

# The Poverty Puzzle: Putting the pieces together!



**Presented on behalf of:**

The Orillia & Area Food Strategy and  
The City of Orillia ad hoc Poverty Reduction Working Group

Thursday September 18, 2025



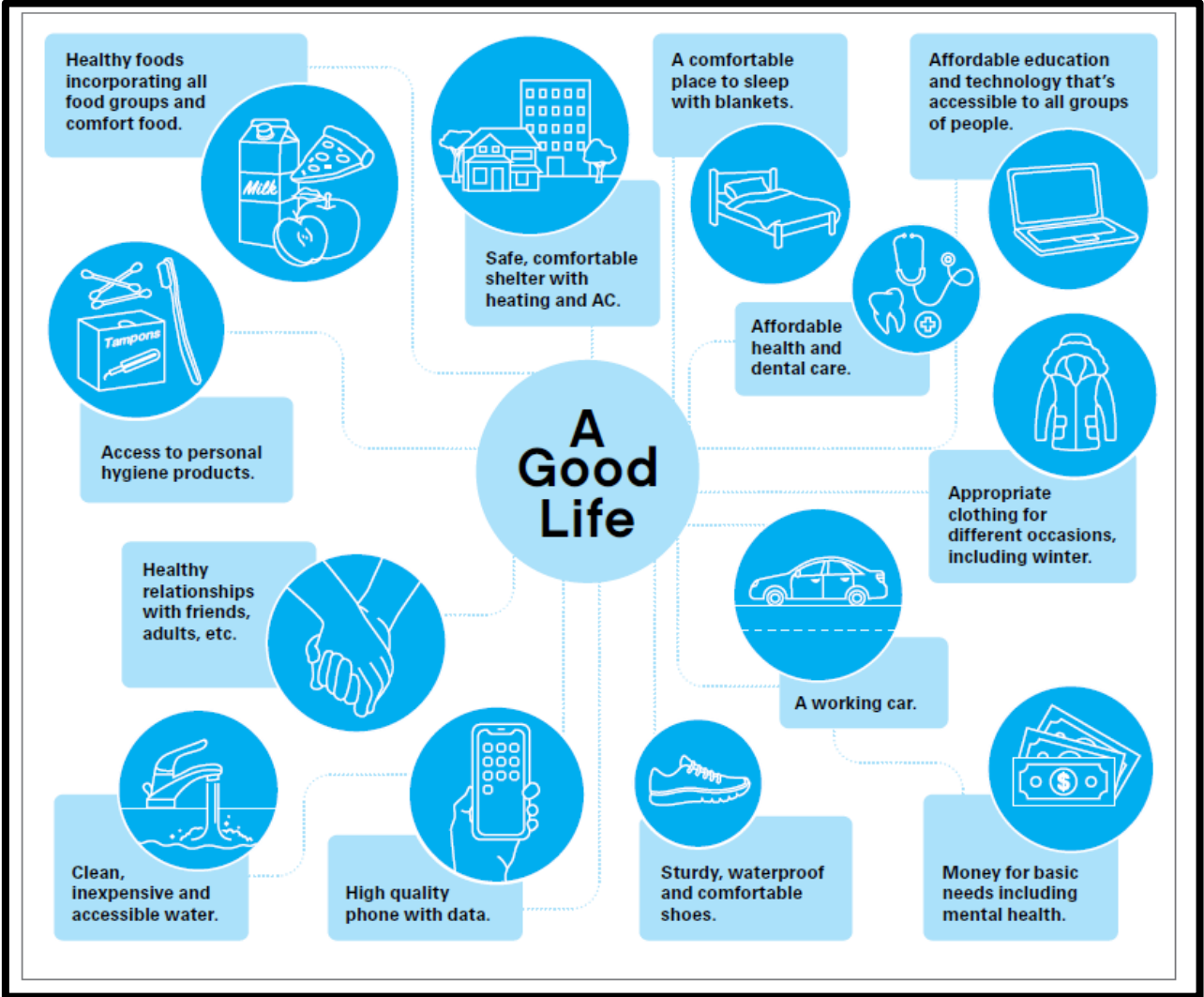
**simcoe  
muskoka**

DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

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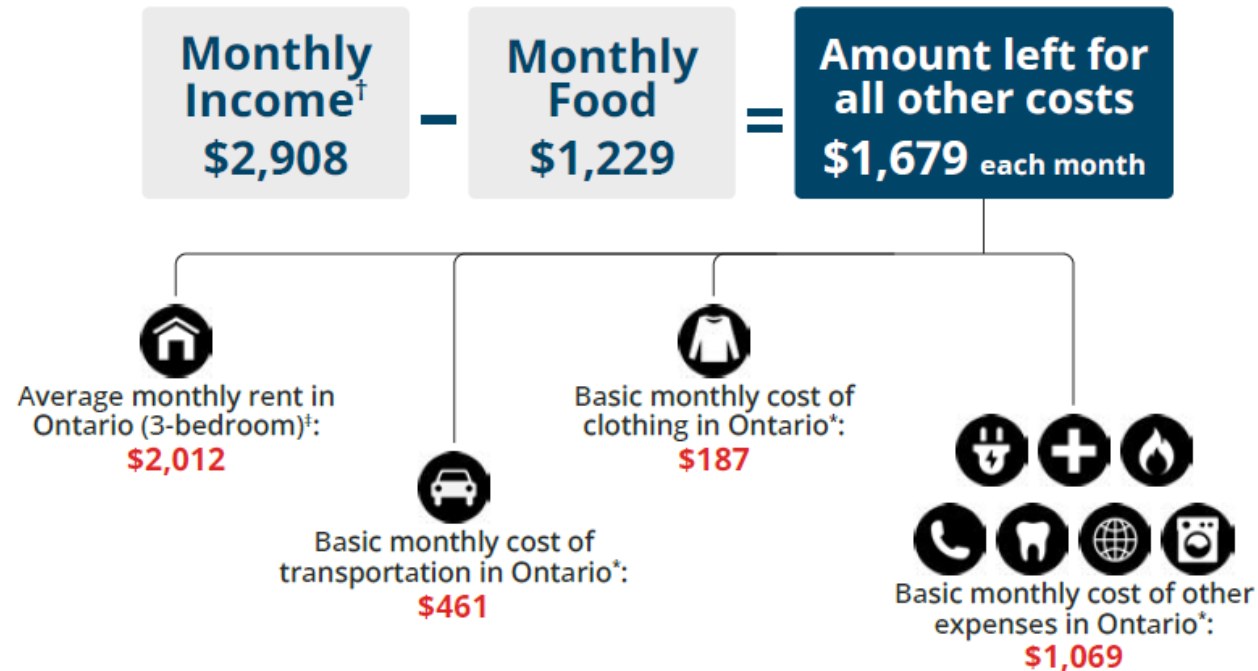
# “A Good Life”, through the Eyes of a Child



Source: UNICEF Canada, UNICEF Report Card 18: Canadian Companion, Child Poverty in Canada: Let's Finish This, UNICEF Canada, Toronto, 2023.

## Households reliant on social assistance cannot afford nutritious food and other basic costs of living.

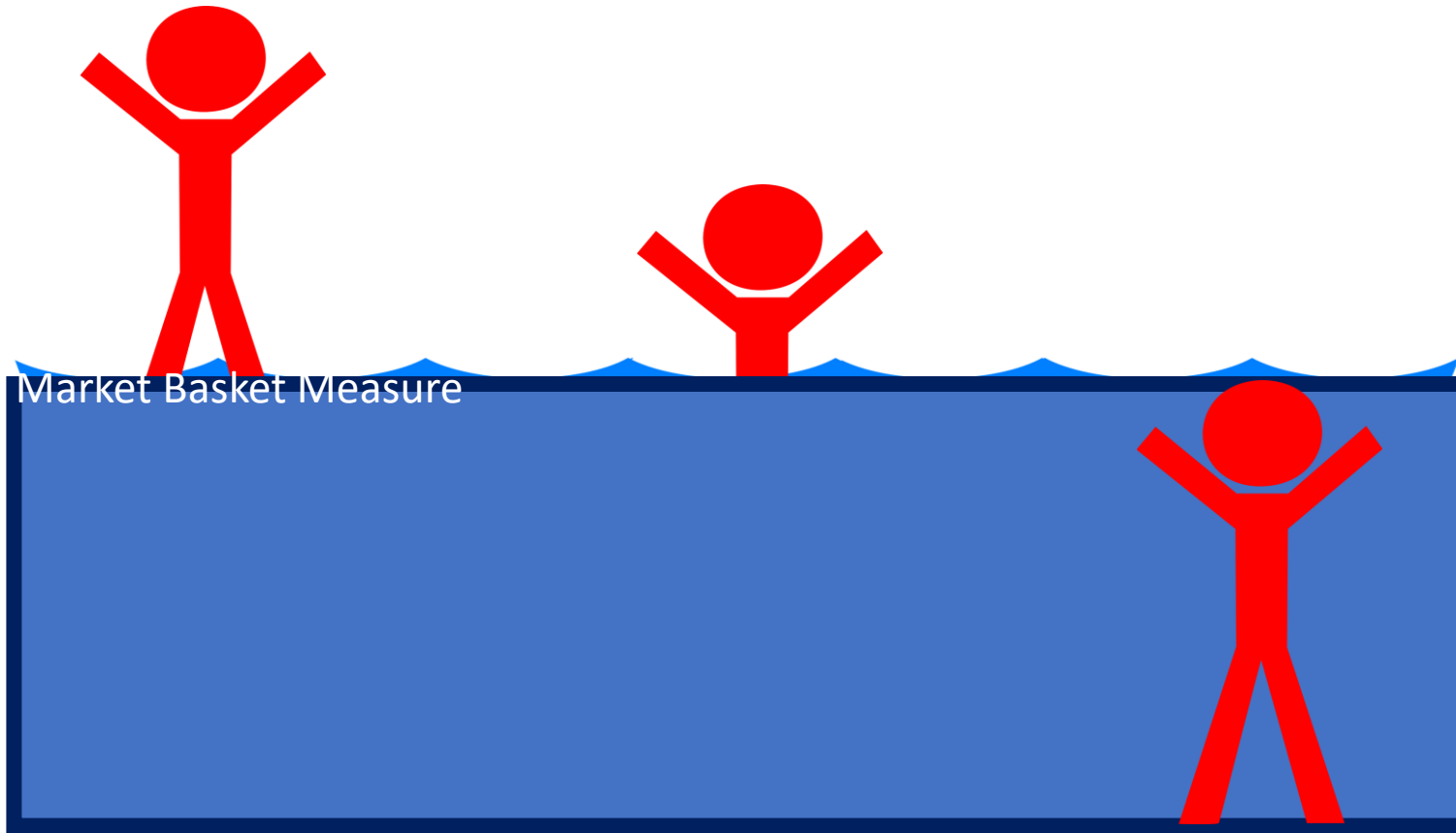
A family of four reliant on Ontario Works would need to spend 42% of their monthly income to purchase a basic nutritious diet.



<sup>†</sup> Income includes Ontario Works and all benefits

<sup>‡</sup> Estimates from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

\* Based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM), which is used to set the poverty threshold in Canada



Imagine poverty as a swimming pool with different depths. Some people are in the deep end, while others are in the shallow end, depending on the severity of their situation.

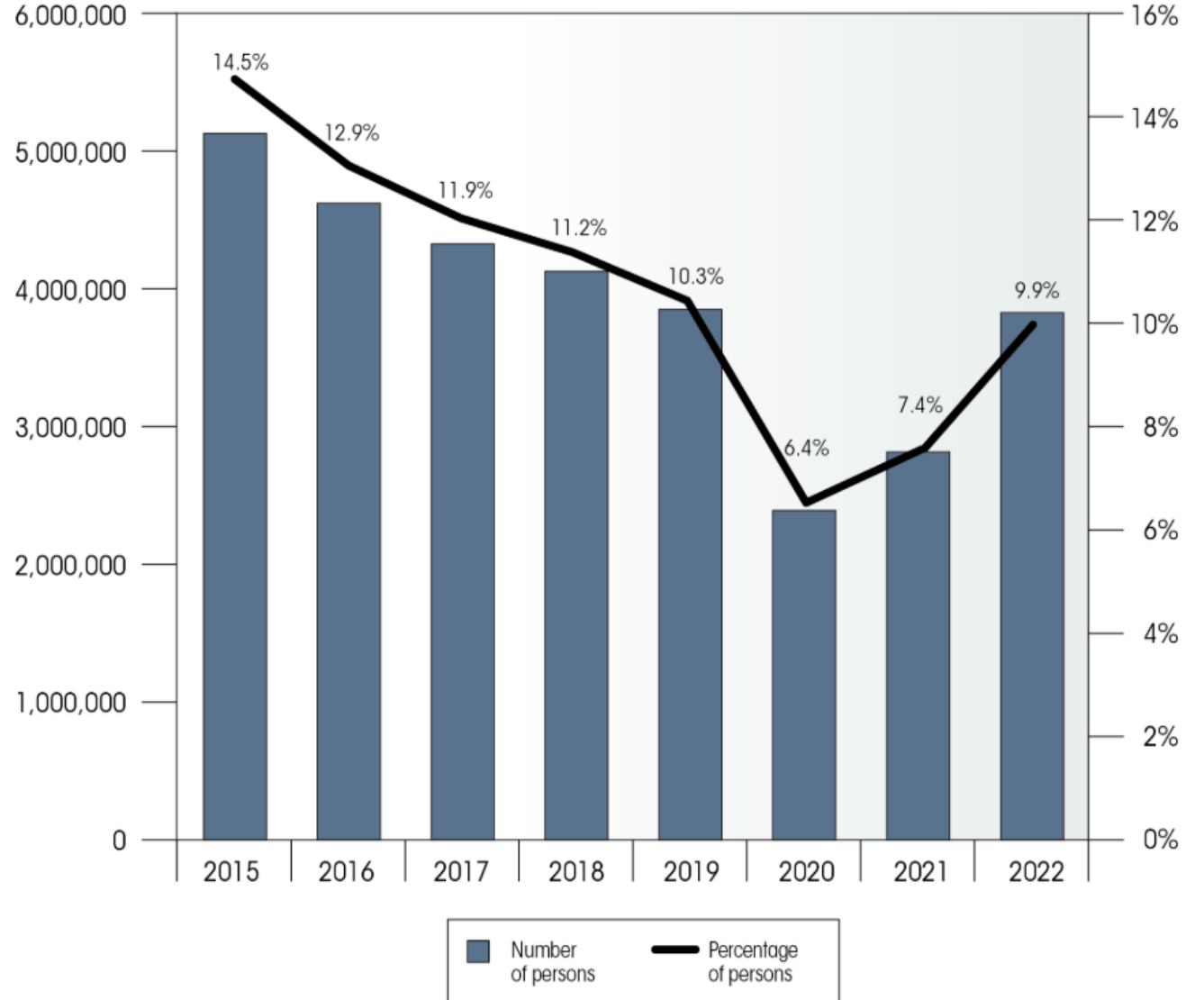
*Poverty* is “the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic level of living standards and to facilitate integration and participation in society”.

*Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy, Government of Canada, 2018, p. 7*



# Number and percentage of persons living in poverty in Canada based on the Market Basket Measure for 2015 to 2022

Graph 1 - Number and percentage of persons living in poverty in Canada based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM) for 2015 to 2022



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Income Survey, Table 11-10-0135-01 Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type.

Note: The percentage and number of persons living in poverty in Canada exclude the territories.



Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy envisions a province where everyone can reach their full potential and contribute to a prosperous, healthy Ontario.

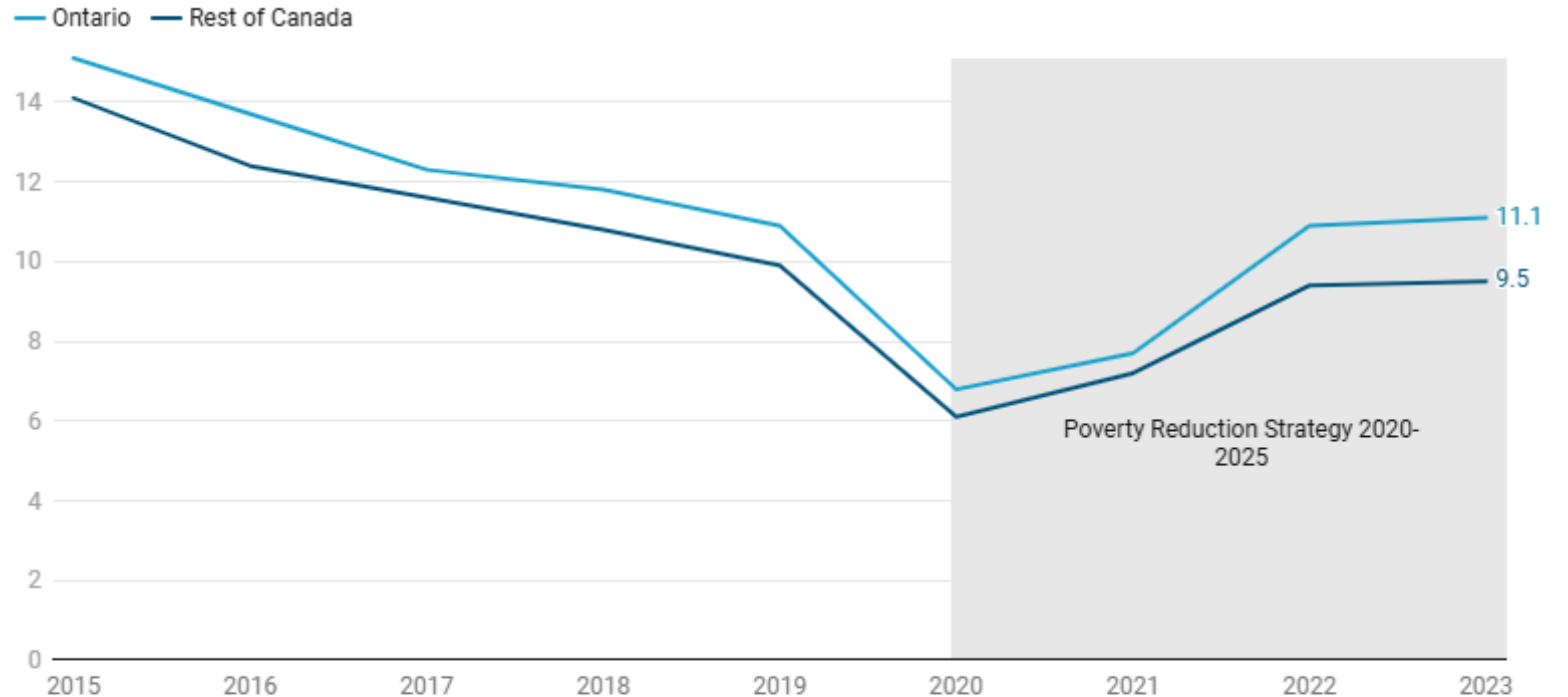
The current five-year plan is built on four pillars:

1. Encouraging job creation and connecting people to employment.
2. Connecting people with the right supports and services.
3. Making life more affordable and building financial resiliency.
4. Accelerating action and driving progress through collaboration with sector partners.

Source: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/building-strong-foundation-success-reducing-poverty-ontario-2020-2025>

# POVERTY RATES (MBM) IN ONTARIO AND THE REST OF CANADA, 2015 - 2023

Ontario's poverty rate has risen above pre-pandemic levels, with a growing gap compared to the rest of Canada—indicating the need to reassess current approaches.



[Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0135-01. Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type

[Poverty rising: How Ontario's strategy failed](#)

Municipal governments are well positioned to play a direct role in poverty reduction. Their understanding of local populations allows them to identify gaps in basic needs and create targeted plans to enhance community resilience.

### 'Poverty is a problem' in Orillia that council commits to tackle

Orillia's 'statistics are pretty dire': City to develop partnership with Lakehead University to develop poverty reduction strategy for Orillia

### Orillia hosts 'landmark' poverty reduction symposium

'The dedication and passion of everyone involved were truly inspiring,' says Coun. Durnford, who called forum a 'pivotal moment for our community'

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### City looking for input on reducing poverty

Online survey available for the next two weeks, while hard copies available at the Orillia City Centre

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### City looks to tackle local poverty with new action plan, new staffer

'It's more about creating a climate where people aren't just struggling from crisis, going from one crisis to the next,' said health unit official

### City could add staff to tackle 'complicated' food insecurity issue

Food insecurity puts burden 'on our healthcare services, on our social services, on our criminal justice system,' says advocate; city will ponder idea during budget talks

### Food for thought: Locals planting seeds for regional food strategy

'No matter your income or where you live, you should be able to get nutritious affordable food,' says Sharing Place official

### Sharp rise in food insecurity prompts emergency declaration in Orillia

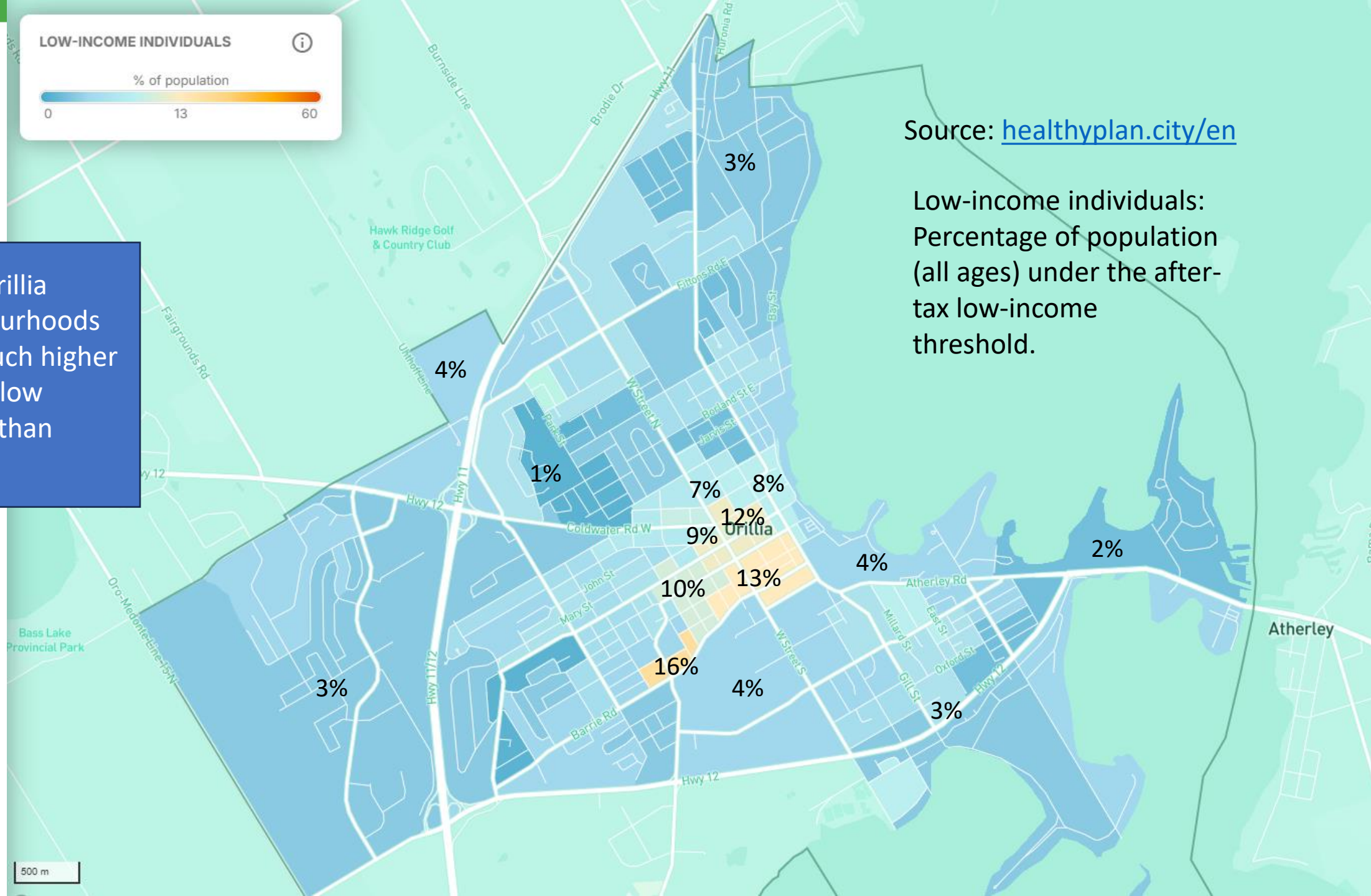
With demand at local food banks surging, Orillia city council has passed a motion urging provincial and federal governments to step in before the situation worsens further



Some Orillia neighbourhoods have much higher rates of low income than others.

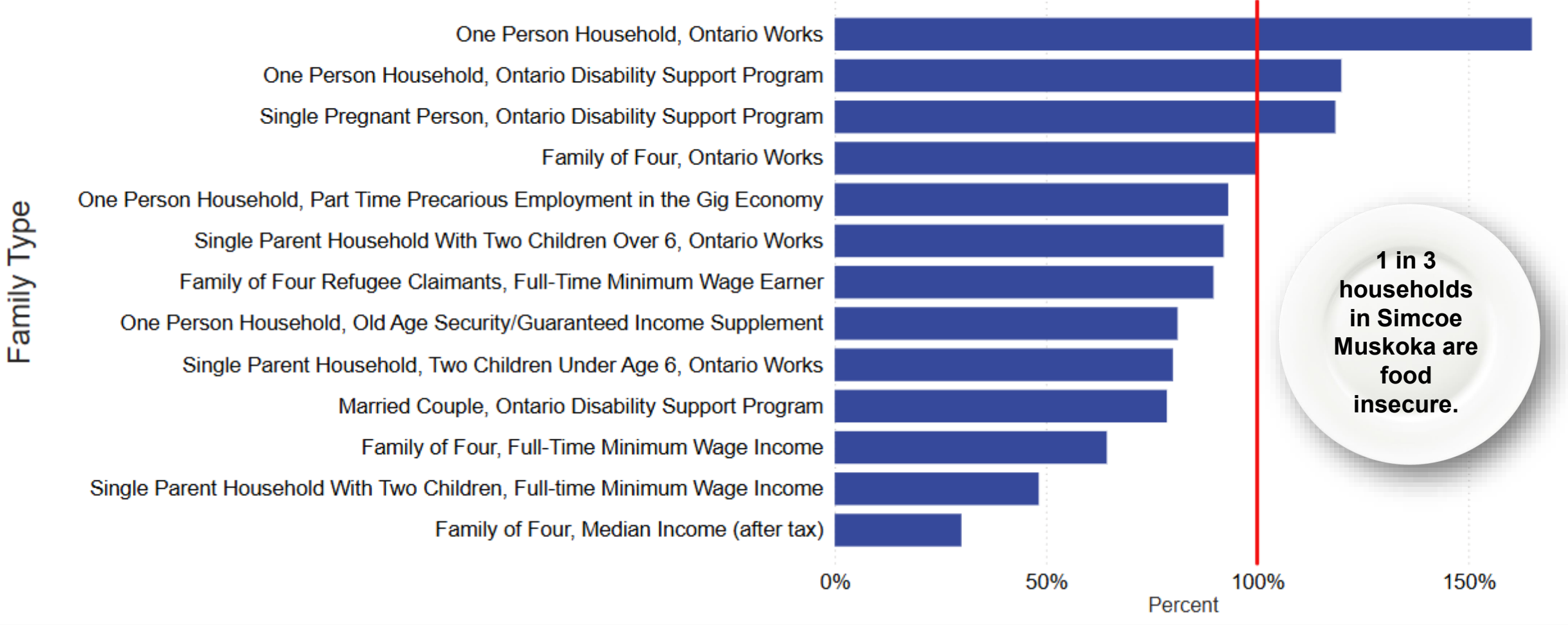
Source: [healthyplan.city/en](https://healthyplan.city/en)

Low-income individuals: Percentage of population (all ages) under the after-tax low-income threshold.



# Nutritious Food Basket

Percent of Income Spent on Rent and Nutritious Food Combined, Simcoe County, 2024

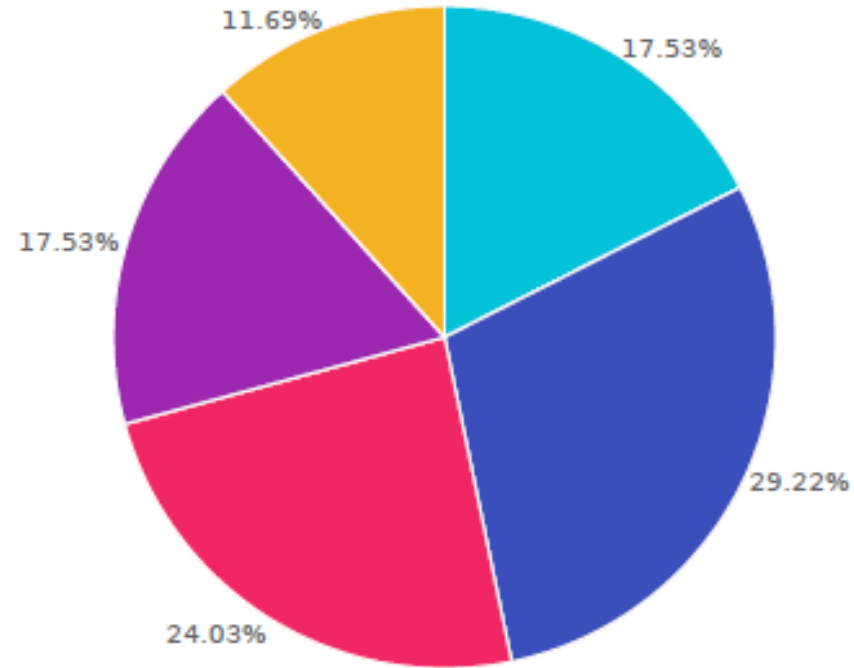


**1 in 3 households in Simcoe Muskoka are food insecure.**

## How secure do you feel about your food situation?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 104

Orillia residents are struggling to afford basic needs, even when employed full-time.



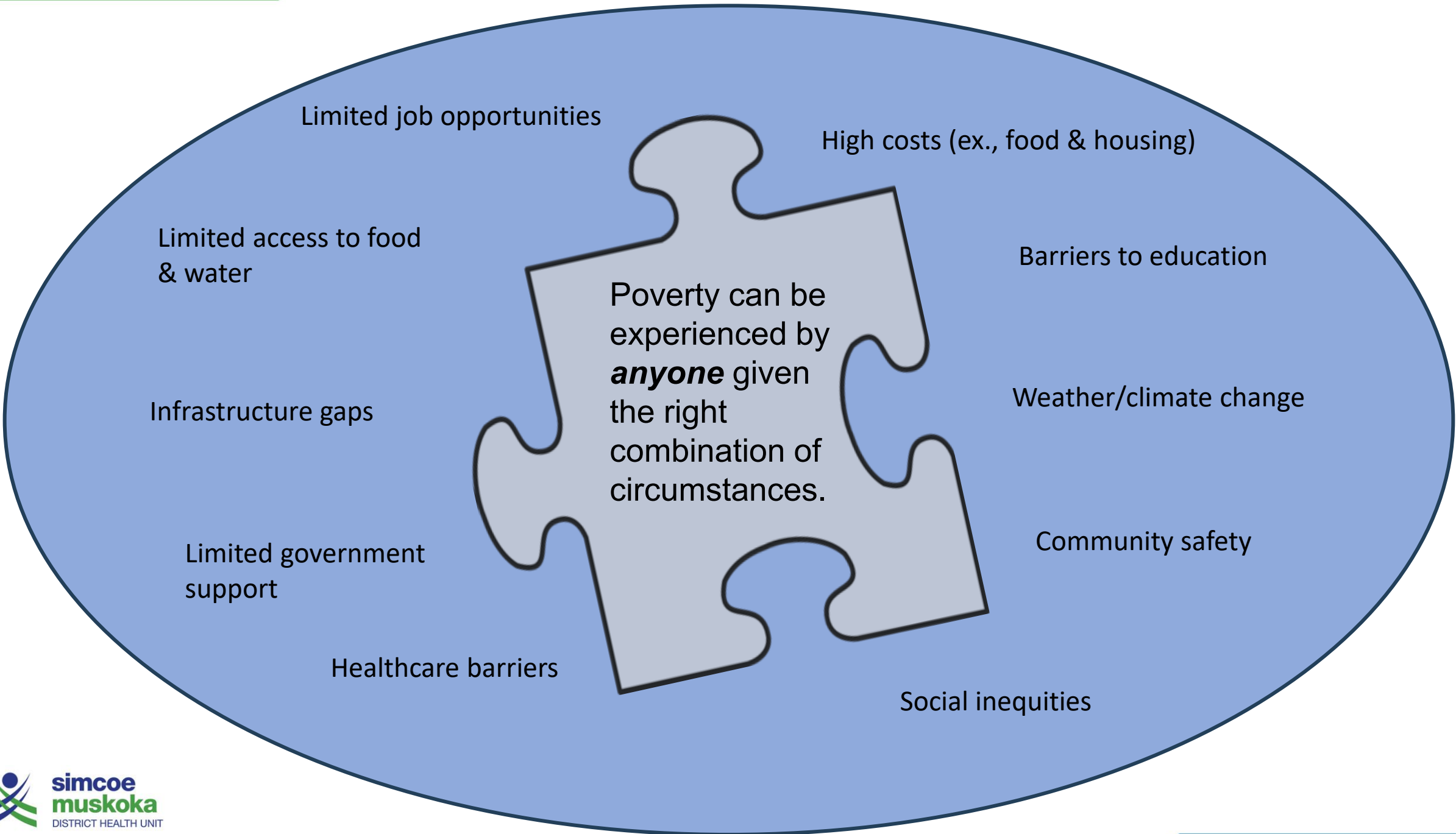
Very insecure

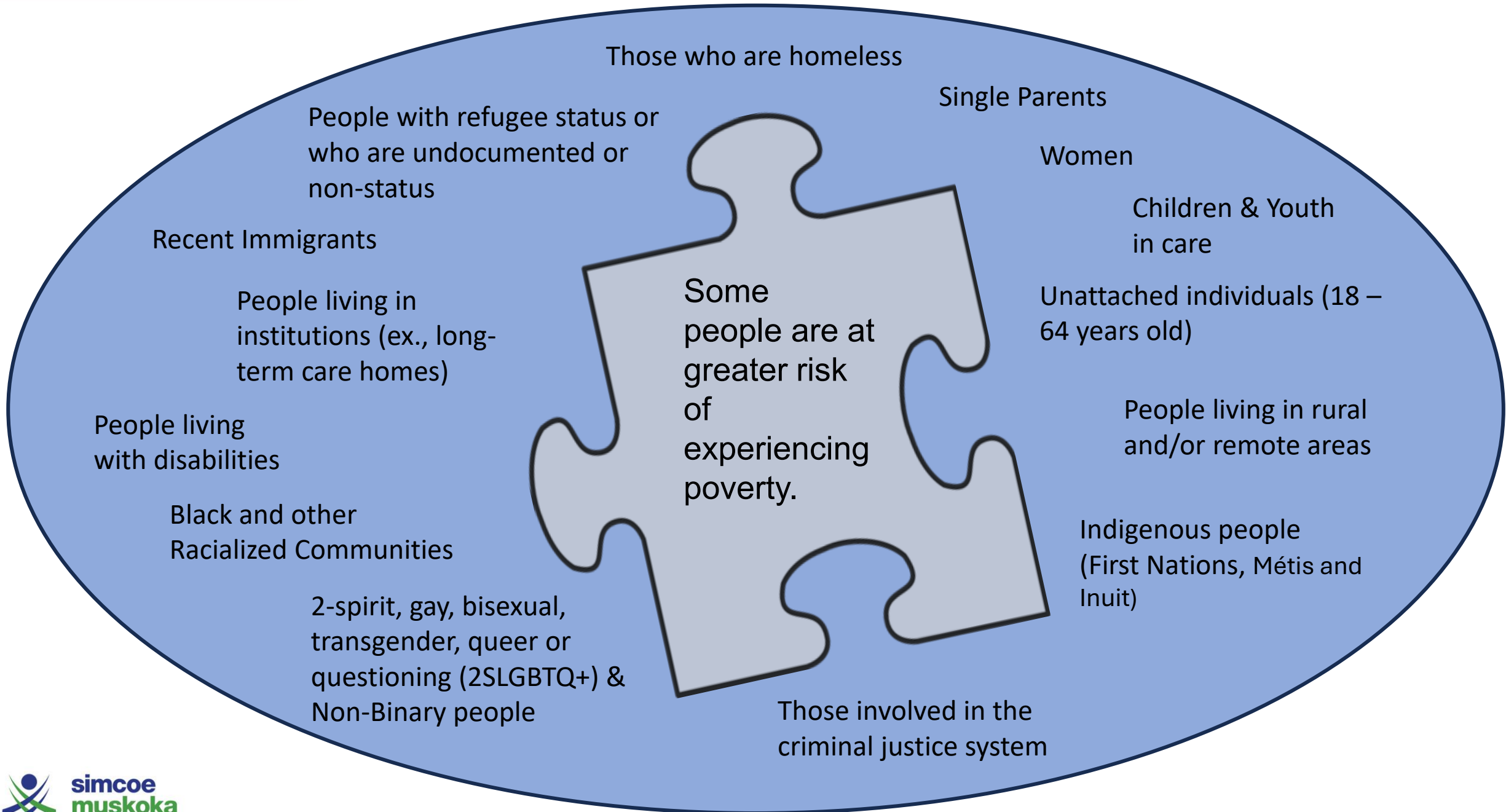
Insecure

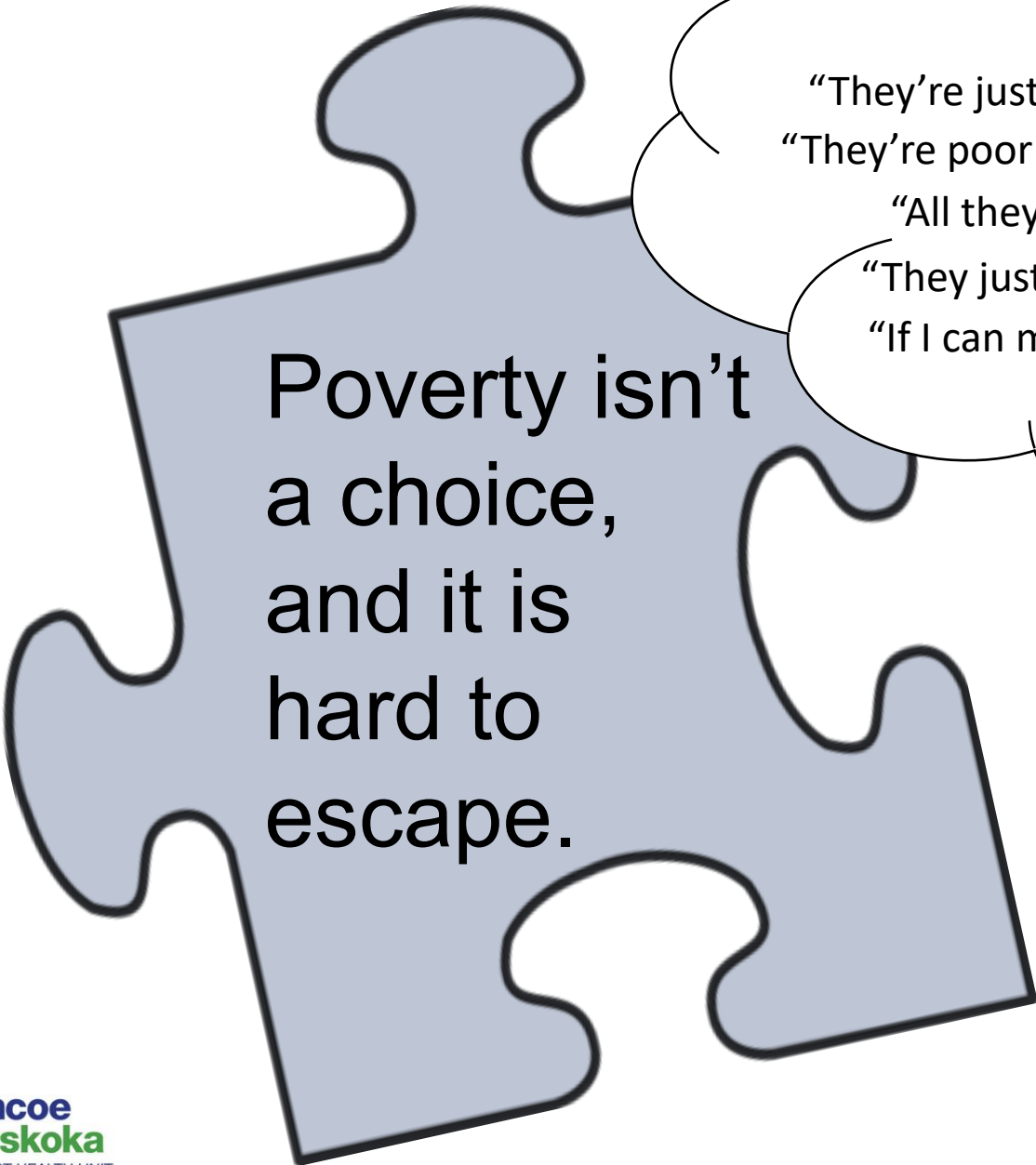
Neutral

Secure

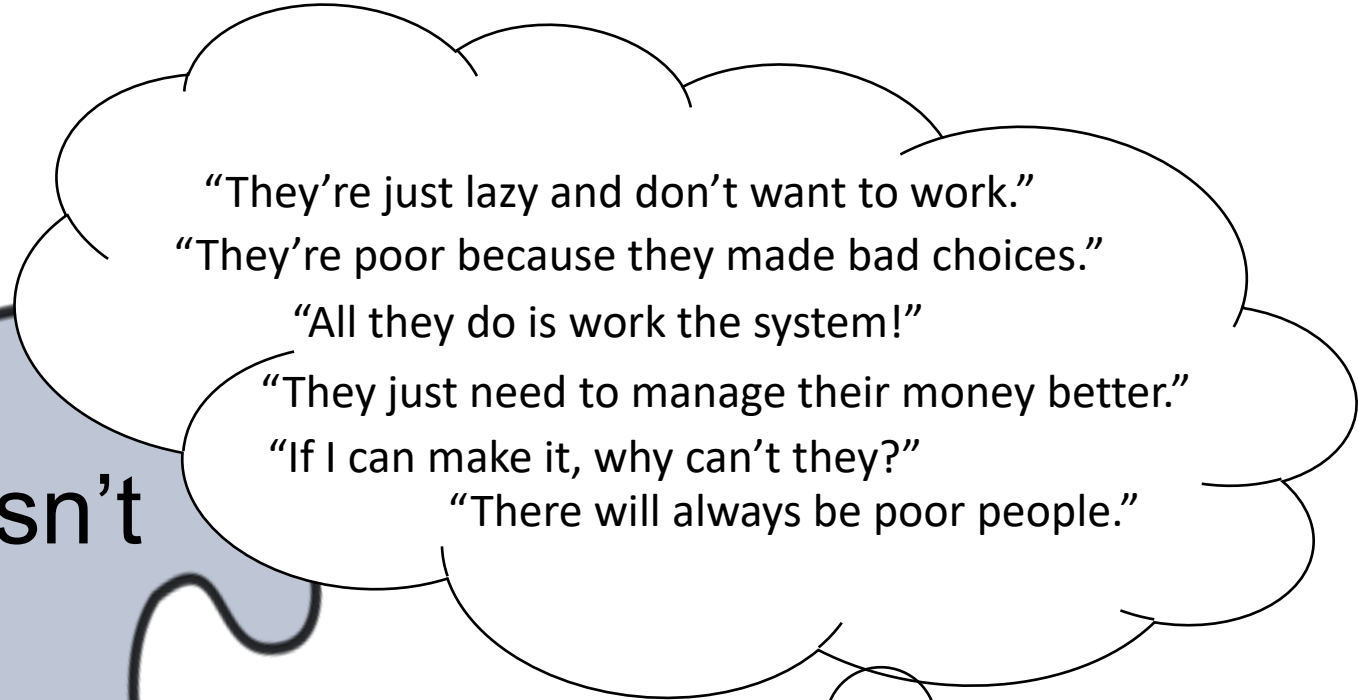
Very secure







Poverty isn't  
a choice,  
and it is  
hard to  
escape.



"They're just lazy and don't want to work."  
"They're poor because they made bad choices."  
"All they do is work the system!"  
"They just need to manage their money better."  
"If I can make it, why can't they?"  
"There will always be poor people."



# The Cost of Poverty

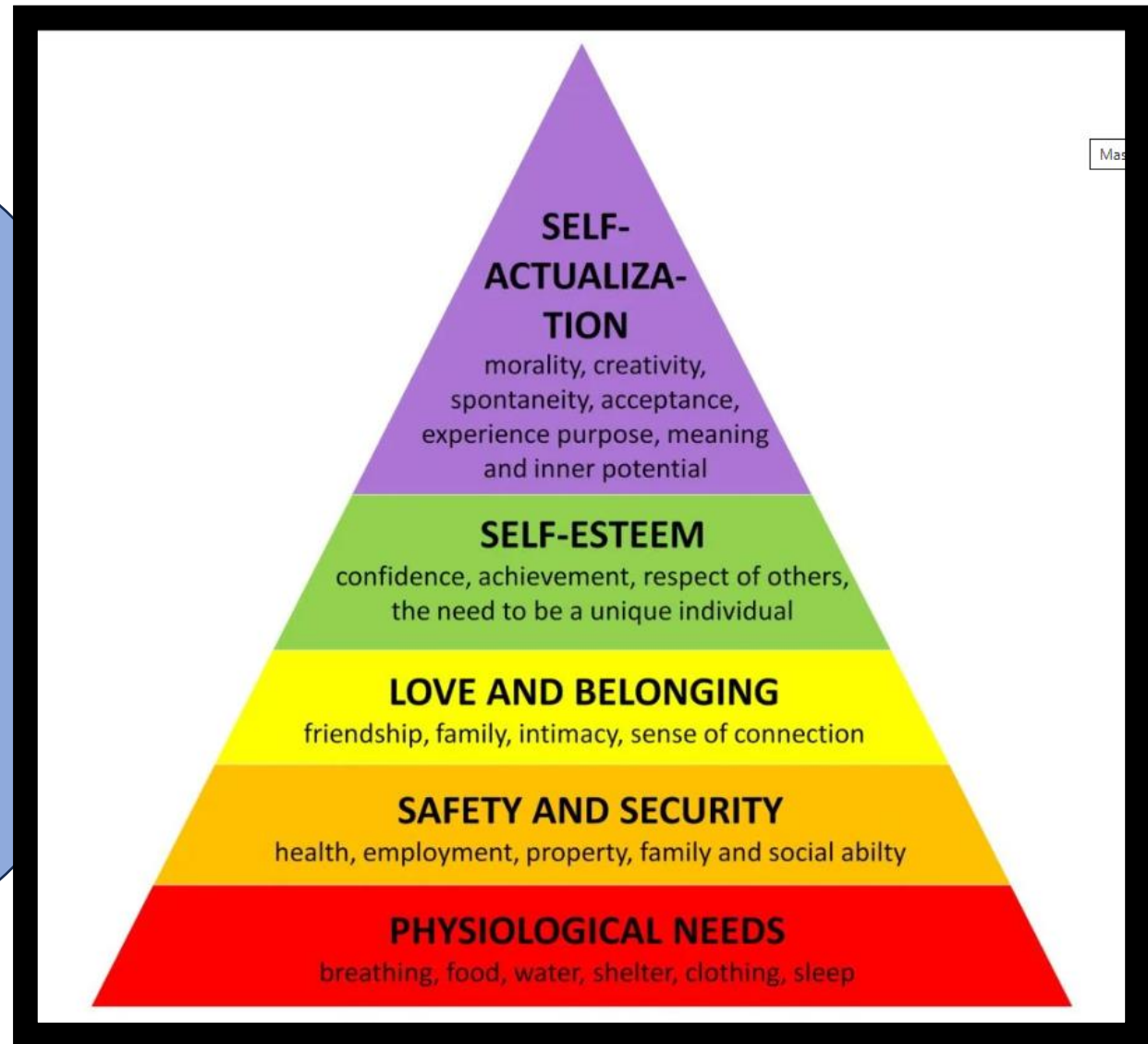
Growing up in poverty increases the chance of experiencing early life adversity, such as unstable housing, household food insecurity, and social stigma.

These challenges affect health, education, and employment opportunities throughout life.

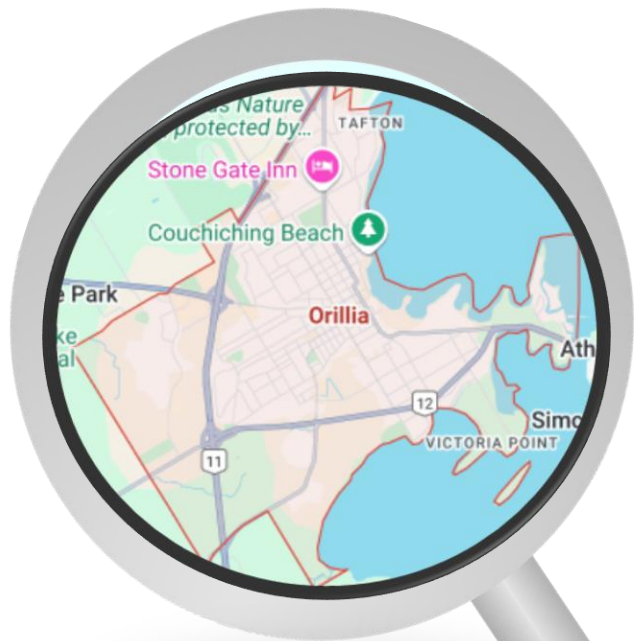
The long-term impact is costly — the total annual economic burden of early life adversity is estimated at US\$581 billion in Europe and **US\$748 billion in North America.**



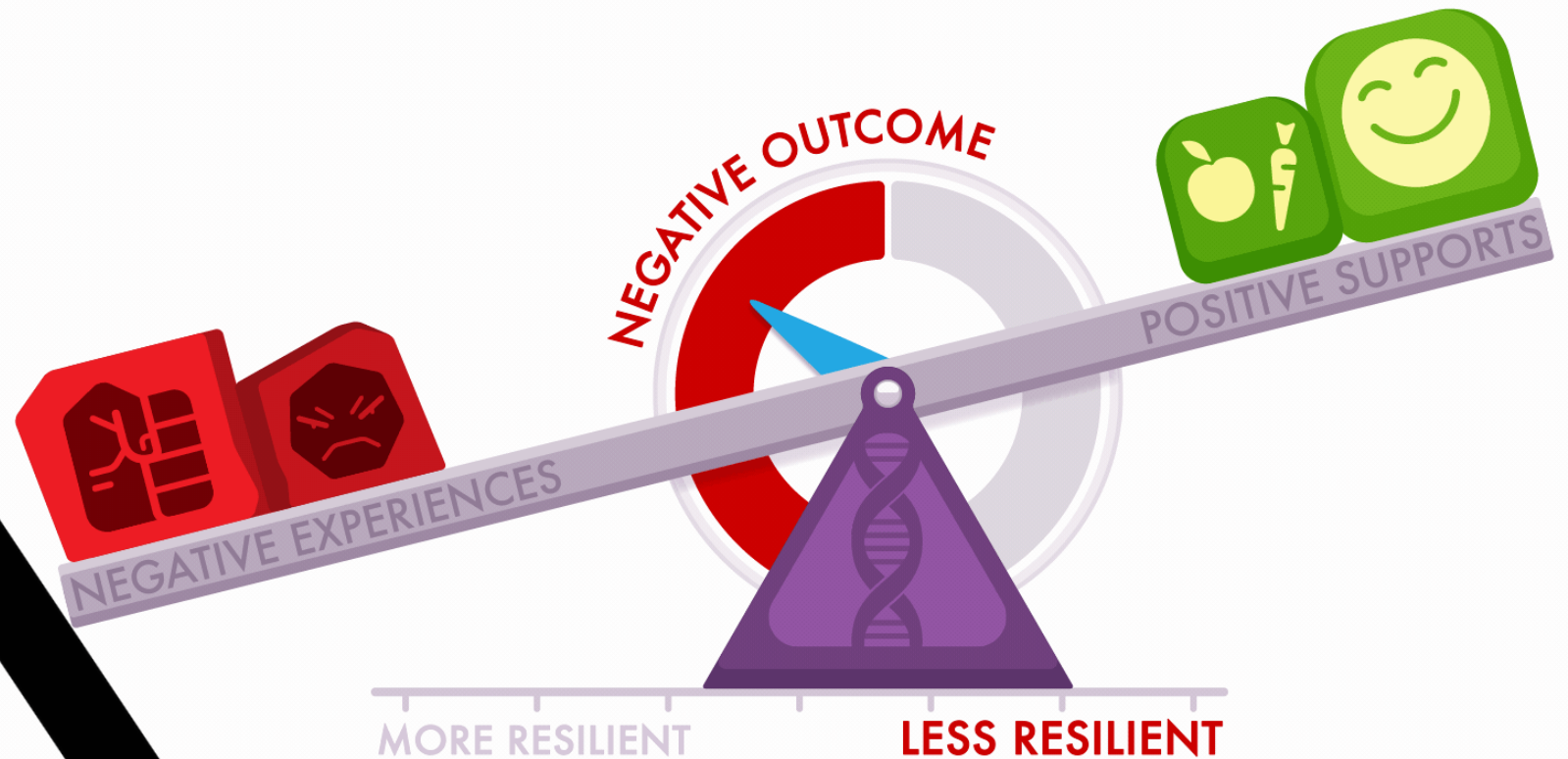
How can everyone be supported to reach their full potential?



[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs \(simplypsychology.org\)](http://simplypsychology.org)



# Toward a more **Resilient** Orillia!



## We Need a Whole Community & Government Approach.

- Solutions that put **more money in people's pockets** and take **pressure off the household budget** are needed.
- Economic policies that ensure adequate household income are essential to reduce poverty & household food insecurity.



# EFFECTIVE Income And Policy-based Solutions

## Federal & Provincial Strategies:

- ✓ Social assistance rates indexed to inflation to match real living costs
- ✓ Basic income
- ✓ Affordable/Attainable housing
- ✓ Lower taxes for those living with low income
- ✓ Jobs with livable wages, regular hours and benefits
- ✓ Canada Child Benefit improvements



# EFFECTIVE Income and Policy-based solutions

## Local Community & Municipal Strategies:

- ✓ Subsidizing public programs and services
- ✓ Promoting Living Wage Employers
- ✓ Advocating for increased attainable housing
- ✓ Advocating for increased social assistance rates
- ✓ Advocating for a guaranteed basic income
- ✓ Supporting free income tax filing clinics
- ✓ Supporting coalitions actively combating poverty & household food insecurity



## If you are a Community Service Provider, What Can You Do?

- ✓ Support clients with applications and forms (ex. Special Diet Allowance)
- ✓ Connect clients to free community tax clinics
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the [Canada Benefits website](#)
- ✓ Refer to [211Ontario.ca](#) or call 2-1-1
- ✓ Share information about local services like [Information Orillia](#)
- ✓ If appropriate, share information on emergency food and housing assistance



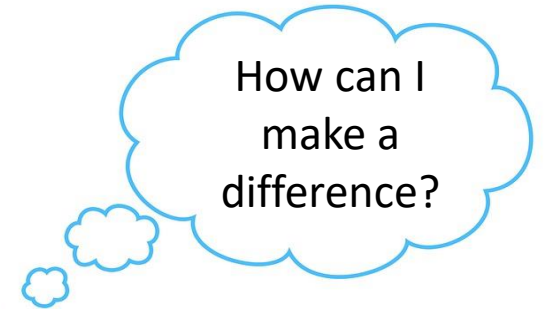
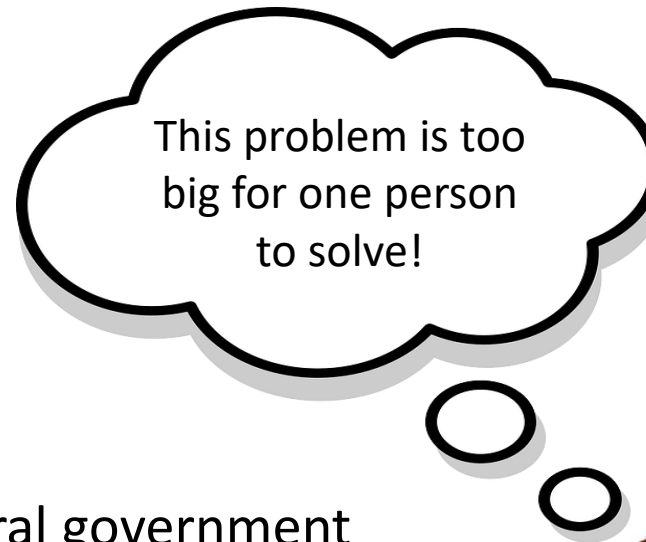
## If you are a Business Owner, What Can You Do?

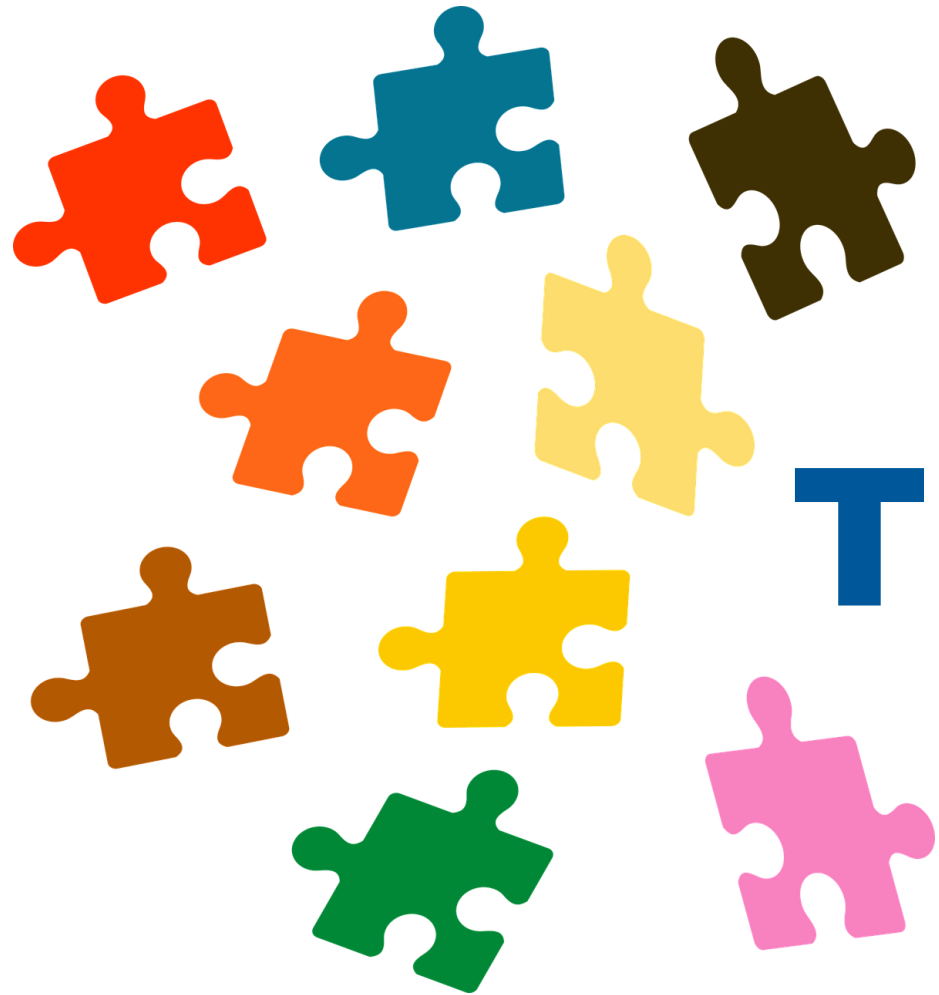
- ✓ Become a living-wage employer
- ✓ Have Family Friendly Policies
- ✓ Provide Predictable Work Schedules
- ✓ If Possible, Offer Flexible Work Arrangements
- ✓ Make it Easy for Staff to Use Active Transportation
- ✓ Paid Sick Days



# What Can Individuals Do?

- ✓ Learn more
- ✓ Share & raise awareness
- ✓ Speak out for change
- ✓ Advocate to the provincial and federal government
- ✓ Action can be as simple as:
  - Talking to friends, family and colleagues
  - Sending a letter to your MP/MPP/Municipal Councilor
  - Filling out a survey
  - Voting
- ✓ Identify opportunities to collaborate with others
- ✓ Get involved in poverty or household food insecurity work in your community





# Thank you!

Please contact  
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further information