

The initial vision for Cooperation Jackson was to create the material and political conditions for the City of Jackson to scale up a local cooperative economy through municipal procurement and resources.

The City of Toronto can learn from this case study to understand the importance of partnering with community-based initiatives that aim to scale up cooperative infrastructure in alignment with justice-driven goals, such as through procurement practices, educational resources, and loan funds for cooperatives in partnership with local credit unions.

# Fair Work

## Snapshot

### Community Benefits Agreements

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are legally binding commitments negotiated between community coalitions, public institutions, and/or private developers to ensure that new developments generate benefits, such as local jobs, community space, affordable housing, and childcare, for historically disadvantaged communities. Since the launch of the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) in 2014, the community-labour partnership has supported grassroots campaigns to achieve community benefits agreements in major public infrastructure projects across Toronto. The network has been tracking 12 projects across Toronto with community benefits commitments worth a total value of \$63B, and leading to 850 people trained, 2,330 people employed, \$121.4M in local procurement, and \$24M in social procurement<sup>106</sup>.



*Toronto Community Benefits Network*



TCBN has also catalyzed numerous systemic changes in public institutions and the labour sector. For example, after signing the Eglinton Crosstown LRT CBA with TCBN in 2014, Metrolinx launched a Community Benefits and Supports Program to promote apprenticeship training and workforce development opportunities for local communities and equity-deserving groups, including 10% hiring targets for Black, Indigenous, and racialized workers, women, apprentices and requirements for an anti-racism policy<sup>107</sup>. Likewise, the negotiation of the Rexdale-Casino Woodbine CBA in 2018 led to the adoption of the City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework in 2019, which embeds Community Benefits clauses in City agreements for purchases, builds, and financial incentives in order to create inclusive and equitable economic opportunities. There are now more than 150 City-led projects or agreements that include community benefits clauses which differ in size, budget, targets, and duration.

In addition to the City-wide framework for community benefits, TCBN has supported local communities, such as Parkdale, Golden Mile, and Jane-Finch<sup>108</sup>, to advance their own grassroots community benefits frameworks. In Regent Park, TCBN supported a coalition of community groups to negotiate a community benefits agreement with Toronto Community Housing (TCH), which included a proposal to consider embedding a community wealth building strategy<sup>109</sup>. As a Black-led organization, TCBN also played a supportive role in the creation of the Afro Canadian Contractors Association<sup>110</sup>, which aims to increase representation of Black and racialized contractors in construction companies across Canada.

# Fair Work

## Snapshot

### Workforce Development

Toronto is home to sector-based workforce development initiatives aimed at growing the skills of workers to access fair work and unionized employment in alignment with the needs of employers in key sectors. The Metcalf Foundation played a foundational role in supporting this workforce approach through their Toronto Sector Skills Academy, which launched in 2015 to train workforce leaders on how to raise the floor of working conditions within specific sectors and build ladders for low-income workers to move into better jobs in those sectors by matching the demands of employers with the training and supply of workers<sup>111</sup>.

One key example of sector-based workforce development is Building Up, a non-profit construction contractor. Building Up runs a pre-apprenticeship program that provides paid training to individuals facing barriers to employment with an 85% success rate of graduates accessing trades careers<sup>112</sup>. Building Up tackles the housing crisis and skilled labour shortage by partnering with social housing providers and community land trusts to support green retrofits. For example, Building Up's partnership with Toronto Community Housing (TCH) directs 25% of contract values to train and employ TCH tenants on job sites and connect them to union apprenticeships and full-time construction careers<sup>113</sup>. Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC) is another example of sector-based workforce development in the hospitality industry<sup>114</sup>. HWTC partners with employers and unions to deliver hands-on, industry-relevant training programs and career development services to help workers secure sustainable employment.

An example of community-based workforce development is Miziwe Biik which offers culturally tailored employment support and training opportunities for Indigenous communities in Toronto. Miziwe Biik recently opened a new training institute as part of the City's first Indigenous Hub which includes a carpentry shop to prepare Indigenous trainees for careers in the skilled trades and incubator space for Indigenous-led enterprises<sup>115</sup>.

The City of Toronto has been advancing workforce development through the Community Benefits Framework, Social Procurement Program, TransformTO, and sector-based programs like xoTO Screen Industry Pathways in the film industry<sup>116</sup>. However, there have been challenges in sustaining sector-based initiatives supported by the City. For example, in 2017, the City supported an initiative called Construction Connections, a construction sector workforce development and employment services hub that connected job seekers to jobs and training, and employers to suitable candidates<sup>117</sup>. The hub was located at the Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) Employment Centre at Yonge and Eglinton with support from YMCA staff, however the pilot ultimately ended following the shift in provincial government in 2018 which led to the restructuring of the employment services sector.

# Fair Work



*Justice for Workers*

## Snapshot

### Workers' Rights

Toronto has a robust grassroots network of community organizations fighting for workers' rights, such as the partners housed within the Ontario Employment Education & Research Centre—Workers' Action Centre, Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, and the Decent Work & Health Network. These initiatives are funded by foundations like Atkinson, Metcalf, and Maytree. The Ontario Equal Pay Coalition has also been uniting women's groups, trade unions, community groups and business organizations to close the gender pay gap from an intersectional lens<sup>118</sup>.

Since 2015, grassroots organizers in Ontario campaigned for a \$15 dollar minimum wage which was finally won in 2022. On International Workers' Day in 2021, the Fight for \$15 and Fairness Campaign transitioned into the Justice for Workers movement<sup>119</sup>. Justice for Workers organizes for a \$20 minimum wage among other critical demands for the dignity of workers, including a campaign for a workers' first agenda to address the tariff crisis<sup>120</sup>. As of 2024, the minimum wage increased to \$17.20, yet this hourly rate was still below the 2024 living wage of \$26 in Toronto as determined by the Ontario Living Wage Network<sup>121</sup>.

Several networks have sought to mobilize employers to advance fair work practices, such as the Better Way Alliance, a network of ethical businesses advocating for paid sick days, fair scheduling, and higher wages<sup>122</sup>. Employers can also sign on to charters or receive certifications for advancing decent work, such as the Ontario Nonprofit Network's Decent Work Charter for nonprofit employers to advance decent work in seven issue areas such as providing a fair income and offering health and retirement benefits, and the Ontario Living Wage Network's certification for Living Wage Employers<sup>123</sup>.

# Fair Work

## Policy Landscape

### City of Toronto Policies

On a municipal level, the City of Toronto's Fair Wage Policy prohibits the City from doing business with contractors and suppliers who discriminate against their workers<sup>124</sup>. The Fair Wage Office establishes Fair Wage Rates for job classifications that are either harmonized with union wages or reflect the prevailing wages for non-union workers in the geographic area. However, the City's Fair Wage Policy does not translate to a living wage for all workers.

In 2024, the City released its Action Plan for Toronto's Economy which highlights quality jobs as one of its core pillars to grow inclusive economic development over the next decade. For example, the City has committed to creating 10,000 new summer jobs for youth by 2026<sup>125</sup>. The Social Procurement Policy has also been leveraged and applied to large scale events, such as the FIFA Men's World Cup 2026, to support decent work, equitable employment pathways, and a target of at least \$20M in business contract opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and diverse suppliers and social enterprises<sup>126</sup>.

Organizations like Toronto Community Benefits Network and Toronto Environmental Alliance have also been organizing to ensure a just transition and decent work pathways as part of the City's Transform TO Climate Action Plan. The goal is to create green jobs through building retrofits, solid waste and organics collection, as well as greenscaping<sup>127</sup>.

### City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework (CBF)

The City of Toronto has played an influential role at the forefront of municipal policy advancements and systemic changes to secure community benefits. The Community Benefits Framework, adopted by Toronto City Council in 2019<sup>128</sup>, sets measurable targets for equitable hiring of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities and other outcomes when the City buys and builds.

The framework has supported and catalyzed more than 150 community benefits initiatives—such as the REXdale-Casino Woodbine CBA, which includes 40% targets for local or social employment; the Economic Development & Growth in Employment (EDGE) Program, a tax increment equivalent grant program for eligible sectors that has a mandatory workforce development requirement; the FIFA Community Benefits Plan, Downsview Community Development Plan, and Taxiway West District Plan, all of which incorporate CB targets; and the Housing Now Initiative, which embeds CB in new housing developments<sup>129</sup>.

The creation and leadership of a dedicated staff team—the Community Benefits Unit—has resulted in a deepened understanding, acceptance, and implementation of mandatory community benefits requirements in City agreements across many divisions and agencies. The success of the framework lies in the dynamic synergy across policy makers, politicians, community advocates, non profit, labour and the private sector.

# Fair Work

## Policy Landscape

### Community Benefits across Canada

Community Benefits policies have expanded across all levels of government to advance workforce development. On a municipal scale, Vancouver<sup>130</sup> (2018) and Brampton<sup>131</sup> (2024) have adopted Community Benefits (CB) policies. The City of Toronto has supported other municipalities and regions to inform local CB policies, such as Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, Hamilton, Prince Edward County, and Saskatoon.

At the provincial scale, Ontario was the first Canadian jurisdiction to introduce community benefits principles through the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act (2015) and the subsequent Long-Term Infrastructure Plan (2017). The Act encourages—but does not require—infrastructure investment to include community benefits, such as local job creation and training opportunities<sup>132</sup>. In 2018, BC created a new crown corporation, British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits (BCIB), to offer local jobs, apprenticeships, and employment equity on selected major infrastructure projects valued over \$500M through a CBA with construction unions<sup>133</sup>.

In 2018, community benefits language was integrated at a federal scale through the Investing in Canada plan<sup>134</sup>. As part of Infrastructure Canada’s Community Employment Benefits initiative, projects over \$10 million are required to provide training, employment, or procurement opportunities for Indigenous peoples, equity-deserving groups, and social enterprises.

### Ontario’s Employment Services Transformation

Employment services on the provincial scale have been undergoing significant changes through the Integrated Employment Services transformation, which is merging employment services with social assistance services under Employment Ontario (EO).

The province’s transformation is intended to create an “efficient, more streamlined, and outcomes focused” system<sup>135</sup>. However, in practice, the integration has created unsustainable caseloads for frontline workers in the sector, limited life stabilization and pre-employment supports for jobseekers, and introduced funding cutbacks to employment service providers based on performance metrics that are not responsive to the holistic needs of jobseekers and people on income support, such as Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

In 2023, the City of Toronto decided not to bid to manage Ontario’s new employment service system for the Toronto region, naming that the transformation was at odds with its equity commitments and would create fiscal and operational risks to the City<sup>136</sup>.

Workforce development networks like First Work, Ontario Disability Employment Network, and Community Living Ontario have been monitoring the transformation and offering policy recommendations to improve employment services and ensure that jobseekers and people on social assistance are receiving dignified support<sup>137</sup>.

# Fair Work

## Opportunities

### Workforce Development

The EO transformation has led to a series of challenges, such as the privatization of service system management, cuts to dedicated youth employment programs, and limited support for people with disabilities. Given these challenges, the City is in a unique position to develop and leverage its workforce development capacity by convening sectoral partners to identify skills gaps and job seeker aspirations, advocating with the Province to adequately fund service providers, and embedding decent work indicators into the City's Economic Development Dashboard<sup>138</sup>. By building a unified strategy towards place-based and community-focused workforce development, along with a commitment towards living wages, the City can leverage its own role as an anchor employer and its network of AnchorTO members towards local hiring, workforce development, and fair work.

### Green Jobs

An encouraging intervention in the CWB ecosystem has been the development of green jobs as a core practice to advance fair work and climate action. Notably, a growing movement of community land trusts and social housing providers have been practicing social procurement and equitable hiring pathways when engaging in renovations and retrofits of their affordable homes to improve climate resilience. The City can fill the gap in workforce development training opportunities and expand investments in green jobs in alignment with City- and community-led development, renovations, and retrofits.

## International Spotlight



### Portland, OR, US—Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund<sup>139</sup> (PCEF)

The PCEF was won through a grassroots campaign led by Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities. It imposes a 1% tax on large retail business in Portland. The revenue generated funds community-led projects that reduce carbon emissions and create family-wage jobs for low-income Portlanders. Through this fund, the City of Portland prioritizes investment in clean energy projects, including renewable energy and energy efficiency; transportation decarbonization projects; regenerative agriculture and green infrastructure projects; and climate action-related workforce development and contractor support programs. The program operates under the principles of being justice-driven, accountable, and community-powered.

The City of Toronto can learn from this model as an alternative revenue tool that mobilizes equity-deserving communities and connects them with fair, green jobs.

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Snapshot

### Community Land Trusts

Toronto has been at the forefront of a new generation of community land trusts that emerged in response to growing pressures of gentrification and displacement as a result of real estate speculation and the financialization of housing<sup>140</sup>. CLTs aim to retain local and democratic control of property for community benefit. The following community land trusts have been advancing solidarity economy programs and ecosystem-building work:

- **Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT)** formed in 2014 to protect the social, cultural and economic diversity of Parkdale. As of 2024, the Neighbourhood Land Trust (NLT), PNLT's charitable arm, owned and stewarded 84 properties with over 200 units of permanently affordable housing in downtown Toronto. The PNLT helped form the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, a network of over 40 community land trusts across the country.
- **Kensington Market Community Land Trust (KMCLT)** launched in 2017 after years of organizing by Friends of Kensington Market. In 2021, KMCLT bought its first property with 12 residential units and 5 commercial units to resist displacement, and in 2024, KMCLT was selected by the City to partner on a supportive housing development with 78 residential units on a former Green P parking lot. KMCLT is a founding partner of FairBNB Canada, a social enterprise alternative to other short-term rental platforms.
- **Circle Community LandTrust** was founded in 2017 to protect and invest in over 560 single-family homes formerly owned by TCH scattered across east Toronto, East York, central Scarborough, Malvern, and more. Similar to PNLT, Circle has worked to integrate social procurement throughout their operations, and particularly their Capital Repair Program in partnership with Building Up and People's Design Co-Op.
- **Community & Cultural Spaces Trust**<sup>141</sup> was founded in 2022 and recently preserved two affordable artist production units at the former Artscape Youngplace building at 180 Shaw Street in partnership with the City of Toronto and Inspirit Foundation.



*Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust*



*Circle Community LandTrust*



*Community & Cultural Spaces Trust*

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Snapshot

- **Little Jamaica Community Land Trust<sup>142</sup>**, launched by Black Urbanism TO in 2022, is Toronto's first Black-led community land trust. As of 2024, Little Jamaica CLT was leading working groups to inform the Governance Structure, Bylaw Template, Membership Criteria, Land Acquisition Strategy, Indigenous Reconciliation and more.
- **Toronto Chinatown Land Trust<sup>143</sup> (TCLT)** launched on Lunar New Year in 2023. The community-controlled effort was born out of years of organizing by the grassroots group Friends of Chinatown Toronto (FOCT). TCLT's strategic priorities are to build their base, become ready to steward, and develop an anti-colonial framework for their work.



*Little Jamaica Community Land Trust*



*Toronto Chinatown Land Trust*

There are also emerging land trusts in York Region, Etobicoke, and Davenport, as well as an older generation of land trusts driven by housing cooperatives. In addition to community land trusts focused on housing and urban centres, Sundance Commons has been pursuing an agricultural land trust committed to land access, training, and fair compensation for new farmers<sup>144</sup>. Sundance Commons operates four farms in southwestern Ontario, including one at Downsview Park and one at Woodbine Racetrack in Rexdale that offers a New Farmer Training Program. The City of Toronto has also made commitments to support the expansion of land trust models, such as a commitment within the Toronto Black Food Sovereignty Plan (2021) to pilot two land trust sites to advance food access and community sovereignty outcomes, and the commitment to enable a minimum of three commercial land trusts by 2028 within the 10-Year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy (2024)<sup>145</sup>.

## Alternative Commercial Spaces

The City's Main Street Recovery and Rebuild Initiative has supported initiatives like PlazaPOPs, which leads community-led transformations of parking lots along strip malls, such as Wexford Heights Plaza and Albion Islington Square, into free, safe, and accessible gathering spaces<sup>146</sup>. The project is bringing this model to tower communities in Toronto through a project called TowerPOPs in an effort to improve health equity. Scadding Court's Market 707 is another intervention in repurposing open urban space into a street market that supports young, newcomer, and first-time business owners to access affordable shipping containers to offer multi-cultural and inexpensive food and needed services<sup>147</sup>.

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Snapshot

### Repurposing Institutional Properties

Over the past few years, local “anchor institutions” have mobilized their land for community wealth building initiatives. For example, University Health Network (UHN) partnered with the City of Toronto and United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) to implement the Social Medicine Initiative, a project aimed at improving social determinants of health, such as housing. In 2024, UHN repurposed one of their parking lots in Parkdale for a four-storey modular building called Dunn House. The building provides 51 people experiencing homelessness, who are also frequent users of hospital services, with safe, accessible, and supportive housing operated by Fred Victor<sup>148</sup>. The City of Toronto has also mobilized its own land for community wealth building initiatives. In an effort to advance supportive housing, the City recently transferred a Green P parking lot to the Kensington Market Community Land Trust in partnership with St. Clare’s Multifaith Housing to operate affordable housing<sup>149</sup>. The Housing Now Initiative has transformed 22 City-owned sites into affordable housing since 2019, such as a recent project in Scarborough Centre that aims to transform a public parking lot into the province’s largest co-operative housing development and one of the largest affordable housing projects in Ontario in the past 25 years<sup>150</sup>.

### Community Hubs

Community hubs are another unique approach to social purpose real estate, which are aimed at expanding the availability, accessibility and affordability of community space for nonprofits, charities and communities at risk of displacement. The City of Toronto owns and operates 8 community hubs, and the United Way Greater Toronto is investing \$100 million over the next 10 years to expand 10 new community hubs across Toronto<sup>151</sup>. In Parkdale, the redevelopment of the local library, community centre, arts centre, and parking lot has led to the expropriation of a local Dollarama to develop new affordable housing as part of the community hub based on community demands<sup>152</sup>. In Jane-Finch, the community led a decade-long struggle with Metrolinx to secure land for their Community Hub and Centre for the Arts, which is now identified as a priority in both the Community Development Plan and the Secondary Plan for the area<sup>153</sup>. Community hubs also play a vital role in emergency response and climate action, from incorporating renewable energy, green space, and passive design within their building infrastructure to offering programs on skills development for green jobs and climate change education<sup>154</sup>.

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Policy Landscape

### Municipal Land Use Planning

The City of Toronto's City Planning Division has been expanding its planning tools and policies to further embed community wealth building principles within land use planning. Notably, the division has been advancing Secondary Plans that allow for the creation of Community Development Plans and District Plans that aim to mitigate development-driven displacement.

Secondary Plans are prepared as an amendment to the Official Plan, offering the regulatory framework for linking community development goals and principles to land use planning. Community Development Plans build upon the broader policies of a Secondary Plan, which offers detailed local development policies to guide growth and change in a defined area of the City.

For example, the Jane Finch Community Development Plan was released in 2024 and builds on the area's Secondary Plan to outline a commitment to inclusive economic opportunities and an anti-displacement strategy in alignment with the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit's Growing in Place Initiative<sup>155</sup>. The City also released the Downsview Community Development Plan in 2024 following the area's Secondary Plan, outlining a commitment to establishing an inclusive economy through anti-displacement policies, social hiring pathways, and an exploration of commercial land trusts and cooperative models for new commercial space<sup>156</sup>.

Given the large area of the Downsview Secondary Plan, the City has also created districts which establish their own District Plans. For example, the Taxiway West District Plan within the Downsview Secondary Plan establishes a community benefits plan to enforce workforce development and social procurement within new development<sup>157</sup>.

The City has been advancing a Cultural Districts Program which aims to protect the cultural identity and heritage of Indigenous, Black, racialized, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities<sup>158</sup>. The program will establish Cultural District Plans in neighbourhoods such as Little Jamaica, Downtown Chinatown, and Church-Wellesley. Notably, a multi-disciplinary team from 12 City divisions is currently reviewing and developing a Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan to sustain and celebrate the area's Jamaican-Caribbean heritage, expand affordable housing options for the local community, and protect affordable commercial spaces to support the area's Black-owned and operated businesses<sup>159</sup>.

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Policy Landscape





### Municipal Acquisition Programs across Canada

The City of Toronto's Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition Program (MURA), launched in 2021, is a groundbreaking tool that provides City funding and incentives to support the acquisition of private market rental housing by non-profit providers—including Indigenous housing providers, co-ops and CLTs. Unlike other funding programs which require nonprofits to own land in order to receive funding, MURA enables nonprofits to acquire land with at-risk private market rental housing and protect it as permanently affordable housing<sup>160</sup>.

Alongside Toronto, Halifax's Affordable Housing Grant Program launched in 2020 and helped inspire other jurisdictions to consider similar strategies<sup>161</sup>. The City of Montreal has operated a housing acquisition fund for non-profit and co-op housing since 2007, and launched an acquisition program in 2023 for social economy businesses to purchase a property or complete a construction or renovation project<sup>162</sup>.

On a provincial level, British Columbia released a Rental Protection Fund for non-profits and co-ops in 2023<sup>163</sup>; Manitoba established a Capital Funding Program in 2024<sup>164</sup>; and Nova Scotia launched a Community Housing Acquisition Program<sup>165</sup> in 2022 for loans and a Community Housing Capital Fund<sup>166</sup> in 2024 for grants to acquire housing. Ontario currently lacks a strategy to support non-profit housing acquisition<sup>167</sup>.

### CANADA'S FIRST-EVER NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY:

-  Investing in affordable housing and rentals
-  Cutting chronic homelessness in half by 2028
-  Building new affordable homes for 100,000 families in need
-  Creating strong, safe communities where families can thrive



### Federal Housing Programs

At the national scale, the National Housing Strategy (NHS) launched in 2017, committing over \$115 billion in strategic investments over 10 years to advance a human rights based approach to housing<sup>168</sup>. Notably, the NHS Solutions Lab<sup>169</sup> and the Community Housing Transformation Centre's Sector Transformation Fund<sup>170</sup> have been critical tools for emergent community land trusts aimed at advancing systems change.

This past decade has seen historic investments, such as the co-op housing sector receiving one of the largest funding increases in the past thirty years. In 2022, the federal government announced a \$1.5 billion Co-op Housing Development Program to expand co-op rental housing<sup>170</sup>. The program is estimated to support the development of thousands of affordable rental cooperative housing units by 2028.

In 2024, the federal government launched Canada's Housing Plan<sup>172</sup>, which proposed a \$1.5 billion Canada Rental Protection Fund<sup>173</sup> to support non-profit housing providers to acquire and protect affordable housing.

# Just Use of Land and Property

## Opportunities

### Community Control of Housing

Investing in social housing by expanding funds into promising programs like MURA helps remove property from the speculative market and place it under community control for permanent affordability, alongside commitments to accessible, adequate, and culturally responsive housing. Although initiatives like land trusts and housing cooperatives offer important interventions in disrupting the commodification of land and housing, there are still wide and sweeping systemic changes that need to take place to advance housing justice, such as implementing residential and commercial rent and vacancy control, reclaiming vacant units and property through expropriation for social housing, and enforcing affordable housing as a component of all new developments across Toronto. The City Planning Division has started to integrate anti-displacement tools within its land use planning policies, and there is room to build upon and expand these practices across neighbourhoods in Toronto.

### Community Control of Commercial and Community Space

In addition to housing, it is critical to ensure that tenants have access to livable communities with community spaces, green spaces, and affordable goods and services. Creating an acquisition fund similar to MURA for commercial space and community space could greatly expand social purpose real estate across Toronto. The City can draw inspiration from Montreal's acquisition program for social economy businesses to create the fund. Anchor institutions, such as hospitals, also have an opportunity to assess their land and property and determine opportunities to expand community benefits such as social housing, community space, and community gardens to address the social determinants of health. For example, UHN's social medicine approach to supportive housing at Dunn House could be replicated across Toronto's health institutions. The City can also assess its public land sale policy so nonprofits and community groups have the first or second right to first refusal and can access sales below market rates in order to expand social purpose real estate.

### Transforming Property Relationships

As institutions and community-led initiatives continue to envision strategies for just use of land and property, there is a critical need to advance reparative strategies that transform property relations in the context of settler colonialism. The City of Toronto has named a commitment to return land and stewardship rights to Indigenous Nations, communities, collectives, and organizations and agencies in its Reconciliation Action Plan. As the community wealth building movement continues to grow, it will be imperative to build solidarity with Indigenous communities and efforts to advance land reclamation and Indigenous economic livelihoods. For example, the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts has been supporting Indigenous-led CLTs and mobilizing settler-led CLTs across Canada to consider policies and practices to support Indigenous land stewardship, such as stipulating in their bylaws that assets will be transferred to Indigenous nations or organizations if the CLT dissolves<sup>174</sup>.

# Just Use of Land and Property



*Nunavut 3000 - Igluliuqatigiingniq*

## National Spotlight

### **Nunavut — Igluliuqatigiingniq – Building Houses Together program<sup>175</sup>**

Nunavut 3000, also known as Igluliuqatigiingniq – Building Houses Together program, aims to address the housing crisis in Nunavut by building 3000 new housing units by 2030. The program commits to significantly expanding public, transitional, affordable, and market housing, including community housing and coops through the Nunalingni Piruqpaalirut Fund—a partnership between the Nunavut Housing Corporation and Community Housing Transformation Centre. The program also includes training and employment opportunities to develop Inuit workforce capacity, and supports partnerships with Inuit-led organizations such as the Nunavut Construction Corporation Development.

The City of Toronto can learn from this project’s comprehensive vision integrating the expansion of affordable housing, training and employment pathways for Indigenous workers, and community ownership centering Indigenous leadership.

# Takeaways



*Toronto Chinatown Land Trust*

Community wealth building—in language and practice—is a dynamic space that will continue to evolve, yet it is important to ensure that change takes place in alignment with its core values and principles of building resilient economies, centering community control, contributing to a just transition, and committing to equity and community wellbeing.

The practice of looking back at community wealth building strategies over the last decade opens space for practitioners to dream together and question what it takes to strengthen an equitable, democratic, and sustainable economy in Toronto over the next decade.

We know that there are tensions inherent in this work as there are in any process that aims to bring together such a diverse group of actors—organizations, institutions, workers, communities—to chart a new and different course<sup>176</sup>. These tensions emerged through the retrospective on Toronto’s CWB journey over the decade and are woven throughout the paper.

Instead of putting forward a concrete 10-year action plan, the following section offers a series of opportunities, lessons, and challenges to contemplate for the future of CWB in Toronto. Each of the points were lifted up through the collaborative process and are meant to be living directions that can adapt and shift as the next ten years unfold.

# Takeaways

## Community Wealth Building Ecosystem

### Movement Infrastructure

The CWB system is strongest when it is connected rather than fragmented. In order to grow and sustain the next generation of CWB movement builders, practitioners can convene on a more consistent basis to learn from one another about inspiring precedents, build strategies towards strengthening and advancing CWB in Toronto, and advocate for stronger policy and systemic levers to support the five pillars of CWB. There is also a need for a coordinated effort between funders to ensure that sustainable grant funding is available for both the localized movement infrastructure—or the backbone work—while collectively mobilizing investments into place-based CWB initiatives.

### Backbone Networks

In order for movement infrastructure to thrive, there is a need for a robust backbone network or organization within each CWB pillar that can provide resources, coordination, policy advocacy, and real-time data collection for small-scale, place-based initiatives. Backbone networks also support with building narratives that are accessible and popularized for communities to understand the tangible impact of CWB strategies, while also helping to shift the practices of the public and private sectors. Practitioners can assess if a backbone exists within their pillar, and if not, mobilize with partners and funders to build one.

### Institutional Infrastructure

As a complement to movement infrastructure, the City of Toronto and anchor institutions can strengthen their institutional infrastructure to advance supportive policies, programs, and resources for CWB initiatives. As the City advances its Inclusive Economic Development Framework, it can consider creating commitments and minimum targets to champion CWB practices while also engaging in cross-divisional and external partnerships to implement the framework and strategies. Following in the footsteps of cities like Chicago, Rochester, and Richmond, the City has an opportunity to further embed CWB approaches, policies, practices and accountability mechanisms within the IED Framework with adequate resourcing, data collection, and governance.

### Internal & External Champions

When results are not immediately visible, it can be difficult for government machinery to champion systems change projects. It took over 10 years for CWB to proliferate across multiple divisions due to lack of knowledge and awareness, as well as lack of political priorities and will. In order for CWB to scale up within institutions, it is necessary to have both external champions within communities as well as internal champions across all levels of government and within anchor institutions. These champions can build resilient plans and strategies to persist through changing times, allowing for champions to transition in and out without impacting momentum.

# Takeaways

## Progressive Procurement

### Municipal Procurement

With the co-development of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Policy and continued support for Black-owned, Black-led businesses and social enterprises, the City can ensure that its spending generates community wealth and workforce pathways with historically disadvantaged communities. As the City expands the Social Procurement Policy to include social enterprises, it can also review other social business models in future amendments, such as worker co-operatives. The City of Toronto can also learn from the Preston Model to expand public ownership and progressive procurement across institutions.

### Institutional Procurement

As a backbone network for anchor strategies across Toronto, AnchorTO has a significant opportunity to continue to mobilize anchor institutions to advance progressive procurement, local hiring, and community investments. Notably, there is an opportunity to expand the AnchorTO network to include health institutions, while continuing to support the advancement of these policies within educational institutions and municipal bodies like the TTC. There is also an opportunity to advocate for the provincial government to incorporate progressive procurement policies.

## Locally Rooted Finance

### Leveraging Endowments

Cities, anchor institutions, and foundations have significant investment power through their endowments that can be leveraged to resource local communities. Drawing inspiration from the Boston Ujima Project, there is an opportunity to build an alternative financial vehicle for institutions, foundations, and investors to responsibly invest in CWB initiatives and for communities to democratically determine the allocation of investments in initiatives such as community land trusts, worker cooperatives, and BIPOC-owned small businesses.

### Investment Readiness

There is a wide landscape of community finance available for CWB initiatives, yet further investment readiness support is needed to help non-profits, cooperatives, social enterprises, and diverse businesses access the capital available. Institutions and networks in the CWB ecosystem can offer capacity building support, such as training on how to build viable business plans. Likewise, the City can collaborate with community finance initiatives to make social financing more accessible for equity-deserving communities and minimize risk.

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# Takeaways

## Inclusive Democratic Enterprise

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### Cooperative Infrastructure

The City of Toronto currently lacks a supportive ecosystem for cooperative development, including business development for cooperatives and succession planning for businesses looking to sell to their workers. The City can learn from jurisdictions like Montreal which offers a financial assistance program aimed at growing social economy enterprises, as well as a property acquisition fund for social economy enterprises looking to purchase a building or lot for their businesses.

### Social Enterprises

On both the municipal and provincial scale, the City of Toronto currently lacks a comprehensive social enterprise strategy aimed at strengthening community-driven solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges. As part of the strategy, social enterprises can consider methods to further embed democratic control, decent work, and unionization as components of their operation.

## Fair Work

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### Workforce Development

The City is in a unique position to advance living wages and support the creation of a comprehensive, citywide Workforce Development Program aimed at providing career development resources and supports, training, and employment opportunities to Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities. The City can also advocate with the Provincial and the Federal governments to meaningfully address the gaps in the new Integrated Employment Services for youth, people with disabilities, and equity-deserving communities, and to adequately invest in social assistance so Torontonians can meet their basic needs.

### Green Jobs

The City of Toronto can learn from jurisdictions like Portland to support the development of green jobs advancing decent work and climate action, with the goal of training equity-deserving community members on sustainable approaches to construction, renovation, repair and management of properties that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect homes from extreme weather events, and improve the living conditions of tenants.

# Takeaways

## Just Use of Land and Property

### Community & Public Ownership

Greater acquisition funding can help expand community control over social purpose real estate for affordable housing, affordable commercial and community spaces. The City and Province can invest in initiatives that support community and public ownership, such as CLTs, by expanding funds into residential acquisition programs like MURA, creating new funding streams for commercial acquisition, and integrating CWB commitments in land use planning tools and policies.

### Transforming Property Relationships

There is a critical need to advance restitutive strategies that transform property relations in the context of settler colonialism. As the CWB movement continues to grow, it will be imperative to build solidarity with Indigenous communities and efforts to advance land reclamation for Indigenous economic livelihoods.

## Final Takeaways

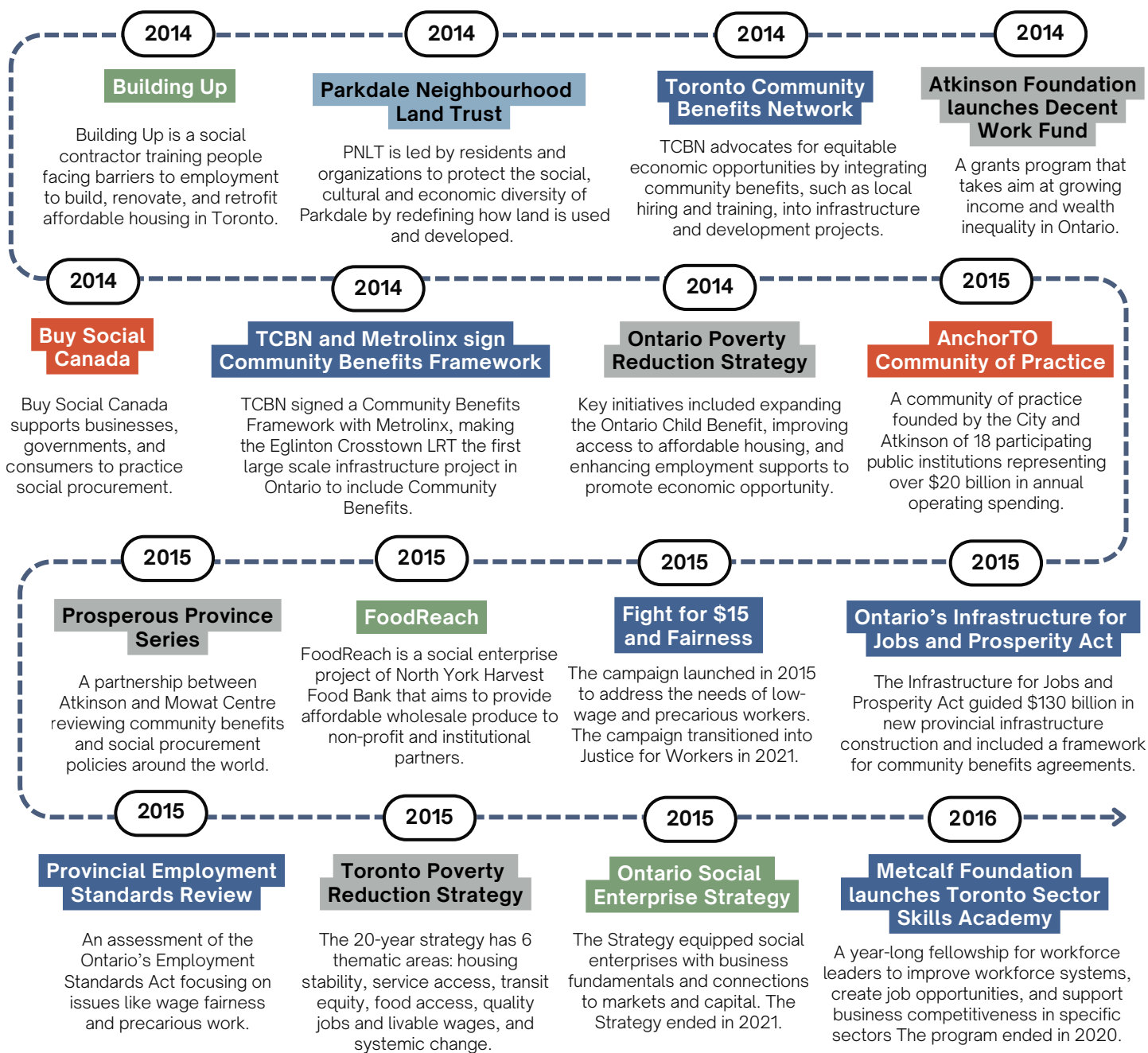
When reflecting on the role of each actor within the CWB ecosystem, the following reflections and takeaways are recommended:

- **City of Toronto:**
  - Continue to integrate CWB into policy frameworks, land use planning, and funding tools; while also expanding support into new areas such as workforce development, cooperative infrastructure, and pathways for community and public ownership.
- **Funders:**
  - Coordinate funding and collective investments to support both backbone networks and place-based CWB initiatives.
- **Anchor Institutions:**
  - Continue to leverage economic power to advance local hiring, social purchasing, and community investments, particularly within health institutions.
- **Community and Labour Networks:**
  - Convene to share learnings and develop an action plan for the next 10 years of CWB in Toronto, with support from the City of Toronto, funders, and anchor institutions and in solidarity with Indigenous communities.

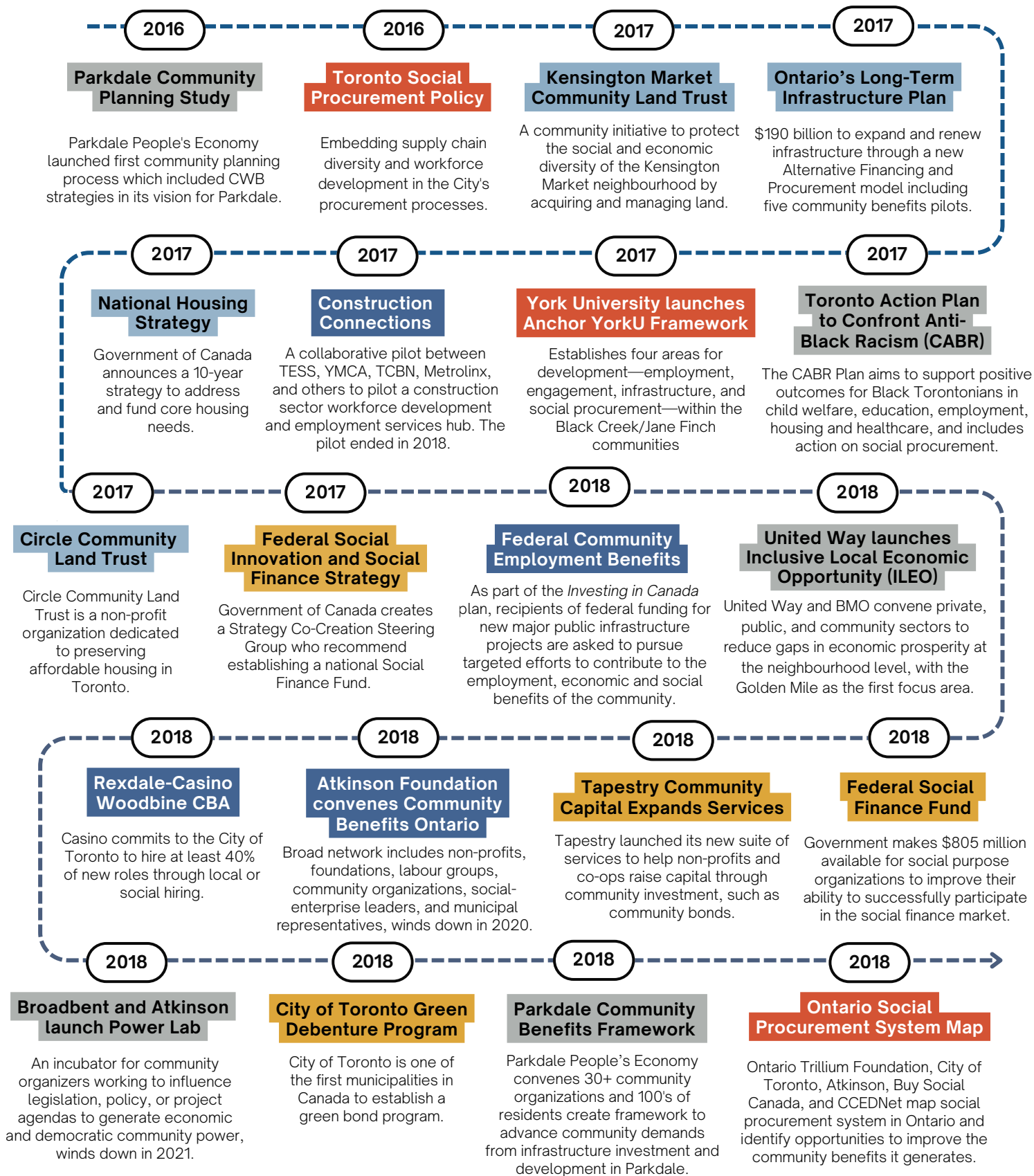
With a coordinated network of actors advancing CWB over the next decade, Torontonians can experience a tangible change in the material conditions of their day to day lives by shifting power within the local economy, taking ownership, and building community wealth.

# Appendix: Timeline

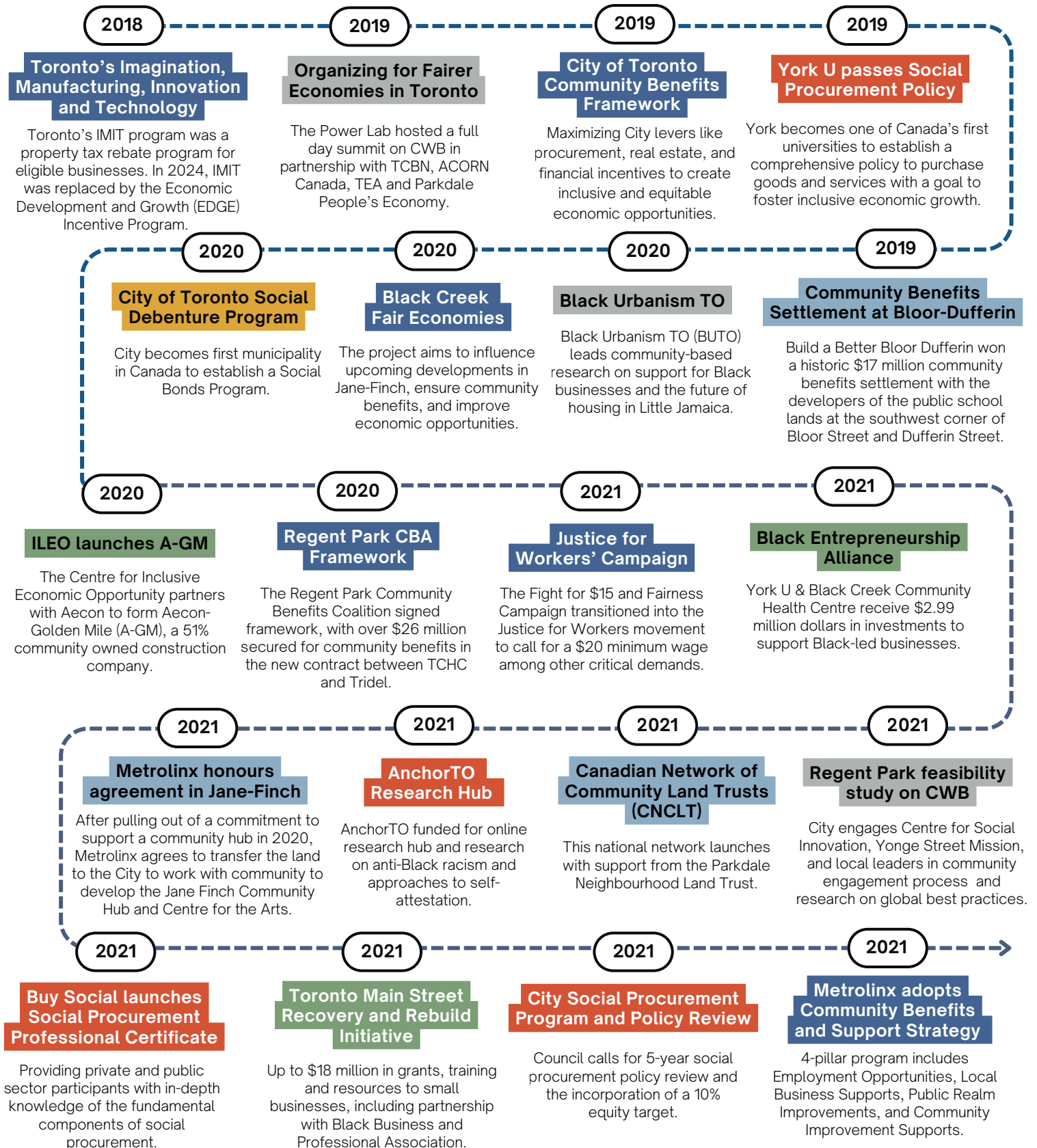
Our timeline is colour coded to correspond with the five pillars of CWB. Items that are shaded in grey encompass multiple pillars, or involve broader ecosystem-focused work.



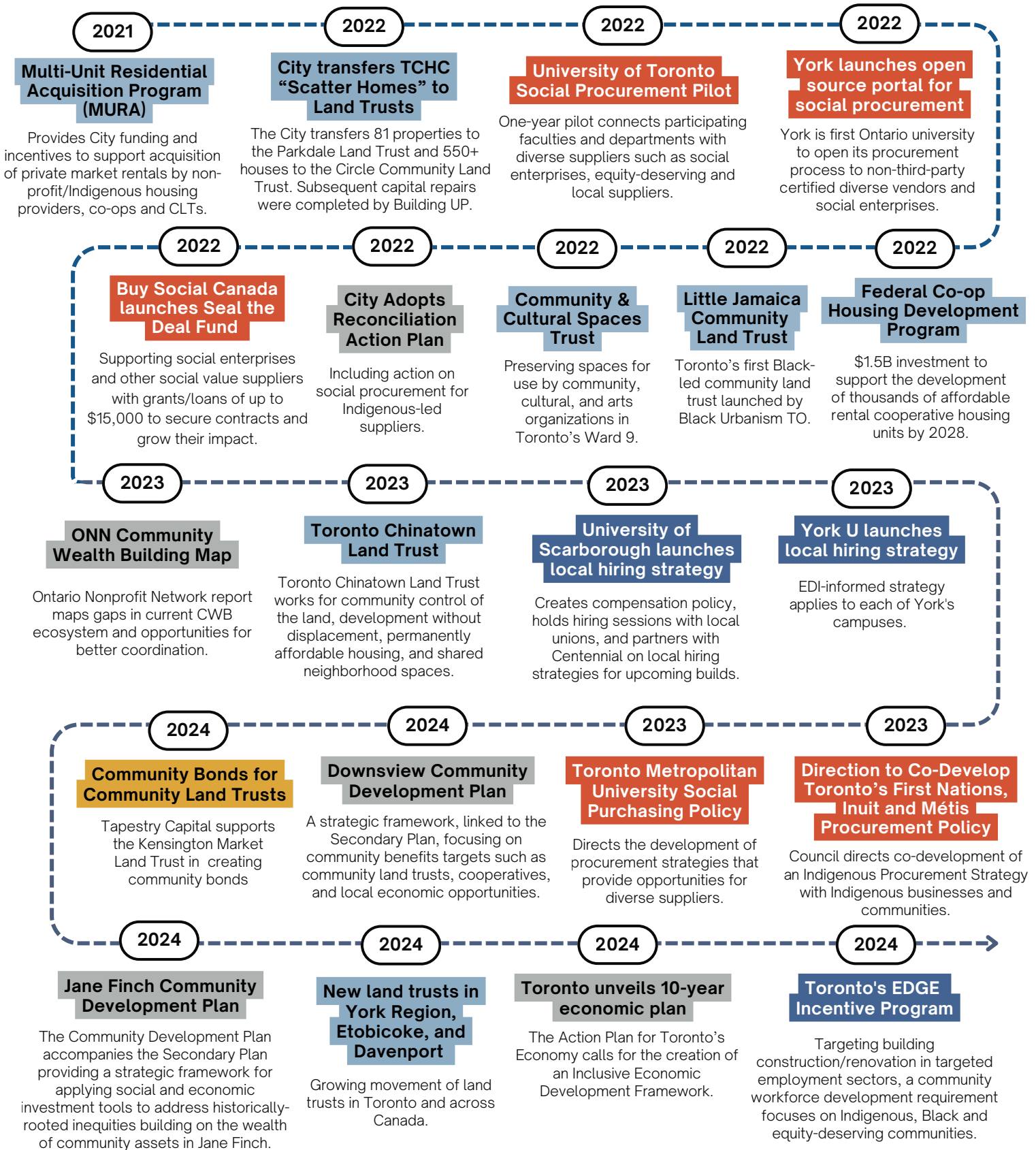
# Appendix: Timeline



# Appendix: Timeline



# Appendix: Timeline



# Endnotes

## Context

- 1. While the richest 20% of Canadians are getting richer—accounting for over two-thirds of Canada’s net worth not only through income but through financial assets—low income households are falling farther behind (the bottom 40% of Canada’s wealth distribution represented only 2.8% of Canada’s total net worth). The gap between the richest 40% of Canadians and the lowest-income 40% of Canadians grew to 47% in 2024, marking the widest gap recorded since 1999 when [Statistics Canada](#) first started collecting this data. The gap was driven by the top 20% of income earners (averaging \$3.4 million per household), who saw the largest increase in their share of disposable income through investment gains due to high interest rates.
- 2. Social Planning Toronto’s Child and Family Poverty Report Cards in [2016](#) and [2024](#) demonstrate that child poverty in Toronto has been the highest in the country, with a rate of 26.8% in 2014 and 25.3% as of 2022. [Toronto’s Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) was launched in 2015 and offers a twenty-year strategy to address poverty in Toronto. The release to the Poverty Reduction Strategy was the first time the City intentionally brought social and economic development approaches together under the banner of quality jobs and livable incomes.
- 3. The Yellowhead Institute’s Red Papers, [Land Back](#) and [Cash Back](#), outline how Canada’s economy cannot be understood outside of land dispossession. [Slavery](#) was also part of Canada’s colonial nation building for over 200 years until it was abolished in 1834, meaning that it was legal and practiced in early Canada longer than it has been abolished. The economic system of slavery instilled legacies of anti-Black racism within the Canadian economy which continue to this day. There are numerous other examples of labour extraction of racialized communities in the Canadian economy—from Chinese railway workers and the subsequent Chinese Head Tax to migrant farmworkers and caregivers with limited pathways to permanent status. The [Ontario Nonprofit Network](#) has written extensively on how CWB offers a pathway to advancing economic and racial justice.

## Terminology

- 4. The [Democracy Collaborative](#) first articulated CWB as a framework in 2005. This approach is housed under the wider umbrella of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), which is recognized by the [United Nations](#) (UN) as “forms of economic activities and relations that prioritize social and often environmental objectives over profit motives.” According to the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD), Canada does not have a framework around the SSE at the national level but coordinates these efforts on a local scale, pointing to provincial policies such as Quebec’s Social Economy Act (2013). In 2024, Canada [co-sponsored a UN resolution](#) recognizing the importance of the SSE to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth.
- 5. Following community advocacy around the City’s approach to Inclusive Economic Development (IED), the City committed to collaborate with community partners on [A Partnered Approach to Inclusive Economic Development](#).
- 6. The [New Economy Coalition](#) traces the roots to the solidarity economy as “growing out of social movements in Latin America and the Global South” to provide “real alternatives to capitalism, where communities govern themselves through participatory democracy, cooperative and public ownership, and a culture of solidarity and respect for the earth.” Examples of solidarity economy practices in Toronto include mutual aid initiatives, such as [Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction](#), who also run their own social enterprise, [Native Arts Society](#); [Rotating Savings and Credit Associations](#), such as [susu and ayuuto](#) within Black diasporic communities; and [Family Associations](#), who provided essential employment, housing, banking, and protection services in Chinatown during a period of exclusionary policies (e.g. Chinese Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act).

## Milestones

- 7. It is important to recognize milestones that preceded 2014—such as the wave of [co-op housing land trusts](#) in the 1990s, early movements for community benefits such as Rexdale’s [Community Organizing for Responsible Development](#) (CORD) coalition in 2007, and enabling funding and research such as the [Toronto Enterprise Fund](#) in 2000, the United Way’s [Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario](#) (PEPSO) in 2010, and the Metcalf Foundation’s [Resilient Neighbourhood Economies Program](#) in 2012. It is also critical to acknowledge the “Movement Ancestors” who paved the way for CWB strategies long before we had such terminology. For example, the first community land trust—[New Communities Inc.](#)—emerged in 1969 during the US civil rights movement when Black farmers collectively purchased a 5,700 acre plot of land in Georgia for Black households who had lost their homes and jobs as a result of registering to vote. The first Community Benefits Agreement was negotiated in 2001 for the [Staples Centre sports arena in Los Angeles](#), emerging in the wake of the fight for living wage ordinances led by working class communities of colour through the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy.

# Endnotes

## CWB Ecosystem

- 8. Chicago's [Community Wealth Building Initiative](#) partnered with the Center for Urban Economic Development at the University of Illinois Chicago serves as a Community Wealth Building Ecosystem Hub to convene CWB working groups, develop tools and resources, connect and build the capacity of ecosystem partners, and conduct research to communicate the impact of CWB.
- 9. The City of New York was also considering a Community Wealth Building strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection's Office of Financial Empowerment issued the following report on [Municipal Policies for Community Wealth Building](#) providing a summary of Rochester and Richmond's Mayoral Offices for CWB.
- 10. Scotland's [Community Wealth Building Bill](#) was introduced in March 2025 and is at Stage 1 of the process to decide if it should become an Act. According to the [Democracy Collaborative](#), the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) ACT 2026 will be the first piece of national CWB legislation anywhere in the world.

## Progressive Procurement

- 11. The [Social Procurement Program Review](#) (2024) highlights the origins of social procurement in Toronto: "As early as 2006, youth in the Flemingdon Park neighbourhood saw City of Toronto capital projects in their community and approached staff in SDFA about how to access employment opportunities on those projects. Work then began on connecting youth with jobs on a project-by-project basis and over time, this creation of economic, workforce and social development benefits derived through City contracts came to be referred to as social procurement.
- 12. The City of Toronto's [Social Procurement Policy Review](#) in 2024 included an overview of [Program Achievements](#), which outlined the total awards issued based on their certifications. The majority (66%) of social procurement contracts were awarded to suppliers certified by Women Business Enterprises Canada (WBE Canada); 16% was awarded to suppliers certified by Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council and 6% certified by Canadian Council for Indigenous Business; 11% was awarded to suppliers certified by Inclusive Workplace and Supply Council of Canada; and 1% was awarded to suppliers certified by Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce. It is important to note that the \$102.9M that has been spent on Indigenous, Black, and Diverse Suppliers between 2017-2023 is not exclusively due to the social procurement policy - notably, \$10.4 million of spend between 2017-2023 was awarded to certified Indigenous, Black and diverse suppliers with workforce development requirements.
- 13. York University is one of Canada's first universities to have a [Social Procurement Policy](#). The policy has led to nearly \$10M in social value spend on 17 construction and renovation projects, with 73 equity-deserving apprentices hired for a total of over 54K hours. York has its own [Social Procurement Vendor Portal](#) for diverse vendors, Indigenous-owned businesses, and social enterprises.
- 14. University of Toronto's [Social Procurement Policy](#) was launched as a [pilot](#) in 2022 to foster an inclusive economy, reduce poverty, and create employment opportunities that enrich the community. U of T also launched its own [Diverse Supplier Portal](#), a directory of social enterprises, diverse/equity-deserving, and local suppliers.
- 15. Toronto Metropolitan University's [Social Purchasing Policy](#) was developed by a Social Purchasing Working Group in 2022 to create processes for the university to leverage its purchasing power for social, environmental and economic good. The policy creates new opportunities to engage with diverse suppliers and small sized businesses, including businesses that are majority owned, managed and controlled by Indigenous and equity-deserving communities.
- 16. Humber's [Social Procurement Program](#) was launched in 2022 with two components: Supplier Diversity and Workforce Development.
- 17. George Brown's [Socially Responsible Procurement](#) is focuses on making purchases that are environment-friendly.
- 18. Toronto Public Library's [Purchasing Policy](#) includes a clause on social procurement through the lens of supply chain diversity and workforce development.
- 19. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is in the [process of formalizing social procurement](#) as part of its Community Economic Development Strategy. Prior to formalizing a strategy, TCHC has already awarded \$6M in contracts to social enterprises, \$24M in wages from developers and other vendors who employed close to 700 tenants, \$2M in tenant scholarships, and trained 150 tenants through external partnerships. From 2025-27, TCHC aims to leverage its \$1.2B investment in capital repairs and ongoing maintenance towards strategic sourcing, procurement with impact, and equitable internal controls.
- 20. Metrolinx' [Community Benefits and Supports Program](#)—the province's first community benefits program, which is marking its tenth anniversary in 2024—is a four-pillar program focused on: (1) Employment Opportunities; (2) Local Business Supports; (3) Public Realm Improvements; and (4) Community Improvement Supports. In 2023-24, the program [reported](#) combined spending of \$35.7 million on local businesses and social enterprises in the region.
- 21. The PNLT's [Social Procurement and Sustainability Action Framework](#) is the first of its kind for a CLT.

# Endnotes

## Progressive Procurement (Cont'd)

- 22. The federal [Policy on Social Procurement](#) facilitates and supports the inclusion of socio-economic measures in the Public Services and Procurement Canada's (PSPC) Acquisitions Program (AP). From 2018 to 2020, PSPC undertook a 2 year experimentation cycle to test social procurement as a means to increase supplier diversity and to increase economic inclusion.
- 23. In an effort to advance economic reconciliation, the federal government established a strategy to support [Indigenous businesses with procurement opportunities](#). Notably, the federal government established a mandatory requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure a minimum 5% of the total value of contracts are held by Indigenous businesses. [Indigenous Services Canada](#) reported that the 5% target from 2022-23 increased demand for contracts with Indigenous businesses but more work is still needed to connect Indigenous business capacity to opportunities.
- 24. Manitoba has a growing Indigenous community, yet Indigenous firms have been under-represented in government procurement opportunities. The [Indigenous Procurement Initiative](#) aims to increase the participation of Indigenous peoples and suppliers in providing goods and services to the Province. The City of Winnipeg also recently adopted a [Social Procurement Framework and Action Plan](#) to leverage the municipality's \$400 million annual spending on goods, services and construction in support of environmental, ethical, social, and Indigenous opportunities. The program outlines five key sustainable procurement opportunity areas—employment, skills and training, social value in the supply chain, community development, and environment—which it measures in alignment with its Social, Indigenous, and Environmental Pillars. The City is establishing set asides for Indigenous businesses and social enterprises in alignment with Manitoba's Indigenous Procurement Policy which might be relevant to the City of Toronto's Indigenous Procurement Strategy.
- 25. The [Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy](#) was written in partnership with all 14 Yukon First Nations to enhance economic outcomes for Indigenous communities and businesses.
- 26. Nova Scotia's [Sustainable Procurement Strategy](#) aims to consider the environmental, economic and social factors related to the goods, services and construction it buys. The [Strategy](#) will “incorporate social, local, diverse, accessibility, environmental, and ethical strategic priorities and builds upon the region's Indigenous and African Nova Scotian history and diversity, the strength and resilience of the local economy, and the current commitments to economic, environmental, Indigenous, social and inclusion efforts in procurement.”
- 27. The [BC Procurement Strategy](#) was launched in June 2018 and recognizes that government procurement in BC is based on principles that include value for money, transparency and accountability. The strategy incorporates social impact criteria into a commonly used point-based solicitations for purchases under \$75,000.
- 28. See ONN's [Social Procurement Briefing Note](#) (2024).
- 29. See the appendix of Buy Social's “[Buy with Impact: Social Procurement in Canada 2022 Report](#)” for a list of municipal social procurement policies.
- 30. See City of Toronto's [Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2032](#) and Niibin Advisory Services' [Indigenous Procurement Engagement Sessions: Summary and Key Themes](#).
- 31. See City of Toronto's [Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism](#).
- 32. [Black Urbanism TO](#), with support from the Community Economies Lab at the University of Toronto, offers recommendations for pursuing fee-free certification drawing on other cities' social procurement policies in North America, along with evaluating the policy's efficacy at hiring diverse suppliers, building capacity for small businesses to navigate procurement, and training purchasers on equity, anti-racism, and social procurement.
- 33. [Buy Social Canada and Social Economy for Social Inclusion](#) (SETS!) built a report on Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Procurement and identified systemic barriers such as access to financing, limited networking opportunities and the cost of diverse supplier certification.
- 34. As identified in the City's [Social Procurement Program Review](#), certification poses numerous barriers for Indigenous, Black and diverse suppliers to participate in the procurement process but also protects the City from the risk of fraudulent identity claims.
- 35. The TTC has operated a [Green Procurement Policy](#) since 2008. It has been taking an ad hoc approach to incorporating social procurement language in tenders and contracts, but this approach has not yet been operationalized at a policy level. For example, the TTC has workforce development programs for women in the trades and diverse populations.
- 36. In its [2024 Social Procurement Briefing Note](#), the Ontario Nonprofit Network advocated for the Treasury Board Secretariat to create a social procurement policy when developing the Ontario Public Sector Supply Chain Strategy to support non-profit social enterprises and cooperatives.
- 37. The Democracy Collaborative published a 10-year retrospective on the impact of the [Preston Model](#) within the community wealth building movement.

# Endnotes

## Progressive Procurement: AnchorTO Member Profiles

- 38. In 2016, York University approved its [Anchor YorkU: An Anchor Institution & Community Benefits Framework](#) which establishes four target areas for current and future development opportunities: employment, engagement, infrastructure, and social procurement, specifically within the Black Creek/Jane Finch communities. In 2019, York approved its [Social Procurement Policy](#). In 2021, York University York released a report, [Our Collective Wellbeing: Towards a Local Hiring Strategy at York University](#), aimed at increasing local inclusive hiring as a key employment strategy at all York's campuses.
- 39. In 2019, TMU partnered with the MaRS Discovery District, AnchorTO, and the University of Toronto on the [Buying with Impact \(BWI\)](#) project, focused on developing practises that enable Advanced Education Institutions in Toronto to procure more goods and services from social enterprises. The BWI project created a [Social Enterprise Procurement Playbook](#) to share their findings and recommendations. In 2023, TMU launched its [Social Procurement Policy](#) which helped [increase access for businesses owned by Indigenous Peoples and racialized people](#).
- 40. The [Sam Ibrahim Centre for Inclusive Excellence in Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Leadership](#) (SICIEIL) has supported 150+ startups, with 65% of founders identifying as visible minorities and 52% as female-identified. UTSC's residence building, [Harmony Commons](#), is the largest passive house-certified building in Canada and the largest passive house dormitory in the world, which uses less energy for heating and cooling systems than conventional buildings. The [Institute for Inclusive Economies and Sustainable Livelihoods](#) (IIESL) is a research centre devoted to the exploration, imagining, and planning of alternative economic futures.
- 41. The Metrolinx [Community Benefits & Supports Program](#) is a critical part for connecting and supporting communities, notably the LRT and subway projects to achieve some significant community impacts.
- 42. Through partnerships, OTF co-invests in projects that strengthen the infrastructure, resources, and relationships to build a stronger non-profit sector. For example, [New Power Labs](#) is building a strong network of financial institutions, foundations, and social finance intermediaries to advance more equitable finance practices to better serve underrepresented communities.

## Locally Rooted Finance

- 43. In 2023, the [Social Debenture Program](#) financed key capital projects such as the George Street revitalization (\$11.6M), shelter repairs and acquisitions (\$189M), community centers (\$14.4M), as well as TCHC capital repairs and accessibility projects for the TTC.
- 44. In 2023, the [Green Debenture Program](#) financed sustainable clean transportation, such as cycling infrastructure (\$9.9M) and TTC upgrades (\$68.3M); energy efficiency, such as the Renewable Thermal Energy Program (\$12M) and Energy Conservation Demand Management (\$5.4M); and climate change adaptation, such as the Scarborough Waterfront Project (\$4.2M)
- 45. CommunityBonds.ca is a joint project by the Centre for Social Innovation and Tapestry Community Capital, and created the following [guide](#) on the history of CSI's Community Bond model.
- 46. The Toronto Renewable Energy Coop is the parent organization of Tapestry Community Capital. For more information on Tapestry's history, [read here](#).
- 47. In 2024, Kensington Market Community Land Trust launched its [Kensington Community Bond](#) to raise \$2 million to acquire a second residential or mixed use property to preserve affordable housing. By November 2024, the campaign raised \$1 million in community bonds.
- 48. [Capital stacking](#) represents the underlying financial structure for an asset or real estate deal, such as non-repayable capital (e.g. donations and grants), equity (e.g. reserve funds and existing assets), loans (e.g. traditional loans and low-interest arrangements), and debt (e.g. community bonds and mortgages). Tapestry is also exploring the role that [social procurement](#) can play in capital stacking for social enterprises.
- 49. In 2019, [VCIB](#) provided \$1 million in mortgage financing to support NLT, PNLT's charitable arm, in acquiring a 15-unit rooming house on Maynard Avenue, to be permanently preserved as affordable rental housing. Following the success of this first loan, VCIB and PNLT launched the first-of-its-kind Preserve and Protect Guarantee Program which leveraged impact investments from foundations like [Metcalf Foundation](#) and [Atkinson Foundation](#). The goals of this Program were achieved in April 2021, with the successful acquisition of a 36-unit apartment building also located on Maynard Avenue.
- 50. The goal for NYCH's [Toronto Impact Initiative](#) is to serve primarily members of low-income, racialized, newcomer, and otherwise marginalized communities that traditionally face increased barriers to accessing finance.

# Endnotes

## Locally Rooted Finance (Cont'd)

- 51. [DUCA Credit Union](#) began as a single branch credit union in Toronto in 1954, and has expanded to 19 branches across Southern Ontario. DUCA is also the first credit union to receive a B-Corp certification; offers grants to community initiatives; invests in communities to fight poverty, grow good ideas, and promote fair financial inclusion; and runs a registered charity, [DUCA Impact Lab](#), to address inequities in the financial system. [Meridian Credit Union](#) is Ontario's largest credit union and invests in affordable housing, financial access, community support, climate resilience, and equity and reconciliation. [Alterna Savings](#) provides a range of cooperative banking services with a strong focus on community development and financial literacy. Alterna offers microfinance programs and supports social enterprises, emphasizing financial inclusion for underserved communities. The [Pan-African Credit Union \(PACU\)](#) is a collaborative initiative, formed by The Jamaican Canadian Association, The Lion's Circle Afrikan Men's Association, and the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce with support from the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, to offer an alternate banking option steeped in [co-operative economics](#) to better serve Black communities.
- 52. [Tapestry](#) has shared analysis on how the Social Finance Fund can help amplify locally rooted financial instruments like community bonds. [Buy Social Canada](#) and [SETSI](#) have shared analysis on the gap in the fund's ability to address equity along with recommendations for moving forward.
- 53. In 2017, the Government of Canada appointed a Co-Creation Steering Group to guide the development of a Canadian Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy. In 2018, the steering group released their report, [Inclusive innovation: New ideas and new partnerships for stronger communities](#). This report became the foundation for the [Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy](#) in 2018.
- 54. In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) released its Fourth Assessment Report—which at the time was the largest and most detailed summary of the climate change situation ever undertaken—leading the IPCC to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In response to the report, a series of global institutions and climate change experts collaborated to establish a process for debt markets to invest in sustainability projects. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), the first green bond was issued in 2007 by the European Investment Bank. This was followed in 2008 by the [World Bank](#), which is considered to be the blueprint for green bonds. In order to substantiate and standardize the practice, the International Capital Market Association (ICMA) created the [Green Bond Principles \(GBP\)](#) in 2014. The [Institute for Sustainable Finance](#) and the [Responsible Investment Association](#) offer a comprehensive history of Green Bonds in Canada and its context within the global market.
- 55. In 2014, the Province of Ontario issued Canada's [first Green Bond](#) to support the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, the largest transit expansion project in Toronto's history.
- 56. The Province of Quebec established its [Green Bond Program](#) in 2017 and updated its framework in 2022.
- 57. Ottawa first released its [Green Debenture Framework](#) in 2017, which later evolved into a Sustainable Debenture Framework in 2023.
- 58. The City of Toronto's [Green Debenture Program](#) aims to support its goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2040.
- 59. Canada in a Changing Climate provides a [case study](#) on the use of the [Green Bond Program](#) by the City of Vancouver.
- 60. Established in 2018, the green bonds issued by [Canada Pension Plan Investment Board](#) aim to invest in renewable energy, sustainable water and wastewater management, and green buildings. CPPIB announced plans in 2018 to invest more than C\$3 billion in the renewable energy sector.
- 61. The Government of Canada's [Green Bond Framework](#) was first released in 2022, with the [updated version](#) released in 2023. In March 2022, the Department of Finance launched Canada's first Green Bond Framework and successfully issued an inaugural 7.5-year, \$5 billion green bond.
- 62. According to [Shift Action for Pension Wealth and Planet Health](#), "Amidst a worsening climate crisis and an accelerating energy transition, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments, or CPPIB) has so far committed at least C\$3.3 billion to new oil, gas, coal and pipeline assets in 2024."
- 63. In 2017, Los Angeles County's first social impact bond aimed to support the [Just in Reach \(JIR\)](#) project, a health-based supportive housing program that is working to reduce jail recidivism and help end homelessness among people experiencing repeat jail stays.
- 64. Barcelona's [Sustainability Bond Framework](#) aims to support projects such as affordable housing, access to essential services, and socioeconomic advancement along with climate goals such as energy efficiency, clean transportation, pollution prevention, and sustainable water.
- 65. Reykjavik's [Social Bond Framework](#) aims to support Reykjavik Social Housing, Iceland's largest provider of affordable social housing.

# Endnotes

## Locally Rooted Finance (Cont'd)

- 66. In 2017, the International Capital Market Association released the [Social Bond Principles](#), a global framework to ensure transparency, accuracy, and integrity of social bonds. According to the [International Finance Corporation](#), “issuances have skyrocketed since the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, as social bonds have become of increasing interest to investors looking to achieve positive social outcomes together with a financial return.”
- 67. According to the City of Toronto’s 2020 [Report](#) on the [Social Debenture Framework](#), “several investment banks in the City’s debt syndicate have advised that Canadian investors prefer separate debt issues of either Green Bonds or Social Bonds rather than a mixture of both (Sustainability Bonds). This was based on feedback they received from several North American investor panels and prominent institutional investors in the Canadian Green, Social, and Sustainability debt market.”
- 68. The City of Vancouver’s [Sustainability Bond Framework](#) builds upon the City’s 2018 Green Bond Framework.
- 69. Building on the Green Debenture Framework first published in 2017, the City of Ottawa has developed an updated [Sustainable Debenture Framework](#) in December 2023.
- 70. In January 2024, Ontario released its [Sustainable Bond Framework](#) replacing the Province of Ontario’s Green Bond Framework developed in 2014. The Framework allows the Province to issue Green Bonds, Social Bonds, or Sustainability Bonds when projects include both Green and Social objectives.
- 71. Social impact bonds have also been critiqued by academics [Meghan Joy and John Shields](#) as a neoliberal tool in social policy that risks advancing austerity.
- 72. Canadian public pension funds have been directly involved in the [privatization of public services](#), the [displacement of low-income tenants](#), and other predatory financial practices on a local and global stage. Initiatives like [SHARE](#) have been mobilizing shareholder investment power to build a sustainable, inclusive, and productive economy.
- 73. The Democracy Collaborative released an [Action Guide](#) for cities and institutions to implement CWB. Divestment is the process of institutions withdrawing investments from a key asset for financial, ethical, or political reasons. Across university campuses, there has been a [growing movement](#) for institutions to divest from corporations and organizations that contribute to human rights abuses and violations as well as climate change. On both an individual and institutional scale, there have also been campaigns to divest from big banks that are investing in weapons manufacturing and reinvest in more ethical alternatives, such as credit unions, as part of the wider boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement in solidarity with Palestine.
- 74. The [University of Toronto’s Asset Management Corporation](#) is tracking the divestment progress in the endowment.
- 75. For example, the West End Food Co-op (WEFC) was a grocery co-op in Parkdale that was formed in 2009 and financed through community bonds. The co-op supported an alternative currency program called the [Co-op Cred Program](#), which provided supportive work-learn placements for people facing barriers to employment in exchange for credits to purchase healthy food. When the co-op lost its affordable space, it could no longer financially sustain itself and dissolved in 2019 which also defaulted on \$120K in outstanding bonds. The closure of WEFC offers important lessons on the potential challenges of this model with regards to long-term sustainability and financial viability. The [Parkdale Community Wealth Building Report](#) provides a case study on the WEFC. It is worthwhile to note that many of the gaps in Toronto’s infrastructure to support community bonds that existed at the time have since been filled through initiatives like Tapestry Community Capital.
- 76. The [Solidarity Working Group](#) created a ‘Stronger Together’ statement that was endorsed by key groups in the community economic development ecosystem to address inclusion, diversity, and equity.
- 77. SETSI also partnered with Alterna Savings to launch the [Afro Caribbean Business Network Foundation MicroLoan Fund for Black Entrepreneurs](#). The ACBN MicroLoan Fund is one of the first of its kind in Ontario, providing a remarkable opportunity for Black business founders to obtain low-interest loans between \$500 and \$25,000 at 1.25%.
- 78. The [Boston Ujima Project](#) is home to the first democratically governed investment fund in the United States.

## Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise

- 79. There is not comprehensive data on how many social enterprises and co-ops operate in Toronto. There are currently 51 Toronto-based social enterprises that have been certified by [Buy Social Canada](#), 228 Toronto-based co-operatives, credit unions, caisse populaires or mutuels listed with [Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada](#) (other lists include 8 Toronto-based worker cooperatives listed as members with the [Canadian Worker Co-op Federation](#), 19 Toronto-based co-ops listed with the [Ontario Co-operative Association](#), 185 housing coops listed as members with the [Co-op Housing Federation of Toronto](#), and 50 active credit unions across Ontario with the [Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario](#)). Likewise, there are currently 91 businesses in Toronto that are certified as B Corporations—for-profit companies that use the power of business to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy—according to [B Local Ontario](#).

# Endnotes

## Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise (Cont'd)

- 80. According to [TREC](#), there have been more renewable energy co-ops established in Ontario than all the other co-ops combined. This is partially due to the incentives created through the Feed-In-Tariff program. Currently, more than 7,000 Ontarians belong to renewable energy co-ops, a number that is growing steadily as investors seek out stable returns from ethical investments.
- 81. [Toronto Renewable Energy Coop](#) (TREC) is an umbrella organization that has founded several projects, including SolarShare, WindShare, ZooShare, Relay Education, and Tapestry Community Capital.
- 82. SolarShare is Canada's leading renewable energy coop. Since 2010, it has created 51 solar projects, generated over \$50 million in revenue, and raised over \$80 million in community bonds from over 2,000 community investors and paid out almost \$12 million in interest. SolarShare was also able to leverage the Ontario government's [Feed-in-Tariff program](#) to guarantee supplying the electricity generated from the renewable energy project to the Ontario Power Authority's electricity distribution system.
- 83. [ZooShare](#) is North America's first zoo-based biogas plant. The facility launched in 2021 and raised over \$7 million in community bonds from over 800 community investors. The project will divert 15,000 tons of food waste from landfills each year, reduce CO2 emissions by up to 20,000 tons, generate 500kW of renewable energy each year, and produce a nutrient rich fertilizer as a by-product.
- 84. Circle Community LandTrust's [Retrofit & Renew Report](#) (2024) outlines the repairs, renovations, and upgrades they have been making to their portfolio of over 600 homes that were transferred from TCHC to Circle in 2022.
- 85. The [UpLIFT Credit Exchange](#) trades units of time based on principles of solidarity and reciprocity and offers an opportunity to participate in mutual aid.
- 86. For more than 15 years, [CAMH](#) has partnered with Working for Change by providing subsidized and stable rent to operate Out of This World Cafe.
- 87. The Metcalf Foundation has written about [North York Harvest's](#) community wealth building strategies, such as training people for good jobs through their Leadership in Logistics workforce training program and operating their social enterprise FoodReach.
- 88. The Toronto Enterprise Fund started in 2000 and was absorbed into the [United Way Greater Toronto's Inclusive Employment](#) pillar of work in 2023.
- 89. As a community-owned construction company, [A-GM](#) ensures local residents have a direct entry-point to participate in and benefit from the development and investment that is coming to the Greater Golden Mile.
- 90. [Chandos](#) was established in 1980 and has since become the first and largest B Corp certified national technical builder in North America. B Corps are committed to and continuously meet rigorous standards of social and environmental accountability, public transparency, and legal responsibility.
- 91. The [Toronto Main Street Recovery and Rebuild Initiative](#) received \$18 million from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario to support small business operators, community business associations, streetscape animation and retail innovation through the following programs: Transit Expansion Construction Mitigation Grant Program; Commercial Space Rehabilitation Grant Program; Retail Accelerator Program; technical assistance to small businesses in Little Jamaica; and plazaPOPS.
- 92. See here for more information on [Employee Ownership Trusts](#).
- 93. In order to expand democratic employee ownership, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has identified a series of policy options to expand meaningful control rights for workers. These include developing supportive infrastructure, such as offering resources for regional democratic employee ownership centres; offering tax and public policy incentives, such as permanently expanding the capital gains tax exemption for co-ops; expanding public capital and access to financing, such as creating a public investment bank to service co-ops; and creating clearer legislative frameworks, such as establishing an employee "right to own" framework under certain circumstances. These policy options are drawn from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2024) report: [Expanding democratic employee ownership in Canada: Policy options](#). The Canadian Worker Co-op Federation has also written about how [Employee Ownership Trusts Are Not the Only Solution to Succession Planning](#).
- 94. See here for the [Federal Budget 2024](#) proposal to expand qualifying business transfers of EOTs to include the sale of shares to a worker cooperative corporation.
- 95. Social innovation is among the keys to Montréal's development. The city provides [guidance and financial assistance](#) to social economy businesses that contribute to the economic and social vitality of its communities, such as the [bylaw](#) establishing the financial assistance program for scaling up social economy enterprises.
- 96. ONN's [Primer for Ontario Budget 2020](#) shared disappointment about "the provincial government's April 2019 decision to end the Five-Year Social Enterprise Strategy, including the cancellation of the \$15 million Procurement & Investment Readiness Fund and the third round (\$5.6 million) of the Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund."
- 97. See ONN's [Social Procurement Briefing Note](#) (2024)

# Endnotes

## Inclusive & Democratic Enterprise (Cont'd)

- 98. In a study of entrepreneurial ecosystems for worker cooperative development in Toronto and Montréal, [Jason Spicer and Michelle Zhong](#) (2022) find that Toronto-based worker cooperatives must extend their reach for resources and support at higher geographic and jurisdictional scales, which are often limited in value; whereas Montreal comparatively has a supportive ecosystem.
- 99. [Freedom Dreams Coop](#) does training, workshops and consulting to redefine what co-operatives and co-operation looks like from an intersectional and cultural inclusion lens.
- 100. [Solid State](#) builds worker cooperatives and enterprises that support cooperativism that are led by racialized communities. Since their launch in 2017 and have supported at least 20 initiatives.
- 101. The [Union Cooperative Initiative](#) is a non-profit solidarity cooperative uniting the labour and co-operative movements as we build towards a social and solidarity economy at home and abroad.
- 102. Commercial leases are not protected by provincial [rent control](#) under the Commercial Tenancies Act. The [Better Way Alliance](#)—an ethical employer network—and [commercialrent.ca](#) launched the [Commercial Renter Bill of Rights](#) to protect the rights of commercial renters and advocate for rent control.
- 103. The [Kensington Market Community Land Trust](#) currently stewards five commercial units and [Little Jamaica Community Land Trust](#) has been mobilizing to protect Black-owned businesses at risk of displacement.
- 104. Just Like Family Home Care is a social enterprise that offers top-quality in-home care across Canada. [Buy Social Canada](#) offers a step-by-step breakdown of Just Like Family Home Care's social acquisition.
- 105. Cooperation Jackson also did a [10-year review](#) of their work in 2024 and key lessons for building a solidarity economy, including their initial vision for partnering with the City under former Jackson mayor Chokwe Lumumba's leadership (which did not materialize due to political shifts in power).

## Fair Work

- 106. [Toronto Community Benefits Network](#) has supported the following CBAs: Eglinton Crosstown LRT (2014), Finch West LRT (2019), Casino Woodbine (2018), and West Park Health Centre (2017)
- 107. [Metrolinx Community Benefits & Supports Program](#) has four pillars: employment opportunities, local business supports, community improvement supports, and public realm improvements. The program started on the Eglinton Crosstown in April 2014, and then expanded to the Finch West LRT and the Hazel McCallion LRT in Mississauga.
- 108. The [Parkdale Community Benefits Framework](#) launched in 2018 and was the first neighbourhood-based grassroots framework of its kind in the Canadian landscape. It helped inspire CBF models in neighbourhoods like Golden Mile and Jane-Finch.
- 109. In 2021, a [working group](#) of Regent Park residents, community agencies, city staff, anchor institutions and local businesses were convened by CSI and the Yonge Street Mission to explore the feasibility of using Community Wealth as a new strategy for building an equitable and inclusive neighbourhood economy.
- 110. The [Afro Canadian Contractors Association](#) is a not-for-profit organization that works to increase the presence of BIPOC contractors and construction companies across Canada.
- 111. The [Toronto Sector Skills Academy](#) was a Metcalf Inclusive Local Economies initiative from 2016 to 2020.
- 112. Building Up's [pre-apprenticeship program](#) is a 16-week paid training program using construction contracts and in-class training to prepare individuals facing barriers to employment for successful careers in the trades.
- 113. The Ontario Nonprofit Network hosted a convening of community wealth building practitioners in 2024 to discuss social procurement, and Building Up presented alongside TCHC about the social impact of their partnership, in which 25% of all contract value paid flows directly as wages to TCHC tenants.
- 114. Since 2004, [Hospitality Workers Training Centre](#) (HWTC) has led workforce solutions for the hospitality industry.
- 115. The [Miziwe Biik Training Institute](#) is part of a new [Indigenous Hub](#) in the West Don Lands that offers skills training and employment services in a culturally enriched environment that will provide the GTA's Indigenous population with the skills and credentials to attain good paying jobs.
- 116. In the City's [Social Procurement Program](#), Workforce Development requirements will apply to Request for Proposals and tenders over \$5 million. The Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development Committee also partnered with the City of Toronto in 2023 to host a [webinar](#) to explore the workforce development implications of the City of Toronto's Net Zero Strategy and related activities. In 2024, the City of Toronto released a report on the [Economic Potential and Workforce Requirements in Toronto's Net Zero Strategy](#), highlighting the need for workforce development in green jobs. In 2017, the City launched a [Strategic Action Plan for the Film, Television and Digital Media Industry](#) which included a commitment to advance [sector-based workforce development](#) under xoTO Screen Industry Pathways, which now includes a 3D Realtime program with POV, the Entertainment Trades program with the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, and the Video program at The Remix Project.

# Endnotes

## Fair Work (Cont'd)

- 117. Learn more about [Construction Connections](#).
- 118. Since 1976, the [Equal Pay Coalition](#) has been the main advocate for women's pay equity in Ontario.
- 119. On January 1, 2022, minimum wage across Ontario increased to \$15 per hour, a victory won by the [Fight for \\$15 and Fairness Campaign](#) supported by the Workers' Action Centre.
- 120. In 2025, the Justice for Workers' campaign and the Workers Action Centre released a [workers' first agenda to address the tariff crisis](#). The agenda focuses on how to fight privatization and profiteering as well as racialized scapegoating and fascism, and instead create a strong social safety net to move through this crisis. The agenda draws on lessons from the pandemic, including measures like CERB and the eviction moratorium, and how they can be improved for this current moment. These initiatives are in line with reflections from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in their analysis on [which Canadian workers will be hit hardest by a trade war with the United States](#).
- 121. The [Ontario Living Wage Network](#) updates rates every year in November.
- 122. The [Better Way Alliance](#) launched in 2017 as a network of Canadian business owners & non-profit executives who invest in employees to build stronger organizations and boost Canada's economy.
- 123. The ONN's [Decent Work Charter](#) is a critical pathway to gender equity, racial justice, and reconciliation in the nonprofit sector.
- 124. The Fair Wage Office investigates complaints and takes enforcement action when it is determined that a contractor has failed to pay its workers the prescribed Fair Wage Rate or has not abided by the labour trade contractual obligations in the construction industry (collective agreements). The Fair Wage Office issues [annual reports](#) on the program and violations. The Fair Wage Office's investigations from the period of 2004-2023 recovered approximately \$5.6 million in back wages to over 4000 workers due to practices such as underpayment of wages and misclassification of workers.
- 125. The City of Toronto is creating a multi-sector, career-focused, [Toronto Youth Employment Strategy](#) with the goal of hiring 10,000 equity-deserving youth ages 15-24 by Summer 2026.
- 126. [Toronto Community Benefits Network](#) has been organizing with community and labour to track the City's targets for social procurement and supply chain diversity as part of FIFA26 Procurement Plan, such as the commitment for at least 50% of all procurements to include supply chain diversity requirements and a target of \$20 million in contracts will be allocated to Black, Indigenous and diverse suppliers.
- 127. The City of Toronto is currently building its 2026-2030 Action Plan for the [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#), which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 65% by 2030 with the goal of reaching net zero by 2040. [Toronto Environmental Alliance](#) has been advocating with partners for the municipal government to invest in local economic activity that generates good jobs and benefits for communities, promotes circularity and environmental stewardship, and addresses the need for deeply affordable, climate-safe housing.
- 128. The [Community Benefits Framework](#) was adopted by Toronto City Council in 2019. Currently, the City of Toronto's [Community Benefits Framework](#) is at the development and testing stage. There is a need to develop back-end infrastructure—reliable and streamlined local and social hiring processes, data tracking and reporting processes, strong and transparent accountability and monitoring structure, and protocols and procedures to guide stakeholders—to support the implementation of the City's current and future community benefits initiatives.
- 129. Current [Community Benefits Initiatives](#) at the City of Toronto: [Rexdale-Casino Woodbine CBA](#); the [Economic Development & Growth in Employment \(EDGE\) Program](#); the [FIFA Community Benefits Plan](#); [Downsview Community Development Plan](#) (the [Secondary Plan](#) includes a 20% affordable housing target); [Taxiway West District Plan](#) (creating first of its kind private sector-led CB); and community benefits commitments reaffirmed through the City-led housing development portfolio (e.g. [Toronto Builds Policy Framework](#) and the new [Housing Development Office](#)).
- 130. In 2018, Vancouver became Canada's first major city to institute a [mandatory CBA policy](#) for developments over 45,000 square metres. However, all developers are encouraged to sign a CBA, which demonstrates commitment to local, inclusive employment, and social and local procurement targets.
- 131. Brampton's [Community Benefits Policy](#) harnesses the City's procurement power to create inclusive training and employment opportunities for Brampton residents, especially those from equity-deserving groups.

# Endnotes

## Fair Work (Cont'd)

- 132. Following the introduction of the Ontario Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act (2015), the province released its [Long-Term Infrastructure Plan](#) (2017) that selected five [Community Benefit Pilot Projects](#) to advance workforce development and social procurement. Following the provincial election in 2018, only 2 projects moved forward with a CBA—[Finch West LRT](#) and [West Park Healthcare Centre](#). According to ONN, the Act “currently lacks supportive regulations to set the [CBA] model into the provincial framework for inter-ministry program delivery, hindering the meaningful and practical implementation of this act.” The definition of community benefits under the Act is separate from the [Community Benefits Charge](#) as defined by the Ontario Planning Act in 2022, which places restrictive caps on the benefits that can be leveraged from new private development (cannot exceed 4% of the value of the land). This tool replaced the former Section 37 height and density bonus in the Planning Act. During the [2025 City Budget Process](#), the Chief Financial Officer shared that the community benefits charge is expected to generate \$35 million annually from private development, compared to the \$90-100 million that would have accrued through Section 37.
- 133. The [Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the positive impact of the [British Columbia Infrastructure Benefits](#).
- 134. Through the [Investing in Canada Plan](#), launched in 2016, the Government of Canada committed over \$180 billion over 12 years for infrastructure that benefits Canadians – from public transit to trading ports, broadband networks to energy systems, community services to natural spaces. The Plan is associated with the creation of 100,000 good, well-paying jobs each year. The federal [Community Employment Benefits](#) initiative is a framework for establishing project targets and reporting on results related to employment and/or procurement opportunities for targeted groups, including Indigenous peoples, recent immigrants, women, and people with disabilities. In 2023, the federal government also updated the [Employment Equity Act](#) to include two newly designated groups: Black workers and 2SLGBTQI+ workers (in addition to the pre-existing groups: Indigenous workers, workers with disabilities, racialized workers, and women).
- 135. Ontario’s [employment services](#) system has been undergoing a massive transformation aimed at integrating employment programs with social assistance.
- 136. City Council adopted this [recommendation](#) in May 2023. According to a report for the [Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development](#) in 2021, Toronto’s Service System Manager (SSM) will oversee the largest client population in Ontario, with at least double the clients compared to the second largest SSM in the province, underscoring the scale and complexity of employment challenges within the City. At least one in five EO-assisted clients in Toronto are recipients of social assistance, either OW or ODSP.
- 137. First Work has been conducting a series of [reports](#) monitoring Ontario’s Employment Services Transformation and offering recommendations to ensure the transformation holistically meets the needs of jobseekers and people on social assistance. Community Living Ontario and the Ontario Disability Employment Network released a report in 2024, [Tangled in Red Tape](#), addressing a lack of effective support for job seekers with disabilities.
- 138. The Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development released a report in 2021 aimed at [Advancing a Workforce Development Agenda for Toronto](#) which identified the Employment Ontario Transformation as an opportunity for the City of Toronto to embed workforce development as part of economic development for better coordination of the labour market.
- 139. Learn more about the [Portland Clean Energy Fund](#).

## Just Use of Land and Property

- 140. According to the [Community Housing Transformation Centre](#), “The community land trust model in Canada has evolved over time. Initially, it was primarily rural, aimed at protecting and conserving land. It was not until the 1980s that Canadian CLTs became urban and housing oriented. Two distinct “generations” of Canadian urban CLTs can be identified. The first focused on land acquisition for housing construction. It was driven by cooperative initiatives and aimed to compensate for the lack of support from public authorities. The second generation emerged around 2012 in response to the growing pressures of gentrification in the urban areas of cities like Toronto and Vancouver.”
- 141. In November 2019, after many years of community organizing and advocacy by Building A Better Bloor Dufferin, residents in Toronto’s west end won a historic \$17 million community benefits settlement with the developers of the public school lands at the southwest corner of Bloor Street and Dufferin Street. \$2 million of these funds are stewarded by the [Community & Cultural Spaces Trust](#) to preserve spaces used by local community, cultural, and arts organizations.
- 142. The [Little Jamaica Community Land Trust](#) aims to mitigate Black cultural displacement in Toronto through community ownership.

# Endnotes

## Just Use of Land and Property (Cont'd)

- 143. The [Toronto Chinatown Land Trust](#) is currently running the Hak Hei program, aimed at developing their Anti-Colonial Framework, the Solutions Lab aimed at shaping their community ownership projects and development partnership prospects, and the Anchoring Chinatown project aimed at applying a community wealth approach to safeguard Chinatown's future, which includes their a walking tours program and operating a community storefront in the courtyard of Chinatown Centre.
- 144. [Sundance Commons](#) is an agricultural non-profit that operates at four farm locations in southwestern Ontario.
- 145. Action 17 of the [Toronto Black Food Sovereignty Plan](#) (2021) recommends the City to “identify at least two pilot sites for ‘community land sharing and community land trust models’ to be supported by a Black-led food agency.” Action 19 of the [10-Year Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy, 2025-2035](#) (2024) recommends that the city build community wealth and employment opportunities by enabling a minimum of three commercial land trusts by 2028.
- 146. [plazaPOPS](#) supports community-led transformations of parking lots and other under-invested spaces, into free, safe and accessible gathering places to support thriving culture, community and small businesses.
- 147. The Metcalf Foundation released the following story about [Market 707](#) as part of a special series focused on the issues the Inclusive Local Economies program has supported over the last 10 years.
- 148. As Canada’s first-ever [social medicine supportive housing initiative](#), the development at Dunn House at 90 Dunn Ave has been delivered through the City of Toronto’s partnership with the University Health Network (UHN) and United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT), in conjunction with the project’s housing provider, Fred Victor.
- 149. In 2024, the City announced that it will build a [four-storey supportive housing development](#) with 78 affordable homes on the site of a Green P Parking Lot in Kensington Market, which will be managed by Kensington Market Community Land Trust and St. Clare’s.
- 150. According to [Create TO](#): “2444 Eglinton Avenue East is a project part of the Housing Now Initiative to invest in City-owned lands across Toronto for the development of affordable housing within mixed-income, mixed-use, transit-oriented communities. The current use for this site at 2444 Eglinton Avenue East is a parking lot and autobody shop that is vacant and not in use, so by unlocking this space and maximizing its potential, the Scarborough Centre community will see major benefits socially and economically.” The development is creating 918 cooperative homes including 612 rent-geared-to-income units.
- 151. UWGT announced its intention to develop an additional [10 community hubs](#) across the GTA — including underserved areas like Peel and York — over the next 10 years, for a total of 20 hubs. UWGT and U of T also co-released a [report](#) in 2024 on real estate solutions for community hubs, such as community-leased and community-owned real estate, highlighting hubs as an example of having a high degree of space control and increased stability.
- 152. The idea for the [Parkdale Hub](#) was originally proposed in the [Parkdale Community Planning Study](#) (2016), championed by Councillor Perks, and influenced to include affordable housing through community organizing.
- 153. As shared by [The Local](#), “After five years of negotiation, the community received confirmation from Metrolinx in the fall of 2018 that the maintenance and storage facility would be set back 32 metres from Finch Avenue to allow for the Hub. In July 2020, however, Metrolinx reneged on its agreement and announced instead that it planned to sell the land. After concerted pressure, Metrolinx agreed to give the land back to the community for the Hub... in March 2021.”
- 154. The Toronto Environmental Alliance has led extensive research on the role of Community Hubs and Climate Change, such as this [feasibility assessment](#) in 2018 and the following [lessons](#) for Community Hubs to build a more equitable, resilient and climate-safe Toronto.
- 155. The [Jane Finch Community Development Plan 2024-2034](#) is a resident-informed plan for the future of Jane Finch led by Social Development, Finance and Administration and Economic Development and Culture. The [Jane Finch Secondary Plan](#) also includes commitments to the Community Hub and Inclusive Economic Development, such as social hiring pathways, commercial land trusts and cooperative models, and support for community businesses.
- 156. Building on the [Downsview Area Secondary Plan](#), the [Downsview Community Development Plan 2024-2029](#) seizes the opportunity presented by the anticipation of significant growth to centre equity as the basis for Downsview’s redevelopment, reflects in-depth engagement and outlines clear commitments to meet the needs of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.
- 157. The [Taxiway West District Plan](#) establishes a Privately-led Community Benefits Program for Taxiway West District, the first of its kind for a private developer in Toronto. The plan also creates a 10% commitment to affordable rental housing based on the Downsview Secondary Plan, yet expands the affordability period from 20 years to 99 years, and commitments to social procurement. TCBN shared the following [recommendations](#) to make the district plan’s community benefits transformational and to expand affordability and community ownership.
- 158. Learn more about the [Cultural Districts Program](#), informed by Jay Pitter Placemaking. The program is still in development.

# Endnotes

## Just Use of Land and Property (Cont'd)

- 159. The [Little Jamaica Cultural District Plan](#) was created by Jay Pitter Placemaking.
- 160. The City's Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition (MURA) Program was launched in 2021 to support the acquisition, renovation and refinancing of rental homes by non-profit housing providers, including Indigenous housing providers, co-operatives and community land trusts. Since 2021, MURA has awarded \$165 million in funding to 21 community housing providers to preserve the affordability of more than 1,000 rental homes in 34 projects across the city. The Canadian Network for Community Land Trusts released a report on [Funding for Residential Acquisition Projects](#) in 2025 that provides a comprehensive list on funding options for CLTs which are shared in the Acquisition section.
- 161. Halifax's [Affordable Housing Grant Program](#) supports non-profit or charitable organizations with costs for development, renovation, or purchase of affordable housing. Funding sources for the program include Bonus Zoning as a public benefit from developments, municipal operating funds, and the federal Housing Accelerator Fund.
- 162. Initially established in 2007, the [Fonds d'acquisition de Montréal](#) provides temporary financing to non-profit and co-op housing providers to acquire properties before long-term government funding is secured. Montreal's [social economy business acquisition program](#) launched in 2023 and provides \$400,000 in subsidies to acquire a property or for to construct or renovate a building. In order to be eligible, the enterprise must be a non-profit or co-op social economy business, meaning that it is democratically-run and combines economic viability with social objectives in responding to the needs of members or users. At least 20% of their generated income must also be autonomous.
- 163. British Columbia's [Rental Protection Fund](#) provides capital contributions to nonprofit housing organizations to disrupt inequities in the housing market that lead to displacement, promoting opportunities to grow and prosper. In addition to capital contributions, the fund aims to uplift community ownership and capacity building.
- 164. Manitoba's [Capital Funding Program](#) offers community housing providers a forgivable loan up to \$70,000 per social or affordable unit to fill funding gaps and help offset development capital costs. Units must be rented to eligible tenants at social or affordable rates with a plan to continue meeting these criteria for at least 20 years.
- 165. Nova Scotia's [Community Housing Acquisition Program](#) offers a fixed-interest-rate, repayable loan up to \$10 million per project amortized over a maximum of 30 years.
- 166. The [Nova Scotia Community Housing Capital Fund](#) has a total of \$3.5 million available to provide community housing organizations in Nova Scotia with access to capital grants for the acquisition of existing residential buildings. This fund was created by the Government of Nova Scotia in collaboration with the Community Housing Transformation Centre to support the growth of the non-profit and co-operative housing stock.
- 167. ONN has been mobilizing nonprofits to rally for an [Ontario Housing Acquisition Fund](#) to operate alongside the federal fund and quickly increase deeply affordable housing stock while protecting existing affordability in perpetuity.
- 168. The [National Housing Strategy](#) is a 10-year, \$115+ billion plan to address diverse needs across the entire housing continuum. The Strategy launched in 2017 and is anchored in the National Housing Strategy Act which requires the key principles of a human rights-based approach to housing.
- 169. The NHS [Solutions Lab](#) launched in 2018 and offers funding to tackle persistent and complex housing issues that require systems change, enabling the rapid development of potential solutions.
- 170. The Community Housing Transformation Centre manages the [Sector Transformation Fund](#) supplied by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as part of the National Housing Strategy. It includes three distinct support programs: local projects, sectoral impact projects, and a Community-Based Tenant Initiative.
- 171. Budget 2022 and the 2023 Fall Economic Statement announced \$1.5 billion in funding for the [Co-op Housing Development Program](#) to expand co-op rental housing. The program is managed by the CMHC and is estimated to support the development of thousands of affordable rental co-operative housing units by 2028.
- 172. In April 2024, the federal government released a [Canada's Housing Plan](#) building on important federal investments launched in 2017. The plan has three key areas: building more homes, making it easier to rent or own a home, and helping Canadians who can't afford a home.
- 173. The [Canada Rental Protection Fund](#) will provide \$1 billion in loans and \$470 million in contributions to non-profit organizations and other partners so they can acquire units and preserve rent prices in the long term.
- 174. The [Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts](#) provides resources on Indigenous Solidarity.
- 175. To address the housing crisis in Nunavut, the Government of Nunavut with the Nunavut Housing Corporation launched Nunavut 3000, or [Igluliuqatigiingniq](#) meaning "building houses together" in October 2022.

## Takeaways

- 176. [Erik Olin Wright](#) discusses this tension as 'real utopias' that combine strategies aimed at "taming capitalism through public policies and in socioeconomic projects of eroding capitalism through the expansion of emancipatory forms of economic activity."

