

# **Resilient Orillia: Toward a Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Orillia Poverty Reduction Action Plan

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**Prepared for:**

**The City of Orillia**

**Poverty Reduction Strategy Municipal Advisory Committee**

## Territory Acknowledgement

Hello, Bonjour, Aaniin Boozhoo,

We honour the sovereignty, territories, histories, languages, knowledge systems, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit nations. The City of Orillia is situated upon the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, which includes the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. We specifically acknowledge the Chippewas of Rama/ Mnjikaning First Nation, a member of the Chippewa Tri-Council and the Three Fires Confederacy. This territory is a signatory to the Williams Treaties and Upper Canada Treaties, established by our governments on behalf of the Anishinaabeg and settler society, and was historically part of the Coldwater-Narrows Reserve.

We recognize and respect the resilience, wisdom, and cultural contributions of Indigenous peoples, acknowledging the impact of historical dispossession and marginalization. In our efforts to reduce poverty, we commit to centring Indigenous voices, perspectives, and priorities in our work. The City of Orillia is dedicated to creating an equitable, inclusive, and accessible community for all citizens, with a focus on meaningful reconciliation.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

## Appreciation

The Orillia Poverty Reduction Action Plan is a result of the commitment and dedication of the Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) members: Gayle Jackson, CAO; Rebecca Zanussi, EA; Councillor Janet-Lynne Durnford; and Charlotte Knegt, SMDHU. The committee's vision for a more equitable Orillia provided the foundation for reducing poverty and enhancing the well-being of our community.

We acknowledge Jessica Hayes as the report, *Setting the Stage for a City of Vancouver Poverty Reduction Plan* (2017), served as a foundational piece of literature for the development of the Orillia Poverty Reduction Action Plan.

Lastly, we sincerely thank Dr. Kevin Brooks for his unwavering support throughout the research process, and the Orillia community for attending the Poverty Reduction Symposium and taking the time to complete the anonymous surveys. The insights and contributions gathered from community members are invaluable to creating a more equitable future for all.

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## Research Objectives

### Purpose

The purpose of the report is to provide preliminary considerations to the City of Orillia as it prepares to engage its community and move forward on poverty reduction efforts. This research intends to understand the following better:

- How can the learnings and successes of other cities help inform the development of Orillia's poverty reduction plan?
- How can existing city- and community-level initiatives in Orillia create the foundation for a trauma-informed, robust, and effective poverty reduction strategy that enhances community resilience?

### Research Questions

This research aims to answer two main questions for the City of Orillia as it develops its poverty reduction strategy:

#### Question 1

What is the current state of poverty in Orillia, and how can the City develop a poverty reduction strategy that addresses the specific dimensions of poverty within its local context?

- How does the City of Orillia define poverty within its local context, and what specific dimensions of poverty should a poverty reduction strategy aim to address?
- What is the current state of Orillia, including an analysis of demographics and gaps in service?

- What promising work is already being done by the City and surrounding community to address poverty (especially work with an ACEs/trauma-informed lens) in Orillia?
- How can the City of Orillia build upon this foundation when developing a municipal poverty reduction strategy?
- Which organizations and community partners are already successfully targeting poverty, and how could the City of Orillia support this work?

## Question 2

What can the City of Orillia learn from other municipalities already implementing poverty reduction strategies?

- What is important for the City of Orillia to consider when developing its poverty reduction strategy?
- What are the important lessons learned from other municipalities?
- Which actions appear to be successful, what is the measurement of success, and would the proposed actions align with the City of Orillia's Council Priorities?

## Objectives

- Research and analyze poverty reduction initiatives in municipalities across Canada to determine which initiatives could apply to Orillia.
- Increase the City of Orillia's understanding of existing poverty reduction initiatives being explored and implemented in other municipalities.
- Collect and synthesize existing local initiatives that directly or indirectly address poverty.
- Provide strategic actions for the City of Orillia to consider in implementing evidence-based poverty reduction initiatives.
- Consider not only the immediate effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives but also their long-term sustainability and potential for scalability within the City of Orillia.

## Rationale and Significance

During the Council meeting held on October 30, 2023, the members voted to support the development of a poverty reduction strategy for the City of Orillia. The Chief Administrative Officer and Councillor Durnford were directed to work in partnership with Lakehead University to develop this strategy. The proposed strategy aims to:

- Assess the current poverty-reduction practices and policies available within the City of Orillia;
- Facilitate community initiatives to gain insight into poverty in the community;

- Engage community partners to create a long-term strategy for poverty reduction,
- Identify potential funding opportunities from various sources;
- Increase community awareness about the impact of childhood trauma on later health, social outcomes, and the cycle of poverty.

The 2024 Capital Projects Budget of the City of Orillia has allocated \$50,000 for the Orillia poverty reduction study. The proposed strategy for Orillia will complement federal and provincial initiatives to address poverty. It will reflect a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by the community, making a significant contribution to fostering positive change by specifically addressing localized issues.

Through the development of a long-term poverty reduction strategy, the City of Orillia aims to focus on sustainable solutions, assess current policy and practice, ensure trauma-informed service delivery, and ultimately break the cycle of poverty and build back human capital for the community.

## **Methodology**

This research was designed alongside MAC staff members. It was completed as a practicum option for the Masters of Social Justice Studies program at Lakehead University, reflecting a commitment to care and compassion for the well-being of the Orillia community.

A mixed-method research approach was applied. Online journals, peer-reviewed articles, open-access government documents, and books were reviewed to understand poverty and identify examples of successful municipal poverty reduction models, practices, and initiatives. Additionally, a thorough document review of ten pre-existing poverty reduction strategies from upper and single-tier municipalities were considered: Windsor, ON; Ottawa, ON; Peel Region, ON; Niagara Region, ON; Thunder Bay, ON; Toronto, ON; Kingston, ON; Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County, ON; Calgary, AB; and Edmonton, AB.

The information in this document is primarily based on secondary data, with literature and document review as significant research methods. It also incorporates findings from various community engagement initiatives specific to Orillia. Engaging the community began with the Orillia Poverty Reduction Symposium, which gathered government representatives, community organizations, business representatives, and interest-holders to strategize poverty reduction methods grounded in multi-disciplinary expertise. The symposium results were then analyzed to design anonymous surveys focused on engaging individuals with grounded expertise in the context of poverty. The feedback accumulated through the Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey provided insight into the current experiences and needs related to the vulnerabilities associated



with living in conditions of poverty, while considering the multiple intersecting identities that shape these experiences.

## Limitations

There are two main limitations to this research. First, as an individual who has not directly experienced poverty and as an academic researcher born and raised in Orillia, identifying as an arrivant within Canadian settler society that resides on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, my positionality presents a notable limitation that may inhibit a full understanding of what is needed to address poverty in Orillia. Second, the short time frame allocated by critical service learning and the subsequently limited scope of the study impacted the extent of community engagement.

While this document represents a significant step forward in the City of Orillia's initiatives to address poverty through community engagement, identifying trends, community needs, service gaps, and potential strategies for poverty reduction, it is important to acknowledge that these findings may not fully reflect all the experiences and perspectives within the community. Ongoing engagement and collaboration will be necessary to invest in equity-deserving populations within Orillia.

## Introduction

The Canadian Constitution's Charter of Rights and Freedoms outlines that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice" (Government of Canada, 1982, s. 7). The experience of poverty conflicts with the notion of a fair and equitable society outlined in the charter, based upon the limited access to necessities and the unjust allocation of resources, thereby impacting the ability to enjoy these fundamental rights.

In 2018, the federal government published *Opportunity for All—Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy*. This document outlines a national vision of human dignity, rooted in the belief that all Canadians, regardless of their ethnic background, deserve to be treated fairly and have the opportunity to fully participate in society (Government of Canada, 2018). The need for security has always been present; however, this need has become more evident in times of perceived uncertainty, categorized by post-pandemic society, climate change, and an ongoing affordability crisis.

Located on the unceded lands of the Anishinaabeg, the City of Orillia is a community with a bright future. Despite its charm, the community faces challenges due to poverty, resulting in

people who are underhoused, struggling with addiction, and bearing hidden deprivation. Our aspiration is for Orillia to become a place where all individuals have equitable access to opportunities and resources, creating a community where everyone can enjoy a fulfilling and dignified life. This action plan aims to inform future municipal actions and policies that will alleviate poverty and contribute positively to the well-being of all Orillia residents.

## What do we know?

### Defining Poverty

When people think about poverty, they often envision what is known as absolute poverty, in which individuals and families face severe deprivation of needs. However, this public misconception results in inaccurate understandings regarding the experiences and the occurrence of poverty. Gordon (2000), as cited in Raphael (2020), stated the following:

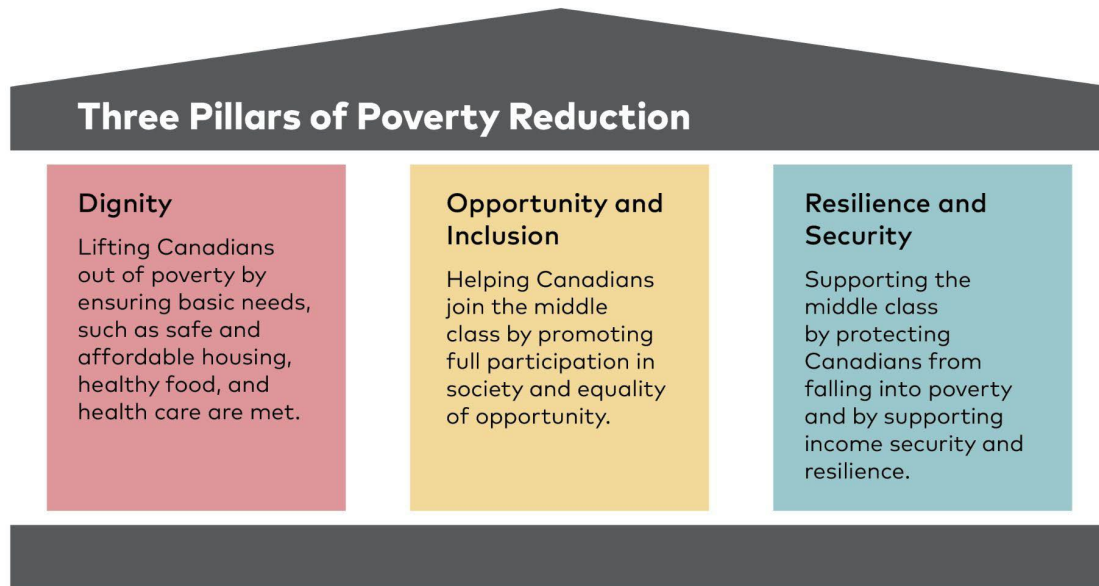
Poverty is the condition whereby individuals, families, and groups lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved of, in the society to which they belong. Poverty can be considered in terms of absolute poverty, whereby individuals and families do not have enough resources to keep “body and soul together,” or relative poverty, whereby they do not have the ability to participate in common activities of daily living. (p. 22)

Poverty in Canada is best categorized as relative poverty, which is “the experience of material and social deprivation that prevents individuals and communities from reaching their full human potential” (Townsend, 1993, as cited in Raphael, 2020, p. 5). This refers to the inability of individuals, families, and groups to access resources that enable a nutritious and culturally acceptable diet, participate in societal activities, and maintain standardized living conditions and amenities.

In accordance, the federal report, *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy*, defines poverty as “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” (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 7).

Following the creation of Canada’s strategy, an *Official Poverty Dashboard of Indicators* was released. These indicators fall under dignity, opportunity and inclusion, and resilience and security. Dignity measures deep income poverty, unmet housing needs, unmet health needs, and household food insecurity. Opportunity and inclusion measure relative low income, income

share, youth engagement, and literacy and numeracy. Resilience and security measures median hourly wage, average poverty gap, asset resilience, and low-income entry and exit rates (Statistics Canada, 2022a).



(Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018, p. 10)

## Measuring Poverty

Canada currently measures low income using three lines: the Low-Income Cut-offs (LICOs), the Low-Income Measures (LIMs), and the Market Basket Measures (MBM). Statistics Canada uses poverty as a subjective term; while poverty and low income are not interchangeable, they are closely related (Aldridge, 2017).

LICOs were originally the primary poverty measure in Canada, established in a 1968 report by the Economic Council of Canada and developed by J. Podoluk at Statistics Canada, based on the concept of the percentage of pre-tax income spent on basic needs (Raphael, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2016). It aimed to identify families in financially challenging situations, those spending 20% more than the average Canadian family on necessities, and those who did not. LICOs are presented through two income concepts: LICO-BT using total income data from the 1992 Family Expenditure Survey, and LICO-AT using after-tax income data. Both the LICO-BT and LICO-AT datasets included 35 cut-offs for seven family sizes and five different area sizes to accommodate cost of living differences (Statistics Canada, 2016). LICOs are now used to identify those significantly worse off than others (Statistics Canada, 2016). The focus has since

shifted to other measures like the LIM-AT and the MBM, leading to less emphasis on LICOs (Raphael, 2020).

In 1991, Statistics Canada started publishing low-income measure-based thresholds (LIMs), which identify individuals or families as low income based on their household income relative to the median income in their society, set at half of the median household income (Raphael, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2016). This measure is adjusted for household size using an equivalence scale to reflect economies of scale in household consumption. Statistics Canada produces a before-tax (LIM) and after-tax (LIM-AT) measure from a household income survey. The LIM-AT considers household income after taxes and identifies individuals or families as low income if their after-tax income is less than 50% of the median after-tax income in their society, adjusted for household size. This adjustment recognizes that larger households can share resources and reduce per-capita costs (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The Market Basket Measure (MBM), developed by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), is **Canada's official poverty measure** (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). It was established in 2000 by a working group of federal, provincial, and territorial officials led by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in response to criticism around the statistical abstractions of the LICOs and LIMs (Raphael, 2020). The MBM thresholds represent the costs of “a basket of goods and services that individuals and families require to meet their basic needs and achieve a modest standard of living” (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 11). It includes nutritious food, shelter and home maintenance, clothing and transportation, and goods and services that permit engagement. Canada's Official Poverty Line (COPL) is determined using the MBM, which takes into account poverty thresholds in 50 different regions, including 19 communities across Canada. If individuals or families cannot afford the basic basket of goods and services, they are considered to be living below COPL (Government of Canada, 2018).

## **Roles to Reduce Poverty**

### **Government of Canada**

The federal government has a central role in shaping macro-level economic policies and funding poverty reduction initiatives, such as the Canada Child Benefit, Employment Insurance, the National Housing Strategy (NHS), and provincial social programs.

#### **Federal Initiatives**

##### **1. Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018)**

- Integrates \$22 billion in investments targeting housing, clean water, healthcare, childcare, and employment skills to enhance Canadians' social and economic well-being.
- Establishes the Official Poverty Line and sets targets to reduce poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030 (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022).

## **2. National Advisory Council on Poverty**

- Provides strategic advice to the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development on poverty reduction initiatives and reports annually on progress towards the established targets (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2023).

## **3. Poverty Reduction Act (S.C. 2019, c. 29, s. 315)**

- Establishes a legislative framework to support and monitor poverty reduction efforts in Canada.

## **Province of Ontario**

The provincial government is responsible for overseeing essential services such as child care, social and affordable housing, and Ontario Works (OW) (Lakehead Planning Social Council, 2022). These services are managed and implemented by the County of Simcoe for the City of Orillia on behalf of the provincial government.

### **Provincial Initiatives**

#### **1. Building a Strong Foundation for Success: Reducing Poverty in Ontario (2020-2025)**

- Aims to reduce poverty while promoting economic recovery post-COVID-19.
- Focuses on job creation, connecting individuals with supports and services, making life more affordable, and driving progress through collaboration.

## **City of Orillia**

The municipal level of government is responsible for identifying and addressing the needs of residents experiencing poverty by providing accessible and inclusive resources and programs. It also coordinates with other levels of government to complement initiatives on income support, mental health, education, and skill training, thus supporting efficient and resilient communities.

Specifically, the City of Orillia is addressing poverty within its community by aligning with council priorities for 2022 to 2026. The City focuses on physician recruitment, affordable housing, infrastructure and services, environmental sustainability, vulnerability, and strengthening community participation to support and uplift its residents. To achieve these goals, the City contracts the County to manage certain services, such as housing and social services, ensuring that the needs of the community are met effectively.

### Things Municipalities Can Do

- Engage with community to assess needs
- Provide affordable, accessible transportation
- Reduce barriers to community services
- Address affordable housing and homelessness
- Advocate for quality child care for low-income families
- Ensure inclusivity by aligning with disability legislation
- Increase senior support investments
- Promote well-being and dignity of all residents.

(Image created using Carlon & Born (2016), and Duclos (2017))

## City of Orillia Context

Orillia faces significant socioeconomic challenges as a city. In 2021, the population of Orillia increased by 7.2% from 2016, with an average age of 45.8. Based on the 2021 demographics, 26% of the population is aged 65 and over, 6.1% identifies as Indigenous, and 9.7% are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2023b). In Orillia, 14% of the population, approximately 4678 people, live below the MBM, which is the highest proportion in Simcoe County. This highlights the significant challenge that many people in Orillia face in affording basic necessities (Statistics Canada, 2022b; Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2021b). Moreover, Orillia has the highest percentage of lone-parent families in Simcoe County at 48.9%, compared to 31.3% for Simcoe County and 30.1% for Ontario. This is significant because lone-parent families, particularly those headed by women with young children, are disproportionately affected by poverty. For example, in 2020, the poverty rate for one-parent families headed by a woman with a child aged 0 to 5 was 31.3%, more than five times the rate of couple-families with a child of the same age,

which was 6%. This demographic information highlights the urgent need for a targeted poverty reduction strategy, particularly as these families are at greater risk during economic downturns or periods of high inflation (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2021b; Zhang & Bernard, 2022; Statistics Canada, 2023b). The subsequent sections will apply relevant indicators of poverty to Orillia, ON.

## Housing

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (2018) outlined that affordable housing should cost less than 30% of total before-tax household income. In 2021, approximately one in four Orillia households, whether tenant or owner, spent 30% or more of their income on shelter costs (Statistics Canada, 2023b). Orillia has the highest percentage of renter households in Simcoe County at 38.8%, with the second-highest percentage of renter households spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs at 44.9%. Orillia also has the fourth-highest percentage of tenant households in Simcoe County living in subsidized housing, with 14.6% of tenant households benefiting from this support. In Orillia, 61.2% of households are homeowners, with 55.9% having a mortgage. However, 15.2% of owner households still spend 30% or more of their income on shelter (Statistics Canada, 2023a; Statistics Canada, 2023b). A survey published by the County of Simcoe revealed that the average monthly shelter cost for a rented dwelling in Orillia in 2020 was \$1,261 (Sanghavi et al., 2022). Subsequently, the 2023 Orillia Affordable Housing Action Plan revealed an increase in average shelter costs for rental units in Orillia. According to the plan, the average monthly shelter costs for different types of rental units in Orillia are as follows: older apartments at \$1,854, condominium apartments at \$1,904, townhouses at \$2,399, and single-detached homes at \$2,567 (City of Orillia, 2023e).



### Core Housing Need

Core housing need occurs when households spend 30% or more of their income on housing that still fails to meet adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards. In Orillia, 12.9% of households are in core housing need—the highest rate in Simcoe County (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2021b).



## Employment and Income

In 2021, Orillia had the highest unemployment rate in Simcoe County, at 15.2%, higher than the County average of 11.8% and the provincial average of 12.2%. The city also saw a decrease in available jobs and employers between 2017 and 2021 (County of Simcoe, 2021). The current living-wage rate for Grey-Bruce-Perth-Huron-Simcoe, including Orillia, is \$22.75 per hour (Coleman, 2023). Only five employers in Orillia have been identified as living wage employers: Hillson Medicine Professional Corporation, Meridian Credit Union, The Couchiching Conservancy, Helping Hands, and the Paper Planes Play Café (The Ontario Living Wage Network, 2024). The prevalence of low-income individuals in Orillia is higher than the provincial average, with 12.6% of the population living below the low-income threshold (Statistics Canada, 2023b). The average income in Orillia, \$24.62 per hour, is lower than the provincial average of \$35.77 per hour (County of Simcoe, 2021).

<b>Median After-Tax Household Income, 2020</b>	
<b>Geography</b>	<b>Income</b>
Ontario	\$79,500
Simcoe County	\$82,000
Barrie	\$82,000
Midland	\$62,800
Orillia	\$64,000
Oro-Medonte	\$98,000
Ramara	\$75,000
Severn	\$83,000
Wasaga Beach	\$68,000

## Food Insecurity

According to an Orillia and area specific survey conducted by the University of Waterloo (2019), the rising cost of living, high unemployment rates, and inadequate social support systems force many Orillia residents to choose between essential expenses such as housing, utilities, and food. Participants identified experiencing high financial insecurity related to not having enough money to pay their bills on time and, subsequently, not having enough money to buy nutritious food. Approximately 29% of participants expressed food insecurity as a regular problem (University of



Waterloo, 2019). A considerable number of households struggle to access sufficient and nutritious food, a situation exacerbated by Orillia's broader socio-economic challenges. Communities that live in marginalized conditions, including low-income families, lone-parent households, renters, and older adults, are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2021a).

### **Health and Well-being**

Socioeconomic conditions significantly impact health and well-being, as evidenced by various health indicators and outcomes in Orillia. As identified in the survey conducted by the University of Waterloo (2019), Orillia residents with lower well-being include women, individuals under 35 years old, and those spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Factors such as living with a disability or chronic illness, single status, lower education levels, and having children further contribute to lower well-being (University of Waterloo, 2019). Mental health is a critical component of well-being, with lower levels linked to negative mental health impacts (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2023). Individuals with lower well-being reported higher incidences of mental health issues and reduced participation in physical activities, contributing to poorer physical health outcomes (University of Waterloo, 2019).

The Ontario Marginalization Index (ON-Marg) highlights that material deprivation and residential instability exacerbate health disparities. Orillia residents living in conditions created by systemic marginalization experience higher rates of emergency department visits and hospitalizations for conditions related to alcohol use, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). These health challenges correlate with higher rates of ischemic heart disease, diabetes, and mental health issues, all of which are more prevalent in economically disadvantaged communities (Public Health Ontario, 2023). Socioeconomic factors such as lower income, unemployment, and low educational attainment are strongly associated with negative health behaviours and outcomes. These factors correlate to higher rates of smoking, poor nutrition, and reduced physical activity, ultimately leading to a higher prevalence of chronic diseases and lower health overall (University of Waterloo, 2019). This is particularly evident in Simcoe County, including Orillia, where the high unemployment rate has also been linked to opioid toxicity and deaths (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2023a; Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2023b).

### **Personal Testimonies from the Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey (2024)**

1. "I was a homeless/jobless 55 year old before arriving in Orillia in fall 2019. I think I would still be homeless (2024) if not for the County of Simcoe rent subsidy, and a landlord willing to participate in the program; not charge outlandish rent, simply because they could (capitalism/neoliberalism) for such a small, rough space. Having no home

means forgetting how to hope. Every moment is framed by ‘how do I survive’? Not, how do I thrive/contribute? Thoughts of a future are for the privileged. A safe, secure, dignified, dependable roof (and resources), the potential for finding/building community, and an all-important address, are critical and foundational to well-being. As an ODSP recipient and gender nonconforming human, legislative poverty is at least a step up from no hope. Still, the relentless pressures/reality of a system with big brother ways, takes so much work on a daily basis. ODSP isn’t enough to live on, never mind, dream on. Unlike homelessness, legislative poverty helps one to see what could be possible, if only it wasn’t a punitive system, designed to punish; a cruel positionality I work daily to be grateful for, knowing the alternative is homelessness. I started at Lakehead University in 2020. I have had to work at a pace which allows me to maintain some reserve of strength and focus; such is the full-time job of living in, and fighting against, systemic poverty. Everyone (cities, municipalities) need to increase pressure and advocacy for financial security and meaningful, safe opportunities for people with disabilities. Orillia is isolating, especially if one is not straight and cis, or ‘able’, or without wheels and money. Society emerged from social isolation, more hateful than before COVID. Inequity is at the heart of everything. The more diverse the person, the more intersectional and interlocking barriers are. Thank you for an opportunity to contribute to this survey, and for helping Orillia to adjust its sails in meaningful and helpful ways” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

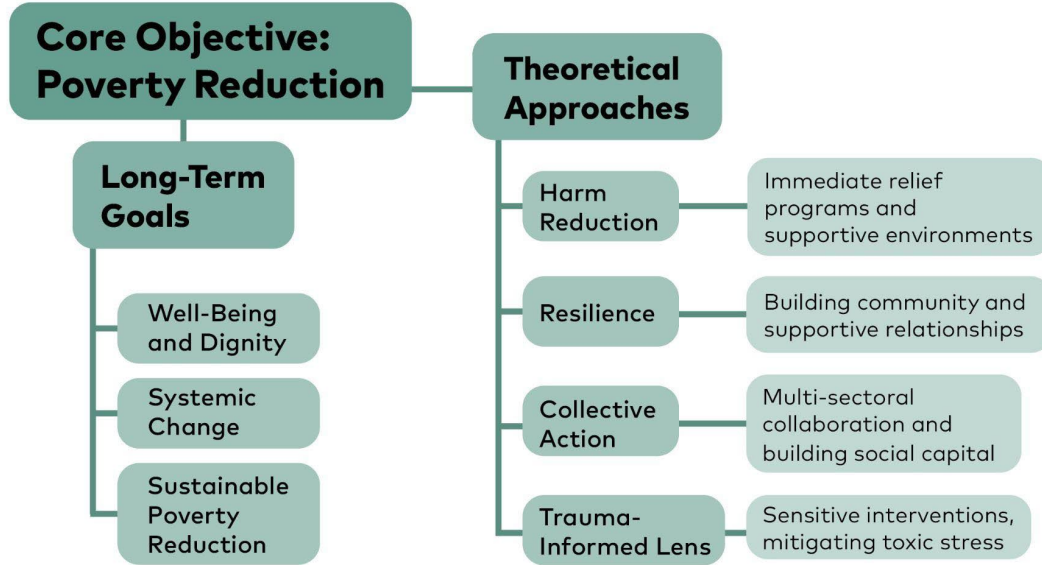
2. “We are on a pension but at least we were able to pay for our home.... not a goal in reach of our kids! We have a family member with mental health needs living with us who is on a limited pension income, as well as helping a daughter who is a single parent and a son with children with disabilities requiring one parent to stay home as childcare isn’t available. Without rent control our daughter now has to pay an extra \$586 a month more on her rent to pay for the landlord's mortgage! Landlord’s property is worth \$90,000 more than five years ago but now my daughter subsidizes their profit ... nowhere else for her to go with five teens (three are unhoused and two have mental health needs). She had to take a third part-time job to pay the rent increase. Anything you can do is going to help even if it’s not enough, sadly. I fear for the future prospects of my grandchildren” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
3. “Housing affordability is huge for me. My fiancée and I were homeless in the fall of 2023 because we couldn't afford our rent despite the fact that we both work full-time, well-paying jobs. Our rent was about \$2,000 a month for a two bedroom basement apartment with an extremely loud and disrespectful neighbour upstairs and we also had to pay utilities on top of our rent. We had one month with an unexpected expense and because we were already living paycheque to paycheque, we couldn't pay our rent and then couldn't get caught up and inevitably got evicted. Our landlord knew our neighbour was

loud and disrespectful and he also knew that we were struggling. I think better screening for landlords to ensure that tenants are not being taken advantage of or scammed, and perhaps a rent cap for landlords that don't include utilities. These are big asks but I think these small changes will make tenants feel more safe and secure when looking for apartments. Thanks” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

4. “I have grown up in the neighbouring hamlet of Washago and now rent in Orillia. I have lived, shopped, played many sports, had many jobs, and met many people, friends, classmates, colleagues; truly grown up and lived all my life experience here in Orillia. But I will never afford a house in town or within a 30 minute drive of the surrounding area at the rate this housing market is going in this area. This fact truly breaks my heart as we are a young couple with a good career and no children. I truly hope you can help the homeless issue, but I also hope you realize how the young people of this town, the next generation to support and build this town, are struggling. We need more single family homes that don’t cost half a million dollars. We need less high end condos being built and more low income apartments. We need change” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

## **Towards a Theoretical Framework**

The framework for poverty reduction in the City of Orillia needs to integrate harm reduction, resilience, collective action, and a trauma-informed lens to address systemic inequities exacerbated by neoliberalism. A harm reduction framework provides immediate relief and demonstrates empathy, focusing on minimizing the negative impacts of adversity through practical and compassionate measures. The resilience framework emphasizes building individual and community capacity to adapt positively to adversity, while the collective action framework highlights the importance of collaborative efforts among interest-holders. Applying a trauma-informed lens ensures that all interventions are sensitive to the past and present traumas experienced by individuals, recognizing the pervasive impact of trauma on people's lives. This comprehensive approach ensures that interventions are well-coordinated, responsive to the community's needs, and sustainable, addressing both short-term challenges and long-term systemic issues.



## Harm Reduction

Harm reduction addresses the interplay between health, social determinants, and economic stability. By adopting harm reduction strategies, municipalities can promote equity by supporting persons who choose to use drugs, and those who have been historically underserved or marginalized. These initiatives also aid those with mental health challenges, creating a healthier and safer environment for everyone. Such strategies mitigate the negative health consequences associated with these factors and enhance access to essential services of support. Harm reduction initiatives foster a non-judgmental approach that respects individual autonomy and promotes investment in healthier choices, ultimately leading to better health outcomes and greater economic participation (Hawk et al., 2017). This approach aims to alleviate immediate health risks while also contributing to breaking the cycle of poverty, as healthier individuals are more likely to engage in education, employment, and community activities, strengthening the overall community.

## Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood experiences are stressful and potentially traumatizing events or circumstances that occur during childhood (0 - 17 years old). They are widespread in our society, as shown by the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging, where 62% of participants reported

exposure to at least one ACE and 36% reported exposure to two or more. Living in poverty is strongly associated with ACEs, as economic hardship subjects people to unpredictable environments, limited resources, and social stigma.

Adverse Childhood Experiences were traditionally categorized into three broad groups: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Joshi et al., 2021). However, it is now understood that adversity in childhood can also arise from past and ongoing forms of colonialism, racism, childhood poverty, a lack of stable housing, weak social support, and other individual and systemic barriers. Indeed, these broader forms of adversity contribute to the experience of the three original groups of ACEs (Fraser Health Population and Public Health, n.d.). The Fraser Health Framework (2022-2027), which is being adapted by Public Health Ontario, refers to three realms of ACEs and highlights the importance of recognizing broader systemic issues as well as the impact of the environment in addressing childhood adversity.

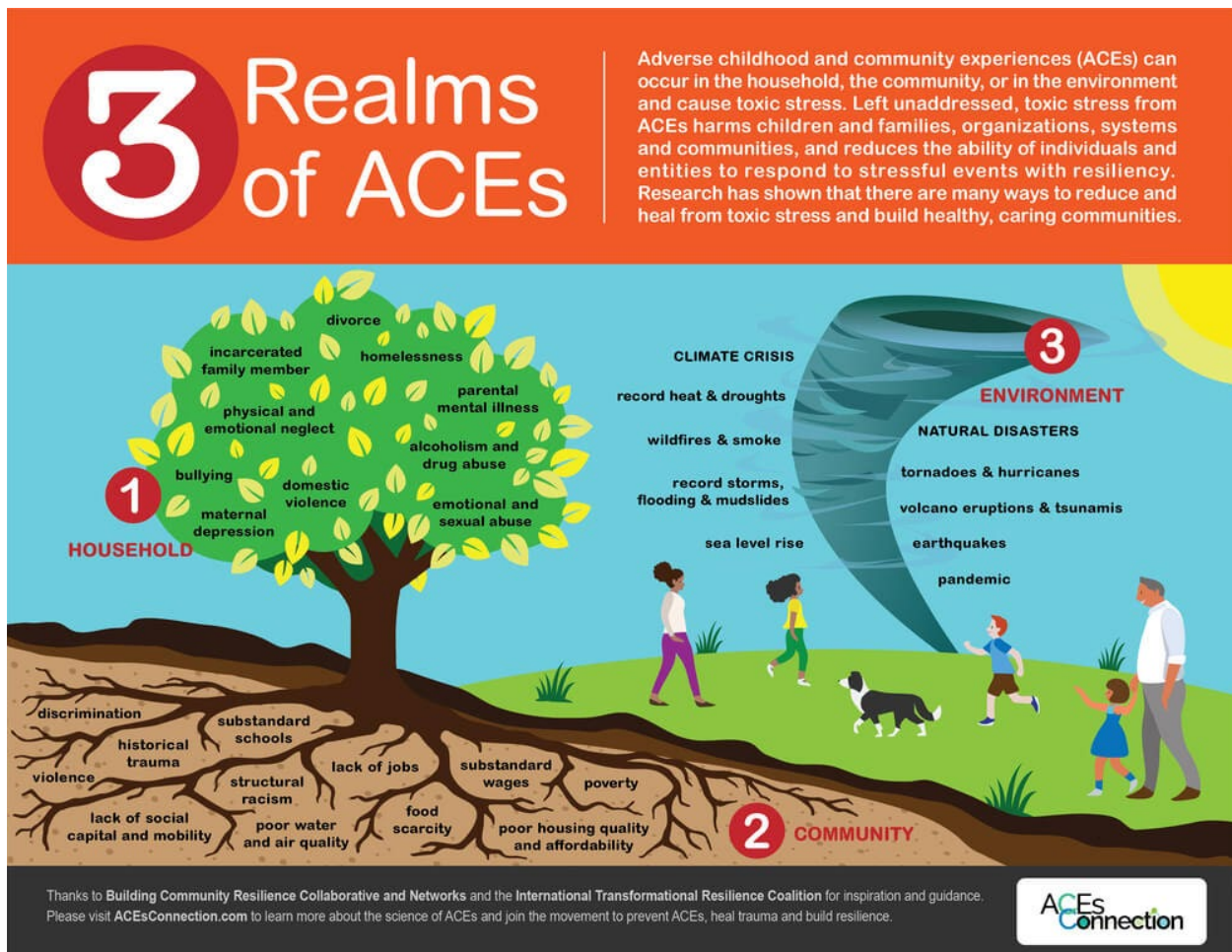
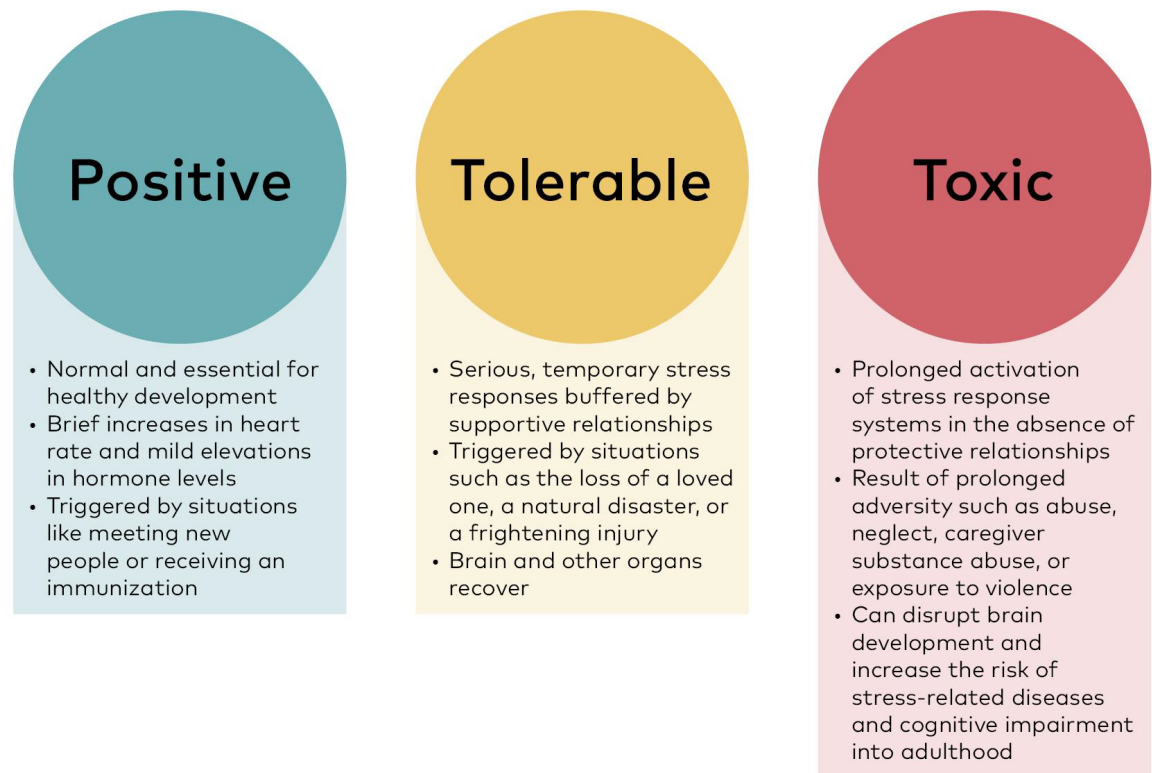


Image from PACEsConnection (2023), as cited in Fraser Health (n.d.).

When faced with a stressful situation, whether positive or negative, a physiological response is triggered to help handle the challenge. This response is usually protective, but if the stress response is intense, frequent, or long-lasting, it can become harmful and cause damage to both brain and body. This is referred to as a toxic stress response (Center on the Developing Child, 2015). Although harmful at any age, toxic stress responses are particularly damaging to children because they can disrupt normal growth and development. This can lead to learning difficulties, emotional problems, a higher risk of engaging in health-harming behaviours (including choosing to use drugs), chronic health conditions, lower educational achievement, and reduced employment rates, all of which contribute to generational poverty (Hall et al., 2012; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2023).

## Types of Stress Responses



Due to the harmful effects of toxic stress, the primary goal should be to prevent adverse events, especially during childhood. However, since prevention isn't always possible, it is essential to create support systems within families and communities. These supports help children manage

stress from adverse experiences, reducing its impact and preventing the toxic stress that can lead to negative health and social outcomes later in life. Research highlights the interconnectedness of family, school, and community in shaping children's experiences to potentially improve long-term outcomes, including breaking the cycle of poverty (Hoang et al., 2024). By focusing on building resilience through collective action and trauma-informed approaches, we can help children manage and overcome adversity, fostering healthier development and long-term well-being. This approach ensures children have the tools and environments necessary to thrive despite potential challenges creating a foundation for a stronger, more resilient community.

## **Understanding Resilience**

Resilience is the ability of individuals and communities to navigate their way to resources that sustain their well-being in the face of significant adversity. This capacity includes psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources, and it also involves the ability of individuals and groups to advocate for these resources to be provided in culturally appropriate ways (Ungar & Theron, 2020). Research shows that resilience is influential in reducing the impact of toxic stress and improving outcomes for children and families facing significant challenges (Community Resilience Coalition of Guelph and Wellington, n.d).

Supportive relationships, positive educational experiences, and community resources foster resilience (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Masten, 2014). Municipalities play a significant role in supporting families in building resilience and mitigating experiences of toxic stress by providing access to resources and creating supportive environments.

## **Individual Characteristics**

Although individuals vary, traits like self-regulation, optimism, and a sense of purpose, which are all heavily influenced by toxic stress, are associated with higher resilience. Self-regulation helps children manage their emotions and behaviours in challenging situations, while optimism and a sense of purpose can motivate them to persevere despite difficulties. Interventions that focus on enhancing these traits, such as mindfulness training and cognitive-behavioural strategies, can support the development of resilience in children (Masten, 2014).

## **Family/Supportive Relationships**

Supportive relationships, particularly with caring and responsive adults, are important to building resilience. These relationships provide emotional support, practical assistance, and a sense of stability, which can buffer the negative impacts of toxic stress. For instance, having at least one stable and committed relationship with a trusted adult can provide the child with the emotional

security and modelling of adaptive skills necessary to navigate challenges, effectively building resilience (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).

## Education

The education system plays an important role in building resilience by offering a structured and supportive environment where children can develop social, emotional, and academic skills. Positive educational experiences, such as engaging in extracurricular activities, forming positive relationships with peers and teachers, and receiving recognition for achievements, can contribute positively to a child's self-esteem and sense of competence. Programs that promote social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools help children build skills like emotional regulation, empathy, and problem-solving, which are vital for building resilience (Durlaket al., 2011).

## Access to Community Resources

Access to community resources, such as healthcare services, recreational programs, and social support networks, can also promote resilience. Communities that provide safe spaces for children to play, access to nutritious food, and opportunities for social interaction and learning can help mitigate some of the negative effects of poverty. Community initiatives that focus on building social capital and fostering a sense of belonging can empower families and create supportive environments that contribute to resilience (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

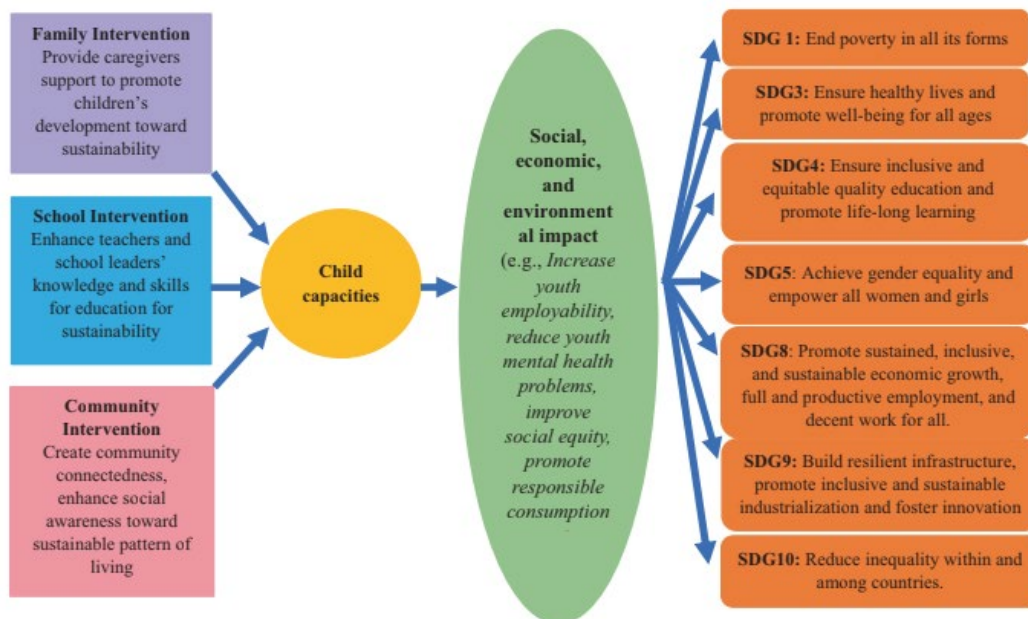





Image from Hoang et al. 2024



## The Resilience Scale Metaphor

<p><b>Loading the Scale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive experiences (protective factors) are stacked on one end:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive relationships, nurturing caregivers, good prenatal health, nutrition, healthcare, serve-and-return interactions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Negative experiences (risk factors) are stacked on the other end:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toxic stressors like abuse, neglect, and parental addiction can tip the scale negatively.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Setting the Fulcrum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fulcrum position on the scale determines the impact of positive and negative experiences on life outcomes.</li> <li>Genetic inheritance sets the starting position:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some are more sensitive to toxic stress, while others are more resilient.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Supportive relationships and experiences can shift the fulcrum towards resilience.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Tipping the Balance Toward Good Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote resilience through:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supportive relationships, nurturing caregivers, and family support.</li> <li>Develop coping skills like emotional regulation, stress management, planning, and problem-solving.</li> <li>Serve-and-return interactions strengthen brain circuits and positively impact gene expression.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

(Images adapted from Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (n.d).)

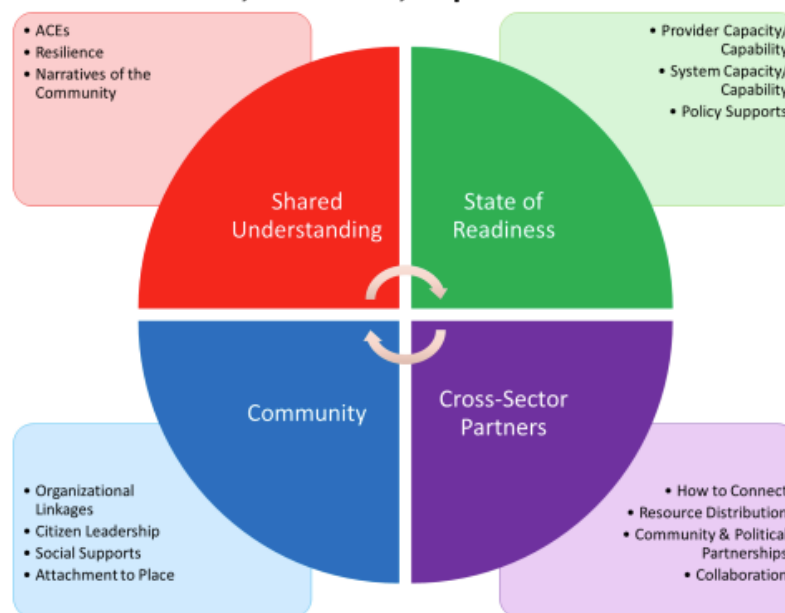
## Building Community Resilience

A resilience approach emphasizes the connection between individual well-being and community support systems (Redstone, 2017). By creating environments where individuals and communities can access necessary resources and support, the impact of poverty and adverse experiences can be mitigated. Building community resilience involves creating supportive environments to sustain well-being. This necessitates developing community infrastructure that provides essential services, fostering social connections, and promoting a culture of mutual aid and cooperation. Community resilience approaches emphasize the role of collective action and shared resources in mitigating the impacts of poverty. By cultivating strong community networks and ensuring

access to essential resources, communities can create environments that support the well-being of all members. This approach addresses immediate needs and builds long-term capacity for individuals and communities to thrive despite adversity (Redstone, 2017).

Policies and practices that support families and communities are necessary to effectively build resilience and combat toxic stress associated with poverty. This includes ensuring access to quality early childhood education, healthcare, mental health services, affordable housing, and childcare and implementing programs that promote parental education and support (Center on the Developing Child, 2015). Collaborative efforts among policymakers, practitioners, and community members can create environments that foster resilience and help break the cycle of poverty and adversity.

### Building Community Resilience: Process of Assessment, Readiness, Implementation & Sustainability



Ellis W & Dietz W, A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model, *Academic Pediatrics* (2017).

Image adapted from Ellis & Dietz (2017), as cited in Redstone (2017).

## Collective Action

Collective action is integral to building community resilience and addressing poverty effectively. It involves collaboration across various sectors, including governments, non-profits, private businesses, and community members, to address the multifaceted nature of poverty. Multi-sector collaboration brings together the unique resources and perspectives of different interest-holders,

creating comprehensive and sustainable solutions to poverty. For instance, government agencies can provide policy support and funding, nonprofits can offer direct services, the private sector can contribute through job creation and corporate social responsibility initiatives, and community organizations can ensure solutions are culturally and contextually relevant (Lasker & Weiss, 2003).

Building social capital is another key aspect of collective action. Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and norms that facilitate cooperation and support within a community. By fostering strong social networks and community ties, collective action can create supportive environments that help individuals and families navigate challenges and access resources. Social capital can also enhance community resilience, as strong social networks can provide emotional support, share resources, and mobilize collective efforts in times of need (Putnam, 2000).

## **Applying a Trauma-Informed Lens**

As previously discussed, poverty and trauma often coexist, creating a cycle of adversity that is difficult to break. Living in poverty increases the likelihood of experiencing trauma due to factors such as unstable housing, community violence, and limited access to healthcare. These conditions can expose individuals to chronic stress and adverse experiences from an early age, contributing to the development of mental health disorders and physical health problems.

Trauma can occur at any point throughout the lifespan, but it has a particularly significant impact on children, as previously discussed. When parents experience trauma, their ability to respond effectively to their children's needs is often impaired. This can hinder their capacity to create safe, nurturing, and stable relationships and households, which are crucial for protecting children from the effects of toxic stress (Gonzalez, 2013). Living in poverty further exacerbates this issue, as it limits families' ability to meet basic needs, thereby increasing the likelihood of ACEs. Research suggests that the combination of poverty and parental mental health issues may be stronger predictors of poor developmental outcomes than other ACEs. In such environments, children may be more vulnerable to the harmful effects of toxic stress, as their parents are less able to provide the necessary support and protection (Amussen et al., 2020; Shern et al., 2014).

Trauma can also perpetuate poverty by impairing individuals' abilities to maintain stable employment, pursue education, and build supportive social networks. Survivors of trauma may struggle with symptoms of PTSD, depression, or anxiety, which can affect their daily functioning and limit their opportunities for economic advancement. Moreover, the coping mechanisms developed in response to trauma, such as substance abuse or risky behaviours, can further entrench individuals in poverty (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014).

A trauma-informed lens is essential for building resilience and effectively addressing poverty. This approach recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. It emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. By integrating trauma-informed practices into community services, schools, and healthcare systems, we can create supportive environments that help individuals and families heal from trauma and reduce its long-term impacts (SAMHSA, 2014).

Trauma-informed care involves:

- Realizing the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on individuals and communities.
- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
- Responding by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- Resisting re-traumatization by emphasizing safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment.
- Implementing a trauma-informed approach requires training for service providers, creating safe and supportive environments, and ensuring that services are accessible and culturally sensitive. This approach can help mitigate the effects of trauma and support resilience in individuals and communities (SAMHSA, 2014).

## What Are We Doing?

### Housing

#### Federal Initiatives

##### 1. National Housing Strategy (NHS)

- Canada's 10-year, \$82+ billion plan to improve access to safe, affordable, and inclusive housing.
- Aims to address the housing needs of 540,000 households, create 160,000 new housing units, renew 300,000 homes, and expand 385,000 community housing units by 2027 (Government of Canada, 2017).
- **Key initiatives include:**
  - a) **Affordable Housing Fund**
    - Provides funding to support the development and maintenance of affordable rental housing for low-income Canadians (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHA], n.d.-a).

- b) Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative**
  - o Focuses on creating and maintaining shelter and transitional housing options for Indigenous women, children, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people (CMHC, n.d.-j).
- c) Affordable Housing Innovation Fund**
  - o Supports innovative approaches and solutions for affordable housing (CMHC, n.d.-b).
- d) Federal Lands Initiative**
  - o Utilizes surplus federal lands to develop affordable housing projects (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], n.d.-f).
- e) Rapid Housing Initiative**
  - o Creates new affordable housing units for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness (CMHC, n.d.-k).
- f) Apartment Construction Loan Program**
  - o Offers low-interest loans to developers for the construction of rental apartment buildings (CMHC, n.d.-c).
- g) Reaching Home: Canada's Homeless Strategy**
  - o A community-based homelessness prevention program that provides funding to communities across Canada (Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, 2024a).
- h) Veteran Homelessness Program**
  - o Addresses homelessness among veterans by providing targeted support, housing, and services (Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, 2024b).
- i) Housing Accelerator Fund**
  - o Provides funding and support to municipalities and other partners to accelerate the construction of new housing (CMHC, n.d.-h).
- j) First-Time Homebuyer Incentive**
  - o Offers financial assistance to first-time homebuyers through shared equity loans or reduced mortgage payments (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], n.d.-g).
- k) Shared Equity Mortgage Provider Fund**
  - o Supports the creation of shared equity mortgage programs (CMHC, n.d.-l).

**l) Canada Housing Benefit**

- o Provides direct financial assistance to low-income renters (Canada Housing Benefit 2024: Do I qualify? n.d.).

**m) Federal Community Housing Initiative**

- o Improves community-based rental housing by providing funding for repairs, maintenance, and operational support (CMHC, n.d.-e).

**n) Community Housing Transformation Centre**

- o Provides grants, tools, and services to support community housing organizations (CMHC, n.d.-d).

**Provincial Initiatives****1. Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Program**

- Supports new construction, renovations, homeownership assistance, rent supplements, shelter allowances, and accessibility modifications.
- Funded by the Government of Canada and cost-matched by provinces and territories (CMHC, 2022).

**2. Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Program**

- Supports new construction, renovations, homeownership assistance, rent supplements, shelter allowances, and accessibility modifications.
- Funded by the Government of Canada and cost-matched by provinces and territories (CMHC, 2022).

**3. Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI)**

- Enhances Ontario's social housing supply, supports tenants in rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) housing with expiring agreements, and promotes the long-term viability of non-profit and co-operative housing providers.

**4. Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)**

- Offers flexible funding to address local housing needs and enhance affordability through construction or conversion, preservation of existing housing via repairs and renovations, and affordability support such as rent supplements and homeownership assistance.

**5. Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)**

- Improves rental affordability by providing portable housing benefits to households in need, including those on social housing waiting lists (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2023).

**6. Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP)**

- Assists municipal service managers across Ontario in combating homelessness by providing affordable housing and support services, including emergency shelters and supportive housing (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2024).

## 7. Indigenous Supportive Housing Program

- Partners with Indigenous administrators to offer supportive housing for off-reserve Indigenous people, including rent supplements and allowances (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2024; Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services [OAHS], 2023).

## 8. Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (OBHS)

- Supports sustainable and culturally appropriate, affordable housing and home repairs for Indigenous people in Ontario.
- OPHI homeownership and OPHI Ontario Renovates 2020/2022 Home Repair Program for Indigenous Individuals (OAHS, 2024b; OAHS, 2024d).

## 9. Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant (OSHPTG)

- Provides financial assistance to low- or moderate-income older adult homeowners in Ontario to help offset property tax costs (Canada Revenue Agency, 2024c).

## 10. Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)

- Offers emergency financial aid to individuals behind on electricity or natural gas bills, helping those at risk of disconnection (Ontario Energy Board, n.d.-b).
  - a) **Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)**
    - Provides monthly credits on electricity bills to low-income households based on income and household size (Ontario Energy Board, n.d.-a).
  - b) **Energy Affordability Program (EAP)**
    - Offers free energy-saving assessments and upgrades, such as energy-efficient refrigerators, LED bulbs, smart thermostats, and insulation (Save on Energy, 2024).
  - c) **Home Winterproofing Program (HWP)**
    - Provides free energy-efficient upgrades, including insulation and smart thermostats, for homes with Enbridge Gas accounts and a natural gas furnace or boiler (Enbridge Gas Inc., n.d.).

## County Initiatives

*(Orillia's Service Provider)*

### 1. Housing Our Future: Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

- Outlines strategic opportunities and priority activities to be implemented by the County of Simcoe and its municipal partners between January 1, 2014 and January 1, 2024.
- Minimum target of 2,685 new affordable housing units throughout Simcoe County by 2024.

- Target has been achieved with a total of 3,250 new housing spaces created since the inception of the strategy (County of Simcoe, n.d.-a).
- 2. Affordable Homeownership Program**
    - Provides low-to-moderate income renters with down payment assistance to buy a home, up to \$50,000, as a 20-year forgivable loan (County of Simcoe, n.d.-c).
  - 3. Housing Retention Program**
    - Offers financial support to prevent homelessness, including a combined maximum up to \$2,000 for singles or couples and up to \$4,000 for families within 24 months (County of Simcoe, n.d.-f).
  - 4. IAH Program**
    - Ontario Renovates Program
      - a) Offers up to \$15,000 per unit for urgent repairs, renovations, and accessibility modifications for low—to moderate-income homeowners.
    - Secondary Suites Program
      - a) Provides up to \$30,000 to homeowners for creating or upgrading rental units within existing homes to increase affordable rental options (County of Simcoe, 2024c).
  - 5. Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC)**
    - Provides affordable housing through:
      - a) Rent-Geared-to-Income Social Housing (RGI): Rent is based on income, and there are 1,292 RGI units and 360 additional affordable units.
      - b) Rent Supplement Program: Rent subsidies to landlords for up to five years, based on income (County of Simcoe, n.d.-h).
  - 6. County Orillia Campus Project**
    - A \$79 million development with 130 affordable residential units and essential services for older adults, families, and individuals (County of Simcoe, 2024e).
  - 7. Age-Friendly Seniors Housing Grant Program**
    - Funds projects that incorporate accessible, adaptable, and inclusive designs, enabling older adults to live independently (County of Simcoe, n.d.-d).

### **Municipal Initiatives**

*(In addition to the contracted services from the County - Orillia has augmented those services as follows:)*

- 1. Housing Attainable Supply Action Plan, County of Simcoe and City of Orillia**
  - The housing analysis highlighted a significant shortage of attainable housing options for both ownership and rental markets.



- Outlined strategies for implementation, including the Development Navigator Program, coordination initiatives, innovation initiatives, financial initiatives, and advocacy initiatives (County of Simcoe & City of Orillia, 2024)
2. **Affordable Housing Incentives Policy 4.2.1.4**
    - Outlines the various forms of financial support and grants available for eligible affordable housing projects, including land donations, building and planning fee grants, and cash-in-lieu of parking.
    - Establishes a structured application and evaluation process to ensure the effective allocation of funds from the Affordable Housing Reserve, along with conditions for repayment if the land is repurposed within 20 years (City of Orillia, 2022).
  3. **Affordable Housing Action Plan**
    - Focuses on promoting innovative housing models such as tiny homes, co-housing, and life-lease arrangements, aiming to provide more affordable and diverse living choices for residents.
    - Seeks to enhance funding mechanisms by establishing a Rent Subsidy Investment Fund and increasing awareness of available funding opportunities for developers to finance the development of more affordable housing units (City of Orillia, 2023e).
  4. **Affordable Housing Coordinator**
    - Two-year housing coordinator position to develop and update City affordable housing policies and bring more affordable housing to the city.
  5. **Affordable Housing Working Group**
    - Advise on affordable housing matters, conduct research, and provide recommendations to the Council Committee regarding affordable housing policies and development proposals (City of Orillia, n.d.-a)
    - Recommended that the two-year *Affordable Housing Coordinator* contract be extended and that there be a permanent position (McGrath-Goudie, 2024).
  6. **Supportive Rapid Re-Housing Program Project (SRRP)**
    - Managed by the County of Simcoe, the SRRP assists low-risk individuals facing situational homelessness to transition into permanent housing within 180 days.
    - SRRP facilities located at 175 West St. S. and 66 Peter St. S. (County of Simcoe, n.d.-g).

## Community-Level Initiatives

1. **Orillia Housing Resource Centre**
  - Provides housing support services, including assistance with finding affordable housing, eviction prevention, and access to shelters (Orillia Housing Resource Centre, n.d.).

## 2. Empower Simcoe - Regional Housing Support Services

- a. Provides housing-related assistance to residents at risk of homelessness, experiencing homelessness, or facing rental and/or utility arrears (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-d.).

## 3. The Lighthouse

- Offers emergency shelter, supportive housing, youth-specific services, and community outreach services including housing plans, medical/wellness services, and a warming centre (The Lighthouse, n.d.).

## 4. Endaad Native Non Profit Homes Inc.

- Provides non-profit housing with rent-geared-to-income units for Indigenous families. Waitlist minimum: 1.5 years (NSMHealthline, 2024).

## 5. BRAWC - Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle

### a. Bagozenim - To Have Hope program

- Indigenous-led Housing First initiative.
- Assists Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness by facilitating access to permanent housing and necessary support.

### b. Naadamaadiwag - Helping Each Other

- Offers outreach and support for those facing homelessness, including cultural connections, community outreach, and access to traditional healing services (Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle [BRAWC], n.d.).

## Arts and Recreation

### Provincial Initiatives

#### 1. Special Needs Resourcing (SNR)

- Supports the inclusion of children with special needs in licensed childcare settings, including children's recreation programs and camps (Ministry of Education, 2023).

#### 2. Free Family Fishing

- Canadian residents in Ontario can fish for free four times a year: Family Fishing Weekend, Mother's Day Weekend, Father's Day Weekend, and Family Fishing Week. Participants must follow fishing rules (Ministry of Natural Resources, 2023).

## Municipal Initiatives

### 1. Art in Public Places Strategic Plan (2023-2033)

- Provides opportunities for local artists, drives economic growth through tourism, and contributes to a thriving creative economy (City of Orillia, 2023b).

### 2. Cultural and Festival Events Program

- a. Provides funding to not-for-profit organizations that present culturally and historically significant programming and activities (City of Orillia, n.d.-f).

### 3. Recreational Financial Assistance Pilot Program

#### a. FUN Passes

- 100 Orillia residents per year who meet the LIM-AT threshold are eligible for a subsidized monthly access rate.
- Adult fare is \$15 (including HST) per month, while child/student/older adults applicants fare is \$7.50 (including HST) per month.

#### b. All-Access Day Passes

- Social service agencies in Orillia can purchase All-Access Day Passes at a subsidized rate of \$2 per pass to provide to their clients.
- Provides \$5,000 total per year to cover the non-subsidized portion of the pass.

### 4. Library of Things

- a. Allows community members to borrow a variety of non-traditional items, such as Ontario Parks passes, seeds, recreational equipment, and baking supplies (Orillia Public Library, n.d.).

### 5. General Recreation Programs

- Various recreational programs and activities for all ages.
- Quarterly recreation guides: Spring Made Fun, Summer Made Fun, Summer Splash, Fall Made Fun, Winter Made Fun.
- Potential funding sources are identified within each guide (City of Orillia, n.d.-i.).

### 6. Seniors at Play Program

- Provides older adults with age-friendly, affordable programming to prevent isolation and promote physical activity (City of Orillia, n.d.-j.).

## Community-Level Initiatives

### 1. Empower Simcoe - Community Support Program - Day Services

- Connects individuals to leisure and recreational activities or volunteer placements, with support from a Community Support Worker to ensure a smooth transition into these community-based opportunities (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-a.).

## 2. Orillia and District Arts Council

- a. Coordinates funding for local arts and culture projects that engage people and use art to increase community well-being (Orillia Matters, n.d.).

## Youth Services

### Federal Initiatives

#### 1. Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)

- Allocates \$54.1 million annually to support community groups in developing and managing comprehensive, culturally appropriate programs for vulnerable children aged 0-6 years (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023b).

#### 2. Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)

- Provides \$26.5 million annually to community groups to support the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their babies facing challenges (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023a).

#### 3. Canada Child Benefit (CCB)

- A tax-free monthly payment for families with children under 18, based on family income and custody arrangements (Canada Revenue Agency, 2024b).

#### 4. Child Disability Benefit (CDB)

- A tax-free monthly payment for families with a child under 18 with severe and prolonged impairment (CRA, 2024a).

#### 5. National School Food Policy

- Proposes to ensure all Canadian children have access to nutritious meals at school, supported by a \$1 billion government investment (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024d).

### Provincial Services

#### 1. Canada-Ontario Early Years and Child Care Agreement - 2021 to 2026

- Increases the accessibility and affordability of childcare, aiming for an average of \$10 per day for children under six by March 2026 (Ministry of Education, 2024).

#### 2. Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy

- A framework developed in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve and culturally customize programs, policies, and services for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth, and families (Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, 2024e).

### **3. Child Care Fee Subsidy**

- Helps families with childcare costs, including children's recreation programs and camps (Ministry of Education, 2023).

### **4. Ontario Child Benefit (OCB)**

- Provides financial support to low- and moderate-income families, offering up to \$1,680 per child annually (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2024c).

### **5. Temporary Care Assistance**

- Provides financial support to families temporarily caring for children who are not their own (Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2024g).

### **6. Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)**

- Offers monthly financial assistance to Ontario families with children under 18 who have severe disabilities requiring additional care (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2024a).

### **7. Healthy Smiles Ontario Child Dental Program**

- Provides free dental care to children and youth aged 17 and under from low-income families in Ontario (Ministry of Health, 2024a).

### **8. Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program**

- Provides support to pregnant women and families with young children to promote health and development, including home visits, parenting support, and health education (SMDHU, n.d.).

### **9. Family Well-Being Program**

- Provides holistic, culturally safe, and community-based support to Indigenous children, youth, and families, focusing on violence prevention, reducing child welfare involvement, and improving overall health and well-being.
- Co-developed and co-managed with First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous partners at 250 sites across Ontario, including the Chippewas of Rama First Nation (Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, 2024b)

### **10. Simcoe Shores Alternative School**

- Offers a smaller, supportive learning environment for students disengaged from traditional secondary education, providing flexible programming for grades 11 and 12.
- Provides access to face-to-face classes, eLearning, cooperative education, dual credit opportunities, and Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) (Simcoe Shores Secondary School, n.d.)

**11. Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)**

- Supports high school students in exploring and starting apprenticeships, combining academic learning with hands-on training in various trades (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2022d).

**12. Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin programs**

- Provides community-based support, tools, and activities for Urban Indigenous children (ages 7-12) and youth (ages 13-18) focusing on life skills, cultural engagement, and healthy lifestyle choices.
- Managed by The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) through 30 delivery sites.

**13. OAHS Don McBain Memorial Award**

- Grants three annual scholarships of \$5,000 each to Indigenous students from Ontario pursuing their first year of post-secondary education (OAHS, 2024a)

**Municipal Initiatives****1. Orillia Youth Centre**

- a. Drop-in facility for youth aged 11- 17.
- b. Offers free, hands-on programs such as cooking workshops, kickboxing, yoga, art programming and more.
- c. Provides a space for youth to relax, study, and engage in recreational activities, including pool and ping-pong, board games, arts and crafts, and computer access for school projects (City of Orillia, n.d.-g).

**2. Orillia Youth Strategy**

- a. Ongoing study to investigate the current state of youth services in Orillia, and make recommendations for how to sustainably grow services to meet the needs of the community (City of Orillia, n.d-h).

**Community-Level Initiatives****1. Youth Haven**

- a. Provides support for youth aged 16-24, including counselling, housing support, employment assistance, education support, and referrals (THL Information Network, n.d.).

**2. New Path Youth and Family Services**

- a. Offers mental health support for children, youth, and families, including counselling, emotional regulation, family dynamics, and 2SLGBTQIA+ support (New Path Youth and Family Services, n.d.-a.).

### 3. The Common Roof

- a. Provides workspaces for human-service not-for-profit agencies serving children, youth, and families (The Common Roof, n.d.).

### 4. Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions

- a. Provides support services, including child protection, family support, and youth development programs.
  - a. **Basic Needs Program**
    - Provides essential support, such as grocery gift cards, hygiene products, coverage for transportation, mental health services, bedding, clothing, and more (Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions [SMFC], n.d.-a.).
  - b. **Camp Program**
    - Provides children with access to summer camp through partnerships with various local accredited facilities (Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions [SMFC], n.d.-b.).

### 5. EarlyON Simcoe North

- Provides early childhood education, parenting support, and family resources for children and their caregivers
  - a. Emergency Baby Needs Depot
    - Provides weekly access to baby formula, pablum, jarred food, diapers, and occasionally shampoo and wipes.
  - Toys for Specific Development Lending Library
    - Offers more than 200 educational toys, which can be borrowed for four weeks at no cost (EarlyON North Simcoe, n.d.).

### 6. Empower Simcoe - Youth Services

- a. **Let's Socialize**
  - Supports neurodiverse youth aged 12 to 16 in developing social skills and understanding healthy sexuality through two six-week programs (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-c)
- b. **Transition Services**
  - Support youth and young adults attending or have recently left high school (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-e).
- c. **The Youth Program**
  - Fully inclusive, drop-ins and virtual nights, for high school students (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-f).

### 7. Catulpa Community Support Services Inc.

- a. **MotherCare Program**

- Free weekly program for pregnant individuals.
- Provides support and information on nutrition, pre- and postnatal health, breastfeeding, and newborn care.
- Participants receive prenatal vitamins, a \$20 grocery gift card, and access to health professionals.

**b. Baby Steps Program**

- Free weekly program for parents of infants up to 12 months.
- Offers guidance on newborn nutrition, perinatal mental health, and infant development.
- Participants receive vitamin D drops and a \$20 grocery gift card.

**c. Next Step Program**

- Free weekly program for parents of children aged 12 to 36 months.
- Focuses on nutrition, child development, and parenting support.
- Participants receive a \$20 grocery gift card.

**d. Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)**

- Free, regular activities for families with children aged 0 to 6, focusing on nutrition, health, and child development (Catulpa Community Supports Services, n.d.-l.).

**e. Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) Coordination**

- Assists youth aged 14 to 18 who are moving to adult services while receiving extended society care through Child Protective Services (CPS) or Complex Special Needs funding through Regional Complex Care (Catulpa Community Supports Services, n.d.-m.).

**f. Children's Respite Services**

- Offers funding and coordination for caregivers to ensure they have time for renewal while their children engage in social and recreational activities (Catulpa Community Supports Services, n.d.-b.).

**g. Ontario Autism Programming (OAP)**

- Assists with system navigation and peer support for families of children with autism (Catulpa Community Supports Services, n.d.-h.).

**8. Orillia Native Women's Group**

- Promotes Indigenous well-being in Orillia through a variety of programs and support services.

**a. Indigenous Parenting Program**

- Offers early intervention support to improve child development and caregiver education grounded in Indigenous culture and traditions.



**b. Binoojiinh Mno-Bmaadziwin (Child's Path to the Good Life) (CAPC/CPNP)**

- **The Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)**
  - Supports families with children ages 0-6 by educating parents and children about obesity and diabetes complications, promoting good nutrition and healthy eating habits, encouraging physical activity, ensuring food safety, and preserving traditional/cultural foods.
- **Canada Prenatal and Nutrition Program (CPNP)**
  - Strengthens positive cultural identity through cultural awareness, increases knowledge and awareness of healthy prenatal and postnatal nutrition for parents and children, encourages physical activity and play to promote the health of prenatal and postnatal mothers, and raises awareness among prenatal and postnatal mothers about child development and child-rearing (Orillia Native Women's Group, n.d.).

**9. Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC)**

- Promotes Indigenous well-being in Simcoe County, Muskoka, and York Region through culturally grounded programs and services (211 Ontario North, 2023).
  - a. Bebminot Family Wellness Program**
    - Offers child development and parenting guidance for Indigenous families (Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle [BANAC], n.d.-b).
  - b. Biinoojinsauk Child Care Centre**
    - Offers childcare services and promotes Indigenous identity and heritage through a holistic curriculum (BANAC, n.d.-c, n.d.-d).

## Food Security

### Federal Initiatives

**1. National School Food Policy**

- Aims to improve children's health and academic performance by ensuring access to nutritious meals at school (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024d).

**2. Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)**

- Provides nutritional support, among other services, to enhance child development (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023b).

### 3. Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)

- Offers nutrition counselling, prenatal vitamins, food assistance, and breastfeeding education (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2023a).

## Provincial Initiatives

### 1. Student Nutrition Program

- Various meal and snack programs offer school-age children and youth access to nutritious food.

### 2. First Nations Student Nutrition Program

- Provides nutritious meals and snacks at 159 sites in First Nations and urban Indigenous communities, managed by Indigenous partners who may incorporate traditional food practices (Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, 2024f).

## County Initiatives

*(Orillia's Service Provider)*

### 1. Simcoe County Food Security Framework

- A strategic plan designed to guide community stakeholders in coordinated actions to improve food security, reduce household food insecurity, and promote sustainable food systems (County of Simcoe, 2019).

## Municipal Initiatives

(In addition to the contracted services from the County - Orillia has augmented those services as follows:)

### 1. Backyard Hen Program

- Promotes local food production by allowing residents to keep backyard hens on qualifying properties (City of Orillia, n.d.-b).

### 2. Community Gardens

- Individuals, families, or groups can book garden plots for the growing season.
- Each plot is a 12' x 4' raised planter, complete with a convenient water source, and gardeners are expected to tend to their own plots.
- Locations include York Street Park, High Street Park, Hillcrest Park, and Lakehead University (City of Orillia, n.d.-d.).

### 3. Orillia Food Access and Sustainability Working Group

- Considers matters and provides advice to Council with respect to support the development of an accessible and sustainable local food system.

#### **4. Growing Change: A Roadmap to Orillia's Food Strategy**

- Evaluation and strategic framework aimed at improving food security and access within the City of Orillia (Wilson, 2021).

### **Community-Level Initiatives**

#### **1. The Sharing Place Food Centre**

- Operates a food bank and programs like School Fuel and Meals-4-Change, including food recovery partnerships and an inclusive food bank (The Sharing Place Food Centre, n.d.-a., n.d.-b.).

#### **2. Guardian Angels Parish/ Saint Vincent de Paul Food Bank and Vinnie's**

- Provides non-perishable food items, baby food, and hygiene products and operates a thrift store for affordable clothing and household items (Information Orillia, n.d.-b.).

#### **3. The Salvation Army - Orillia Citadel**

- Offers food bank services, meal programs, emergency disaster services, and a street ministry that distributes meals and supplies (The Salvation Army, 2023).

#### **4. Fresh from the Farm**

- Provides fresh, locally grown produce to the community, emphasizing food security and sustainable agriculture (Fresh from the Farm, 2023).

#### **5. Orillia Native Women's Group - Ambe Tigadaw: Let's Grow Together**

- Community garden collective to address food insecurity and build capacity for local food production (Orillia Native Women's Group, n.d.).

#### **6. Orillia and Area Good Food Box**

- Provides residents with fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables, promoting healthy eating and food security (Orillia and Area Good Food Box, n.d.).

#### **7. Sustainable Orillia - The 2020 Orillia Food Map and Directory**

- Increases awareness and connectivity between consumers and available food sources (Sustainable Orillia, 2020).

#### **8. Information Orillia - Food Assistance Available in Orillia (2018)**

- Provides visually accessible information of local food banks and meal availability (Information Orillia, 2018).

#### **9. St. Paul's United Church Orillia**

- Fridge, freezer, and pantry stocked with fresh and healthy food (St. Paul's Centre, n.d.).

#### **10. St. James Anglican Church - Loonie Lunch**

- Provides hot soup, donuts, muffins, or fresh rolls for a free will donation of a loonie or more (St. James Anglican Church Orillia, n.d.)

### **11. Helping Hands Orillia - Meals on Wheels**

- Offers nutritious, balanced hot/ frozen meals (Helping Hands Orillia, n.d.).

## **Transportation**

### **Municipal Initiatives**

#### **1. Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan (MTMP)**

- Emphasizes alternative transportation modes such as walking, cycling, and public transportation.
- Reassesses previously planned improvements and addresses changes in the city and neighbouring municipalities' growth. (City of Orillia, 2019).

#### **2. Transportation and Parking Working Group**

- Considers matters and provides advice to Council with respect to active transportation, general transportation and traffic, parking, and transit in relation to the City's diverse needs, overall quality of life and greater multi-modal mobility network (City of Orillia, n.d.-i.).

#### **3. Orillia Transit Teen and Senior Passes**

- Older adults aged 65 and above have permanent access to the Orillia transit system for \$2 per ride using the cOnnect Pass reloadable transit card.
- A 12-month pilot program from March 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025 allows teens aged 13 to 19 to have free access to the Orillia transit system using the cOnnect Pass reloadable transit card (City of Orillia, 2024b).

### **Community-Level Initiatives**

#### **1. Helping Hands Orillia**

- Provides reliable and affordable transportation services that cater to unique mobility needs (Helping Hands Orillia, n.d.).

## **Other**

### **Federal Initiatives**

#### **1. Older Adult Specific**

##### **a. Old Age Security (OAS)**

- A taxable monthly payment, based on residency, for residents aged 65 and older (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024e).

**b. Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)**

- A non-taxable benefit for low-income older adults receiving OAS (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024a).

**c. GIS - Allowance**

- For individuals aged 60 to 64 whose spouse or common-law partner receives OAS and GIS (Government of Canada, 2024c).

**d. Allowance for the Survivor**

- For individuals aged 60 to 64 who have a deceased spouse or common-law partner and have not remarried or entered a new common-law relationship (Service Canada, 2024).

**e. Canadian Pension Plan (CPP)**

- Provides a monthly payment to Canadians aged 60 and older who have made at least one valid contribution to the CPP (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024a).

**Provincial Initiatives****1. Employment****a. Apprenticeship Capital Grant (ACG)**

- Provides funding for capital improvements and equipment purchases to enhance apprenticeship training facilities and support effective hands-on learning (Ministry of Colleges and University, n.d.).

**b. Better Jobs Ontario**

- Offers financial support for training and education to help individuals who have been laid off or are underemployed transition to new careers (Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development, 2023).

**c. Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG)**

- Provides funding to employers to offset the cost of training new or existing employees, helping to improve skills and support job creation (Ministry of Colleges and University, n.d.).

**d. Employment Insurance (EI)**

- Provides temporary financial support to unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work or upgrading their skills, including regular unemployment benefits, maternity, parental, and sickness benefits (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2024b).

- e. **Agilec**
    - Offers a range of employment services and career support to job seekers, including assistance with job search, resume writing, interview preparation, and career counselling (Agilec, 2024).
  - f. **Georgian College Career and Employment Community Services**
    - Provides job seekers with various resources to aid their job search, supports employers in finding skilled employees, and offers assistance for youth entering the workforce (Georgian College, n.d.).
- 2. Skill Development**
- a. **Achievement Incentive Program**
    - Provides financial incentives to employers when apprentices achieve specific training and certification milestones, aiming to address labour gaps, increase apprenticeship registrations, and improve certification rates (Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, 2024).
  - b. **Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPAP)**
    - Provides up to \$5,000 in bursaries to internationally trained professional immigrants with financial need, helping bridge qualifications and find suitable employment (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2022b).
  - c. **Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP)**
    - Provides training and support to help immigrants and internationally trained individuals integrate into the Ontario labour market and utilize their skills effectively (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 2022a).
- 3. Health and Wellness**
- a. **Disability Tax Credit (DTC)**
    - A non-refundable tax credit that reduces income tax for individuals with severe impairments or their supporting family members (CRA, 2024e).
  - b. **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**
    - Offers mental health support, crisis intervention, and community education programs (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2023).
  - c. **Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU)**
    - Offers public health services, including disease prevention, health promotion, and community health programs (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2023).

#### 4. Legal Services

##### a. North Simcoe Victim Services

- Provides support to victims of crime and trauma in the North Simcoe region, offering free services designed to aid individuals in collaboration with local police services and emergency personnel (North Simcoe Victim Services, n.d.).

##### b. Legal Aid Ontario (LAO)

- Provides legal services to individuals who cannot afford legal representation, covering various legal issues such as family legal issues, domestic violence, criminal law, mental health legal issues, and refugee and immigration legal issues (Legal Aid Ontario, n.d.).

#### 5. Financial Assistance

##### a. Ontario Works (OW)

- Provides financial assistance, including money for living expenses like food and rent, health benefits, and employment support such as résumé workshops, job counselling, training, and education (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2022a).

##### b. Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)

- Offers financial support and employment assistance to individuals with significant physical or mental disabilities, covering living expenses and shelter costs (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2024d).

##### c. Ontario Trillium Benefit (OTB)

- A refundable tax credit that provides financial assistance to help with the cost of living, combining the Ontario Sales Tax Credit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit (Canada Revenue Agency, 2024d).

##### d. Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB)

- Provides financial assistance for prescription medications, covering most costs for older adults, individuals receiving social assistance, and those with specific medical conditions (Ministry of Health, 2024b).

### County Initiatives

*(Orillia's Service Provider)*

#### 1. Human Services

##### a. The Orillia Public Library/Onsite Human Services Coordinator

- In partnership with the City of Orillia.

- Provides assistance with navigating social services, including housing resources, mental health support, substance use support, and more (Orillia Public Library, 2024).

## **Municipal Initiatives**

*(In addition to the contracted services from the County - Orillia has augmented those services as follows:)*

### **1. Well-being**

#### **a. Couchiching Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2025**

- Outlines strategies and recommendations focused on mental health and addictions, social connectedness/safety, employment, and access to services (City of Orillia, Township of Oro-Medonte, Township of Ramara, Township of Severn, 2021).

#### **b. Orillia Accessibility Plan 2023-2028**

- Outlines strategies to create an inclusive environment by identifying and removing barriers in municipal facilities, engaging the community for feedback, ensuring compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) and *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* (IASR) (City of Orillia, 2023a).
- The Accessibility Advisory Committee hosts an annual public meeting to hear public feedback and make recommendations.

#### **c. Age-Friendly Orillia Community Action Plan 2022-2026**

- Ensures accessibility and inclusivity for all community members by improving infrastructure, public transportation access, and housing options while promoting universal design principles.

#### **d. Age-Friendly Orillia Advisory Committee**

- Advocate for policies that protect older adults well-being and dignity (City of Orillia, 2022).

#### **e. General Grants Program**

- Supports the not-for-profit sector in its efforts to contribute to the enrichment of community life (City of Orillia, n.d.-f).

### **2. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability**

#### **a. Orillia's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**

- Identifies 27 actions across four themes to enhance community resilience against increased temperatures, extreme weather events, and other climate-related challenges (City of Orillia, 2023c)



**b. Orillia's Climate Future - Our Climate Change Action Plan**

- Outlines a plan for making decisions and setting priorities for climate action in the City of Orillia for the next 30 years.
- Emphasizes the importance of creating more sustainable homes, offices, roads, and green spaces
- It establishes targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and suggests ways for the community to address the challenges posed by climate change (City of Orillia, 2023d)

**c. Climate Change and Environmental Stability Working Group**

- Identify, advise on, and take action to address local environmental issues in Orillia, focusing on the protection and sustainability of air, land, and water resources. This includes overseeing Orillia's aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, such as lakes, tributaries, wetlands, and forested lands, and participating in the development and implementation of the City's Climate Change Action Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (City of Orillia, n.d.-c).

## Community-Level Initiatives

### 1. Health and Wellness

**a. CFS Counselling and Wellbeing**

- Offers mental health counselling, specialized programs, and community wellness initiatives (CFS Counselling and Wellbeing, 2023).

**b. Catulpa Community Support Services Inc.**

- Provides support for developmental and physical disabilities, respite services, crisis response, autism programming, and transitional-aged youth coordination (Catulpa Community Support Services Inc., 2023).

**c. The Meeting Place**

- Provides recreational activities, peer support, and a safe space for individuals with serious mental illness.
- Managed by Outreach Orillia and supported by the Hospital's Community Mental Health Services (Soldiers' Memorial Hospital Orillia, n.d.).

**d. Road to Recovery Addiction Clinic**

- Offers various services, including methadone and Suboxone® programs, alcohol addiction treatment, mental health services, and smoking cessation support (Road to Recovery, n.d.).

**e. One Mississauga Clinic - Dr. R. Cooper**

- Provides methadone and Suboxone® treatments to help manage opioid dependence (Engel, 2018).

- f. Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre/Rapid Access Addiction Medication Clinic (RAAM)**
  - Provides substance use support, walk-in clinic services, counselling, and medication assistance (Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre, 2023).
- g. Uplifting Blessings**
  - A grassroots community initiative founded in 2017 that serves the homeless and vulnerable in Orillia and the surrounding area through the collection of material donations year-round.
  - Provide clothing, hygiene items, comfort packs, school supplies, and holiday support (Uplifting Blessings, n.d.).
- h. Helping Hands Orillia**
  - Provides services that help keep older adults and adults with physical disabilities healthy and independent.
    - a. Transitional Bed Services**
      - Provides a safe and supporting environment for recovery and transitioning into permanent living.
    - b. Telephone Safety Checks**
      - Ensures residents stay connected, and feel safe and supported (Helping Hands Orillia, n.d.).
- i. Living for Jesus Outreach Ministries**
  - Provides free clothing to those in need (Living for Jesus, n.d.).
- j. Enahtig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre/Community Mental Health and Addictions Outreach Services**
  - Provides mental health and addictions counselling, case management, and community capacity building (Enahtig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre, 2023).
- k. Mamaway Wiidokdaadwin Clinic**
  - Integrates traditional practices with modern care, offering immunizations, prenatal and postnatal care, diabetes management, and other health services for Indigenous individuals ( BANAC, n.d.-f.; n.d.-g.).
- l. BANAC-Aging Well - Senior Supports Program**
  - Provides services such as housekeeping, dementia support, and transportation for aging Indigenous individuals (Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC, n.d.-a.).

## 2. Literacy

### a. The Learning Centre

- Offers adult education, literacy programs, and skills training to support personal and professional development (Adult and Continuing Education Department, n.d.).

### b. The Orillia and District Literacy Council (ODLC)

- Offers reading, writing, math, computer, and life skills programs with individualized learning plans, free programs, and employment readiness (The Orillia and District Literacy Council, 2023).

## 3. Employment

### a. Empower Simcoe - Employment Support Services

- Assists individuals in finding employment and job shadowing opportunities, offering on-the-job training, assistance, and evaluation through an Employment Support Services Coordinator (Empower Simcoe, n.d.-b.).

## 4. Support Services

### a. Information Orillia

- Offers community information, referral services, an income tax clinic, system navigation, rental listings, phone messaging, and mail pick-up service (Information Orillia, n.d.-a.).

### b. Green Haven Shelter for Women

- Offers crisis line, intervention, shelter, transitional housing, legal support, and counselling services (Green Haven Shelter for Women, n.d.).

### c. Seven South Street Treatment Centre

- Offers men with alcohol and drug addictions recovery and self-improvement services (Seven South Street Treatment Centre, n.d.).

### d. Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC)

- Provides health, education, social development, childcare, healthcare, aging support, and family wellness services (n.d.-g.).

### e. Orillia Native Women's Group

- Offers programs like Child's Path to the Good Life, Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison, Indigenous Parenting Program, and Breaking Free from Family Violence (Orillia Native Women's Group, 2023).

### f. United Way Simcoe Muskoka Urgent Needs Fund

- Provides financial assistance for urgent needs such as housing, food, and transportation for those facing financial crises (United Way Simcoe Muskoka, n.d.).

## What Are Other Municipalities Doing?

*This section of the report is structured in accordance with Hayes' (2017) report prepared for the City of Vancouver. It is organized thematically according to frameworks of governance, potential partnerships, engagement, and goal areas. Unsurprisingly, based on the methodological similarities of secondary data analysis, an overlap of findings has occurred.*

Across Canada, many cities have developed and are implementing poverty reduction strategies (see Appendix A. Summary of Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies). Community groups lead many strategies, while municipal governments take the lead on others. Successful initiatives often involve:

- Broad multi-sectoral engagement;
- Strong and inclusive community engagement;
- Addressing issues within municipal jurisdiction, such as transportation, food security, housing;
- Human-rights-based approach;
- Consideration of well-being and dignity.

These municipalities also collaborate with federal and provincial governments on matters outside municipal jurisdiction, such as income assistance, child care, and education. Municipal approaches to poverty reduction vary as some focus on transformational changes through preventative measures, while others emphasize specific programmatic changes within their responsibilities.

## Poverty Reduction Frameworks

### Governance

Successful poverty reduction strategies tend to initiate a collaborative, community-based governance system. This means that municipal governments develop, and implement these strategies, with reliance on a separate multi-sector governance body, such as a steering committee or roundtable. Initiatives, including those from Calgary, Thunder Bay, Kingston, and Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County, have adopted this method of governance. Partnerships such as these allow municipalities to leverage expertise and establish community-based assets. These groups are supported by community advisory bodies, working groups, and task forces, implementing specific initiatives aligned with the goals outlined in the policy. A systems approach to governance ensures representation from all sectors, explicitly emphasizing the inclusion of individuals with lived and living experiences of poverty. Additionally, involving

influential members from industries such as health, education, non-profit, and business is important for gaining support, utilizing expertise, and facilitating implementation.

## **Partnerships**

Partnerships identified through the analysis of existing poverty reduction strategies include the United Way Centraide and the Tamarack Institute.

The United Way Centraide is a leading organization dedicated to poverty reduction across North America. In Canada, the United Way's work addresses poverty's root causes through community-based initiatives, investments in housing, education, income security, and health, and advocacy for systemic policy changes (United Way Canada, n.d.). The United Way Centraide Simcoe Muskoka has made significant steps towards poverty reduction in Orillia and the surrounding area through numerous events and initiatives, including the Real2Reel Film Festival and ODSP Orillia (United Way Simcoe Muskoka, n.d.). The United Way Centraide has been involved in the creation of various poverty reduction strategies, including those of Toronto, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Kingston, Edmonton, Calgary, and more.

Similarly, the Tamarack Institute is another powerful organization dedicated to fostering community change through collaborative strategies that engage both citizens and institutions in poverty reduction. Its Vibrant Communities Canada initiative supports municipalities in implementing large-scale change efforts to reduce poverty and strengthen community connections. This network of 344 municipalities works together to develop and implement effective poverty reduction strategies through multi-sector leadership roundtables. The Tamarack Institute has been involved in the creation of poverty reduction strategies for Windsor, Peel Region, and many others (Tamarack Institute, 2018).

Other potential partners may include the Simcoe County Poverty Coalition and the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH).

The Simcoe County Poverty Coalition is dedicated to addressing poverty in Simcoe County, Ontario through collaborative efforts that emphasize community engagement, advocacy, and strategic initiatives. Its work includes supporting programs related to affordable housing, food security, and income support and influencing local policies to create effective, long-term solutions to improve the lives of those affected by poverty in the region. As part of the coalition's work, they have held "Rethink Poverty" events focused on strategies and initiatives for poverty reduction. The purpose of these events has been to bring together representatives from the Poverty Reduction Task Group and various other sectors to share knowledge and collaborate on moving from talk to action to end poverty in our local communities (Simcoe County Poverty Coalition, n.d.).

SCATEH was formed to address the growing issue of homelessness in Simcoe County, Ontario, through collaborative efforts and strategic initiatives. This organization focuses on promoting affordable housing, enhancing support services, and advocating for policy changes to address the root causes of homelessness. Through community engagement and coordinated efforts, the alliance creates sustainable solutions and improves the quality of life for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in the region (Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness, n.d.).

## **Engagement**

It's important to involve the public and interest-holders in developing an effective poverty reduction strategy to ensure the strategy meets the community's current needs. Other municipalities have used a variety of engagement methods over varying durations, including:

- Public surveys
- Focus groups
- Workshops
- Virtual conversations
- Community toolkit submissions
- Emails and online surveys
- Storytelling sessions
- Conversations with organizations and coalitions
- Indigenous engagement facilitated by an Indigenous-led consultant firm
- Informal discussions and learning opportunities with community members
- Targeted community consultation sessions
- Inclusion of lived experience
- Ongoing feedback mechanisms
- Public awareness campaigns
- Engagement of grassroots initiatives
- Community forums
- School programs to raise awareness
- Volunteer opportunities
- Advocacy campaigns
- Collaboration with community organizations

## **Goal Areas**

### **Income, Employment, and Community Economic Development**

Orillia's high unemployment rate and prevalence of low-income individuals make income and employment critical areas of poverty reduction. Improving job opportunities and ensuring fair wages are essential to reduce poverty and enhance economic stability. Community economic

development aims to nurture local businesses, attract investments, and create a dynamic economy, which is necessary to drive job creation, support local enterprises, and build a resilient economy.

**Summary of Recommendations:**

- Lobby for and promote living wage jobs and advocate for fair wage policies.
- Maintain resources for skills training and employment support.
- Facilitate the development of job creation programs and vocational training, especially in high-unemployment areas.
- Facilitate access to internships and apprenticeships, integrating programs for those facing employment barriers.
- Offer incentives and support for local businesses to hire at-risk residents and foster growth through grants, mentorship, and social procurement policies.
- Attract investments and enhance local infrastructure to support economic growth.
- Consider community benefits programs and social enterprises.
- Improve access to public services such as transit and flexible childcare models.
- Pilot financial literacy initiatives and establish financial empowerment programs.
- Apply an equity lens across employment and education practices.
- Support equity-seeking groups through social procurement policies and community benefits agreements.
- Consider initiatives to boost economic development in low-income areas and promote local procurement.
- Partner with financial institutions, community organizations, and businesses to support economic development.
- Advocate for higher social assistance rates and universal basic income.
- Align funding priorities with poverty reduction goals and support strategies to ensure income security and social inclusion.

**Example: Municipal Fee Assistance Program - Kingston, ON**

The Municipal Fee Assistance Program supports residents with lower incomes by offering subsidies for various city services and programs. This includes discounted monthly transit passes, extended health care benefits covering vision, dental, and prescription medications, and free or reduced-cost dental care for adults and older adults. It also provides vision care, prescription drug coverage through various programs, and a voucher for pet spaying or neutering. Additional benefits include reduced fees for City recreation programs through SPARK, a free two-month transit pass for new employees, and discounts on tickets and admissions at the Grand Theatre and PumpHouse Museum. Assistance is provided on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is depleted (*Municipal fee assistance program*, n.d.).

## Health, Well-being, and Social Inclusion

Addressing health disparities and promoting social inclusion is vital for Orillia due to the significant impact of socioeconomic conditions on residents' well-being. Improving access to healthcare, mental health services, and social support will contribute to an increased quality of life and community resilience.

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Use Health Equity Impact Assessments (HEIA) for policies and programs.
- Raise awareness about the link between poverty and health.
- Improve access to healthcare and mental health services for people facing challenging conditions.
- Reduce health disparities among communities that are marginalized.
- Strengthen priority neighbourhoods through targeted programs.
- Provide equitable access to essential support and services.
- Advocate for integrated social and healthcare programs.
- Support individuals facing substance use and mental health challenges.
- Promote access to culturally appropriate education and support services.
- Foster supportive environments that promote mental well-being and inclusion.
- Prevent gender-based violence and support survivors.
- Address racism against Indigenous peoples and immigrants through education and awareness.
- Promote financial stability and access to recreation for low-income individuals.
- Remove barriers in housing, childcare, and essential services.
- Ensure affordability of social and community services.
- Conduct health impact assessments to evaluate poverty's impact on health.
- Develop tools to assess the effectiveness of health and poverty reduction initiatives.
- Establish cultural wellness centres and trauma-informed policies.
- Promote community engagement and participation to reflect diverse needs.

### Example: Shift Lab 2.0 - Edmonton, AB

Shift Lab 2.0 (2017-2020) was based in amiskwaciwâskahikan, Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting ground for the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Métis, and Inuit. This initiative focused on reducing racism through community-based action and was guided by Indigenous ways of knowing, building on existing anti-racism efforts in Edmonton. A key concept from Shift Lab 2.0 is the "sleepy middle," referring to individuals who are neither overtly racist nor fully committed anti-racists. They see themselves as well-meaning and "colourblind," but may be unaware of how systemic racism affects daily life and have varying levels of understanding about the ongoing importance of fighting racism (*Shift lab 2.0*, n.d.).



## Disability

It is imperative to support individuals with disabilities through accessible infrastructure, services, and opportunities. Ensuring inclusivity and equity for people with disabilities will help Orillia build a more supportive community and contribute to poverty reduction.

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Improve accessible infrastructure and services.
- Provide employment and community activity opportunities for differently-abled individuals.
- Enhance support systems for disability-related needs.
- Expand and streamline the disability support program application process.
- Advocate for an increase of ODSP.

### Example: Homemakers and Nurses Services Program (HMNS) - Toronto, ON

The Homemakers and Nurses Services Program (HMNS) provides support to individuals with limited financial resources who need help with daily household tasks. Operated by the City of Toronto through community agency contracts, HMNS offers services such as light housekeeping, laundry, shopping, and meal preparation. To be eligible, applicants must be 18 or older (with priority for older adults), live in Toronto, have physical or developmental disabilities, or be ill and unable to manage household tasks independently. They must also have a stable medical or mental health condition, limited income and assets, and reside in a self-contained unit without environmental risks to service providers (City of Toronto, 2022a).

## Transportation

Improving Orillia's public transit and transportation infrastructure will make it easier for residents to access employment, education, and services, especially for individuals facing increased vulnerability.

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Upgrade public transportation systems to be more reliable, affordable, and accessible.
- Expand transportation options, including e-bikes, and improve infrastructure to support transit accessibility.
- Implement and expand affordable transit pass programs and concession fares for low-income individuals.
- Promote energy cost reduction programs and advocate for consistent public funding for transit systems.
- Ensure residents are informed about the impact of new transit initiatives and collaborate with provincial authorities to harmonize services and fares.

- Achieve equitable access to transportation services and provide free transit for children 12 and under.
- Implement fare options geared to income, evaluate models based on demand, and adjust fare structures accordingly.
- Restore service cuts in high-demand areas, particularly inner suburbs, and improve reliability and connectivity across all transit modes.
- Advocate for continued support for affordable transit pricing for low-income individuals.

### **Example: Low Income Monthly Transit Pass - Calgary, AB**

The Low Income Monthly Transit Pass program offers reduced-cost monthly passes for adults (18 and older), youth (13-17 years), and an annual pass for older adults (65+). The program uses a sliding scale to determine the purchase price based on income, with three rate bands (2024): Band A at \$5.80 per month, Band B at \$40.25 per month, and Band C at \$57.50 per month. This system ensures that individuals with lower incomes pay less, making public transit more affordable and accessible (Calgary Transit, n.d.).

## **Housing**

Addressing housing affordability and availability is important in Orillia, where many households face core housing needs. Developing affordable housing options and reducing shelter costs will provide stable living conditions and alleviate poverty.

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Educate landlords, tenants, and the community on housing rights and inclusive development.
- Support local organizations in identifying housing needs and solutions, and facilitate communication between communities and municipalities.
- Develop and invest in affordable housing projects, including innovative models, and reduce shelter costs.
- Create and support programs for affordable renovations, energy-efficient improvements, and housing stabilization.
- Improve access to services and streamline systems for housing navigation.
- Advocate for increased investment in homelessness prevention and affordable housing, including flexible provincial funding and legislative changes for inclusionary zoning.
- Partner with housing and homelessness organizations to address barriers and support initiatives like tiny homes.
- Increase investments in repairing and maintaining existing social housing and enforce minimum housing standards.
- Expand incentives for private landlords and low-income homeowners, and support energy retrofitting programs.

- Utilize surplus government land and explore integrating affordable housing into public buildings.
- Develop strategies to sustain social housing assets and extend housing benefits to low-income individuals.

### **Example: Tiny Home Pilot Project - Thunder Bay, ON**

The Tiny Home Pilot Project is a collaborative effort involving Indigenous youth, the Lakehead Social Planning Council, and the Matawa First Nations community. The project focuses on building one-bedroom 10x30-foot modular homes, which are then relocated to Matawa First Nations for use in northern communities. Led by the Lakehead Social Planning Council's Poverty Reduction Strategy, the project aims to address Indigenous homelessness and youth employment. Through partnerships with organizations like Smart Modular Canada and the Home Depot Canada Foundation, the project provides housing solutions and offers training and employment opportunities for Indigenous youth (Punkari, 2024; *Tiny Homes*, n.d.).

### **Education, Training, and Skill Development**

Investing in education and skill development is essential to improving employment prospects and economic mobility. Increased access to educational opportunities and vocational training will equip Orillia residents with the skills needed for the evolving job market.

#### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Implement effective parent engagement models and create resources to enhance educator communication and involvement.
- Develop and maintain directories of support services, identify service gaps, and track progress.
- Increase access to educational and vocational training programs, including initiatives aligned with the evolving job market.
- Enhance partnerships between educational institutions and local businesses, and integrate equity tools into education and hiring practices.
- Boost employment supports and opportunities.
- Develop and apply job quality assessment tools in job procurement and city processes.
- Support community adult learning programs, and ensure culturally appropriate and representative curricula.
- Provide grants for low-income students for the first two years of college.
- Advocate for student loan repayment policies based on post-graduation earnings and lower interest rates.
- Improve skills training, literacy, and culturally sensitive curricula in early learning and care centres.

- Ensure sustainable, predictable funding for school-based wrap-around services and promote inclusive education practices.

### **Example: Youth Employment Programs - Vancouver, BC**

The City of Vancouver's Directions Youth Employment Programs supports young people in transitioning from survival mode to employment readiness. The Street Youth Job Action (SYJA) offers same-day pay for community jobs like street cleaning and janitorial work, while the Leaders in Training (LIT) program provides kitchen experience at the Drop-In Centre. Both initiatives build confidence, develop life skills, and offer personalized coaching, helping youth gain valuable work experience and access additional support for further education or job placement (Family Services of Greater Vancouver, n.d.).

### **Early Childhood Education and Care**

High-quality early childhood education and care are foundational for child development and future success. Expanding access to affordable childcare and early learning programs in Orillia will support families and facilitate positive outcomes for children.

#### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Enhance access to affordable, high-quality child care and early learning programs for families at risk of poverty.
- Implement programs to reduce childcare costs, such as the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program.
- Develop strategies to expand the childcare workforce and increase the number of childcare spaces.
- Support initiatives to improve the quality of early childhood education and care, including culturally sensitive curricula and well-educated staff.
- Pilot innovative, flexible child care programs and remove barriers to accessing affordable child care.
- Increase subsidies to cover a significant portion of child care costs for low-income working families and advocate for increased funding from provincial and federal sources.
- Develop child-friendly strategies and increase the City's tax base contribution to childcare fee subsidies.
- Promote policies for universal, full-day kindergarten and ensure that childcare staff and early childhood educators are paid a living wage.

### **Example: Toronto Early Learning & Child Care Services (TELCCS) - Toronto, ON**

Toronto Early Learning & Child Care Services (TELCCS) supports licensed childcare providers to ensure access to affordable and high-quality early childhood education and care for families

across the city. The program focuses on increasing childcare spaces, improving care quality, and promoting equitable access for low-income families (City of Toronto, 2022b)

### **Access to Services, Resources, and Supports**

Ensuring equitable access to essential services, resources, and support is important for addressing socio-economic challenges in Orillia. Streamlining service delivery and improving accessibility will help residents navigate and utilize available resources effectively.

#### **Summary of Recommendations:**

- Enhance access to services and resources by developing streamlined and integrated systems for better navigation and communication.
- Improve digital access and literacy for online applications and services.
- Implement programs to provide discounted or reduced-cost services and essential goods.
- Advocate for integrated access to social, healthcare, and community programs, including child care, housing, and legal resources.
- Improve data sharing and governance to support effective community grant funding and service delivery.
- Develop comprehensive service directories and use technology to list and track available services.
- Create one-stop community access sites for health, education, and social services to remove barriers and improve service coordination.
- Increase support for diverse populations by enhancing safety measures, providing financial literacy tools, and offering culturally appropriate services to ensure equitable access for all.
- Strengthen partnerships among service providers and promote community engagement in decision-making.

#### **Example: Toronto Public Library Digital Literacy Programs - Toronto, ON**

The digital literacy programs offered by the Toronto Public Library provide a variety of services to improve residents' digital skills, making it easier for them to access services. These programs include workshops on basic computer skills, internet navigation, email usage, and online safety. Additionally, personalized one-on-one support is available for individuals requiring extra assistance. The library also offers technology access, provides computer and internet access at its branches, and collaborates with community organizations to reach underserved populations. These services are designed to be inclusive of individuals of all ages and skill levels, and ensure that resources are accessible to everyone (Toronto Public Library, n.d.).

## Food Security

Addressing food insecurity is a priority, with the goal of achieving community food security. This ensures that all Orillia households have reliable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, meeting their dietary needs for an active and healthy life. Improving food assistance programs and promoting local food initiatives will enhance the availability, accessibility, affordability, and cultural acceptability of food resources, supporting the overall well-being and self-sufficiency of the community.

### Summary of Recommendations:

- Develop and implement comprehensive municipal food strategies to address food insecurity.
- Ensure all residents have reliable access to nutritious food.
- Enhance support for food assistance programs through sustainable funding and training.
- Improve access to fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food through income-based solutions and community-based initiatives.
- Promote and support policies that benefit local agriculture and food businesses.
- Expand student nutrition programs and community-based food infrastructure to increase access to nutritious food.
- Facilitate urban agriculture and innovative business models to improve food availability in underserved areas.
- Increase access to food skills and information for residents.
- Invest in food security-oriented enterprises and ensure food security requirements are integrated into relevant policies.

The City of Ottawa and the Peel Region are both taking significant steps to address food insecurity. The City of Ottawa is developing a municipal food strategy that focuses on income-based solutions to improve access to fresh, culturally appropriate, and affordable food. Meanwhile, the Regional Municipality of Peel has included food security as a key area in its poverty reduction strategy and is advocating for policy changes to reduce food insecurity. They have also established the Peel Community Benefits Network to ensure provision for food security in public projects and are promoting a living wage to increase residents' income to alleviate food insecurity. Both municipalities are prioritizing collaboration and community-driven initiatives to ensure that all residents have access to nutritious and affordable food.

## Aging Population

Supporting the aging population is essential, as a substantial portion of Orillia's residents are older adults. Developing age-friendly policies and services will enhance the well-being and quality of life for older adults in the community.

**Summary of Recommendations:**

- Develop directories and maps of support services for older adults, identifying service gaps and tracking progress.
- Implement age-friendly policies and services to support the older adult population.
- Expand access to dental care and other essential services for all adults experiencing low income.
- Advocate for OAS and CPP increases.

Municipalities like Ottawa, Peel Region, and Kingston are each addressing the needs of their aging populations through targeted initiatives. Ottawa focuses on improving access to essential services for older adults, including healthcare and social services, and incorporating their voices in community decision-making to meet their needs. Peel is advancing age-friendly initiatives by enhancing access to transportation, recreational activities, and social services tailored for older adults while supporting caregivers with resources for those caring for aging family members. Kingston, on the other hand, is committed to inclusive community planning by ensuring safe, stable, and accessible housing for older adults and developing social services that promote well-being and social inclusion.

## Community Engagement Analysis

### Poverty Reduction Symposium (June 2024)

#### Executive Summary

- On June 20, 2024, the City of Orillia hosted an Orillia-specific Poverty Reduction Symposium.
- 58 individuals participated in the event, representing 32 local and regional organizations.
- Participants discussed the strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and opportunities regarding housing, arts and recreation, youth services, food security, and transportation in Orillia.
- A total of 527 comments were collected (*See Appendix B. Poverty Reduction Symposium*).
- These results are important in developing a survey to engage community members with lived experiences of poverty.

## Purpose

The Orillia Poverty Reduction Symposium was organized to bring together community partners, leaders, policymakers, and interest-holders to discuss and strategize actionable plans to mitigate and reduce poverty in Orillia. The findings and discussions of the poverty reduction symposium were used to inform the creation of surveys for individuals with lived and living experiences distributed at the Youth Centre, The Lighthouse, the Sharing Place, and the Orillia Public Library.

## Objectives

1. *Identify Challenges:* Discuss and pinpoint the specific challenges faced by the people of Orillia.
2. *Develop Strategies:* Explore and formulate actionable strategies and programs to address these challenges.
3. *Facilitate Collaboration:* Foster collaboration among community leaders, policymakers, and interest-holders.
4. *Generate Measurable Actions:* Establish short-term and long-term measurable actions to support residents and break the cycle of poverty.
5. *Contribute to Research:* Support the development of the poverty reduction action plan.

## Generalized Findings

### Housing

Participants identified significant barriers related to affordable housing, including high mortgage rates, insufficient funding for OW and ODSP, zoning policies limiting land availability, economic segregation, stigma associated with seeking housing support, lack of knowledge about the affordable housing process, long waitlists for housing assistance, and poor coordination between service providers.

However, they also recognized various opportunities, such as advocating for policy changes to incentivize affordable housing development and support for renters, establishing designated areas for tiny home projects, implementing home-share programs, and fostering public-private partnerships for creating affordable housing projects. Additionally, they emphasized the importance of improving education and awareness about housing standards and available resources through community outreach initiatives.



**Arts and Recreation**

Participants highlighted concerns regarding affordability and accessibility in arts and recreation. They pointed out that high costs associated with recreational programs and equipment, physical barriers at facilities, and communication gaps hinder access for individuals, especially those with disabilities. Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles were identified as complicating access to sports and services for diverse populations, emphasizing the need for streamlined processes and better communication.

Participants recognized several opportunities for improvement in addressing these concerns. Inclusive programming was emphasized as an important strategy, with the suggestion to expand community events and provide free cultural activities to engage diverse populations and promote cultural appreciation. Additionally, there was a call to invest in new recreational facilities, such as skate parks and outdoor fitness equipment. Improved communication was also highlighted, with a recommendation to promote awareness of low-cost recreation and arts opportunities through public awareness campaigns. Lastly, participants urged for collaboration with local organizations to create more accessible and comprehensive programming.

**Food Security**

Participants raised concerns about the lack of education regarding healthy food options and available food programs, as well as the stigma associated with seeking food support. They also highlighted transportation challenges, such as inadequate transit options to affordable grocery stores, and systemic issues like bureaucratic barriers and income restrictions, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address these limitations in accessing food resources.

Participants suggested expanding community gardens to promote local food production and education, which could help increase access to fresh produce and foster a sense of community. Additionally, implementing food education programs that teach cooking, gardening, and healthy eating skills was proposed as a long-term solution to promote sustainable and healthy food practices within the community. Furthermore, participants emphasized the need to develop partnerships for daily hot meal programs and coordinated food redistribution efforts to ensure that individuals facing food insecurity receive the support they need. Lastly, there was a call to support community advocacy for basic income initiatives and living wage employers as a means to address the root causes of food insecurity.

**Transportation**

Many participants highlighted significant challenges, such as rising gas prices, limited transit options, and accessibility barriers. A common concern was that public transport does not accommodate shift work with the current hours of operation. Additionally, they pointed out that

a lack of information about transit services, inadequate infrastructure such as bus shelters without seating, and cultural stigma surrounding public transit impede transportation services.

Participants have suggested opportunities for improvement to transportation services, including implementing reduced transit fares for low-income users and extending service hours to improve accessibility. They also highlighted the importance of maintaining adequate transit infrastructure with better bus shelters, medical equipment accommodations, and secure bike storage. Additionally, creating partnerships with local organizations to develop community transportation solutions and increasing awareness and education about public transit options through campaigns and apps were recommended.

### **Youth Services**

Participants highlighted several challenges within current youth services, including affordability issues such as high costs associated with extracurricular activities, sports, and educational programs that limit access for low-income families. Additionally, they identified accessibility barriers, such as lack of transportation to youth centres and insufficient programming for those with disabilities. Communication gaps were also highlighted, with many families unaware of available youth programs and services. Moreover, stigma associated with seeking help for mental health and social support needs created barriers for youth in accessing services. Lastly, participants identified poor coordination between schools, community organizations, and service providers.

The participants highlighted several areas for improvement in current youth services. These include the necessity to expand affordable extracurricular activities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility irrespective of economic background. Moreover, there was an emphasis on increasing awareness of available youth services as actionable strategies to keep families informed about the support and opportunities available to them. Additionally, the importance of reducing the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues and improving access to mental health services for youth was emphasized. Lastly, there was a call for strengthened coordination between schools, community organizations, and service providers to offer a unified and cohesive approach to youth services.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Several key themes emerged from the symposium discussions, highlighting the interconnected nature of poverty-related issues in Orillia:

- 1. Affordability:**
  - a. Challenges related to affordability affect access to housing, recreational programs, and food security initiatives, particularly for low-income families.
- 2. Systemic Barriers:**
  - a. Disparities in access to resources and opportunities are influenced by bureaucratic challenges and structural inequalities, highlighting the need for streamlined systems to improve access to services, especially in housing and social services.
- 3. Accessibility:**
  - a. Issues related to physical and informational accessibility, including the lack of accommodations for individuals with disabilities and insufficient awareness of available services, hinder access to essential resources.
- 4. Stigma and Perception:**
  - a. Social stigma associated with poverty, mental health, and the use of public services creates barriers to seeking help, while cultural barriers affect community engagement and service utilization, necessitating efforts to address negative perceptions.
- 5. Education and Awareness:**
  - a. There is a need for educational programs that inform residents about available services, healthy living, and financial literacy, emphasizing improved communication strategies to raise awareness about programs and resources for effective outreach.
- 6. Mental Health and Well-being:**
  - a. Accessible mental health services and initiatives to reduce stigma and promote well-being are needed, along with strategies aimed at building resilience among families facing poverty and other hardships.
- 7. Collaboration and Community Engagement:**
  - a. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration among community organizations, government, and the private sector, engaging residents in discussions and initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment in addressing local challenges.
- 8. Employment and Skills Training:**
  - a. Skills gap and challenges in finding sustainable employment due to systemic issues and transportation problems limit access to job opportunities, highlighting the need for improved transit services and accessible employment programs.

## **Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey (July 2024)**

### **Executive Summary**

- The surveys were available to the public for two weeks (July 15 to July 29) and distributed via the City of Orillia website, social media and other advertising channels, local media, and various service providers.

- It accumulated a total of 295 responses. The final data encapsulates the responses of the 258 participants that consented to participation; the other responses were omitted.
- It featured multiple-choice, ranking, and open-ended questions.
- The main areas explored were demographic information, affordable housing, arts and recreation, youth services, employment services, food security, transportation, and overall experiences of poverty.
- The survey included a list of emergency resources at the end to provide support to participants in the event of a crisis.

## Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to engage the community and empower residents to have a voice in shaping their future and the decision-making process. By incorporating their insights, the aim was to ensure that the recommendations in the Poverty Reduction Action Plan are grounded in real-life experiences, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the future poverty reduction strategy.

## Objectives

1. *Community Engagement*: Encourage active participation from community members in discussions surrounding poverty and its effects.
2. *Empowerment*: Enable individuals to influence their circumstances and take part in the processes that affect their lives.
3. *Identify Core Challenges*: Uncover the primary obstacles faced by individuals and families experiencing poverty in Orillia.
4. *Recommendation Development*: Suggest actionable recommendations by addressing the specific needs and concerns identified by the community.

## Methodology

The Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey employed a mixed-methods approach to gather comprehensive data on the experiences and perceptions of poverty within the community. The methodology consisted of the following components:

**Survey Design:** A structured questionnaire was developed using the results from the symposium, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative questions. It featured multiple-choice, ranking, and open-ended questions designed to capture diverse perspectives on the challenges and potential poverty-related solutions. The survey aimed to capture demographic information, as well as insights related to affordable housing, arts and recreation, youth services, employment services, food security, transportation, and overall experiences of poverty. It was designed to

take approximately 20 minutes to complete, with assurances of anonymity and confidentiality to encourage honest responses.

**Participant Recruitment:** Participants were recruited in partnership with various community organizations, social media platforms, and local media outlets to ensure a diverse representation of the population. Efforts were made to reach marginalized groups, including low-income families, single parents, and transient individuals.

**Research Ethics Board Review and Approval:** REB approval was obtained from The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board prior to data collection.

**Data Collection:** The survey was administered online to facilitate accessibility and convenience for participants. Hard copies were available at the Orillia City Centre, the Orillia Recreation Centre, and the Orillia Public Library.

*(See Appendix C: Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey Results)*

## **Thematic Analysis**

### **1. Stigma and Awareness**

Many community members highlighted the stigma associated with poverty, emphasizing the need for public awareness and education to reduce negative perceptions. Comments suggest that poverty is often misunderstood, and there is a call for initiatives that promote understanding and empathy toward those experiencing poverty.

- a. “The poor in our area experience so much stigma and always have. I have felt it for 40 years. Providing access to recreation programs, arts and culture events, third spaces, transportation, food, and housing would help with this stigma” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “Help reduce the stigma around people in poverty. Poverty is a spectrum. There are people who can afford a house over their head but no food in their fridge, these people have kids to feed and sometimes animals. Provide public information around the poverty issue in Orillia to create more awareness” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

### **2. Access to Affordable Services**

Community members assert a need for more access to affordable services, particularly childcare and housing. They expressed frustration over the high costs of daycare, which impede their ability to work, and the unaffordability of housing, which leads to economic

instability even among those with full-time jobs. There is a strong need for more affordable housing options and support services that cater to low-income families.

- a. “Affordable daycare is what is holding me back the most. I can't find work strictly during school hours and every other weekend. I need daycare to work but I need to work to afford daycare. I'm kinda stuck” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “Housing affordability is huge for me. My fiancée and I were homeless in the fall of 2023 because we couldn't afford our rent despite the fact that we both work full-time, well-paying jobs” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

### **3. Employment and Economic Opportunities**

Responses indicate a need for job creation and economic stability. Community members suggested that local businesses should be incentivized to hire from within the community and that the municipality better support individuals with awareness and access to local training and skill development opportunities.

- a. “Job programs and skills development are fine, but there are many barriers people can't overcome to be considered for various positions even though they can actually do the job” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “Please invest in the future of Orillia. Families are leaving, and young graduates won't stay; there is nothing here anymore. It's not safe to walk anywhere, and there are no job opportunities... The Orillia I loved is gone, and soon I will be forced to leave to find work” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

### **4. Community Support and Resources**

Responses indicate the need for enhanced community support systems. Community members' suggestions include the establishment of an interconnected food strategy, a designated homeless encampment area with amenities, more community gardens, food preparation programs, and mobile outreach services to assist those struggling with homelessness and food insecurity.

- a. “I also think that there is not enough transitional support - it is nearly impossible for people to access resources when struggling with homelessness due to lack of internet, address, etc. I think physical outreach to areas that the unhoused are known to frequent would help. On that note, I think expanding mobile outreach with resources (food, basic supplies) and communications surrounding them

would be very helpful, especially during the winter months” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

- b. “Develop an Orillia and Area Community Food Strategy - that incorporates poverty reduction, climate action, local economic development and education. Root this strategy in an urban farm that could double as a job training program [for agricultural and related employment] as the skills are transferable” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

## 5. Systemic Barriers

Several responses pointed out systemic issues that perpetuate poverty, such as discrimination, lack of transportation, and inadequate childcare options. To address these barriers, the municipality is called to lobby for universal basic income, promote volunteerism, advocacy, and civic engagement, and increase access to local services.

- a. “Addressing poverty requires a comprehensive strategy that not only meets immediate needs but also addresses underlying systemic issues... Systemic barriers such as discrimination, lack of access to transportation, or inadequate child care options can perpetuate poverty. Small cities can identify and address these barriers through policy reforms, community initiatives, and advocacy efforts to ensure equitable access to opportunities for all residents” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “Many who work to aid the poor are themselves struggling, living on debt or parental support. These temporary crutches don’t sustain younger generations for long” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

## 6. Mental Health and Well-being

Many community members noted that those living in poverty often face significant mental health challenges. There is a need for programs that address these issues and provide support for mental health alongside poverty reduction efforts.

- a. “I think that poverty and substance abuse are almost always connected. Providing better programs for supporting those struggling with addictions would be a great start” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “The poor experience great mental health challenges. We need to be able to engage with the same activities and experiences well-off people do to challenge stigma and heal our mental health” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

## 7. Collective Efforts

Finally, there is a significant focus on the necessity of community engagement and empowerment. Respondents highlighted that cultivating a sense of community and solidarity can enhance efforts to address poverty. This can be done by implementing a collaborative approach to poverty reduction, and through the creation of safe spaces.

- a. “Addressing poverty requires a collaborative approach involving government agencies, non-profits, businesses, and community organizations. By forging partnerships and leveraging resources, small cities can implement holistic strategies that address diverse aspects of poverty and create lasting impact” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).
- b. “The library is a really great community space that has many services that benefit struggling people in our community; if only there were more spaces like this in Orillia that were genuinely empathetic towards those living in poverty” (Anonymous Survey Participant, 2024).

# Outlining the Orillia Poverty Reduction Strategy

## Priorities

1. Establish an explicit vision and mission, and outline the definition of poverty.
2. Establish a community-based governance system to leverage expertise and develop strategies aligned with the community's needs.
3. Leverage existing initiatives that contribute to poverty reduction.
4. Introduce trauma-informed approaches to reinforce community resilience, create support networks, and eliminate stigma associated with poverty.
5. Prioritize human rights and social justice to reduce marginalization, racism, discrimination, and gender-based violence.
6. Respect Indigenous sovereignty and pursue reconciliation through Indigenous partnership.
7. Focus on short-term measures to alleviate poverty while working towards long-term sustainability.
8. Implement monitoring and evaluation processes to track progress and adjust strategies to increase accountability.



## Considerations

### 1. Collective Action

- a. To address poverty issues collaboratively, form an intersectional coalition that includes representatives from local non-profits, government agencies, businesses, interest holders, Indigenous individuals, immigrants, and individuals with lived experiences of poverty.
- b. Schedule regular meetings to discuss and educate about ongoing challenges, share resources, and develop joint initiatives.

### b. Transdisciplinary Approaches

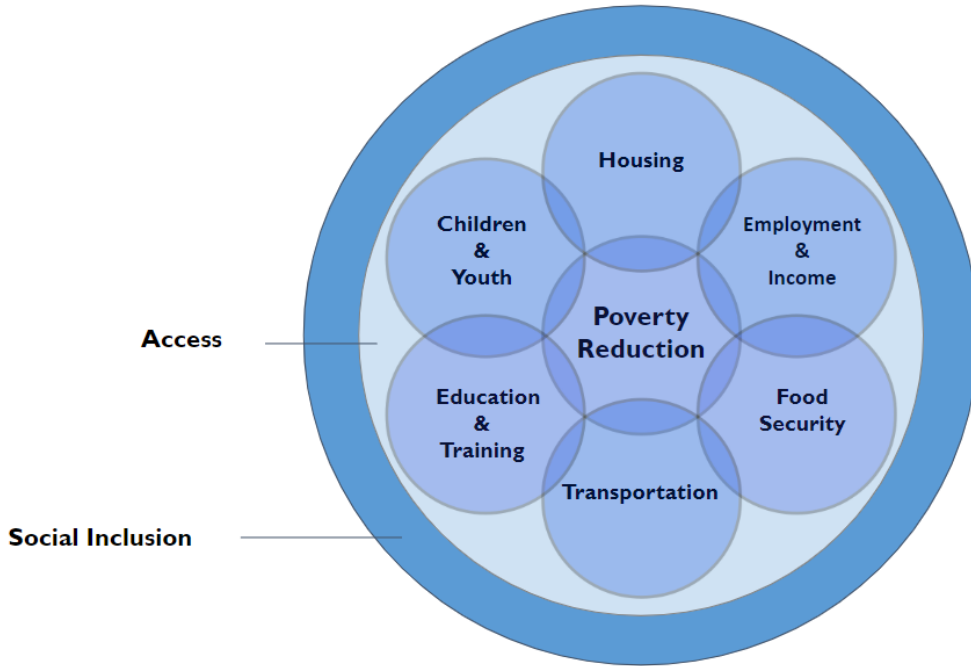
- a. Integrate knowledge and strategies across multiple domains—including poverty reduction, climate action, local economic development, education, food security, healthcare access, housing affordability, transportation equity, youth development, and economic resilience.

### c. Consider Potential Partnerships

- a. Work with the United Way, the Tamarack Institute, and/or the Simcoe County Poverty Coalition to develop the finalized Orillia Poverty Reduction Strategy.

### d. Public Reporting

- a. Create an online platform to communicate with the community, share documents, and track progress on initiatives.
- b. Implement a report card system that evaluates and publicly grades the progress of poverty reduction initiatives using clear, accessible metrics and feedback from the community.



### Goals and Recommendations

- **Short Term**
- ❖ **Medium Term**
- **Long Term**

<b>Goal Area: Access to Services, Resources, and Support</b>	
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Utilize Local Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Information Orillia and the use of 211 Ontario.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase awareness of the Human Services Coordinator at the Orillia Public Library.</li> <li>● Consider implementing a similar role at the Orillia Recreation Centre.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote local hubs like the social services hub and the Common Roof.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider the creation of a human services hub, with youth, senior, and other services.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop a Resource Guide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Collaborate with local organizations to compile a comprehensive guide that includes contact information, eligibility criteria, and application processes for various assistance programs.</li> <li>❖ Include a portion that outlines financial assistance initiatives to maximize income.</li> <li>❖ Make the guide available online and in print at locations such as schools, libraries, and community centres.</li> <li>❖ Schedule outreach campaigns to raise awareness of available services and discuss the needs of the community; update the guide as needed.</li> </ul>
<p>Outreach of Poverty Reduction Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing outreach to Lakehead University’s Department of Social Work students and Georgian College’s Human Services students, similar to the approach in Thunder Bay.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider hosting an annual Poverty Reduction Symposium to connect community organizations, local businesses, and interest-holders to network and discuss poverty-related issues and solutions.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal Area: Health, Well-being, and Social Inclusion</b></p>	
<p><b>Goals</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>

Increase the Visibility of Mental Health Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distribute information in community centres, schools, and healthcare facilities to raise awareness of available services and destigmatize the utilization of mental health services.</li> <li>● Include hard copies such as brochures and flyers, as well as digital platforms including social media, billboards at public facilities, and other channels.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the creation of the Coordinated Access to Mental Health Services system by the Couchiching Family Health Network.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Create a dedicated section of the proposed resource guide that lists local mental health services.</li> </ul>
Destigmatize Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Facilitate workshops on mental health awareness, coping strategies, and stress management in partnership with local mental health professionals.</li> <li>❖ Provide resources and materials for participants to take home, including self-care tips and local support contacts.</li> <li>❖ Create a safe space for open discussions about mental health to reduce stigma and encourage community engagement.</li> </ul>
Ensure Accessible Services and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Library of Things at the Orillia Public Library.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support and expand low-income programming such as the Recreation Financial Assistance Pilot Program.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing application support services.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider developing a program that provides low-income residents with access to affordable services and programs throughout the city, similar to Kingston, ON's Municipal Fee Assistance Program.</li> </ul>
Organize Inclusive Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to host and promote free events and festivals.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work with local associations to organize regular community events that celebrate diversity and promote social inclusion, such as cultural festivals to facilitate cultural appreciation.</li> </ul>
Destigmatize Addiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to support the addiction clinic and treatment centres in Orillia.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Launch community-wide campaigns to educate the public about addiction as a health issue.</li> </ul>
Facilitate Access to Primary Care Physicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Complement Health Care Connect by working with the Couchiching Family Health Team, and the Couchiching Ontario Health Team to create a local registry of family care physicians accepting new patients.</li> <li>❖ Work with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit to distribute information through Health Connection.</li> </ul>
Promote Disability Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote inclusive programming such as Children's Respite Services and the Adult Protective Service Worker Program through Catulpa.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Support the Orillia Accessibility Plan 2023-2028. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Actively identify and remove barriers in municipal facilities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Improve public transportation options to be accessible to all.</li> <li>❖ Ensure that information and communication are accessible to all.</li> <li>❖ Promote awareness of accessibility issues within the community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to lobby for increases to ODSP.</li> </ul>
<p>Promote Age-Friendly Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Aging Well - Senior Support Program for aging Indigenous older adults offered by the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle.</li> <li>● Promote the Age-Friendly Senior Grant Program through the County of Simcoe to fund projects that enable older adults to live independently.</li> <li>❖ Work with the Age-Friendly Orillia Advisory Committee and support the Age-Friendly Orillia Community Action Plan 2022-2026.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ensure community parks, open spaces, and trails are accessible for all ages.</li> <li>❖ Investigate the provision of transit subsidies for low-income residents to improve access to public transportation.</li> <li>❖ Support the development of a mix of housing types, including affordable and communal housing options.</li> <li>❖ Require new buildings to be barrier-free and provide universal access to public sidewalks.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lobby for increases to CPP, OAS, and GIS.</li> </ul>
<p>Support the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote New Path Youth and Family Counselling Services to provide support for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to commemorate Transgender Day of Remembrance, Day of Pink, Day Against Homophobia, Pride Month, and Transgender Day of Remembrance.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the representation and visibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Orillia by supporting local pride initiatives and community-based events.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Collaborate with local organizations, such as the SMDHU, to create a campaign to destigmatize 2SLGBTQIA+ topics and promote human rights.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Advocate for policies and practices that protect the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, such as anti-discrimination laws, inclusive healthcare policies, inclusive health curriculum, and support for gender-affirming care.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal Area: Income, Employment, and Community Economic Development</b>	
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Increase Income Security	❖ Consider working with the Ontario Living Wage Network to advocate for a living wage policy.
	➤ Continue to lobby for increases to OW and ODSP.
	➤ Advocate for Universal Basic Income (UBI) at the federal and provincial levels.
Increase Funding for Support Services	● Develop a clear proposal outlining the needs and potential impact of increased funding on the community.
	● Collaborate with businesses to identify potential funding sources such as Canadian Tire's Community Development Grants.
	❖ Mobilize community members to advocate for increased funding for local shelters, food banks, and mental health services through petitions, public meetings, and social media campaigns.
	❖ Consider hosting an annual community event, such as galas or auctions, to engage residents, raise awareness, and fundraise for local initiatives.
	➤ Lobby for funding increases from the federal and provincial government to support local social services.



Support Local Employment Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote local employment agencies such as Agilec, Georgian College Career and Employment Community Services, Empower Simcoe, and New Path Youth and Family Services.</li> <li>● Increase awareness of services such as résumé writing assistance and interview preparation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Organize bi-annual job fairs in collaboration with local businesses and employment agencies to connect job seekers with potential employers.</li> <li>❖ Create a follow-up system to track job placements resulting from the fair and gather feedback from participants.</li> </ul>
Facilitate the Creation of New Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG) to provide employers with funding to offset the cost of training new employees.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Incentivize the hiring of individuals deemed as “high-risk.”</li> </ul>
Implement Financial Literacy Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work with local high schools, colleges, and community organizations to provide financial literacy workshops that cover budgeting, saving, and investing to youth.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Work with Lakehead University Faculty of Education to create toolkits for teaching financial literacy to students.</li> </ul>
Support Maximizing Income Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Income Tax Clinic by Information Orillia.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider creating a workshop that teaches people to maximize their income through effective budgeting, understanding tax benefits, exploring side jobs, and leveraging community resources for financial assistance and job training programs.</li> </ul>
<p>Support Small Businesses in Orillia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing initiatives to promote Living Wage Employers within the city.</li> <li>● Promote the Small Business Centre of Barrie Simcoe County and Orillia.</li> <li>● Promote the Orillia Area Community Development Corporation (CDC).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal Area: Transportation</b></p> <p><i>(To be completed in collaboration with the Development Services and Engineering Department and the Transportation and Parking Working Group.)</i></p>	
Goals	Recommendations
<p>Expand Multi-Modal Transportation Options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Normalize active transportation modes such as walking, cycling, and public transportation in the Multi-Modal Transportation Master Plan (MTMP).</li> <li>● Improve linkages and connectivity through the continued development of safe bike lanes and sidewalks.</li> <li>❖ Provide more bike storage infrastructure.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing a community transit shuttle that connects low-income residents to food banks, healthcare facilities, and grocery stores.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consider alternative transportation options such as on-demand microtransit, ride-sharing partnerships, bike-sharing programs, and e-bikes.</li> </ul>
<p>Improve Public Transit Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider increasing the frequency of buses and extending service hours to accommodate shift work and post-secondary class times.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ensure transit stops are safe, well-lit, and accessible for differently abled individuals (mobility challenges, hearing and sight impairment, sensory issues, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p>Increase Access to Transit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to support the Orillia Transit Senior Passes and Teen Pass Pilot Program.</li> <li>● Consider extending the duration of the teen pilot program.</li> <li>● Make the Senior Pass Program more flexible, including the option to pay with cash.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to provide free transit for elementary school children accompanied by an adult.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the transit app to improve access to real-time transit information.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Collaborate with schools, community centres, and organizations to promote transit services and provide information on available passes and programs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing a pilot program that provides lower transit rates for post-secondary students and low-income residents.</li> </ul>
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**Goal Area: Housing**  
*(To be completed in collaboration with the Housing Coordinator and the Affordable Housing Working Group.)*

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Increase Affordable Housing Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the Affordable Housing Working Group's call for a permanent Housing Coordinator position.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Secondary Suites Program through Simcoe County to increase the supply of affordable housing.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Affordable Homeownership Program through Simcoe County to assist low-to-moderate income renter households in purchasing an affordable home.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Orillia Housing Resource Centre.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Support the 2023 Affordable Housing Action Plan (ASAP).                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Coordinate with affordable housing groups focusing on youth, families, Indigenous communities, and older adults.</li> <li>❖ Establish a by-law to prevent the demolition or conversion of rental properties without</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>replacement units at or below average market rents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Promote awareness and support for non-traditional housing options such as tiny homes and co-housing.</li> <li>❖ Create a fundraising campaign for an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.</li> <li>❖ Explore voluntary developer contributions to increase funding.</li> <li>❖ Provide education and resources to landlords on grants for energy efficiency and legislative changes.</li> <li>❖ Develop a strategy for the City to acquire land for future affordable housing development.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide Access to Quality Homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Ontario Renovates Program through Simcoe County to provide funding for urgent repairs, renovations, and accessibility modifications for low- to moderate-income homeowners.</li> </ul>
<p>Support Renters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the rent supplement/housing allowance distributed by the County of Simcoe.</li> <li>● Promote the Community Rent Supplement Program (CRSP) through Empower Simcoe and Simcoe County.</li> <li>● Increase awareness of renter rights and responsibilities</li> <li>❖ Provide guidance on navigating disputes with landlords.</li> <li>➤ Lobby for rent control measures.</li> </ul>

Support Homeowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive Program offered by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation to provide financial assistance to first-time homebuyers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Ontario Renovates Program offered by the County of Simcoe to provide financial assistance for urgent repairs, renovations, and accessibility modifications for low- to moderate-income homeowners.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Home Winterproofing Program offered by the County of Simcoe to provide free energy-efficient upgrades.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Affordable Homeownership Program offered by the County of Simcoe to provide forgivable down payment assistance.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Energy Affordability Program offered by the County of Simcoe to provide free energy-saving assessments and upgrades to help homeowners reduce their energy costs.</li> </ul>
Promote the Dignity of Precariously Housed Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Empower Simcoe's Regional Housing Support Services.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Housing Retention Program offered by the County of Simcoe.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support The Lighthouse and the Overnight Warming Centre through annual funding.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider designating a site for people experiencing homelessness to safely camp when shelters are exceeding capacity. This site should include controlled burning sites, portable toilets, fresh water, and an emergency phone.</li> <li>❖ Partner with local organizations to facilitate outreach to this location.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider creating a social space for homeless individuals to visit during the day. The space should have access to snacks, fresh water, bathrooms, information about programs to help keep people housed, and social support services.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Partner with Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH) to develop compassionate strategies to address homelessness.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal Area: Education, Training, and Skill Development</b>	
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Promote Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the services offered by the Orillia Literacy Council.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Celebrate success stories featuring individuals who have benefited from literacy programs to inspire others to participate.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide information about the Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Host family literacy nights to educate and engage parents/guardians in youth literacy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partner with local schools to distribute information about literacy programs, such as tutoring opportunities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Establish a tutoring network that pairs secondary students with elementary school students, and secondary students with post-secondary students offering volunteering opportunities and academic assistance.</li> </ul>
<p>Reduce Barriers to Education and Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an online directory of resources for students to increase awareness of available grants, bursaries, scholarships, and other financial aid options.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work with local businesses and institutions to create a directory of available apprenticeships, vocational training programs, and other post-secondary opportunities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider a partnership with the Orillia &amp; District Literacy Council, Kumon, etc., to provide low-cost tutoring for primary and secondary students from low-income families.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Increase support for students struggling with school attendance.</li> <li>❖ Collaborate with schools to develop a system for early identification of students with frequent absences.</li> <li>❖ Consider targeted programs that address the root causes of absenteeism, such as family issues, mental health challenges, or financial difficulties.</li> <li>❖ Utilize counselling services provided by the school board, combine with</li> </ul>



	mentorship programs, and peer support groups.
	❖ Work with the County of Simcoe to expand the eligibility of the Bursary Program to include Orillia students.
	➤ Advocate for higher OSAP grants rather than loans.
Promote Post-Secondary Attainment	● Provide information about career counselling services.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partner with local high schools to encourage high school graduation.</li> <li>❖ Work with high schools to identify students at risk of dropping out and provide targeted interventions, such as tutoring, counselling, or alternative learning options.</li> <li>❖ Consider hosting informational sessions on the importance of graduation, provide resources to help parents support their children's academic journey, and encourage regular communication between parents and teachers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Work with local high schools and post-secondary institutions to support post-secondary learning.</li> <li>❖ Consider organizing workshops focused on career exploration, college application processes, and financial planning for post-secondary education.</li> <li>❖ Work with Lakehead University and Georgian College to facilitate a mentorship program between post-secondary students and secondary students based on common interests.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal Area: Food Security</b>	
<i>(To be completed in collaboration with the Orillia Food Access &amp; Sustainability Working Group.)</i>	
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Implement a Sustainable Food Systems Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the ongoing development of the Orillia Food Strategy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support the Food Access and Sustainability Working Group's call to hire a Community Food Strategy Coordinator.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Support the expansion of school food programs in coordination with the upcoming National School Food Program.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explore the idea of urban farming.</li> </ul>
Promote the Orillia Food Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Sustainable Orillia's Food Map and Directory (2020) in public locations such as parks, community centres, schools, and the library to increase awareness of food support.</li> <li>● Partner with Sustainable Orillia to create an updated Food Map and Directory.</li> </ul>
Implement a Community Meal Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider facilitating a community meal program that provides free or low-cost meals to families in need.</li> <li>❖ Partner with Information Orillia to conduct an audit of where meals are currently being provided.</li> <li>❖ Promote their directory, expand to allow community organizations to register their efforts.</li> <li>❖ Partner with local restaurants and chefs to fill gaps in the current services.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Promote through schools, community centres, social service organizations, non-profit organizations, and social media.</li> <li>❖ Consider implementing a centrally located community kitchen.</li> </ul>
Host Community Food Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote events that bring together local food resources, such as farmers' markets, to encourage community participation.</li> <li>● Include cooking demonstrations, nutrition workshops, and free meal samples to attract attendees.</li> <li>● Collaborate with local nutritionists and the SMDHU to provide educational content during these events.</li> </ul>
Encourage Participation in Community Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partner with local hardware stores and garden centres to participate in community gardening and food production, such as donating seeds or gardening supplies.</li> <li>● Promote the Seed Library at the Orillia Public Library.</li> <li>● Organize community gardening days, inviting residents to plant and maintain gardens.</li> <li>❖ Consider partnering with the Orillia Public Library to develop workshops on sustainable gardening practices and nutrition to encourage local food production.</li> </ul>
Promote Community Garden Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase awareness of community gardens, regulations and application process.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing a program that connects older adults with unused garden space to a resident looking to garden.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Goal Area: Children and Youth Services</b>  <i>(To be completed in collaboration with the Recreation, Youth and Culture Division.)</i></p>	
Goals	Recommendations
Support Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the MotherCare Program, the Baby Steps Program, the Next Steps Program, and the Community Action Plan by Catulpa Community Support Services Inc.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program by SMDHU.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote Healthy Smiles Ontario to enhance access to dental care for low-income residents.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Emergency Baby Needs Depot, Toys for Development Lending Library, and programs offered by the EarlyON Centre.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Indigenous Parenting Program by the Orillia Native Women’s Group.</li> </ul>
Increase Access to Affordable Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partner with the County of Simcoe to explore ways to advance future childcare space allocations using existing funding to address immediate needs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partner with the County of Simcoe to support the development and expansion of community-based childcare providers in Orillia within the CWELCC program.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider a municipally owned childcare facility for babies under 18-months old under the CWELCC program.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Partner with the County of Simcoe to lobby for increased childcare space allocations and funding in line with the CWELCC program.</li> </ul>
<p>Promote and Expand Youth Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to support the development of the Orillia Youth Strategy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to support and promote the Orillia Youth Centre; consider expansion to ensure adequate facility space for free programming for youth aged 11 to 17.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue the use of the quarterly recreation guides.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote the Let’s Socialize and Youth Program offered by Empower Simcoe.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partner with Youth Haven to discuss potential expansion of outreach services and support for youth in the community.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Partner with a local organization to create a low-cost, youth-friendly space during the hours the Youth Centre close is not operating.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider implementing a payment plan system for recreation programs.</li> </ul>

Enhance Transition Support for Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote transitional services offered by Empower Simcoe.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Work with the Youth Centre, Empower Simcoe, and Youth Haven to implement a standardized transition planning process that includes regular check-ins and updates as youth approach the age of transition.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Consider establishing a mentorship program that connects youth with adults who have successfully transitioned out of the transitional housing system.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

This report represents a significant step toward reducing poverty and increasing well-being within the City of Orillia. This action plan takes a multi-faceted approach designed to alleviate the immediate impacts of poverty while laying the groundwork for sustainable, long-term solutions. By focusing on reducing immediate harm, such as providing access to essential resources and support services, the plan offers relief to those facing urgent needs requiring timely solutions. At the same time, it seeks to address the root causes of poverty through systemic changes and community-wide initiatives.

Implementing these strategies requires viewing the plan as a dynamic, evolving document that adapts to the changing needs of the community and the broader socioeconomic context. Continuous engagement with residents, local organizations, community leaders, and interest-holders will ensure the strategies remain relevant and effective. Moreover, while the goal areas and recommendations are currently pillarized, they are meant to be considered as interrelated to facilitate incremental change that will contribute to sustainable poverty reduction.

Moving forward, it is requested that Council authorize the formation of an action-oriented Poverty Reduction Working Group to implement these recommendations and allocate funds from the Poverty Reduction Strategy to hire a part-time, contracted human resources coordinator to facilitate. This group will be tasked with informed decision-making, exploring effective implementation strategies, analyzing current efforts, addressing access barriers, and ensuring long-term sustainability. The working group will review the recommendations and determine the

most practical and impactful ways to execute them, facilitating the move from planning to concrete action for a meaningful and lasting impact on poverty reduction. The group will also address governance, success measurements, and coordination of efforts across Orillia. Ideally, it would consist of one member of Council and five community members representing housing, food, transportation, youth, and arts and recreation. Further engagement of the broader community would be explored through various methods, such as through polls created by the working group based upon unforeseen gaps in the research. This ongoing dialogue will help refine the approach, address emerging challenges, and improve the overall impact of the poverty reduction efforts. The plan, including the working group's official findings and recommendations, is to be brought back to Council in 2025.

Additionally, there is potential for future expansion of these efforts in partnership with neighbouring municipalities, such as Ramara, Chippewas of Rama/Mnjikaning First Nation, Oro-Medonte, and Severn. Collaborating with these communities would support transient residents and could establish a regional support network that addresses similar challenges and share resources across a broader area.

In conclusion, this Poverty Reduction Action Plan is more than just a set of recommendations – it's a call to action to create a society where everyone can succeed and live a dignified life. It presents an opportunity to build a more equitable community by providing necessary resources and opportunities for all residents allowing everyone to achieve their full potential. Embracing the principles of social justice and collaboration is crucial to achieve lasting effects. Through dedication to these principles, the City of Orillia can work towards building resilience.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Summary of Municipal Poverty Reduction Strategies**

#### **Kingston, ON**

##### **Demographic Comparison:**

The average age in both cities is similar, with Kingston at 42.7 years and Orillia at 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is 21.1% in Kingston, slightly lower than Orillia's 26%. Kingston has a significantly lower percentage of one-parent families at 4.8% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 49.65% of Kingston residents hold postsecondary education compared to Orillia's 40.95%. Kingston also has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 10.81% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is similar in Kingston at 11.3% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Kingston has a slightly higher percentage of renters at 19.27% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. Kingston's unemployment rate is slightly lower at 13.2% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

##### **Plans for Action as a Community (2013)**

###### **Vision:**

The implicit vision is to ensure a safe, accessible, sustainable community for everyone.

###### **Mission:**

The implicit mission is to implement a community-based strategy that effectively reduces poverty through collaboration among various sectors whilst including those with lived experiences of poverty.

###### **Values:**

Collaboration, inclusivity, sustainability, and empowerment.

###### **Definition of Poverty:**

Poverty is defined not just as a lack of income but as a multifaceted issue that encompasses inadequate access to essential services, social exclusion, and diminished quality of life.

###### **Priorities:**

1. Housing
  - a. Provide safe, stable, accessible, and affordable housing.
2. Skills Development and Employment
  - a. Create living-wage job opportunities and strengthen skills for secure employment.

3. Education
  - a. Provide diverse and equitable education options and services for success.
4. Social Services and Community Supports
  - a. Coordinate programs and services to meet individuals' and families' evolving needs.
5. Health
  - a. Provide safe, reliable, and healthy local food supply and equal health opportunities.

**Key Points:**

- Prioritize poverty reduction over alleviation for meaningful progress.
- Utilize collaborative leadership for effective multi-sector efforts.
- Take a comprehensive approach to address interconnected causes and effects.
- Base strategies on local assets and strengths.
- Embrace an ongoing process of learning and adaptation.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Implementing a poverty impact checklist to assess policies and programs through a health equity lens.
- To develop targeted recommendations, establishing working groups focused on specific themes such as housing, health, and education.

**Governance:**

The governance structure includes a Poverty Reduction Initiative Steering Committee composed of representatives from the City of Kingston, United Way, and a variety of social service organizations.

**Engagement:**

Community engagement is achieved through public surveys, consultations, focus groups, and workshops.

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

“Help children succeed in school with parental and community support” (City of Kingston, 2010, p.9)

- a. Implement effective parent engagement models (e.g. Pathways to Education) and create toolkits for educators.
- b. Develop a directory and map of support services, identify service gaps, and track progress in addressing them.



- c. Pair children with skilled volunteers, promote programs for those with learning disabilities and involve local institutions in educator training.
- 2. "Understanding the impacts of poverty and other determinants of health" (City of Kingston, 2010, p.11)
  - a. Use tools like Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) to evaluate policies and programs through a health equity perspective.
  - b. Use research and community voices to raise awareness about the link between poverty and health.
  - c. Improve health care access and navigation for vulnerable populations.
- 3. "A safe, stable, accessible and affordable home for everyone" (City of Kingston, 2010, p. 15)
  - a. Educate landlords, tenants, and the community on housing rights and inclusive development.
  - b. Support local organizations in identifying housing needs and solutions, and facilitate community-municipal communication.
  - c. Create hubs for coordinating housing services and improve access.
- 4. "Enhance access to living wage jobs; build employment potential of people" (City of Kingston, 2010, p. 17).
  - a. Promote using 211 for skills and employment support.
  - b. Pilot reduced-cost transit passes, and improve access to transit information.
  - c. Develop strategies to assist employers in hiring low-income applicants.
- 5. "A compassionate community & system of supports for people in need" (City of Kingston, 2010, p.18).
  - a. Provide discounted services through 'smart cards' and partner with businesses to offer goods at reduced rates.
  - b. Promote the use of 211 for accessing social services.
  - c. Foster peer support and networking among service providers, and use electronic boards to list services (City of Kingston, United Way, 2010).

**Outcomes:**

Led to the development of the Kingston Poverty Reduction Initiative (2018) - a multi-sectoral community collaborative project, coordinated through the United Way and the City of Kingston (Tamarack Institute, n.d.-b).

**Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County, ON**

**Demographic Comparison:**

The average age in Haliburton is 52.8 years, higher than Orillia's 45.8 years. The 65+ population in Haliburton is 35.2%, higher than Orillia's 26%. Notably, the percentage of one-parent families is substantially lower in Haliburton at 3.57% compared to Orillia's 49%. In terms of education, the percentage of residents with postsecondary education is higher in Haliburton at 46.3% compared to Orillia's 40.95%. The percentage of residents with no high school diploma is similar in both regions, with Haliburton at 17.7% and Orillia at 17.98%. The LIM-AT is marginally higher in Haliburton at 12.9% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Haliburton has a significantly lower percentage of renters at 5.78% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate in Haliburton is lower at 11.1% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### **Poverty Reduction Strategy For City of Kawartha Lakes and the County of Haliburton (2012)**

#### **Vision:**

“A place where individuals can overcome adversity and reach their full potential” (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2012, p. 8).

#### **Mission:**

To “advocate for a community of economic prosperity with all citizens able to reach their full potential” (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2012, p. 8).

#### **Values:**

Collaboration, community involvement, and a commitment to addressing the diverse reasons behind poverty.

#### **Definition of Poverty:**

Poverty is understood as a complex issue that affects individuals in various ways, impacting their health, education, housing, and other opportunities.

#### **Priorities:**

1. Employment
  - a. Job opportunities and support for individuals to secure stable and meaningful employment.
2. Transportation
  - a. Access to reliable and affordable transportation options to facilitate mobility and access to services.
3. Child Care
  - a. Availability and affordability of childcare services to support working families.

4. Food and Basic Needs
  - a. Access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food and other essential needs.
5. Housing
  - a. Affordable and stable housing options to prevent homelessness and promote community stability.
6. Living v.s. Getting By
  - a. Challenges faced by individuals who are struggling to meet basic needs.
7. Accessing Services
  - a. Availability and awareness of services that support individuals in overcoming poverty.
8. Health Care
  - a. Access to health care services to address the physical and mental health needs of those in poverty.
9. Coordination of Services
  - a. Collaboration among service providers to create a more integrated and efficient support system.
10. Attitudes and Advocacy
  - a. Positive attitudes towards individuals experiencing poverty and advocating for systemic changes to address the root causes of poverty.

**Key Points:**

- This report is a living document and is intended to serve as the foundation for ongoing poverty reduction efforts.
- Highlights the importance of citizen involvement and collaboration among sectors.
- Identifies the human and financial costs of poverty and the benefits of addressing it.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Establishing theme-based working groups (e.g. employment, housing, food).
- Creating an online directory of services to improve access.
- Advocating for increased subsidies and changes to social assistance programs.

**Governance:**

The City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton united. The strategy was developed through a collaborative effort, with the Technology Alliance Group for Kawartha Lakes (TAG) leading the process in partnership with the John Howard Society of Kawartha Lakes & Haliburton, and U-Links Centre for Community Based Research in Haliburton County.

**Engagement:**

Community engagement was achieved through conducting community consultations through focus groups, extensive surveys, targeted surveys, and a local collaborative forum 'Poverty to Possibilities.'

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Create a community-driven group (CDG) to oversee strategy implementation, involving those directly affected, with stable funding and a focus on short-term goals (1-3 years) for effectiveness.
  - a. Short Term (6 months - 1 year):
    - Form the CDG and recruit members.
    - Define leadership roles and secure council representation.
    - Develop a process to share consultation data and create a budget for CDG activities.
    - Incorporate poverty reduction into community vision statements.
    - Consider separate groups or subcommittees for different regions (e.g., Haliburton County and CKL).
  - b. Medium Term (1-3 years):
    - Achieve inclusiveness by involving municipal government, businesses, social service agencies, and individuals with lived experiences.
    - Maintain engagement with all relevant agencies and individuals.
    - Create an annual online 'report card' to track progress and report to councils and media.
    - Form a committee with local schools to address issues related to food, transportation, child care, and recreation.
2. Create CDG theme-based working groups, engage local expertise, and utilize existing community efforts.
  - a. Food Actions:
    - Improve food banks and community gardens.
    - Develop sensitivity training for volunteers and secure sustainable funding for programs like Meals on Wheels.
    - Obtain transportation for food delivery and increase community kitchens.
    - Review and improve school-based food programs and establish backyard gardening.
  - b. Housing Actions:
    - Explore innovative housing models and advocate for new housing developments.
    - Create an affordable renovation program and prioritize new housing stock.

- Increase rent-geared-to-income subsidies and establish a municipal depot for energy-efficient materials.
  - Develop homeowner repair subsidy programs and review housing infrastructure.
- c. Living vs. Getting By (LVGB) Actions:
- Develop local recreation priorities and establish a ‘sponsor a child’ program for recreation.
  - Create donation mechanisms for large items.
  - Promote re-use events and improve community centre re-use efforts (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2012).

### **Outcomes:**

Development of subsequent action plans:

1. Children and Youth Action Plan (2016)

a. Recommendations

- Implement action plans to address the root causes of child poverty.
- Advocate for increased income and social support while removing child support as a deductible income source for families on social assistance.
- Support early learning programs and social supports for children aged 0 to 6 and their families.
- Advocate for a universal childcare system and increase licensed childcare spaces.
- Support subsidized or low-cost recreational opportunities, library programs, and community events for children and families.
- Expand health, recreational, social, and educational program support in the community.
- Support and expand year-round Student Nutrition Programs.
- Promote mentorship programs for children and youth.
- Endorse a Children’s Charter through the Municipal Council (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2016).

2. Employment and Education Action Plan (2015)

a. Recommendations

- Identify and address business opportunities and labour force needs.
- Develop workforce development and training programs with community interest-holders.
- Implement strategies for business retention, expansion, attraction, and new business development to provide sustainable, living-wage employment.

- Improve infrastructure for business, employment, and educational needs, including broadband, transportation, and social infrastructure.
  - Address barriers to employment, education, and job training, such as childcare, transportation, and housing.
  - Increase job and life skill readiness programs and employment supports for Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2015).
3. Food Security Action Plan (2014)
- a. Recommendations
- Advocate for comprehensive federal and provincial policies on poverty and food security.
  - Integrate food systems, healthy eating, and community design into municipal official plans.
  - Support food security initiatives like community gardens and kitchens and promote innovative community food security programs (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2014a).
4. Transportation Action Plan (2014)
- a. Recommendations
- Lobby for reduced gas prices and subsidies at the provincial and federal levels.
  - Advocate for Ontario to prioritize transportation ridership per capita over absolute numbers and develop short-term transportation subsidies for low-income individuals returning to work.
  - Create transportation strategies and expand discounts on bus passes for low-income earners.
  - Develop a rural transportation system and increase transportation support from the City, County, social services, and community organizations.
  - Encourage local businesses to offer minimal-cost delivery services and customer transportation.
  - Invest in active transportation infrastructure, including bike paths, pedestrian walkways, and signage (City of Kawartha Lakes; County of Haliburton, 2014b).

## Windsor, ON

### Demographic Comparison:

The average age in Windsor is 42 years, lower than Orillia's 45.8 years. The 65+ population in Windsor is 19.3%, lower than Orillia's 26%. Notably, the percentage of one-parent families is

significantly lower in Windsor at 9.19% compared to Orillia's 49%. In terms of education, the percentage of residents with postsecondary education is substantially higher in Windsor at 75.39% compared to Orillia's 40.95%. Conversely, the percentage of residents with no high school diploma is higher in Windsor at 28% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is slightly lower in Windsor at 11.3% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Windsor has a higher percentage of renters at 19.51% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate in Windsor is slightly higher at 15.7% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### **Pathway to Potential Windsor-Essex Poverty Reduction Strategy (2024- 2028)**

#### **Vision:**

“Windsor-Essex County is a thriving community, where residents have access to resources and opportunities to reach their full potential” (City of Windsor, County of Essex, 2024, p. 12).

#### **Mission:**

“Through a collective and citizen-centred approach, Pathway to Potential aims to improve the quality of life for Windsor-Essex individuals and families living with poverty by fostering a collective sense of pride and belonging to the community, increasing access to affordable services and supports, and enhancing collaboration across the regional community” (City of Windsor, County of Essex, 2024, p. 12).

#### **Definition of Poverty:**

Adopted the Government of Canada’s definition, which states: "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" (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018 as cited in City of Windsor, County of Essex, p.8).

#### **Values:**

Equity, collaboration, compassion, inclusivity and citizen-centredness.

#### **Priorities:**

1. Identify and support priority neighbourhoods.
2. Improve access to affordable services and programs for individuals and families living in poverty.
3. Establish a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and initiatives.
4. Implement a citizen-centred approach to program delivery.

**Key Points:**

- Emphasizes affordability and accessibility through the enhancement of existing services and programs.
- Asserts the importance of regional collaborations to strengthen partnerships.
- Emphasizes increased data collection to inform decision-making and ongoing efforts.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Establishing a Regional Neighbourhood Council.
- Expanding the Transit Affordable Pass Program throughout the region.
- Creating a Policy & Research Resource Committee to provide specialized knowledge and support for poverty-related initiatives.

**Governance:**

A multi-sectoral committee made up of non-profit organizations, academic institutions, government agencies, and community members with lived experiences of poverty.

**Engagement:**

Engagement activities were conducted between July and November 2023 to collect input from community members, organizations, and service providers. Engagement methods included community workshops, surveys, collaborative partnerships, focus groups, advisory committees, educational campaigns, social media outreach, volunteer opportunities, public speaking engagements, and data sharing.

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Strengthen priority neighbourhoods
  - a. Identify priority neighbourhoods, develop a framework for neighbourhood strengthening, and initiate and support neighbourhood programs.
  - b. Form a Regional Neighbourhood Council.
2. Advance affordable programming
  - a. Implement a citizen-centred approach for delivering P2P-funded programs and increase awareness of regional affordability programs.
  - b. Expand the Transit Affordable Pass Program.
3. Measure regional impact
  - a. Implement the Government of Canada's Quality of Life Framework.
  - b. Establish a framework for collecting and managing data from P2P-funded programs (City of Windsor, County of Essex, 2024).

**Ottawa, ON**



**Demographic Comparison:**

The average age in Ottawa is 40.7 years, lower than Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is 16.9% in Ottawa, significantly lower than Orillia's 26%. Ottawa has a notably lower percentage of one-parent families at 4.35% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 54.05% of Ottawa residents hold postsecondary education, higher than Orillia's 40.95%. Ottawa also has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 9.85% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is lower in Ottawa at 8.9% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Ottawa has a similar percentage of renters at 14.45% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate in Ottawa is lower at 10.3% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

**Ottawa's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan 2021-2031****Vision:**

"A sustainable community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families can meet their needs for education, healthcare, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression" (Emergency and Protective Services Department, 2021, p. 7).

**Mission:**

"Together we will build a meaningful and inclusive plan based on shared goals for the safety and well-being of all communities in Ottawa" (Emergency and Protective Services Department, 2021, p.7).

**Values:**

Collaborative, collective impact, community, evidence-informed, inclusion, innovation, and integrity.

**Definition of Poverty:**

The plan addresses poverty in the context of financial security and poverty reduction strategies, aiming to improve employment opportunities and access to food. The priority outcomes intersect with poverty reduction.

**Priorities:**

1. Discrimination, marginalization, and racism
2. Financial security and poverty reduction
3. Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women

4. Housing
5. Integrated and simpler systems
6. Mental well-being

### **Key Points:**

- Recognizes the diversity of Ottawa as a ‘community of communities.’
- Evidence-informed decision-making is a core principle.
- Aims to improve access to services and promote data sharing among community organizations.

### **Innovative Actions:**

- Streamlining application processes for services.
- Creating collaborative funding approaches to support long-term community initiatives.
- Inclusion of an Indigenous-led consultant firm.

### **Governance:**

The governance structure was based on collaboration between various city departments, public health, social services, housing, and emergency services, as well as community organizations, non-profits, Indigenous elders, and the general public.

### **Engagement:**

Previous engagement activities conducted by other City departments were used. These included virtual conversations, community toolkit submissions, emails and online surveys, storytelling sessions, conversations with organizations and coalitions, Indigenous engagement facilitated by an Indigenous-led consultant firm, and informal discussions and learning opportunities with community members.

### **Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Financial Security and Poverty Reduction
  - a. Develop priorities and actions to address local poverty.
    - Develop a municipal poverty reduction strategy.
    - Develop a municipal food strategy.
2. Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women
  - a. Ensure all survivors can access and benefit from services and support.
    - Increase awareness and support of programs and services.
  - b. Commit to preventing GBV and violence against women.
    - Increase awareness and access to culturally appropriate education and support.

- c. Provide alternatives to reporting.
  - Increase capacity for community accountability mechanisms.
- 3. Housing
  - a. Improve access to services.
    - Integrate and streamline systems navigation.
    - Adapt communications to be more understandable and accessible.
  - b. Promote data sharing.
    - Develop a data governance model.
  - c. Improve the effectiveness of community grant funding.
    - Develop collaborative funding approaches and build community capacity.
- 4. Mental Well-being
  - a. Improve access to mental well-being and substance use supports.
    - Work with partners to offer safer alternatives for mental health crisis response.
    - Facilitate access to services and supports.
  - b. Promote mental well-being in a stigma-free environment.
    - Foster supportive environments to form connections (Emergency and Protective Services Department, 2021).

### **Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2010)**

#### **Vision:**

“All residents of Ottawa living in dignity and health, in a community that fosters participation and inclusion for all” (Community and Social Services Department, 2010, p. 61).

#### **Mission:**

The implicit mission is to create sustainable solutions that reduce poverty while enhancing dignity, health, and quality of life for all residents.

#### **Definition of Poverty:**

Poverty is discussed in terms of socio-economic conditions that affect individuals and communities, emphasizing the need for a broader understanding that includes social exclusion and lack of access to resources.

#### **Priorities:**

1. Ensure all Ottawa residents can meet basic needs, including dignity, safety, health, inclusion, and access to community opportunities.
2. The City should lead in poverty reduction and social infrastructure investment.

3. Include voices of low-income individuals in community initiatives.
4. Use local collaboration and partnerships to find effective solutions.
5. Address community diversity, including gender, age, ability, urban/rural status, newcomers, and racialized groups.
6. Raise public awareness and implement actions to reduce poverty.

#### **Key Points:**

- The strategy is community-driven and builds on previous consultations.
- It recognizes the importance of social infrastructure in reducing poverty.
- Collaborative efforts are essential for effective implementation.

#### **Innovative Actions:**

- Development of a streamlined application process for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- Establishing a single point of access for City services.
- Advocating for a Living Wage policy in Ottawa.

#### **Governance:**

The strategy involves a Steering Committee that oversees implementation and ensures community engagement. The committee includes peoples with lived experience of poverty, representatives from the immigrant sector, members of the Indigenous community, representatives from the business sector, members of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, representatives from the Coalition of Health and Resource Centres, members of the Social Planning Council, representatives from the United Way, members from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, representatives from the Community Foundation of Ottawa, and City Councillor Bédard, along with City of Ottawa Community and Social Services staff.

#### **Engagement:**

The engagement methods include targeted community consultation sessions, inclusion of lived experience, collaboration with community organizations, ongoing feedback mechanisms, public awareness campaigns, and engagement of grassroots initiatives.

#### **Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Improve service access
  - a. Expand the ODSP application process.
  - b. Streamline needs assessments for health, social support, and home support services.
  - c. Create a single application point for City services and promote 311 and 211.

2. Foster inclusion and belonging
  - a. Increase low-income individuals' access to recreation.
  - b. Establish a planning table for schools and community resources.
  - c. Advocate for higher social assistance rates and removal of systemic barriers.
  - d. Boost employment supports and opportunities for vulnerable populations.
  - e. Integrate immigrants and newcomers into the workforce and apply an equity lens across City departments.
  - f. Seek increased investment in homelessness prevention and affordable housing.
  - g. Promote the Retrofit program for energy cost reduction in rural areas.
  - h. Prioritize a rural community in the Community Development Framework.
3. Promoting poverty awareness and reduction
  - a. Develop a strategy to raise awareness of poverty and encourage local actions.
  - b. Align funding priorities with poverty reduction goals.
  - c. Explore a living wage policy and report to the Community and Protective Services Committee.
  - d. Reinvesting savings from social assistance uploads into social infrastructure and poverty reduction.
  - e. Extend the strategy to address additional poverty issues in future phases (Community and Social Services Department, 2010).

## **Peel Region (Brampton, Caledon, Mississauga)**

### **Demographic Comparison:**

The average age in Mississauga is 41.1 years, younger than Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is lower in Mississauga at 16.6% compared to Orillia's 26%. Mississauga has a significantly lower percentage of one-parent families at 4.88% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 51.67% of Mississauga residents hold postsecondary education compared to Orillia's 40.95%. The percentage of individuals without a high school diploma is lower in Mississauga at 11.93% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is lower in Mississauga at 9.4% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Mississauga also has a lower percentage of renters at 10.07% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate in Mississauga is slightly lower at 14% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### **2018-2028 Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy: Community Action Plan**

#### **Vision:**

“The Peel region is a livable community for all individuals and families” (Region of Peel, 2017, p. 7).

**Mission:**

“To create a Peel community where everyone works together to build a poverty-free future” (Region of Peel, 2017, p. 7).

**Values:**

Citizen-centred, participatory, inclusivity, and accountability (Region of Peel, 2017, p. 7).

**Definition of Poverty:**

Poverty is understood as a condition that affects individuals and groups differently, often exacerbated by systemic barriers and discrimination, particularly impacting marginalized, racialized, immigrant, and newcomer communities.

**Priorities:**

1. Income Security
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Well-being and Social Inclusion

**Key Points:**

- This action plan supplements the first Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy (PPRS), which covered the period from 2012 to 2015. The initial strategy focused on key areas such as economic opportunities, income security, affordable and accessible transportation, food security, and affordable and accessible housing.
- It emphasizes the importance of addressing the root causes of poverty and systemic barriers.
- The strategy spans a 10-year period to effectively track and achieve desired outcomes.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Establish the Peel Community Benefits Network for public projects.
- Launch a Living Wage campaign.
- Develop equity and inclusion tools for fair employment practices.
- Partner with educational institutions to enhance success for marginalized students.

**Governance:**

The governance structure includes the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee, which is composed of representatives from lived experience roundtables, local community organizations, government agencies, and implementation task forces focused on specific poverty reduction initiatives.

Engagement:

The engagement methods used in the community consultation process included targeted sessions, surveys and feedback forms, representation of lived experiences, written submissions, public awareness campaigns, workshops and forums, and collaboration with community organizations.

### **Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Income Security
  - a. Ensure equitable and inclusive access to income, resulting in adequate income security for Peel residents.
    - Pilot financial literacy initiatives.
    - Advocate for removing barriers to savings and government programs like RESPs and subsidies.
    - Host speaker series and information sessions on income inequality.
    - Push for stricter regulations on payday loan lenders.
    - Partner with financial institutions to offer affordable banking options, including low-interest loans and subsidized accounts.
    - Use the payday loan map to guide income security programs.
    - Advocate for expanded access to income programs, including basic guaranteed income.
    - Utilize provincial and federal strategies to support residents in achieving economic and social inclusion.
2. Economic Opportunity
  - a. Provide stable, non-precarious employment opportunities.
  - b. Reduce systemic barriers to stable employment and quality education for marginalized and equity-seeking groups.
    - Create the Peel Community Benefits Network for publicly funded projects.
    - Implement Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) with equity-focused targets.
    - Launch a Living Wage campaign and recognize Living Wage employers.
    - Promote local procurement with anchor institutions.
    - Develop programs with school boards to boost achievement for marginalized students.
    - Create and apply equity tools for fair employment practices.
    - Advocate for quality jobs in both public and private sectors.
    - Pilot micro-lending and social enterprise opportunities.
    - Integrate a poverty reduction lens into education and hiring practices.
3. Well-being and Social Inclusion

- a. Ensure equitable and inclusive access to essential supports and services that meet the needs and human rights of Peel residents.
  - Partner with Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan (PHHP) and Peel Alliance to End Homelessness (PAEH) to address homelessness.
  - Advocate for increased use of inclusionary zoning regulations.
  - Develop tools to remove barriers in housing, childcare, and other services.
  - Advocate for more accessible regional transit systems.
  - Ensure residents are informed about the impact of new transit initiatives like the LRT.
  - Promote the Peel Food Map for better access and use.
  - Pilot an innovative, affordable, and flexible childcare programs with businesses.
  - Advocate for consistent public funding in transit systems.
  - Support policies that benefit Peel's agriculture and food businesses.
  - Explore models that build community resilience and engagement.
  - Advocate for integrated access to social and healthcare programs.
  - Identify and eliminate barriers to transitioning from emergency shelters to stable housing (Region of Peel, 2017).

## Niagara Region, ON

### Demographic Comparison:

Niagara has a younger average age of 43.9 years compared to Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is lower in Niagara at 21.9% compared to Orillia's 26%. Niagara has a significantly lower percentage of one-parent families at 5.98% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 42.39% of Niagara residents hold postsecondary education compared to Orillia's 40.95%. Niagara has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 14.93% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is lower in Niagara at 11.5% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Niagara has a lower percentage of renters at 11.86% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate is higher in Niagara at 22.5% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy 2024-2028

#### Vision:

“Working together to prevent and end poverty and increase well-being in Niagara” (City of Niagara, 2024, p. 14).



**Mission:**

The implicit mission is to create a collaborative approach to address poverty and enhance quality of life for all.

**Values:**

Equitable, inclusive, supportive, accessible, and community-oriented.

**Definition of Poverty:**

Adopts the Government of Canada definition: “the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard needed to promote and facilitate integration and participation in society.” (City of Niagara, 2024, p. 7).

**Priorities:**

1. Decrease the number and percentage of people who live in poverty.
2. Reduce the number of individuals who work but still live in poverty.
3. Lower the rates of homelessness.
4. Reduce the number of households experiencing food insecurity.
5. Minimize the number of individuals who experience financial concerns as a primary stressor.

**Key Points:**

- The strategy is based on community engagement and reflects the concerns and opportunities identified by residents.
- It includes over 100 actions supported by research and aligned with community priorities.
- Emphasizes integrating services and improving access to support for those in need.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Expanding peer support models in community work.
- Creating polyclinics or community hubs for integrated service access.
- Strengthening referral pathways for families at risk of poverty.

**Governance:**

The governance structure involves a Poverty Reduction Steering Committee overseeing the implementation of the strategy. The committee includes government representatives, Niagara residents, members of the Indigenous community, and education and health professionals from Brock University, Bridges Community Health Centre, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, and the Hope Centre.

**Engagement:**

Engagement methods include diverse community consultations, such as organized community conversations and targeted outreach to specific groups like residents with lived experiences and Indigenous communities. The feedback from these consultations is documented in an interim report on community engagement. The strategy emphasizes ongoing engagement to adapt the approach based on evolving community needs.

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Employment
  - a. Promote and develop decent work opportunities with fair wages and benefits, ensuring stable, safe employment.
  - b. Increase vocational training to align skills with local job market needs.
  - c. Expand internships and apprenticeships for foreign-trained newcomers.
  - d. Explore social procurement policies to support small businesses and equity-seeking groups.
2. Food Security
  - a. Improve access to fresh, culturally appropriate, and affordable food through income-based solutions.
  - b. Advocate for federal and provincial policy changes to reduce food insecurity.
  - c. Pilot interventions to address barriers in priority neighbourhoods.
  - d. Monitor and report on food insecurity and effective interventions.
3. Early Child Development
  - a. Facilitate access to affordable, high-quality child care for families at risk of poverty.
  - b. Implement the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program, reducing costs to an average of \$10/day by 2026.
  - c. Develop a strategy to expand the childcare workforce and increase spaces.
4. Transportation
  - a. Achieve affordable and equitable access to transportation services across municipalities.
  - b. Offer concession fares for low-income individuals.
  - c. Improve transit access and active transportation options.
  - d. Extend service hours to include evenings, weekends, and holidays.
5. Mental Health and Addiction
  - a. Strengthen service capacity and provide timely, early recovery interventions for those living in or at risk of poverty.
  - b. Streamline mental health and addiction services.

- c. Enhance support and safety measures for individuals with substance use and mental health challenges (City of Niagara, 2024).

## **Thunder Bay, ON**

### **Demographic Comparison:**

Thunder Bay has a younger average age of 43.9 years compared to Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is lower in Thunder Bay at 22.1% compared to Orillia's 26%. Thunder Bay has a significantly lower percentage of one-parent families at 5.19% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 46.21% of Thunder Bay residents hold postsecondary education compared to Orillia's 40.95%. Thunder Bay has a slightly lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 17.32% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is lower in Thunder Bay at 11.8%, similar to Orillia's 12.6%. Thunder Bay has a lower percentage of renters at 12.64% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate is lower in Thunder Bay at 10.7% compared to Orillia's 15.2%.

### **Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy 2022-2027**

#### **Vision:**

“A Thunder Bay where nobody lives in poverty” (Lakehead Social Planning Council, 2022, p. 5).

#### **Mission:**

“Our mission is to work strategically and collaboratively, utilizing collective impact to understand poverty, advocate for effective public policy, and implement the recommendations included in the key areas of the Poverty Reduction Strategy” (Lakehead Social Planning Council, 2022, p. 5).

#### **Values:**

Collective impact, inclusivity, equity, respect, and diversity.

#### **Definition of Poverty:**

Adopts the Government of Canada definition: “the condition of a person who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain a basic living standard needed to promote and facilitate integration and participation in society.” (Lakehead Social Planning Council, 2022, p. 10).

**Priorities:**

1. Enhance individuals' and families' financial well-being to achieve greater economic security.
2. Ensure better access to crucial services like housing, healthcare, and education to help reduce poverty.
3. Foster collaboration among interest-holders, including community organizations, government entities, and individuals with lived experience, for a unified poverty reduction approach.
4. Develop and integrate support networks that address various needs and connect individuals to resources effectively.

**Key Points:**

- Poverty is influenced by systemic inequities and personal vulnerabilities.
- Poverty can persist across generations, necessitating long-term solutions.
- Involvement of those with lived experience is essential for effective strategies.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Developing targeted data reports to inform strategies and measure progress.
- Utilizing infographics and outreach initiatives to raise awareness about poverty and its impacts.
- Outreach of poverty reduction strategy to HBSW students and MSW students.

**Governance:**

The governance structure involves a Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee composed of Indigenous and Indigenous-led organizations, governments, housing authorities, non-profit organizations, social services, and lived experience.

**Engagement:**

The committee engages individuals with lived experience, local organizations, and interest-holders through workshops, focus groups, regular feedback sessions, partnerships, and data sharing to ensure diverse perspectives and effective decision-making in poverty reduction efforts.

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Work collectively with and support the other local strategies.
  - Collaborate with the CSWB plan committee to inform the community of PRS action items and gain partnerships.
  - Coordinate with TBDS and Thunder Bay Food Strategy to establish common goals and agendas.

- Share information through various channels including social media, website, posters, and email.
  - Work with the data team to continue gathering and updating data for the Community Safety Well Being Plan.
  - Support the ConnectNORTH project with United Way.
  - Provide advisory to the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board's CHPI Advisory Board.
  - Ensure functional Coordinated Housing Access in Thunder Bay by April 2023
  - Gather and share data, facilitate funding for overflow and isolation shelters for pandemic response.
  - Provide updates on COVID-19 specific information and poverty reduction resources.
  - Access funding opportunities to decrease poverty and improve social determinants of health.
2. Work collectively with funding partners to determine the effective use of funds to prevent COVID-19 spread among the homeless.
    - Meet with municipal, provincial, and federal funders.
    - Collect and analyze data for Service Canada on COVID-19 and federal funding utilization.
    - Collaborate to gather and share data, and secure funding for pandemic response shelters.
  3. Develop a public annual report 'Making a Better Thunder Bay for All'.
    - Gather data from Statistics Canada, CVITP, Tax Filer, 211, etc.
    - Create an online document with local poverty information.
    - Review the 2022-2027 five-year plan for poverty reduction to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of the community.
    - Create a monthly data report related to local poverty issues.
  4. Advocate for the Tiny Homes initiative.
    - Partner with businesses and organizations.
    - Work with the City of Thunder Bay for collective impact.
    - Collaborate with CAB and other organizations for By-Law reform in Thunder Bay.
    - Apply for a CMHC grant for Indigenous Youth at KZ Lodge program.
  5. Outreach of the poverty reduction strategy.
    - Create and distribute infographics.
    - Collaborate with Rebecca Schiff on UN: Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and local reviews.

- Mentor LU students and present to Leadership Thunder Bay on social determinants of health (SDOH) and poverty indicators.
6. Create a targeted data repository to support poverty reduction efforts.
    - Develop local data reports on funded projects and pandemic issues.
    - Expand the network of colleagues to share information across sectors.
    - Update the website and social media with recent data.
    - Partner with United Way and Chamber of Commerce.
  7. Implement and promote the Living Wage Campaign in Thunder Bay.
    - Advocate for affiliated organizations to join the campaign.
    - Meet with businesses monthly to explain and recruit for the campaign.
    - Maintain social media coverage and collaborate with the Ontario Living Wage Network.
    - Work with the Ontario Living Wage Network.
  8. Advocate for Universal Basic Income (UBI) as an economic recovery strategy.
    - Develop and execute advocacy efforts for UBI and its role in economic recovery (Lakehead Social Planning Council, 2022).

## **Toronto, ON**

### **Demographic Comparison:**

Toronto has a younger average age of 41.5 years compared to Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is lower in Toronto at 17.1% compared to Orillia's 26%. Toronto has a significantly lower percentage of one-parent families at 5.46% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 53% of Toronto residents hold postsecondary education compared to Orillia's 40.95%. Toronto has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 13.02% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT is slightly higher in Toronto at 13.2% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Toronto has a higher percentage of renters at 19.96% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. Toronto's unemployment rate is slightly lower at 13.9% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### **To Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (2019)**

#### **Vision:**

“By 2035, Toronto is a city with opportunities for all: a leader in the collective pursuit of justice, fairness and equity. We want to be renowned as a city where everyone has access to good jobs, adequate income, stable housing, affordable transportation, nutritious food, and supportive services” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 11).

**Mission:**

The implicit mission is to address current issues, create solutions, and drive systemic change to create pathways to prosperity for all Torontonians.

**Values:**

Equity, collaboration, accountability, and community engagement,, inclusivity, shared responsibility.

**Definition of Poverty:**

Poverty is understood as a condition where individuals lack sufficient financial resources to meet their basic needs for housing, food, childcare, healthcare, and transportation, leading to social exclusion and diminished quality of life.

**Priorities:**

1. Access to essential services.
2. Quality of jobs and economic opportunities.
3. Community engagement and participation in decision-making.
4. Systemic changes that address the root causes of poverty.

**Key Points:**

- The strategy is guided by a collective impact approach, emphasizing collaboration.
- There is a strong emphasis on addressing the urgent needs of individuals living in poverty while creating sustainable pathways to prosperity for all residents.
- Outlines continuous evaluation and adaptation of the strategy.

**Innovative Actions:**

- Establishing one-stop community access sites for health, education, and social services.
- Developing training tools to promote a poverty-sensitive culture within city staff.
- Exploring new revenue tools to fund poverty reduction initiatives sustainably.

**Governance:**

The governance structure includes a Poverty Reduction Unit to coordinate efforts and ensure alignment with community needs, along with various committees and advisory groups, including a Lived Experience Advisory Group.

**Engagement:**

The strategy emphasizes the active involvement of residents with lived experiences of poverty to ensure that initiatives are both effective and relevant. A comprehensive consultation process,

including community conversations, online surveys, and public forums, gathered diverse insights and suggestions. Additionally, partnerships with community agencies and organizations were formed to leverage resources and expertise.

### **Goals/ Recommendations:**

#### 1. Housing Stability

- a. “Improve the quality of all affordable housing” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 14).
  - Increase investments in repairing existing social housing.
  - Strengthen enforcement of minimum housing standards.
  - Expand incentive programs for private landlords and low-income homeowners.
  - Support and promote building energy retrofitting programs to lower hydro costs.
  - Develop a policy framework and enforcement strategy for rooming houses.
- b. “Assist low-income individuals and families to secure and maintain affordable housing” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 15).
  - Increase housing allowances.
  - Develop integrated housing stabilization supports.
  - Advocate for more flexible provincial funding to offer housing subsidies.
- c. “Increase the supply of affordable housing” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 15).
  - Update and expand the City’s funding and incentives for new affordable rental and ownership housing.
  - Prioritize affordable housing in development applications under Section 37 of the Planning Act.
  - Advocate for legislative changes to enable inclusionary zoning.
  - Explore opportunities to integrate affordable housing into existing or new public buildings.
  - Use surplus government land for affordable housing or allocate a portion of land sale proceeds to affordable housing.
  - Develop strategies to sustain and leverage social housing assets for long-term affordability.

#### 2. Service Access

- a. “Increase service access and availability” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 20).
  - Expand digital access and literacy to help residents use online programs and services.
  - Ensure user fees for social and community services do not deter access for low-income individuals.



- Revise program registration and delivery to enhance accessibility for vulnerable residents.
  - Integrate health and mental health services with other City programs in community locations.
  - Increase dental care availability for low-income adults and older adults.
  - Enhance access to financial literacy and advocacy tools to support financial stability.
  - Ensure homelessness and housing support services address the diverse needs of low-income residents.
  - Advocate for more culturally appropriate mental health services.
- b. “Improve access to high quality programs for children and youth” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 21).
- Increase the City’s tax base contribution to child care fee subsidies.
  - Expand the number of licensed and subsidized child care spaces.
  - Support the growth of high-quality out-of-school programs for children and youth.
  - Advocate for increased provincial and federal funding for child care.
3. Transit Equity
- a. “Make transit more affordable for low-income residents” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 24).
- Provide free transit for children 12 and under.
  - Implement fare-geared-to-income options with the new Presto Pass technology.
  - Evaluate fare-geared-to-income models based on demand.
  - Ensure all stations meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act standards by 2025.
- b. “Improve transit services in the inner suburbs” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 25).
- Collaborate with the Province to harmonize service and fares
  - Restore service cuts in inner suburbs where demand is high.
  - Improve reliability across bus, subway, and LRT modes.
  - Address the needs of low-income neighbourhoods and inner suburbs in capital and service planning.
4. Food Access
- a. “Eliminate hunger” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 28).
- Expand student nutrition programs in partnership with school boards, community agencies, and the government.
  - Create cost-effective mechanisms for public and community organizations to procure healthy food.

- Increase the availability of nutritious food in City-run and supported programs.
- b. “Increase access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 29).
- Support innovative business models that enable retailers to sell healthier food in underserved communities.
  - Implement policies and processes to facilitate food initiatives on City land and in City facilities.
  - Clarify and simplify rules for commercial food production, preparation, and sales.
  - Remove barriers to expand urban agriculture on government lands.
  - Empower residents with food skills and information.
  - Invest in community-based food infrastructure to increase access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.
5. Quality Jobs and Livable Income
- a. “Improve the quality of and access to income supports” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 32).
- Ensure income support and services effectively meet the needs of vulnerable residents.
  - Advocate for increased social assistance rates from the Ontario government.
  - Enhance health benefits, including dental, drug, and vision coverage, for those transitioning from Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program to stable employment.
  - Improve access to childcare spaces and fee subsidies for low-income and vulnerable residents.
- b. “Create employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 33).
- Collaborate with private and public sectors to create career pathways for low-income youth.
  - Remove barriers to employment for individuals with justice system experience.
  - Develop flexible childcare models that align with current labour market needs.
- c. “Improve the quality of jobs” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 33).
- Advocate for a living wage standard across Toronto.
  - Prefer vendors who pay a living wage for City contracts.
  - Support provincial efforts to enhance employment standards.

- Develop and apply a job quality assessment tool to City jobs and procurement processes.

#### 6. Systemic Change

- a. “Leverage the economic power of the City to stimulate job growth, support local businesses, and drive inclusive economic growth” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 38).
  - Design and implement a community benefits program for City purchasing and capital investments.
  - Establish a City social procurement policy.
  - Connect job seekers, start-ups, and worker-owned cooperatives with opportunities through local anchor institutions.
  - Develop models to boost economic development in low-income areas.
- b. “Create a seamless social support system” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 38).
  - Stabilize funding for community-based organizations.
  - Integrate intake and administration of core means-tested programs.
  - Coordinate care and support among hospitals, child welfare, correctional and mental health facilities, and City services.
  - Develop and use effective models to engage people with lived experience, agencies, and community partners in City decision-making.
  - Collaborate with the Province to remove barriers to creating one-stop community access sites for health, education, and social services.
  - Protect and enhance service levels for vulnerable residents.
- c. “Coordinate and evaluate the implementation of TO Prosperity” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 39).
  - Create a staff unit to support planning, implementation, and evaluation of poverty reduction actions.
  - Develop processes and tools to monitor and measure the effectiveness of the strategy.
- d. “Engage City staff and residents on poverty reduction efforts” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 39).
  - Develop change management and training tools to foster a poverty-sensitive culture within the organization.
  - Promote poverty reduction as a priority to Toronto residents, businesses, and government levels.
  - Collaborate with community agencies, residents, and other interest-holders to develop, implement, and evaluate the TO Prosperity plan.
- e. “Dedicate funding to poverty reduction actions” (City of Toronto, 2019, p. 39).
  - Integrate mechanisms to evaluate the impact of budget decisions on poverty reduction within City Council’s decision-making processes.

- Explore stable funding options and new revenue tools to invest in poverty reduction efforts.

## Calgary, AL

### Demographic Comparison:

Calgary has an average age of 45.8 years, matching Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is 13.57% in Calgary, lower than Orillia's 26%. Calgary has a lower percentage of one-parent families at 3.99% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 40.06% of Calgary residents hold postsecondary education, similar to Orillia's 40.95%. Calgary has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 5.02% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT in Calgary is lower at 9% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Calgary has a higher percentage of renters at 26.35% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate is slightly lower in Calgary at 12.5% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

### Enough for All 2.0 (2019)

#### Vision:

“We live in a community where there is enough for all” (Vibrant Communities Calgary, 2019, p. 28).

#### Mission:

“We will create opportunities to align and leverage the work of hundreds of organizations and thousands of Calgarians to reduce poverty in our city” (Vibrant Communities Calgary, 2019, p. 28).

#### Values:

Social equity, collaboration, participation, with a focus on shared leadership and trauma-informed approaches.

#### Definition of Poverty:

“The condition in which people are without the supports, means and choices needed to attain and maintain a basic standard of living” (Vibrant Communities Calgary, 2019, p. 1).

#### Priorities:

1. “All Calgarians live in a strong, supportive and inclusive community
2. All Calgarians have sufficient income and assets to thrive

3. All Indigenous People are equal participants in Calgary's future" (Vibrant Communities Calgary, 2019, p. 1)

**Key Points:**

- The refreshed strategy is guided by principles that promote shared leadership, engagement of those with lived experience, and a focus on dignity and inclusivity.
- It aims to reduce poverty levels in Calgary by 30% by 2023.

**Innovative Actions:**

- The strategy includes a 'line of sight' tool to connect various activities and initiatives to broader poverty reduction goals.
- Encouraging individual Calgarians to make personal pledges to reduce poverty in their communities.

**Governance:**

Vibrant Communities Calgary acts as the steward of the poverty reduction strategy, guiding its implementation. Key partners, including the United Way of Calgary and Area, the City of Calgary, and Momentum, work together to align efforts and resources toward common goals.

**Engagement:**

Actively involves the community, especially those with lived experience of poverty, through public forums, focus groups, surveys, and feedback forms. It promotes awareness, empathy, and shared value agreements, while collaborating with local agencies.

**Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Adult Literacy and Foundational Learning
  - a. Advocate for inclusive education.
    - Support community adult learning programs focused on high-risk, financially barriered adults.
    - Ensure the Calgary Public Library's strategic plan includes poverty reduction principles.
    - Promote culturally appropriate and representative curricula.
  - b. Eliminate educational barriers.
    - Remove school fees from kindergarten to Grade 12 to ensure full participation.
    - Collaborate with school boards to support high school completion through counselling, tutoring, and adequate funding.

- Provide subsidies and eliminate fees for the first two years of college for low-income students.
  - Amend student loan repayment policies to base repayment on post-graduation earnings and lower interest rates on provincial student loans.
2. Early Learning and Care
- a. Improve access to childcare.
- Develop a child-friendly strategy for Calgary.
  - Create 5,000 new affordable public childcare spaces and develop a provincial strategy for publicly funded childcare.
  - Increase subsidies to cover 90% of the cost for low-income working families.
  - Increase wages for childcare staff and early childhood educators to a living wage.
  - Promote policies for fully funded, universal, full-day kindergarten.
3. Employment
- a. Advocate for living wages.
- Create a provincial workforce strategy with poverty reduction as a key focus.
  - Support the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership's action plan.
  - Enhance access to integrated skills training programs for those facing employment barriers.
4. Financial Empowerment
- a. Optimize incomes and assets
- Establish a financial empowerment secretariat within the Ministry of Community and Social Services.
  - Integrate financial empowerment into Alberta Supports policies for low-income Albertans.
  - Enforce and enhance regulations on high-cost credit.
5. Food Security
- a. Ensure access to healthy food.
- Promote food security requirements in all human services and support-related policies.
  - Support income-based policies that ensure food security.
6. Housing
- a. Ensure affordable housing.
- Support Calgary's Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy, 2016–2025.
  - Extend existing housing benefits to all low-income Albertans.

- Support income threshold increases for the Property Tax Assistance Program.
7. Income Support
    - a. Advocate for adequate support programs.
      - Advocate for the introduction of a basic income pilot in Alberta.
      - Increase employment earnings exemptions for income support recipients.
      - Promote income support benefits that are adequate and based on the local cost of living.
  8. Justice
    - a. Improve access to legal resources
      - Support multi-sectoral programs focused on preventing and addressing legal issues.
      - Create an accessible database of available justice sector services and programs.
  9. Physical and Mental Health
    - a. Improve access to healthcare.
      - Conduct health impact assessments to evaluate the connection between poverty and health outcomes.
      - Reduce wait times for accessing mental health services.
  10. Transportation
    - a. Create a more accessible transportation system.
      - Advocate for continued funding and support for affordable low-income transit pricing.
      - Improve connectivity and accessibility in public transit systems (Vibrant Communities Calgary, 2019).

## Edmonton, AB

### Demographic Comparison:

The average age in Edmonton is 38.4 years, younger than Orillia's 45.8 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is 13.7% in Edmonton, lower than Orillia's 26%. Edmonton has a lower percentage of one-parent families at 3.41% compared to Orillia's 49%. Additionally, 46.10% of Edmonton residents hold postsecondary education, higher than Orillia's 40.95%. Edmonton has a lower percentage of individuals without a high school diploma at 13.32% compared to Orillia's 17.98%. The LIM-AT in Edmonton is lower at 10% compared to Orillia's 12.6%. Edmonton has a higher percentage of renters at 14.26% compared to Orillia's 16.74%. The unemployment rate is slightly lower in Edmonton at 12.7% compared to Orillia's 15.2% (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

## **End Poverty in a Generation (2015)**

### **Vision:**

The implicit vision is to create a city where all Edmontonians can thrive and live free from poverty.

### **Mission:**

The implicit mission is to eliminate poverty within a generation.

### **Definition of Poverty:**

“Poverty is defined as when people lack, or are denied, economic, social and cultural resources to have a quality of life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community” (End Poverty Edmonton, 2015, p. 7).

### **Priorities:**

1. Eliminate racism
2. Livable incomes
3. Affordable Housing
4. Accessible and affordable transit
5. Affordable and quality childcare
6. Access to mental health services

### **Key Points:**

- Emphasizes the importance of involving the community in the process of ending poverty.
- Aims to dismantle complex issues rooted in systemic factors by focusing on the underlying causes of poverty, such as racism, income inequality, and lack of access to essential services, rather than just addressing its symptoms.
- The initiative is committed to a long-term strategy, with a ten-year implementation plan.

### **Innovative Actions:**

- Establishing social enterprises to create sustainable livelihoods.
- Advocating for culturally sensitive curricula in early learning.
- Implementing trauma-informed policies and practices

### **Governance:**



Collaboration between the City of Edmonton, community interest-holders, and organizations, including United Way Capital Region, the Bissell Centre, Alberta Health Services, the University of Alberta, and various Indigenous organizations.

### **Engagement:**

Engagement strategies include public consultations, community education, and citizen mobilization. This involves community forums, surveys, and focus groups for feedback; workshops and school programs to raise awareness; and volunteer opportunities, advocacy campaigns, and storytelling to inspire action. Collaborative efforts support community-led projects and partnerships with local organizations.

### **Goals/ Recommendations:**

1. Work towards true reconciliation.
  - a. Establish an Aboriginal culture and wellness centre.
  - b. Initiate people-first and trauma-informed policy and practice.
  - c. Implement a community witness program.
  - d. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal people in poverty to showcase and develop their talents.
  - e. Make systemic changes to better reflect the needs, interests, and culture of Indigenous people.
2. Facilitate justice for all.
  - a. Eliminate racism.
  - b. Decriminalize poverty.
  - c. Make it easier to vote and participate in elections.
  - d. Make Edmonton a “human rights city.”
3. Move people out of poverty.
  - a. Advocate for livable incomes for Edmontonians.
  - b. Make transit reliable, accessible, and affordable.
  - c. Improve and expand transit services.
  - d. Negotiate with other orders of government to increase funding for affordable and supportive housing and rental subsidy programs.
  - e. Develop a community-based learning group to explore housing and zoning innovations.
  - f. Improve skills training for sustainable employment.
  - g. Improve literacy.
  - h. Reduce barriers to accessing information and City programs and services.
  - i. Help people navigate systems to access resources and opportunities.
  - j. Improve timely access to mental health and wellness services.

4. Invest in Our Poverty-Free Future.
  - a. Grow social enterprises to build sustainable livelihoods and assets.
  - b. Invest in food security-oriented enterprises to increase food access and employment.
  - c. Partner with community organizations and interest-holders to create a community development corporation.
  - d. Plan and implement a system of early learning and care.
  - e. Reduce barriers for children and families to access services, including out-of-school and respite care.
  - f. Advocate for culturally sensitive curricula and well-educated staff in early learning and care centre.
  - g. Advocate for sustainable, predictable, and adequate funding for school-based wrap-around services.
  - h. Keep the individual at the centre in providing care, services, and support.
5. Change the Conversation: Build a Movement to End Poverty.
  - a. Launch a collaborative broad-based community engagement initiative (End Poverty Edmonton, 2015).

## Appendix B

### Poverty Reduction Symposium Results

#### Event Overview:

The Orillia Poverty Reduction Symposium began with a dynamic panel discussion in which six representatives of local agencies pertaining to youth services, food security, affordable housing, health, and homelessness were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What poverty-related services does your agency provide? To what demographic? What challenges and barriers do you face in providing those services?
2. We know that building resilience in families is crucial for them to flourish despite experiencing difficult circumstances, such as poverty. What steps is your agency, or other agencies in different communities, taking to alleviate stress and promote resilience among families?
3. How can we address stigma and ensure poverty-reduction policies are respectful and dignified?
4. According to the 2021 Census, 48.9% of families in Orillia are lone-parent families, with 39.3% led by women and 9.8% led by men. What specific challenges do these families encounter?
5. Based on the 2021 Census, 38.8% of households in Orillia are renter households, the highest percentage in Simcoe County. Additionally, renter households are 4.2 times more likely to be in core housing need compared to owner households. What specific challenges do these families encounter?

Following the panel discussion, the participants and panel members participated in breakout groups in which they were asked to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and opportunities regarding housing, arts and recreation, youth services, food security, and transportation in Orillia. Each group had a dedicated facilitator, and each topic was allocated 20 minutes for discussion. After the removal of duplicates and the combination of similar comments, the results are as follows: 135 (Housing) + 114 (Arts & Recreation) + 81 (Youth Services) + 82 (Food Security) + 116 (Transportation) = 525 (Total). Within each topic, the results have been separated into themes.

#### Findings

<b>Housing</b> (Total of 135 Comments)
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<p><b>Strengths</b> (32 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive facilities and programs, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, coordinated access, and outreach workers.</li> <li>• Strategic investments, affordable housing units, supportive housing, and housing education workshops.</li> <li>• Committed city councilors, community business support, government support for tiny homes, legal aid, and caring frontline responders.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> (37 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low and poor housing stock, questionable rental spaces, lack of long-term care, and limited rentals.</li> <li>• Bureaucratic issues, political advocacy hurdles, inaccurate subsidies, funding problems, and unused land.</li> <li>• Absentee/corrupt landlords, bias against certain tenants, police/credit checks, and reno-victions.</li> <li>• Lack of affordable housing, long waitlists, transit issues, stigma, NIMBY culture, mental health, and addiction challenges.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Barriers</b> (30 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability issues, high mortgage rates, inadequate OW/ODSP funding, and high long-term care costs.</li> <li>• Zoning policies, lack of land, rapid cost escalation, economic segregation, and reno-victions.</li> <li>• Stigma, the requirement to hit rock bottom for funding, more renters than owners, lack of support, and no pet-friendly shelters.</li> <li>• Understanding the affordable housing process, lack of knowledge about services, long waitlists, poor coordination between providers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b> (36 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated areas for encampments, home share programs, urban planning for smaller homes, and tiny home communities.</li> <li>• Policy changes, incentivize redevelopment of vacant land, affordable housing incentives, and rent control.</li> <li>• Expand the housing coordinator role/ team, rent/utility subsidies, programs for mold/bed bugs, and transitional housing.</li> <li>• Better communication of housing standards, housing fairs, city/community-owned housing, and public-private partnerships.</li> </ul>

**Arts & Recreation** (Total of 114 Comments)

<p><b>Strengths</b> (29 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extensive facilities including large waterfronts, parks, and the Orillia Recreation Centre.</li> <li>● Diverse programs throughout the year including festivals, live music, and recreational activities.</li> <li>● Vibrant arts scene supported by community collaborations.</li> <li>● Strong focus on inclusivity with facilities and programs catering to various demographics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> (15 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Affordability issues with some programs and recreational equipment costs.</li> <li>● Accessibility concerns at certain waterfront and recreational facilities.</li> <li>● Communication gaps affecting awareness of available events and programs.</li> <li>● Bureaucratic hurdles impacting access to new sports and services for diverse populations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Barriers</b> (17 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Economic barriers due to high costs of participation and complicated subsidy processes.</li> <li>● Accessibility challenges including transportation issues and stigma around accessing services.</li> <li>● Timing constraints for programs and cultural/social barriers affecting inclusivity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b> (51 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of new facilities like skate parks and outdoor fitness equipment.</li> <li>● Expansion of inclusive community events and free cultural activities.</li> <li>● Improved communication about low-cost recreation and arts opportunities.</li> <li>● Strengthened partnerships and policies for more accessible and diverse programming.</li> </ul>

<b>Youth Services (Total of 81 Comments)</b>	
<p><b>Strengths (23 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comprehensive facilities and programs including Youth Centre, city day camps, Youth Wing at the Lighthouse, Learning Centre, and Simcoe Shores Secondary School.</li> <li>● Strong collaboration and funding support from organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters, provincial funding, Orillia Youth Strategy, and Ontario Health Team.</li> <li>● Active community and support systems with initiatives like FUEL Innovation, library programs, OPP, and the Elizabeth Fry Program.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses (20 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inadequate services and limited mental health access for youth, small Youth Centre.</li> <li>● Stigma and limited awareness prevent youth from accessing available services.</li> <li>● Resource constraints including high implementation costs and insufficient grassroots funding.</li> <li>● Inclusivity issues in service design, affecting vulnerable groups like 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Barriers (16 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transition challenges for 17 to 20-year-olds aging out of support systems.</li> <li>● Accessibility and cost issues, including high education costs, limited access points, and expensive childcare.</li> <li>● Limited awareness and engagement due to safety concerns and parenting gaps.</li> <li>● Systemic issues like social media harm, generational poverty, and practitioner shortages.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities (22 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhanced transition services for 17 to 20-year-olds and better-defined funding access.</li> <li>● Improved education and employment opportunities through school collaboration and city-led job fairs.</li> <li>● Increased levels of community engagement and resources for programs supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and affordable rentals.</li> <li>● Better communication, subsidized Wi-Fi, and financial literacy training to normalize accessing programs.</li> <li>● Expanded partnerships with universities, educational institutions, and inclusive community activities.</li> </ul>

<b>Food Security (Total of 82 Comments)</b>	
<p><b>Strengths (20 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Robust network of food centres and banks including Sharing Place Food Centre, Rama Food Bank, Saint Vincent DePaul Food Bank, and Salvation Army.</li> <li>● Effective school and student programs like food lockers, breakfast programs, and healthy snack initiatives.</li> <li>● Strong community partnerships and initiatives such as community gardens, farmers markets, and community kitchens.</li> <li>● Various programs and donation efforts like Good Food Box, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Programs, and grocery store donations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses (16 comments)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Food accessibility and affordability issues with food deserts in specific areas and lack of affordable grocery stores.</li> <li>● Educational gaps with limited food and nutrition classes at schools and reactive rather than proactive food programs.</li> <li>● Transportation and coordination challenges including lack of volunteers, understaffing, and gaps between services.</li> <li>● Management issues in community garden programs and need for more support for local farmers.</li> <li>● Other issues like expired food at dollar stores and generational poverty.</li> </ul>

**Barriers** (12 comments)

- Lack of education and knowledge sharing about healthy food options and food programs.
- Stigma and accessibility issues with seeking food support, food bank ID requirements, and catering to dietary needs.
- Transportation challenges to affordable grocery stores and the high cost of food.
- Systemic issues like bureaucracy, land zoning changes, and income restrictions.

**Opportunities** (34 comments)

- Expansion of community gardens and implementation of grocery stores in underserved areas.
- Enhanced food education, including cooking, gardening, and healthy eating.
- Development of food programs and partnerships for daily hot meals, food recovery, and coordinated redistribution.
- Educational initiatives integrating food education with essential life skills.
- Community support and advocacy for basic income, living wage employers, and proactive food programs.
- Incentives and support systems like direct payroll deductions for human services and food incentive programs.



<b>Transportation</b> (Total of 116 Comments)	
<p><b>Strengths</b> (26 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Robust public transit system with City of Orillia and LINX transit, various routes, and initiatives like Lakehead University bus passes and free teen passes.</li> <li>● Private and specialized transport options include Uber, Helping Hands, and community paramedical EMS house calls.</li> <li>● Good walk scores, downtown parking availability, and trail system supporting accessibility and active transportation.</li> <li>● Special programs like food bank delivery services are available by referral.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> (27 comments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public transit limitations include inconsistent bus weekend services, high costs, and long rides for short distances.</li> <li>● Geographical and structural challenges like the location of the transit terminal and urban sprawl affect transit access.</li> <li>● Operational issues include the lack of Uber drivers, car rental cancellations, and infrequent/unreliable bus stop times.</li> <li>● Concerns for pedestrians and cyclists include lack of driver education, winter maintenance of sidewalks, and limited public transport options for decreased mobility.</li> </ul>

**Barriers (23 comments)**

- Cost and efficiency challenges include increasing gas prices and high costs for additional routes.
- Accessibility and knowledge barriers include lack of transit information, hours of availability, and issues with child and pet access.
- Infrastructure and environmental factors like inadequate bus shelters and winter conditions.
- Systemic and cultural barriers include stigma around using public transit and the lengthy, costly driver's license process.

**Opportunities (40 comments)**

- Reduced fares, extended hours, free rides for students and older adults, and shuttle buses to grocery stores would improve cost and access.
- Enhance infrastructure with bike lanes, more bike racks, better cycling infrastructure, and secure bag storage at transit stops.
- Community and environmental initiatives like partnerships for free bikes, bike rentals, carpool incentives, and optimizing current resources.
- Expand services and programs by extending bus service, optimizing intercity routes, and connecting municipal transit systems.
- Increase education and communication with campaigns about public transit, rider training, and developing a public transit app.
- Collaborative and innovative projects include partnerships with hospitals, updating bus routes for better access, and creating community transportation programs with nonprofits.

# **Appendix C**

## **Orillia Poverty Reduction Survey Results**



## Poverty Reduction Survey

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142 Completed Responses  

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116 Partial Responses



Welcome

## **Territory Acknowledgement**

Hello, Bonjour, Aaniin Boozhoo,

Before you start, we want to acknowledge that Orillia is on the land of the Anishinaabeg people, including the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. We especially thank the Chippewas of Rama/ Mnjikaning First Nation. This land is part of the Williams Treaties and Upper Canada Treaties.

In our work to reduce poverty and make our community fair and welcoming for everyone, we promise to centre Indigenous voices. We will move forward with respect and kindness for all Indigenous Peoples, now and in the future.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

No Responses

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## **Dear Participant,**

We think the community should help decide what is best for the future. Your answers will help the City of Orillia, in partnership with Lakehead University, make a plan to reduce poverty in Orillia. Before you consent to participate, please read this box to understand what is involved.

### **Purpose**

This survey is about experiences with poverty in Orillia, ON, and how to reduce it. The data from this survey will help make a plan to reduce poverty. This survey is run by Dr. Kevin Brooks, the Social Justice Studies Program Advisor at Lakehead University, and Nicole Ramjewan, a Social Justice Studies Graduate Student, for the City of Orillia.

### **What Information Will Be Collected?**

We will ask about your demographics and thoughts on housing, arts and recreation, youth services, jobs, food, transportation, and overall experiences of poverty. This helps us get a clear picture while keeping your information private.

### **What Is Requested of Me as a Participant?**

If you choose to participate, you will answer questions about your experiences and opinions on poverty in Orillia. The survey takes about 20 minutes, but the time may vary.

### **What Are My Rights as a Participant?**

Your participation is voluntary. You can stop at any time without any penalty. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the Youth Centre, the Lighthouse, the Sharing Place, the Orillia Public Library, or any other organization. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, you cannot withdraw your responses after submission.

### **What Are the Risks and Benefits?**

Risks: It is unlikely you will have any risks beyond everyday life. However, you may feel some discomfort. Support resources are listed at the end of the survey.

Benefits: Your answers will help make the Orillia poverty reduction plan better.

### **How Will My Confidentiality Be Maintained?**

Your participation is anonymous. Your data will be encrypted and stored at Lakehead University for 7 years. Your answers will not be shared with anyone else. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because the survey is online. By agreeing, you accept this risk.

### **What Will My Data Be Used For?**

Your data will help identify themes and insights for the poverty reduction plan. Results will be presented at a Regular Council meeting on September 9, 2024, and will be available online.

### **Where Will My Data Be Stored?**

Data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for at least 7 years after the project ends.

### **How Can I Receive a Copy of the Research Results?**

You can request a copy of the final report by emailing Dr. Kevin Brooks or Nicole Ramjewan (see contact information below). Results will be presented at the Regular Council meeting on September 9, 2024. You can watch it live online on the City of Orillia YouTube channel.

**What If I Want to Withdraw from the Study?**

To withdraw, please do not submit the survey. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, you cannot withdraw after submission.

**Researcher Contact Information:**

- Dr. Kevin Brooks at [kbrooks2@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:kbrooks2@lakeheadu.ca)
- Nicole Ramjewan at [nmramjew@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:nmramjew@lakeheadu.ca)

**Research Ethics Board Review and Approval:**

The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the ethics of the research, contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8010 ext. 8283 or [research@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:research@lakeheadu.ca).

No Responses

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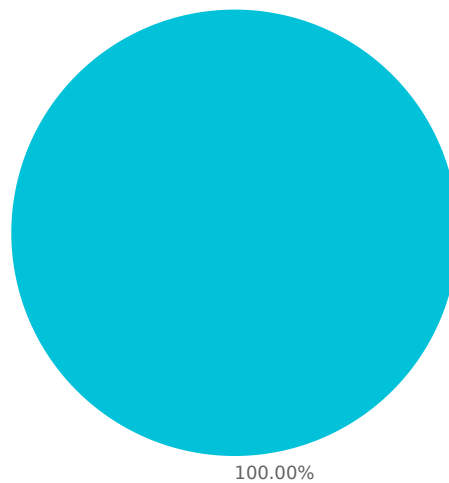
Q1

**My Consent:**

By checking the box below, you confirm that:

- I have read and understand the information above.
- I agree to participate.
- I understand the risks and benefits of the study.
- I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time before submission.
- The data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for 7 years.
- The research findings will be made available to me upon request.
- I will remain anonymous.
- All of my questions have been answered.
- I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Answered: 258 Skipped: 0



● I consent to participate in this survey

● I wish to discontinue at this time

Choices	Response percent	Response count
I consent to participate in this survey	100.00%	258
I wish to discontinue at this time	0.00%	0

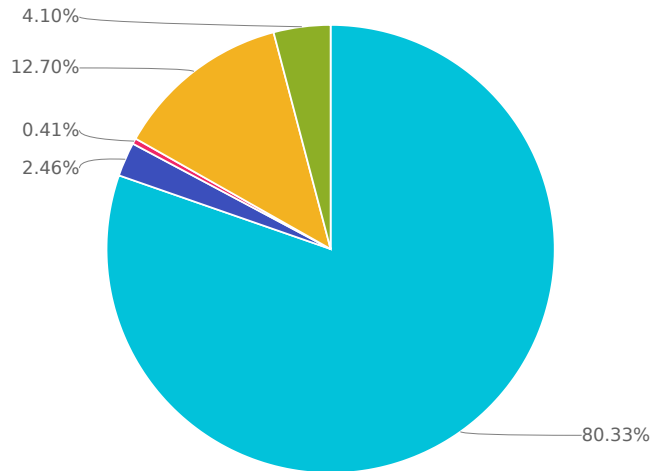


## Demographic Information

Q2

Do you consider yourself:

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



- A full-time resident of Orillia
- A part-time resident of Orillia
- A business owner in Orillia
- An Orillia property owner that does not live in Orillia
- Living in a neighbouring community (Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Townships of Oro-Medonte, Severn and Ramara)
- Other (Please specify)

## Schedule "A"

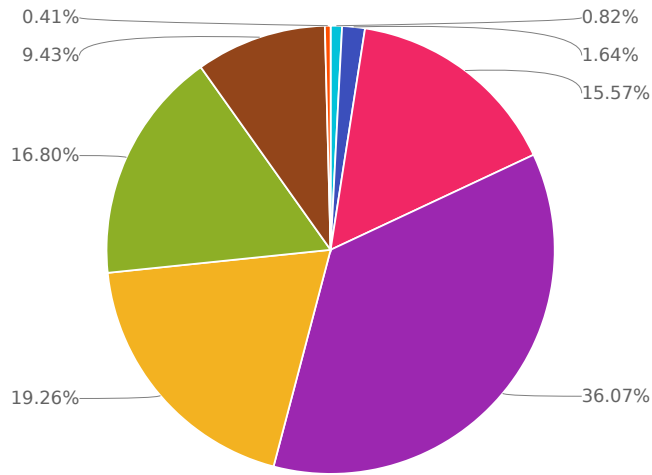
Choices	Response percent	Response count
A full-time resident of Orillia	80.33%	196
A part-time resident of Orillia	2.46%	6
A business owner in Orillia	0.41%	1
An Orillia property owner that does not live in Orillia	0.00%	0
Living in a neighbouring community (Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Townships of Oro-Medonte, Severn and Ramara)	12.70%	31
Other (Please specify)	4.10%	10

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Q3

### Age

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



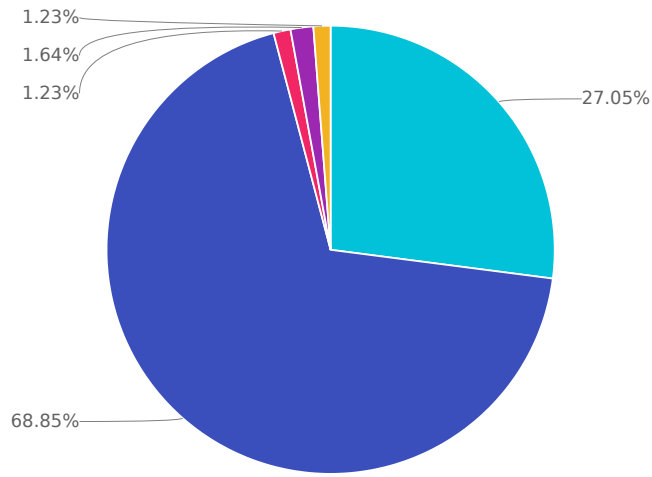
- 15 to 17 years
- 18 to 24 years
- 25 to 34 years
- 35 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- 65 years +
- Prefer not to answer

Choices	Response percent	Response count
15 to 17 years	0.82%	2
18 to 24 years	1.64%	4
25 to 34 years	15.57%	38
35 to 44 years	36.07%	88
45 to 54 years	19.26%	47
55 to 64 years	16.80%	41
65 years +	9.43%	23
Prefer not to answer	0.41%	1

Q4

### Gender Identity

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



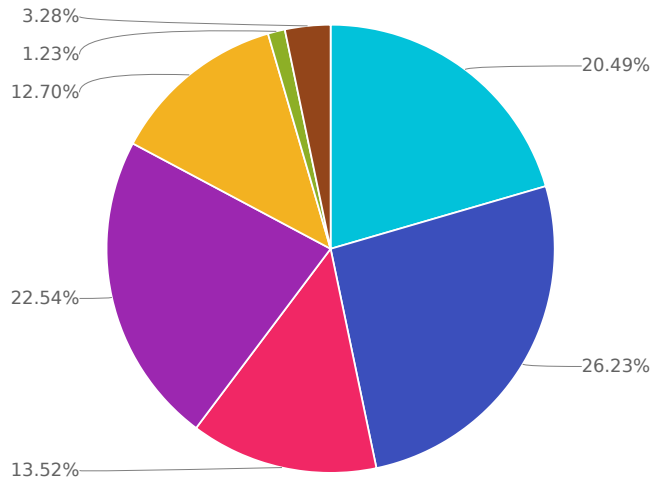
- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer
- I identify as \_\_\_\_

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Male	27.05%	66
Female	68.85%	168
Non-binary	1.23%	3
Prefer not to answer	1.64%	4
I identify as ____	1.23%	3

Q5

### Household Composition

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



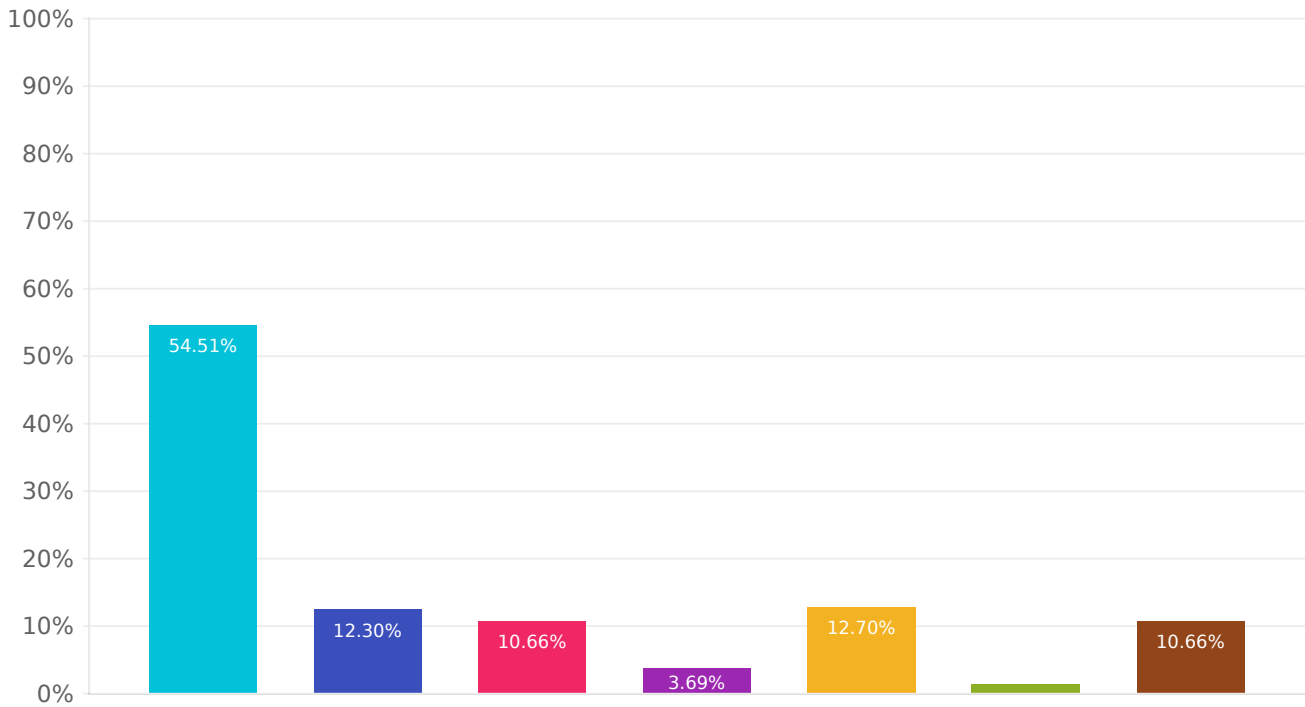
- Single
- Couple without children
- Single Parent with children
- Couple with children
- Multi-generational household
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Single	20.49%	50
Couple without children	26.23%	64
Single Parent with children	13.52%	33
Couple with children	22.54%	55
Multi-generational household	12.70%	31
Prefer not to answer	1.23%	3
Other (Please specify)	3.28%	8

Q6

What is your current employment status? Select all that apply.

Answered: 244 Skipped: 14



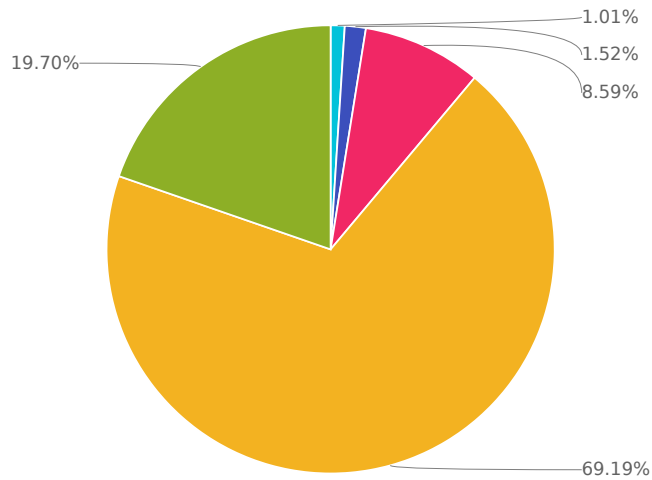
- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Employed full time	54.51%	133
Employed part time	12.30%	30
Unemployed	10.66%	26
Student	3.69%	9
Retired	12.70%	31
Prefer not to answer	1.23%	3
Other (Please specify)	10.66%	26

Q7

Where did you hear about this survey?

Answered: 198 Skipped: 60



- The Youth Centre
- The Sharing Place
- The Lighthouse
- The Orillia Public Library
- Online
- Other (Please specify)

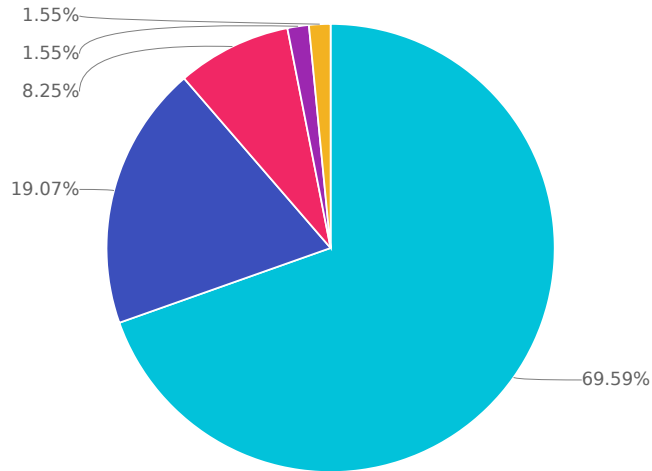
Choices	Response percent	Response count
The Youth Centre	1.01%	2
The Sharing Place	1.52%	3
The Lighthouse	8.59%	17
The Orillia Public Library	0.00%	0
Online	69.19%	137
Other (Please specify)	19.70%	39

Housing

Q8

How would you rate the current availability of affordable housing in Orillia?

Answered: 194 Skipped: 64



- Very Poor
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

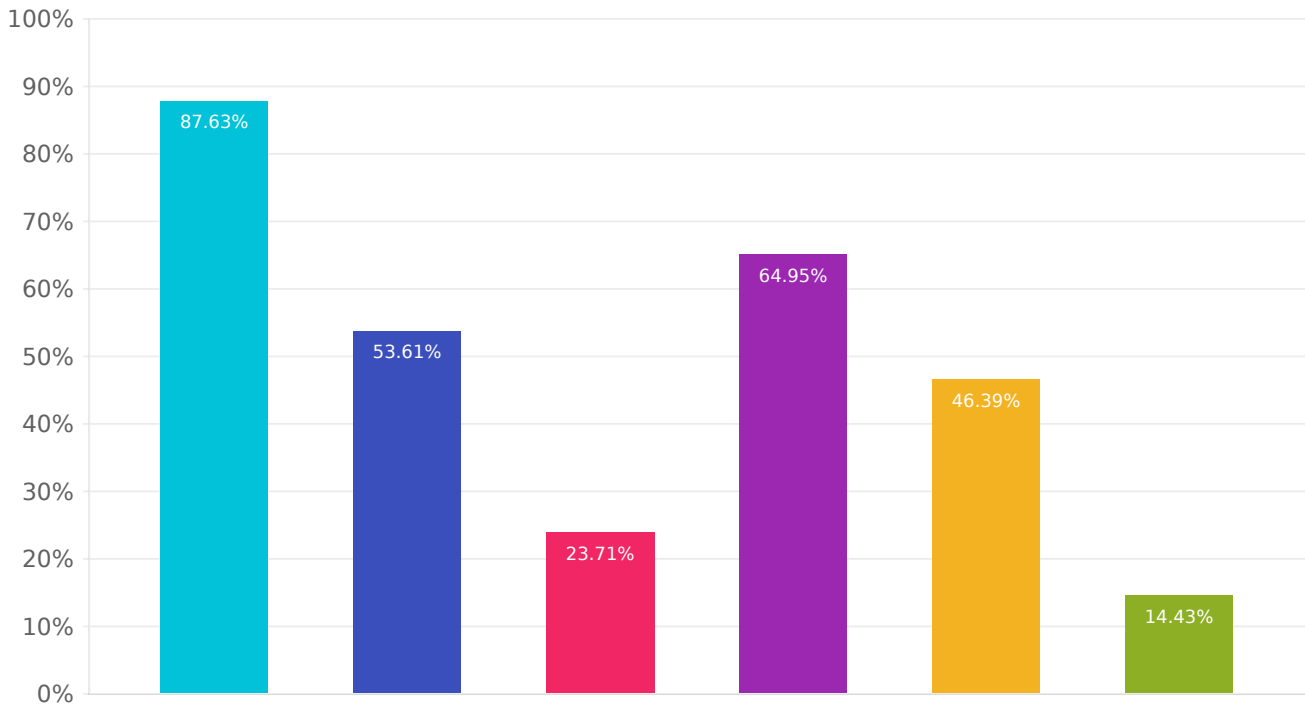
Choices	Response percent	Response count
Very Poor	69.59%	135
Poor	19.07%	37
Fair	8.25%	16
Good	1.55%	3
Very Good	1.55%	3



Q9

What are the biggest challenges you face in finding and maintaining housing? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 194 Skipped: 64



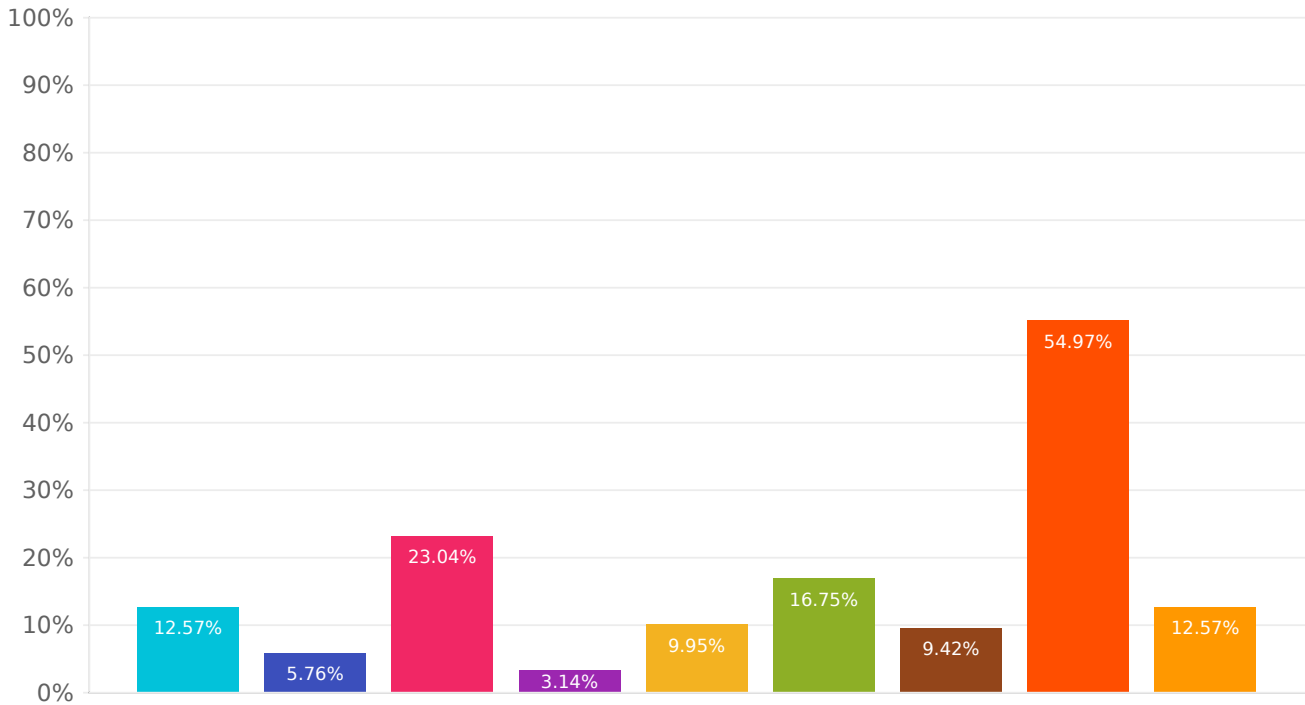
- Affordability
- Quality
- Discrimination
- Availability
- Rules/ application process (lack of references, waitlists, credit rating etc.)
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Affordability	87.63%	170
Quality	53.61%	104
Discrimination	23.71%	46
Availability	64.95%	126
Rules/ application process (lack of references, waitlists, credit rating etc.)	46.39%	90
Other (Please specify)	14.43%	28

Q10

What support services have you used or tried to use for housing? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 191 Skipped: 67



- Emergency shelters
- Transitional housing
- Housing subsidies
- Legal aid for housing issues
- Housing workers
- Housing outreach services
- 211
- None
- Other (Please specify)

## Schedule "A"

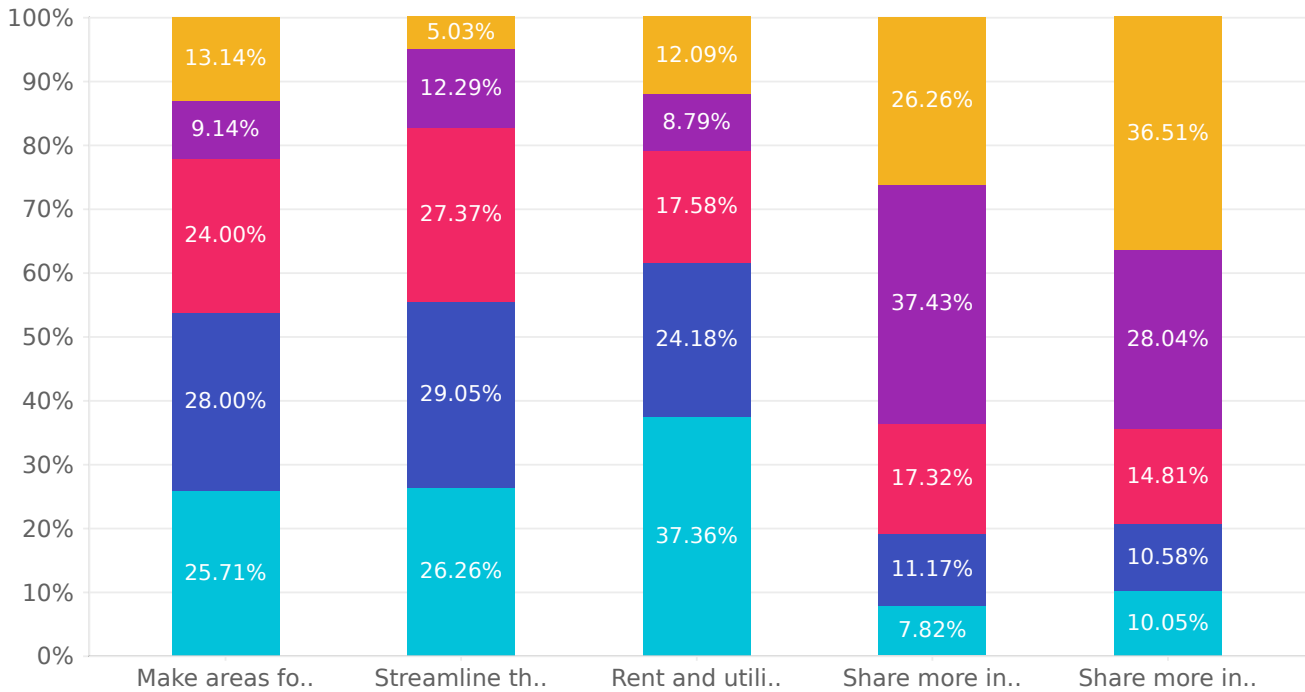
Choices	Response percent	Response count
Emergency shelters	12.57%	24
Transitional housing	5.76%	11
Housing subsidies	23.04%	44
Legal aid for housing issues	3.14%	6
Housing workers	9.95%	19
Housing outreach services	16.75%	32
211	9.42%	18
None	54.97%	105
Other (Please specify)	12.57%	24

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Q11

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 193 Skipped: 65



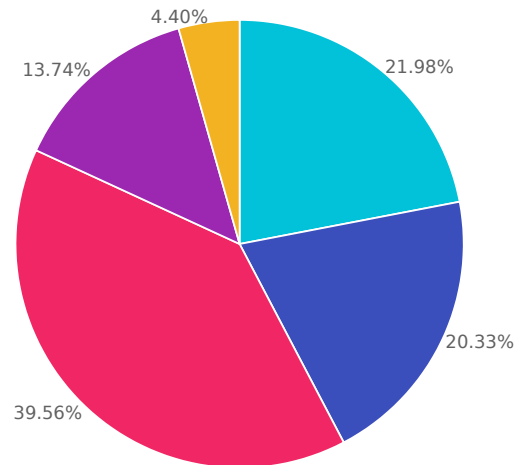
Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
Make areas for tiny homes and shelters	25.71% (45)	28.00% (49)	24.00% (42)	9.14% (16)	13.14% (23)	3.44	3	175
Streamline the process to enable more affordable homes to be built on vacant land	26.26% (47)	29.05% (52)	27.37% (49)	12.29% (22)	5.03% (9)	3.59	2	179
Rent and utility subsidies	37.36% (68)	24.18% (44)	17.58% (32)	8.79% (16)	12.09% (22)	3.66	1	182
Share more information about housing (e.g. hold housing fairs, informal webinars etc.)	7.82% (14)	11.17% (20)	17.32% (31)	37.43% (67)	26.26% (47)	2.37	4	179
Share more information about renter rights	10.05% (19)	10.58% (20)	14.81% (28)	28.04% (53)	36.51% (69)	2.30	5	189

## Arts &amp; Recreation

Q12

How often do you join arts and recreational activities in Orillia?

Answered: 182 Skipped: 76



● Never

● Rarely

● Sometimes

● Often

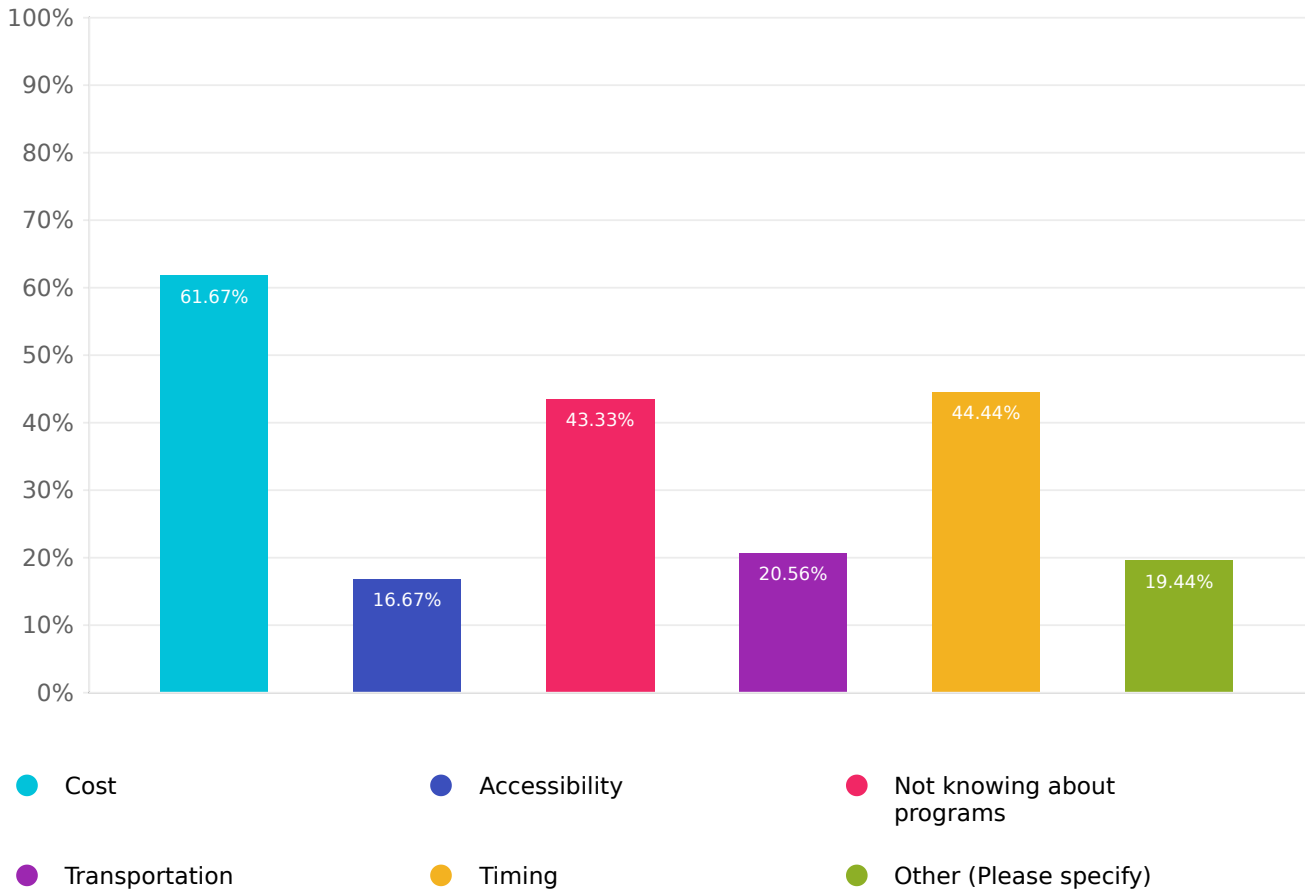
● Always

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Never	21.98%	40
Rarely	20.33%	37
Sometimes	39.56%	72
Often	13.74%	25
Always	4.40%	8

Q13

What stops you from joining arts and recreational activities? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 180 Skipped: 78

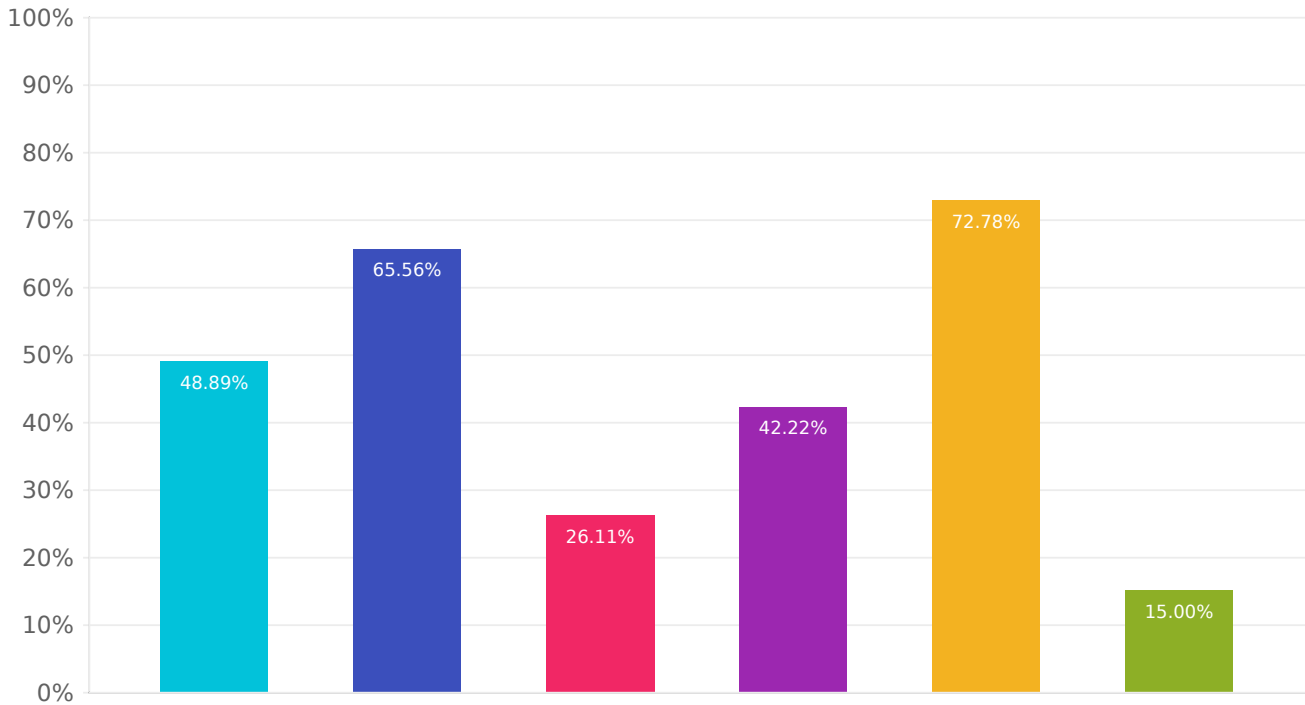


Choices	Response percent	Response count
Cost	61.67%	111
Accessibility	16.67%	30
Not knowing about programs	43.33%	78
Transportation	20.56%	37
Timing	44.44%	80
Other (Please specify)	19.44%	35

Q14

Which arts and activities do you like? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 180 Skipped: 78



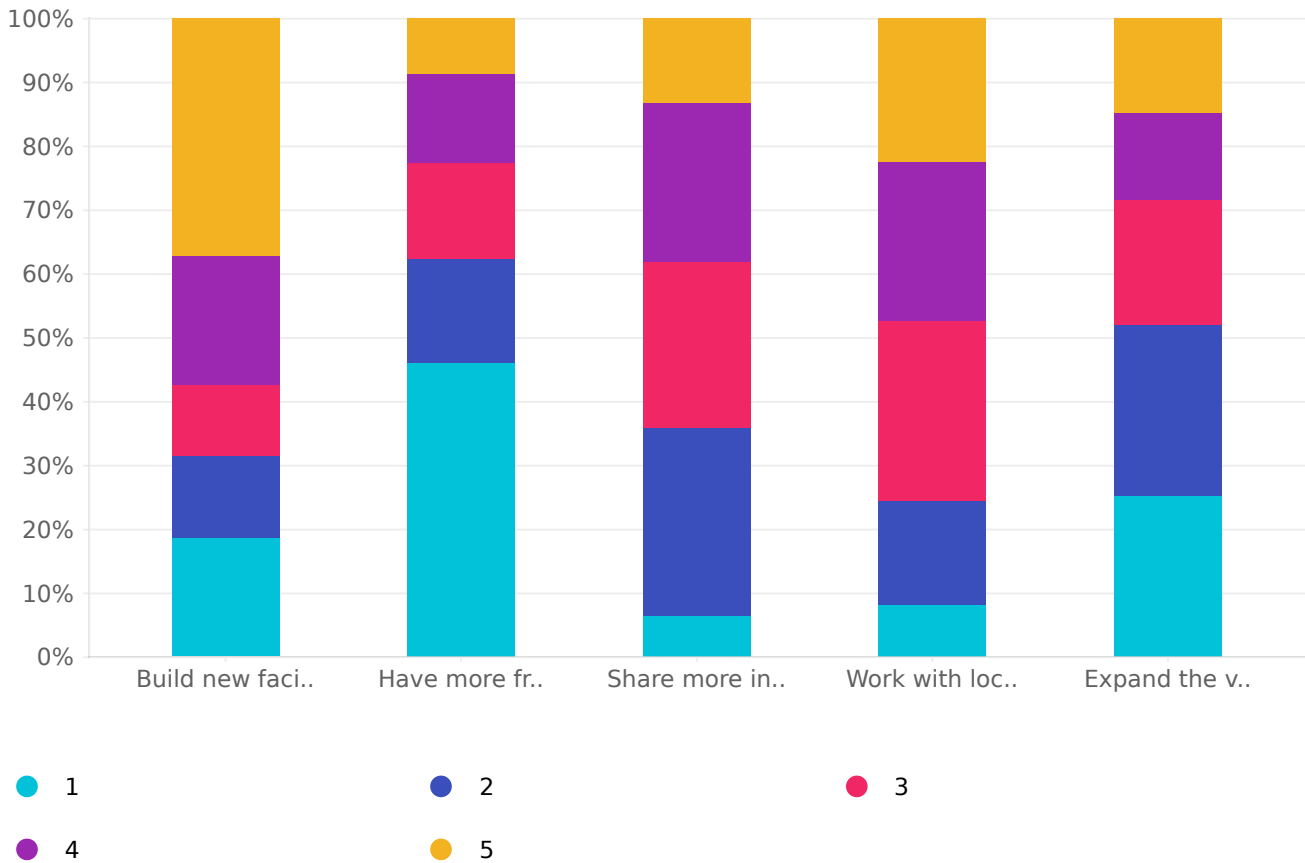
- Sports
- Music
- Dance
- Visual arts
- Festivals
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Sports	48.89%	88
Music	65.56%	118
Dance	26.11%	47
Visual arts	42.22%	76
Festivals	72.78%	131
Other (Please specify)	15.00%	27

Q15

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 180 Skipped: 78



Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
Build new facilities such as skate parks and outdoor gyms	18.60% (32)	12.79% (22)	11.05% (19)	20.35% (35)	37.21% (64)	2.55	5	172
Have more free events and activities for everyone	45.93% (79)	16.28% (28)	15.12% (26)	13.95% (24)	8.72% (15)	3.77	1	172
Share more information about low-cost arts and activities	6.36% (11)	29.48% (51)	26.01% (45)	24.86% (43)	13.29% (23)	2.91	3	173
Work with local organizations to have lending libraries (art supplies, sports equipment, etc.)	8.09% (14)	16.18% (28)	28.32% (49)	24.86% (43)	22.54% (39)	2.62	4	173
Expand the variety of low-cost arts and recreational programs offered	25.14% (44)	26.86% (47)	19.43% (34)	13.71% (24)	14.86% (26)	3.34	2	175

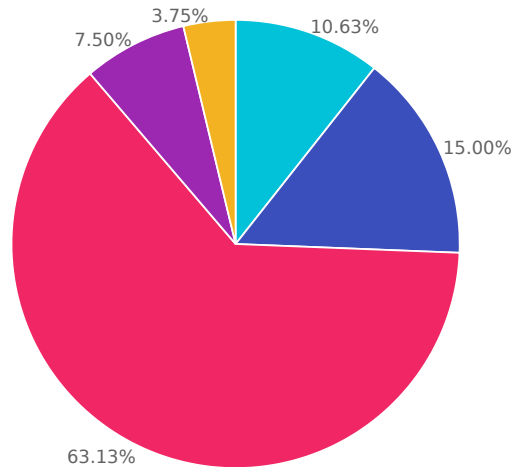


## Youth Services

Q16

Are you happy with the youth services in Orillia?

Answered: 160 Skipped: 98



Very unhappy

Unhappy

Neutral

Happy

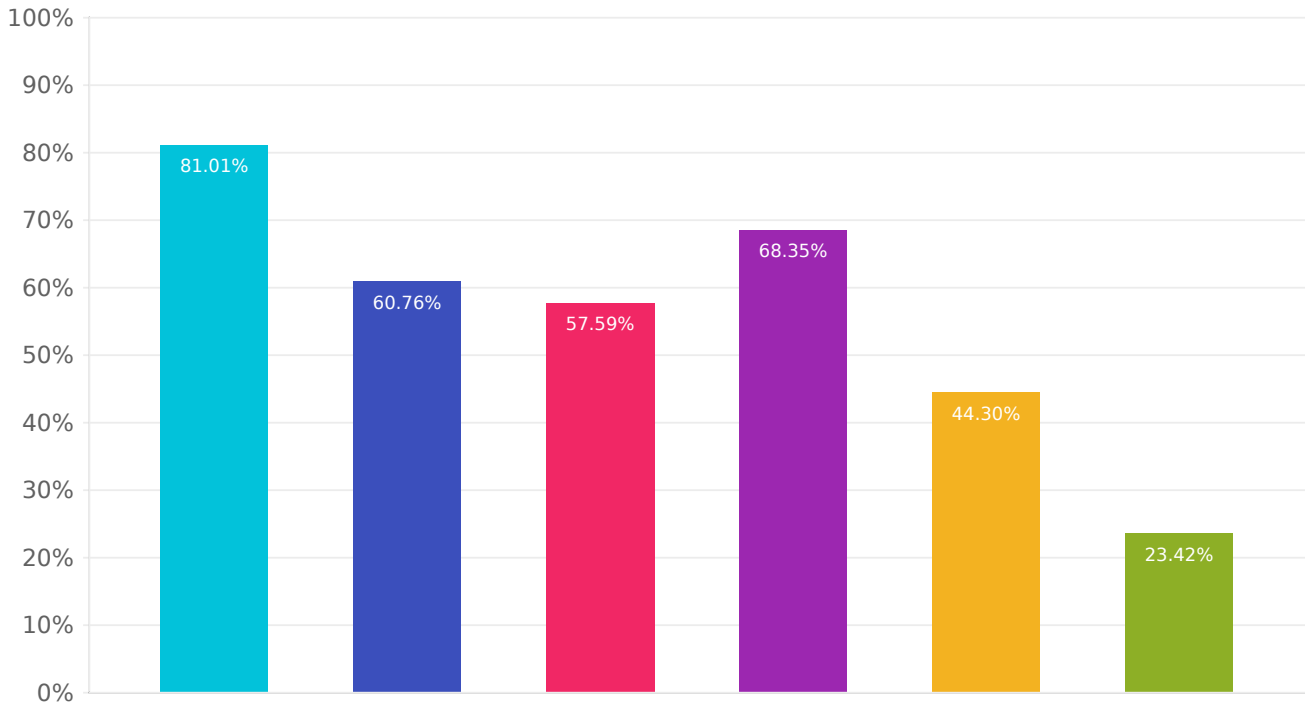
Very happy

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Very unhappy	10.63%	17
Unhappy	15.00%	24
Neutral	63.13%	101
Happy	7.50%	12
Very happy	3.75%	6

Q17

What problems do youth face in Orillia? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 158 Skipped: 100



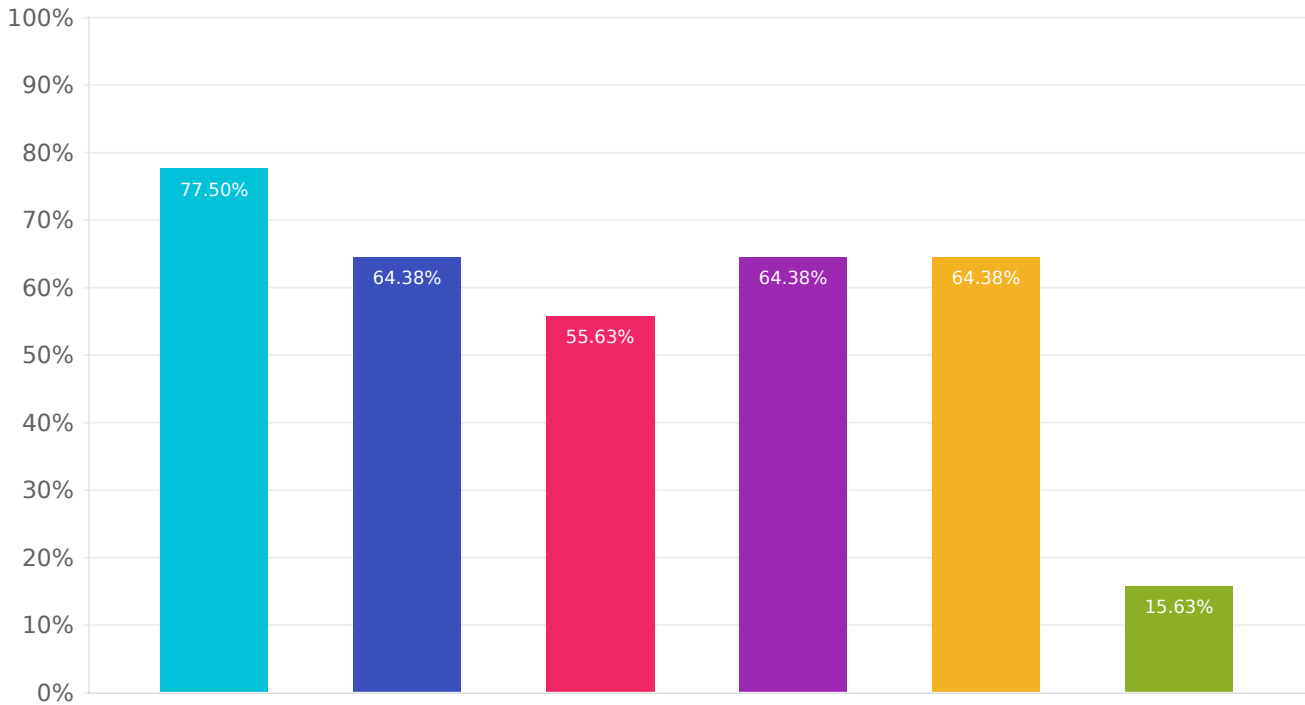
- Mental health
- Lack of jobs
- Education problems
- Housing problems
- Stigma
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Mental health	81.01%	128
Lack of jobs	60.76%	96
Education problems	57.59%	91
Housing problems	68.35%	108
Stigma	44.30%	70
Other (Please specify)	23.42%	37

Q18

What support do youth need the most? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 160 Skipped: 98



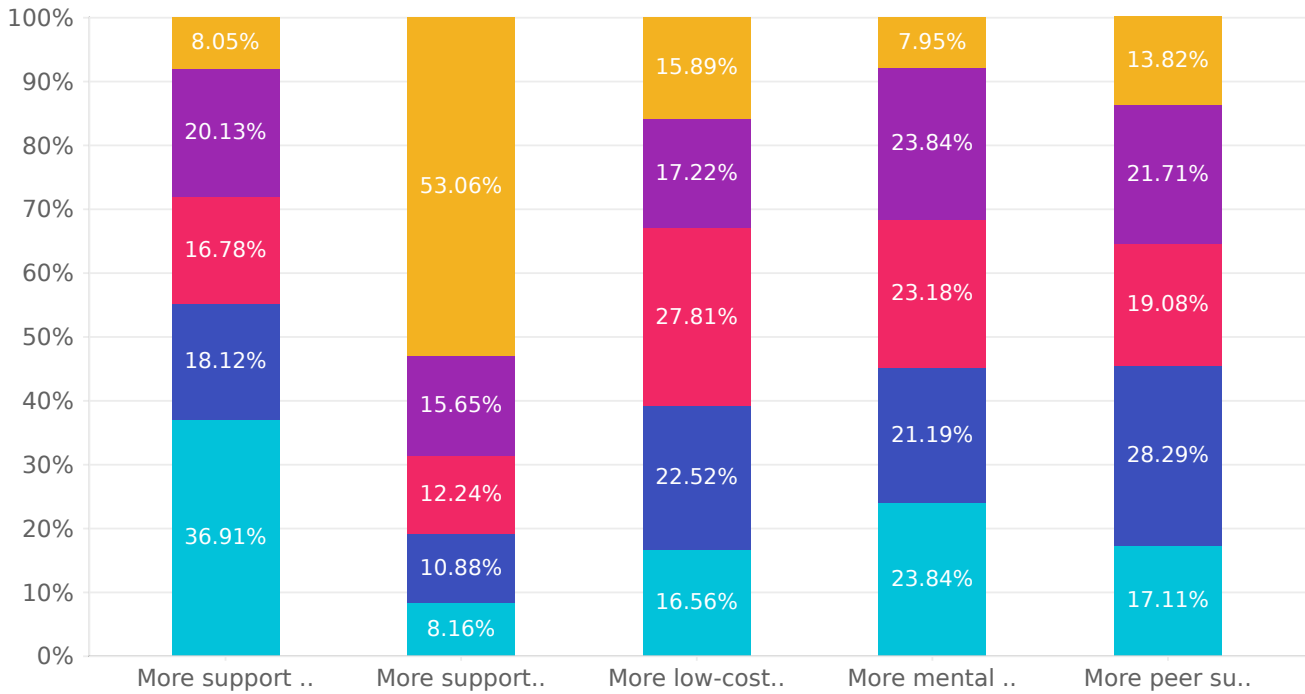
- Mental health services
- Job training
- Housing support
- Education support
- Safe social spaces
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Mental health services	77.50%	124
Job training	64.38%	103
Housing support	55.63%	89
Education support	64.38%	103
Safe social spaces	64.38%	103
Other (Please specify)	15.63%	25

Q19

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 154 Skipped: 104

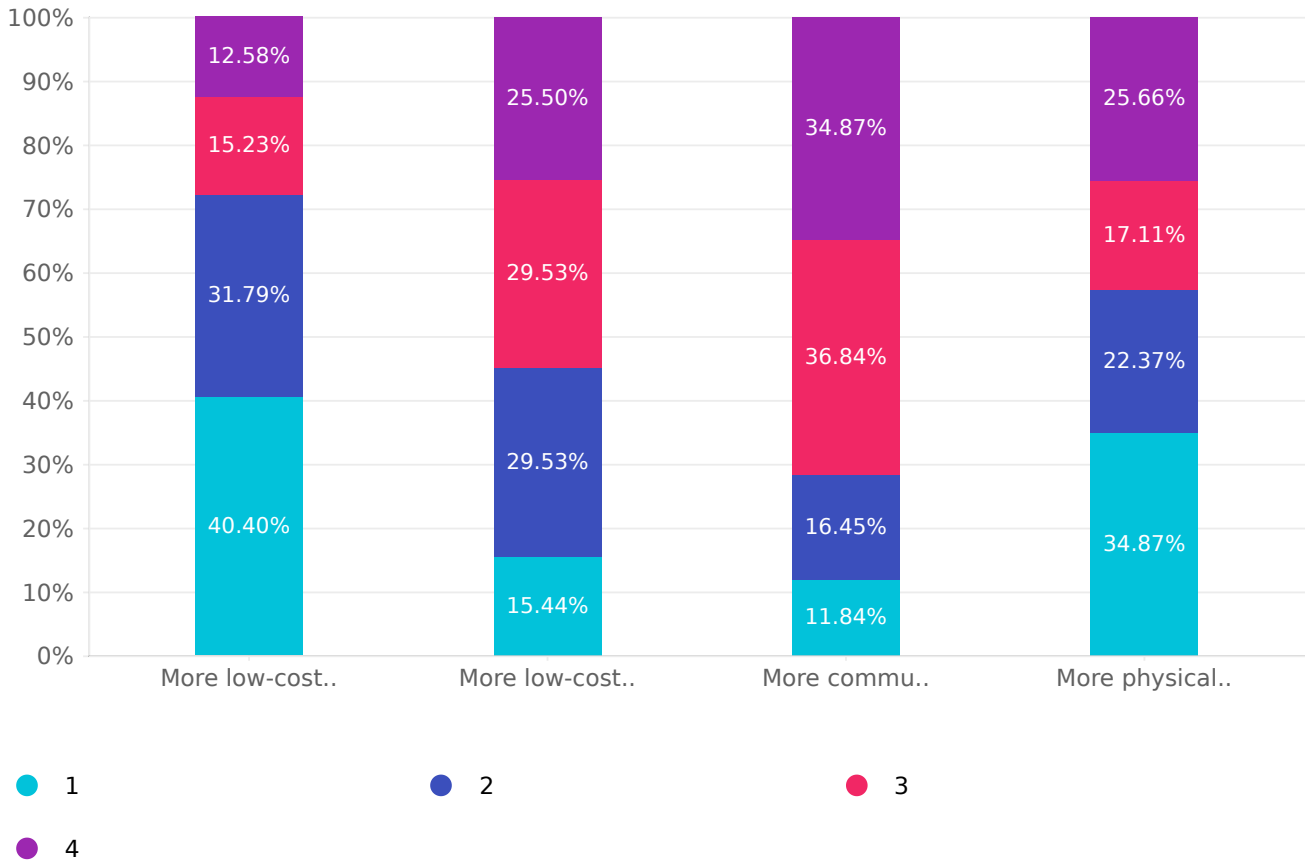


Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
More support for 17 to 20-year-olds when they 'age out' of support programs	36.91% (55)	18.12% (27)	16.78% (25)	20.13% (30)	8.05% (12)	3.56	1	149
More support programs for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth	8.16% (12)	10.88% (16)	12.24% (18)	15.65% (23)	53.06% (78)	2.05	5	147
More low-cost career counseling and guidance services	16.56% (25)	22.52% (34)	27.81% (42)	17.22% (26)	15.89% (24)	3.07	4	151
More mental wellness support services (e.g. mindfulness groups)	23.84% (36)	21.19% (32)	23.18% (35)	23.84% (36)	7.95% (12)	3.29	2	151
More peer support groups and mentoring programs	17.11% (26)	28.29% (43)	19.08% (29)	21.71% (33)	13.82% (21)	3.13	3	152

Q20

Rank these ideas from 1 to 4 (1 is the most important, and 4 is the least important):

Answered: 155 Skipped: 103

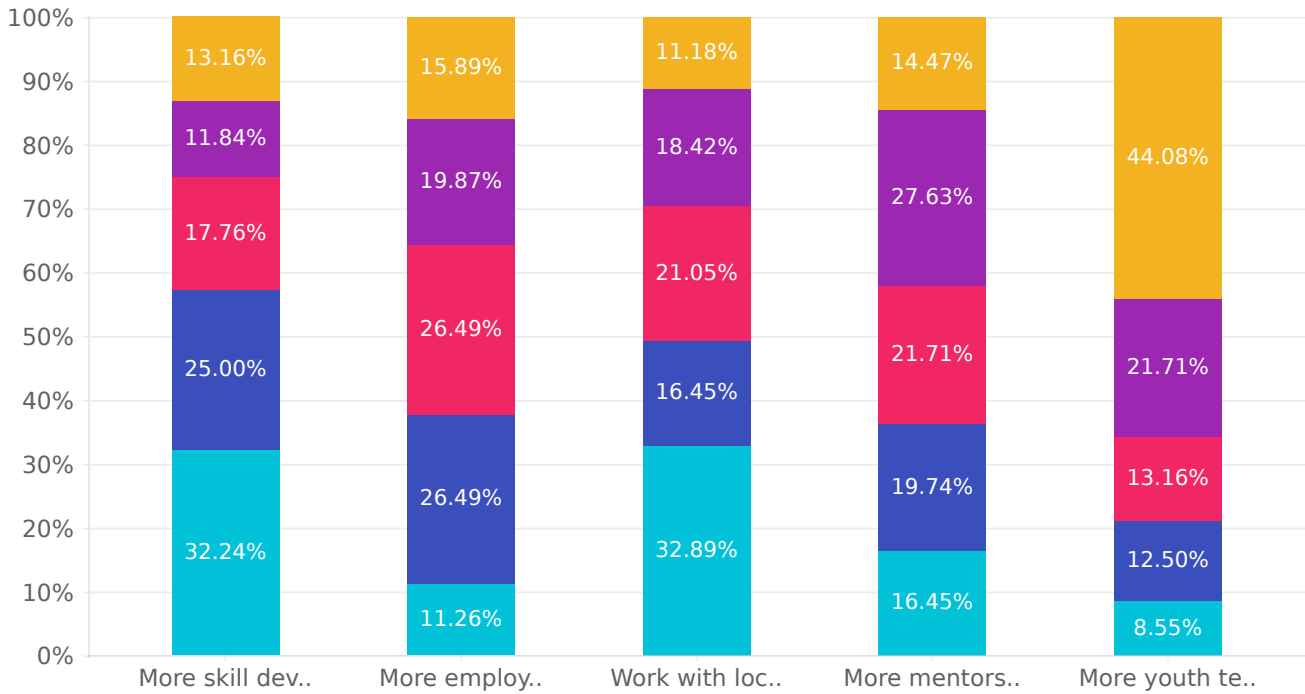


Choices	1	2	3	4	Score	Rank	Response count
More low-cost after school youth recreation programs (e.g. sports, music, art, outdoor recreation etc.)	40.40% (61)	31.79% (48)	15.23% (23)	12.58% (19)	3.00	1	151
More low-cost tutoring services	15.44% (23)	29.53% (44)	29.53% (44)	25.50% (38)	2.35	3	149
More community service and volunteer opportunities for youth	11.84% (18)	16.45% (25)	36.84% (56)	34.87% (53)	2.05	4	152
More physical activity opportunities (e.g. low cost/ free Orillia Recreation Centre passes)	34.87% (53)	22.37% (34)	17.11% (26)	25.66% (39)	2.66	2	152

Q21

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 154 Skipped: 104



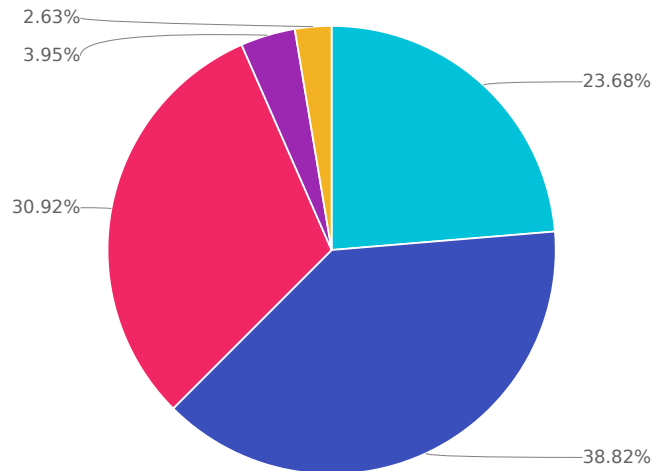
Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
More skill development and training opportunities	32.24% (49)	25.00% (38)	17.76% (27)	11.84% (18)	13.16% (20)	3.51	1	152
More employment support (e.g. resume building, job fairs, etc.)	11.26% (17)	26.49% (40)	26.49% (40)	19.87% (30)	15.89% (24)	2.97	3	151
Work with local high schools, colleges, and universities to provide financial literacy programs	32.89% (50)	16.45% (25)	21.05% (32)	18.42% (28)	11.18% (17)	3.41	2	152
More mentorship programs connecting youth with professionals	16.45% (25)	19.74% (30)	21.71% (33)	27.63% (42)	14.47% (22)	2.96	4	152
More youth technology clubs (e.g. coding, programming etc.)	8.55% (13)	12.50% (19)	13.16% (20)	21.71% (33)	44.08% (67)	2.20	5	152

## Employment

Q22

How easy is it to find a job in Orillia?

Answered: 152 Skipped: 106



Very hard

Hard

Okay

Easy

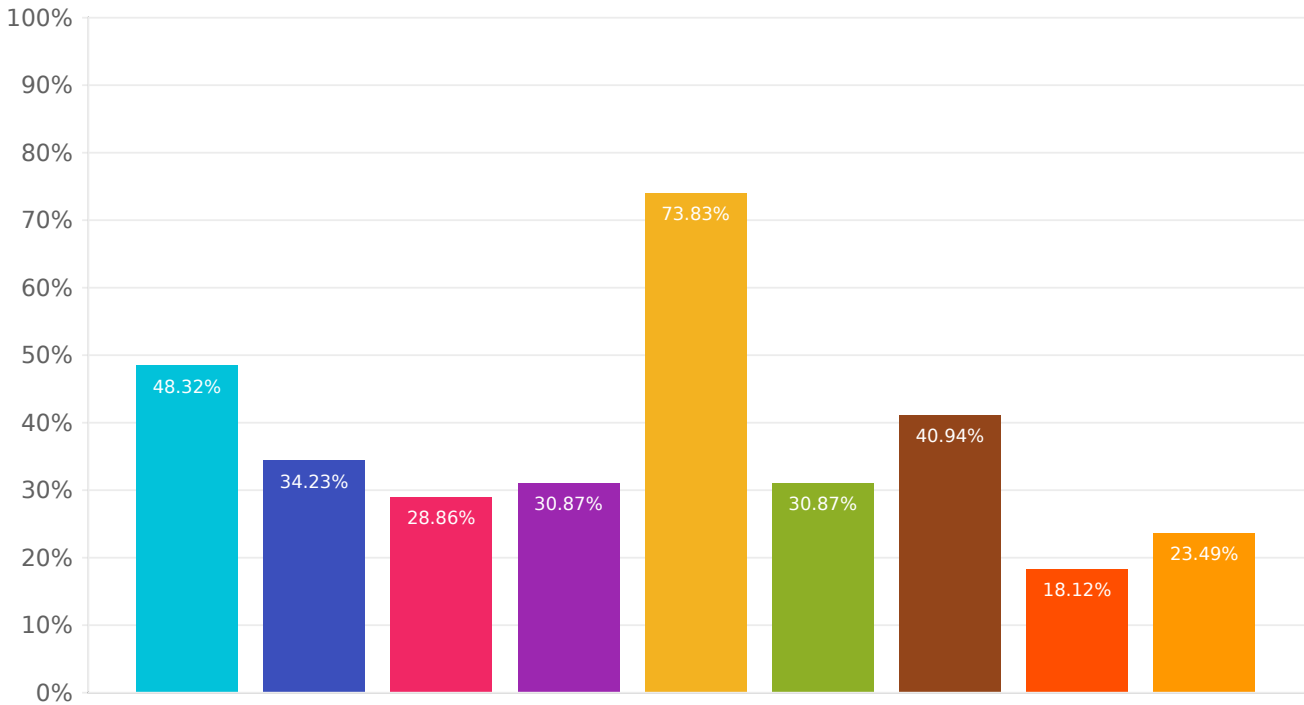
Very easy

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Very hard	23.68%	36
Hard	38.82%	59
Okay	30.92%	47
Easy	3.95%	6
Very easy	2.63%	4

Q23

What problems do you face when looking for a job? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 149 Skipped: 109



- Not enough job openings
- Lack of job skills, training, or qualifications
- Lack of transportation
- Not knowing about job openings
- Wages don't meet my needs
- Lack/ cost of childcare needs
- Lack of flexibility (e.g. work hours do not allow for school bus drop-off times)
- Lack of accessibility (e.g. lack of ODSP accommodations)
- Other (Please specify)



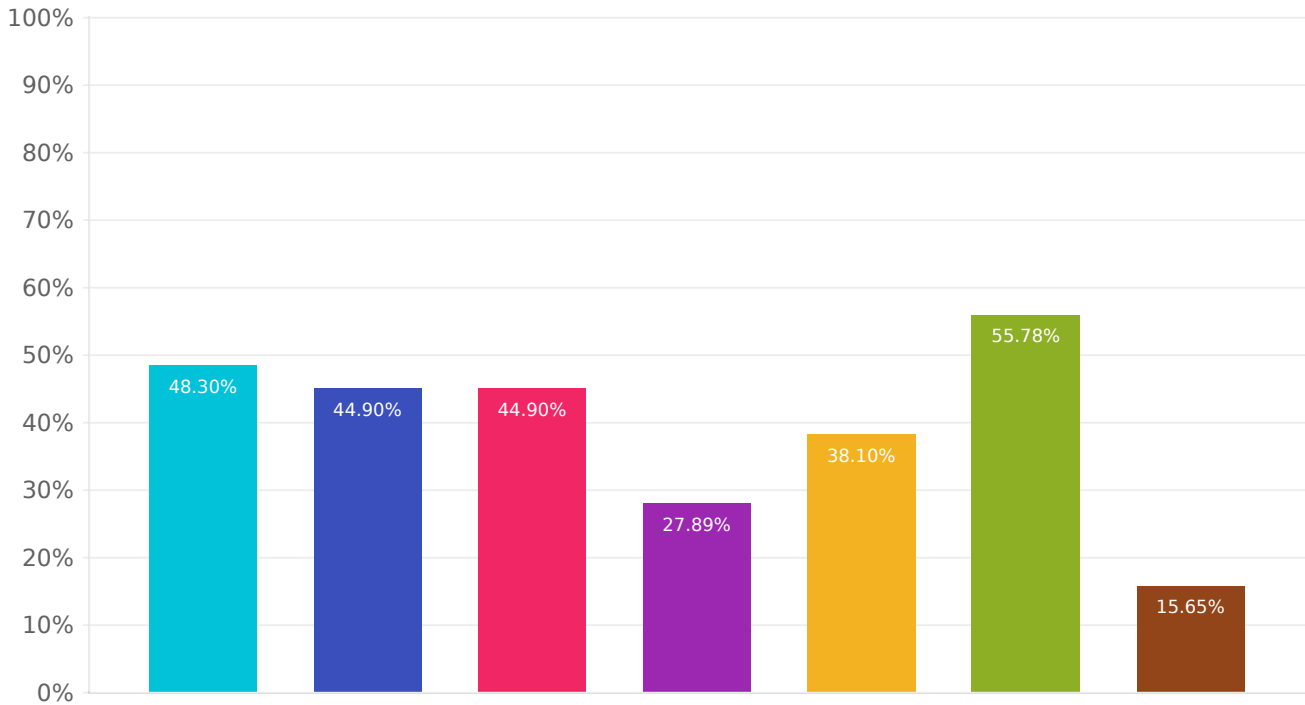
## Schedule "A"

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Not enough job openings	48.32%	72
Lack of job skills, training, or qualifications	34.23%	51
Lack of transportation	28.86%	43
Not knowing about job openings	30.87%	46
Wages don't meet my needs	73.83%	110
Lack/ cost of childcare	30.87%	46
Lack of flexibility (e.g. work hours do not allow for school bus drop-off times)	40.94%	61
Lack of accessibility (e.g. lack of ODSP accommodations)	18.12%	27
Other (Please specify)	23.49%	35

Q24

## What kind of job help would you use? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 147 Skipped: 111



- Job training programs
- Resume and application help
- More direct contact and/or mentoring with potential employers (e.g. job fairs)
- Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) Support
- Support for entrepreneurship
- Information about job openings
- Other (Please specify)

## Schedule "A"

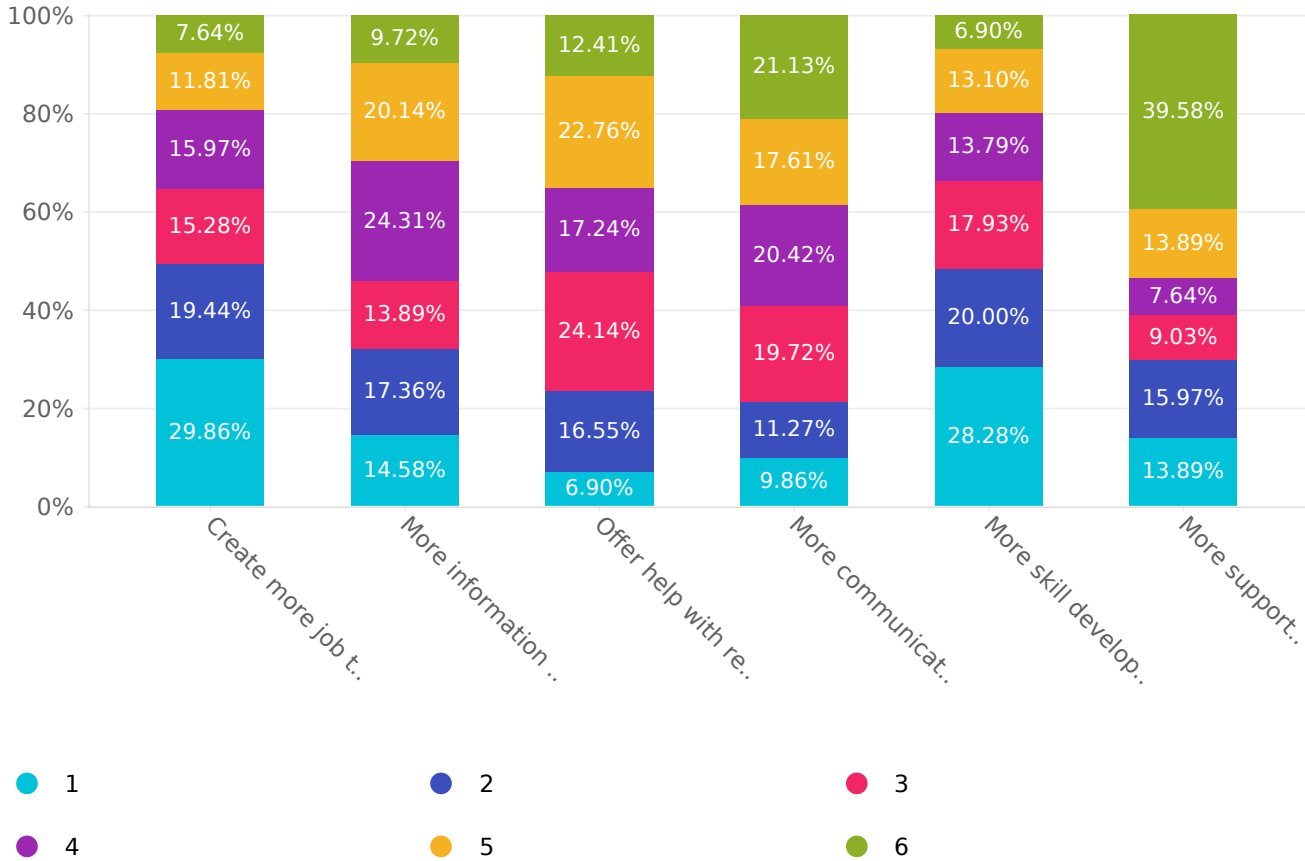
Choices	Response percent	Response count
Job training programs	48.30%	71
Resume and application help	44.90%	66
More direct contact and/or mentoring with potential employers (e.g. job fairs)	44.90%	66
Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) Support	27.89%	41
Support for entrepreneurship	38.10%	56
Information about job openings	55.78%	82
Other (Please specify)	15.65%	23

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Q25

Rank these ideas from 1 to 6 (1 is the most important, and 6 is the least important):

Answered: 149 Skipped: 109



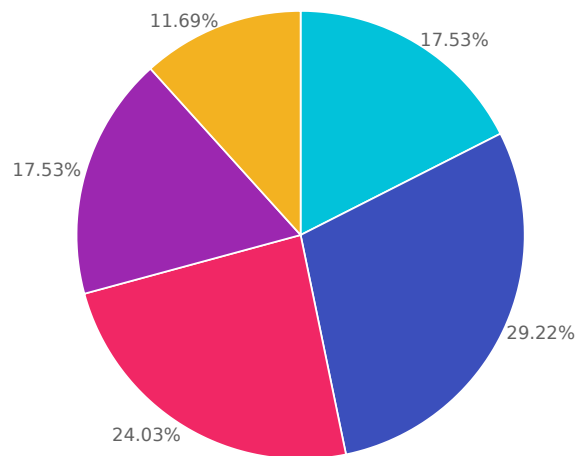
Choices	1	2	3	4	5	6	Score	Rank	Response count
Create more job training programs	29.86% (43)	19.44% (28)	15.28% (22)	15.97% (23)	11.81% (17)	7.64% (11)	4.17	1	144
More information about job openings in the community (e.g. job fairs)	14.58% (21)	17.36% (25)	13.89% (20)	24.31% (35)	20.14% (29)	9.72% (14)	3.53	3	144
Offer help with resumes and job applications	6.90% (10)	16.55% (24)	24.14% (35)	17.24% (25)	22.76% (33)	12.41% (18)	3.30	4	145
More communication about employment services in Orillia (e.g. Georgian College Career and Employment Community Services, Agelic, etc.)	9.86% (14)	11.27% (16)	19.72% (28)	20.42% (29)	17.61% (25)	21.13% (30)	3.12	5	142
More skill development opportunities	28.28% (41)	20.00% (29)	17.93% (26)	13.79% (20)	13.10% (19)	6.90% (10)	4.16	2	145
More supports for entrepreneurship	13.89% (20)	15.97% (23)	9.03% (13)	7.64% (11)	13.89% (20)	39.58% (57)	2.90	6	144

## Food Security

Q26

How secure do you feel about your food situation?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 104



Very insecure

Insecure

Neutral

Secure

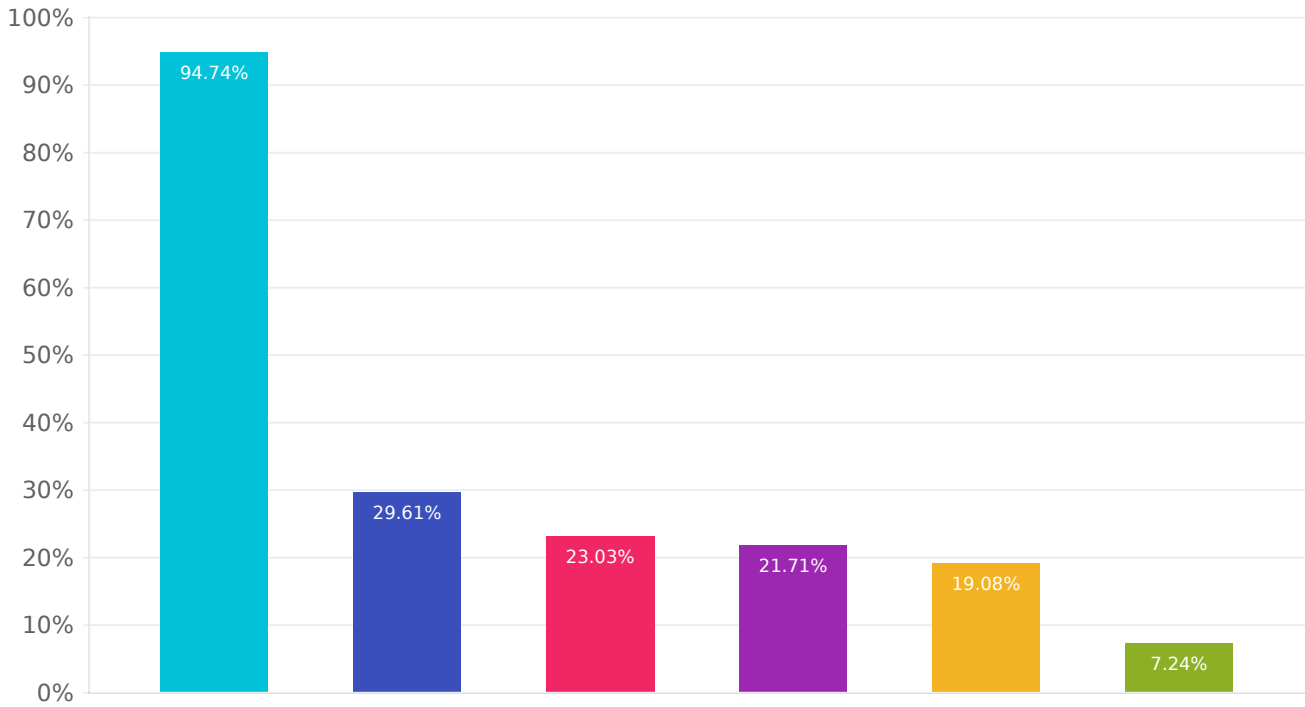
Very secure

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Very insecure	17.53%	27
Insecure	29.22%	45
Neutral	24.03%	37
Secure	17.53%	27
Very secure	11.69%	18

Q27

What makes it hard to get healthy food? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 152 Skipped: 106



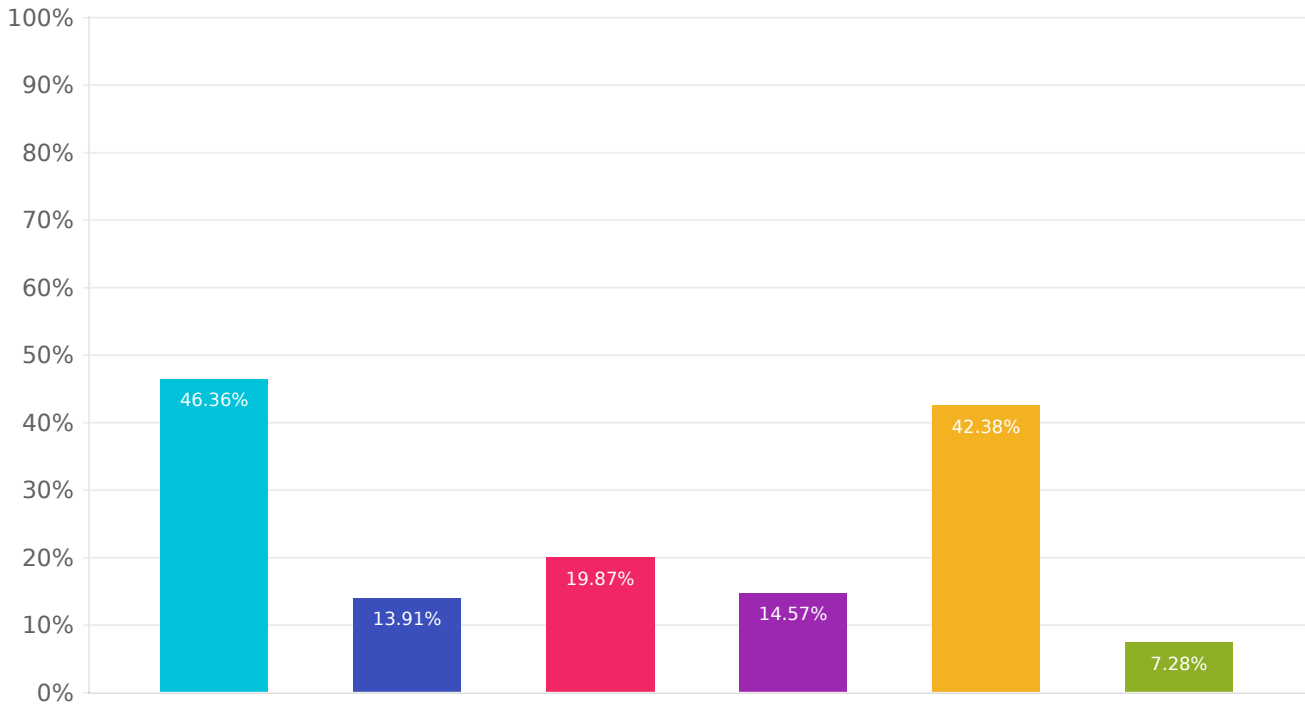
- Cost
- Availability
- Transportation
- Dietary needs
- Lack of food supports
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Cost	94.74%	144
Availability	29.61%	45
Transportation	23.03%	35
Dietary needs	21.71%	33
Lack of food supports	19.08%	29
Other (Please specify)	7.24%	11

Q28

What food supports have you used? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 151 Skipped: 107



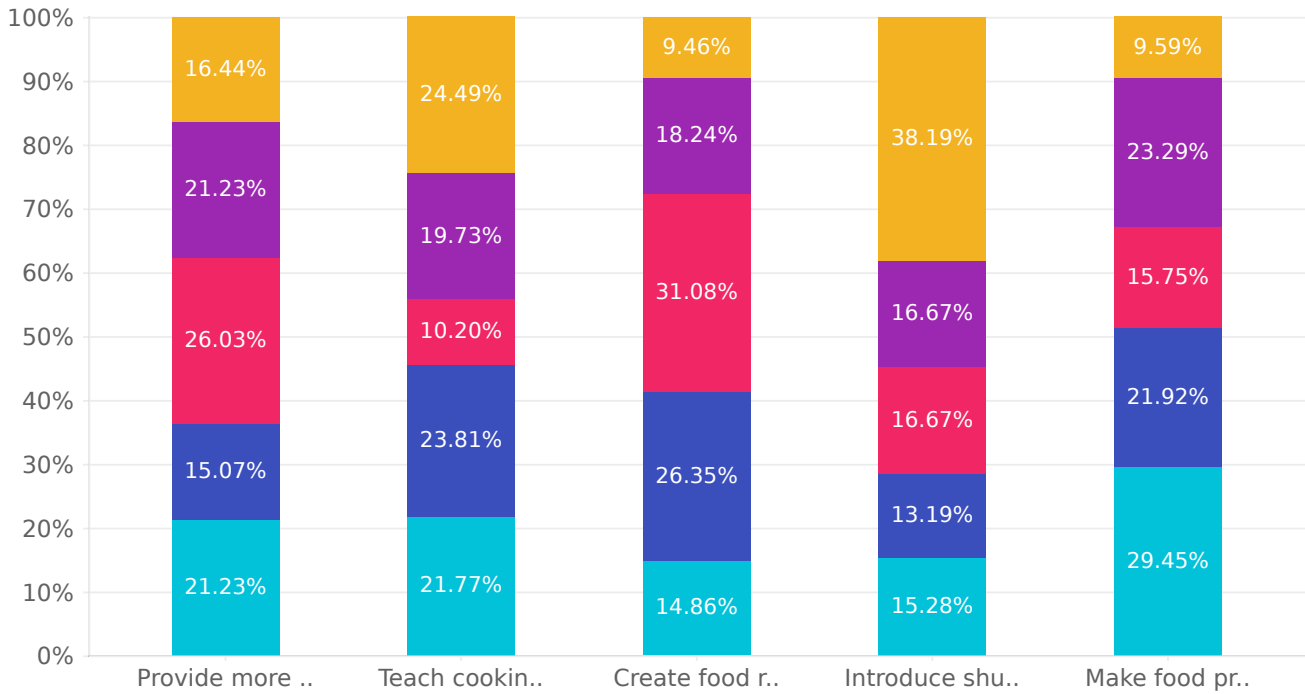
- Food banks
- Community kitchens
- School food programs
- Community gardens
- None
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Food banks	46.36%	70
Community kitchens	13.91%	21
School food programs	19.87%	30
Community gardens	14.57%	22
None	42.38%	64
Other (Please specify)	7.28%	11

Q29

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 150 Skipped: 108



Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
Provide more community gardens/ shared gardening space	21.23% (31)	15.07% (22)	26.03% (38)	21.23% (31)	16.44% (24)	3.03	3	146
Teach cooking, gardening, and healthy eating	21.77% (32)	23.81% (35)	10.20% (15)	19.73% (29)	24.49% (36)	2.99	4	147
Create food recovery and sharing programs	14.86% (22)	26.35% (39)	31.08% (46)	18.24% (27)	9.46% (14)	3.19	2	148
Introduce shuttle buses to grocery stores	15.28% (22)	13.19% (19)	16.67% (24)	16.67% (24)	38.19% (55)	2.51	5	144
Make food programs that help people buy food directly	29.45% (43)	21.92% (32)	15.75% (23)	23.29% (34)	9.59% (14)	3.38	1	146

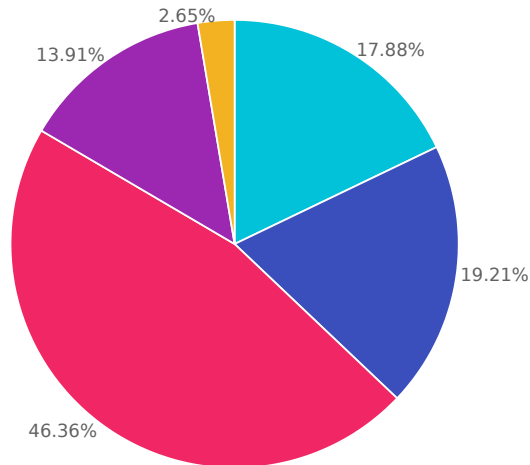


## Transportation

Q30

How do you rate the public transportation in Orillia?

Answered: 151 Skipped: 107



Very bad

Bad

Okay

Good

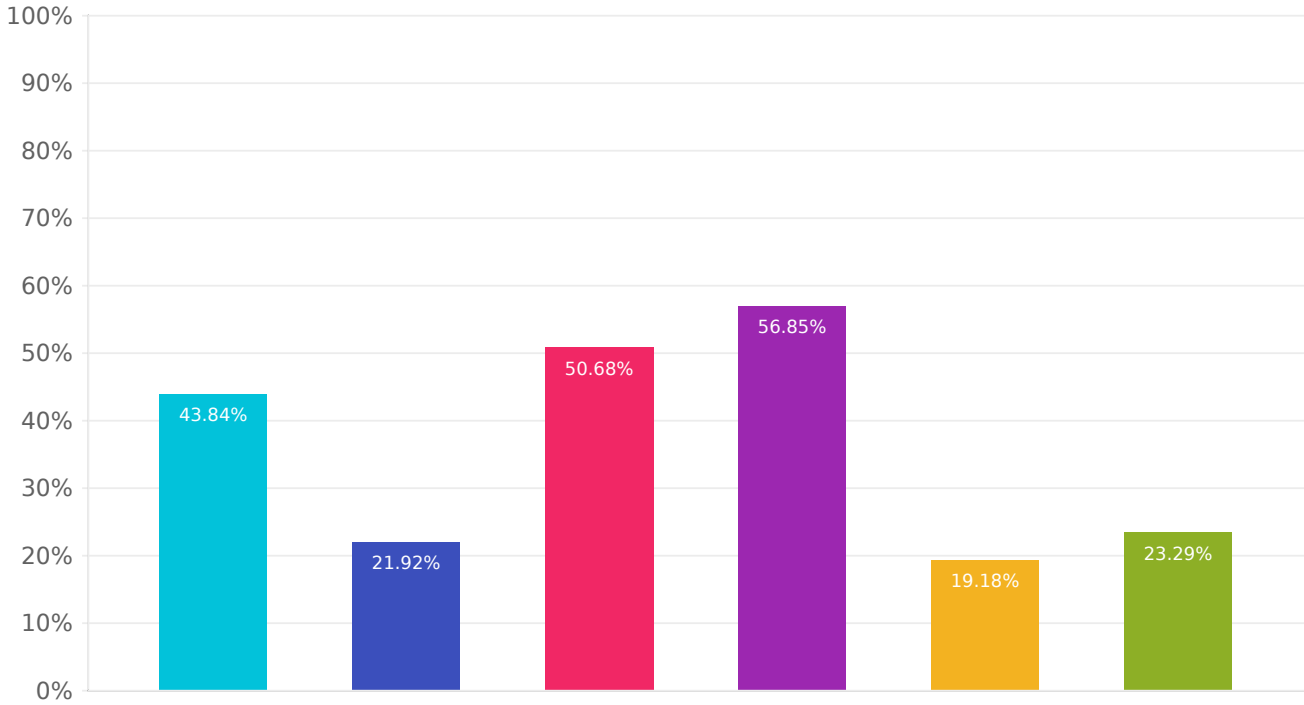
Very good

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Very bad	17.88%	27
Bad	19.21%	29
Okay	46.36%	70
Good	13.91%	21
Very good	2.65%	4

Q31

What problems do you have with transportation? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 146 Skipped: 112



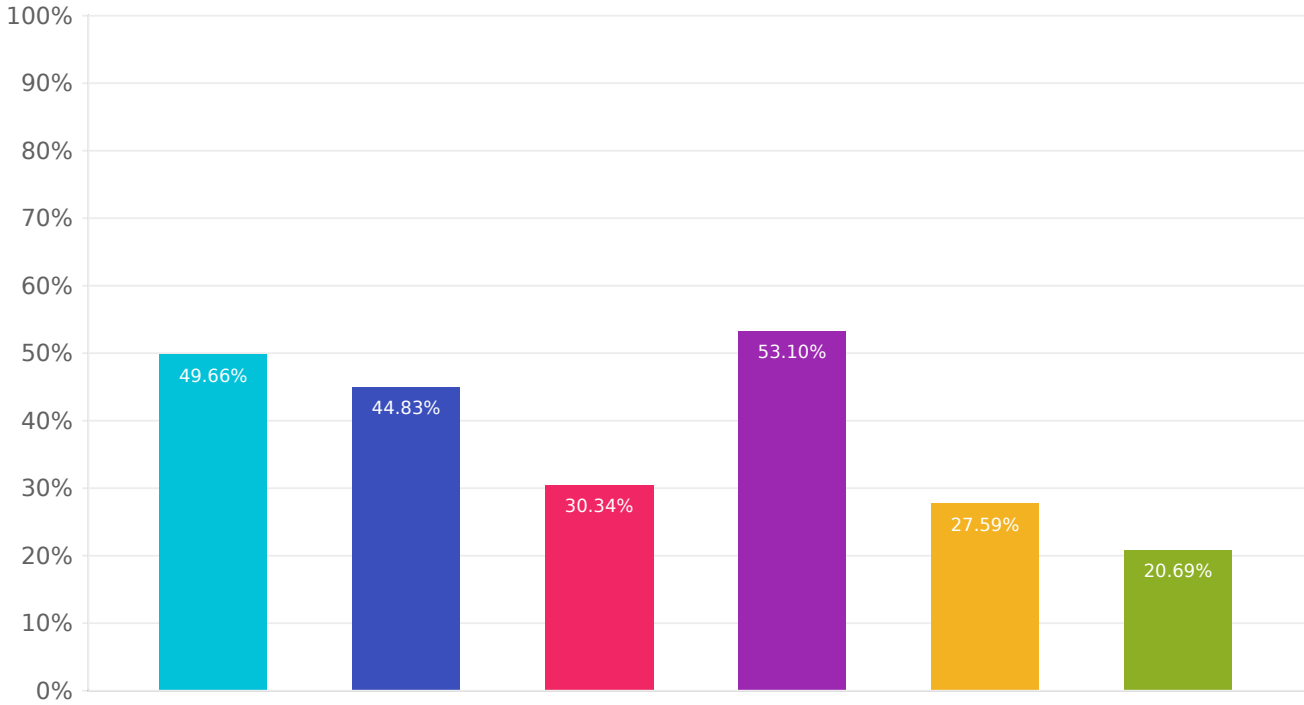
- Cost
- Accessibility
- Routes
- Schedules
- Not knowing about services
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
Cost	43.84%	64
Accessibility	21.92%	32
Routes	50.68%	74
Schedules	56.85%	83
Not knowing about services	19.18%	28
Other (Please specify)	23.29%	34

Q32

What transportation improvements would help you the most? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 145 Skipped: 113



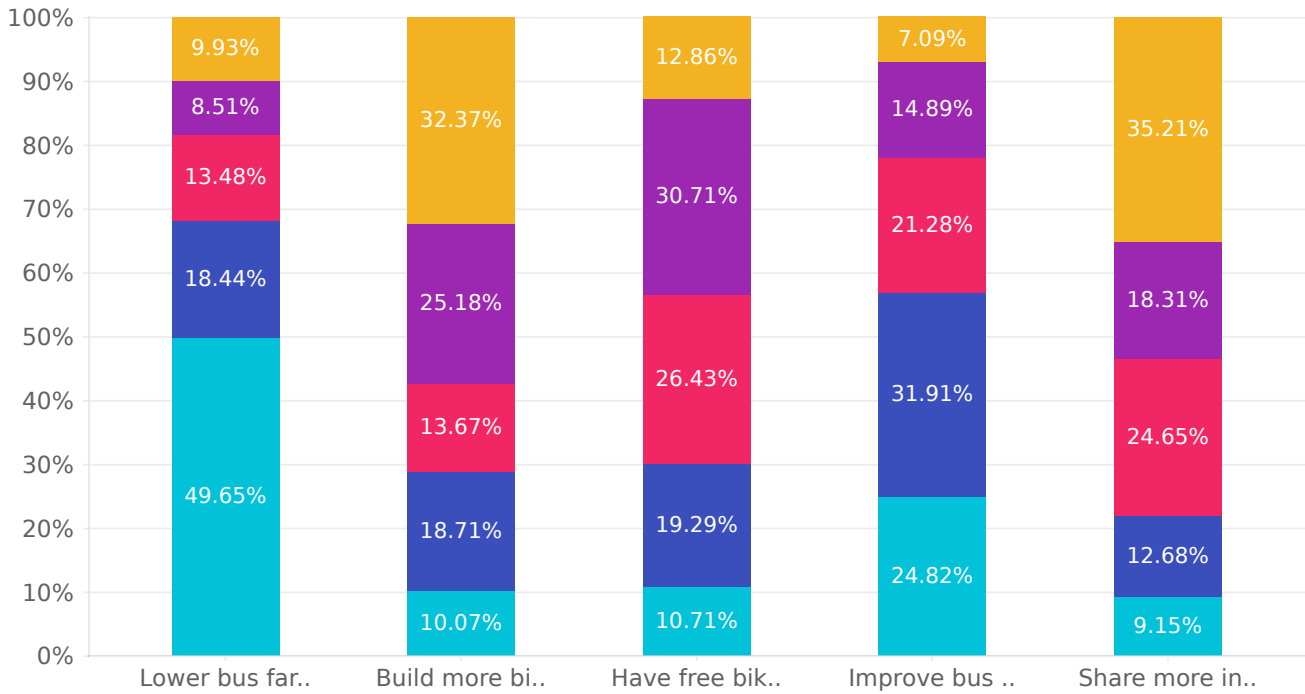
- More frequent buses
- More routes
- Better bike lanes
- Lower transportation costs
- More information about transportation
- Other (Please specify)

Choices	Response percent	Response count
More frequent buses	49.66%	72
More routes	44.83%	65
Better bike lanes	30.34%	44
Lower transportation costs	53.10%	77
More information about transportation	27.59%	40
Other (Please specify)	20.69%	30

Q33

Rank these ideas from 1 to 5 (1 is the most important, and 5 is the least important):

Answered: 147 Skipped: 111



Choices	1	2	3	4	5	Score	Rank	Response count
Lower bus fares and extend hours, offer free rides for students and seniors	49.65% (70)	18.44% (26)	13.48% (19)	8.51% (12)	9.93% (14)	3.89	1	141
Build more bike lanes and safe bike storage	10.07% (14)	18.71% (26)	13.67% (19)	25.18% (35)	32.37% (45)	2.49	4	139
Have free bike rentals and carpool programs	10.71% (15)	19.29% (27)	26.43% (37)	30.71% (43)	12.86% (18)	2.84	3	140
Improve bus schedule (e.g. frequency, expanded weekend hours)	24.82% (35)	31.91% (45)	21.28% (30)	14.89% (21)	7.09% (10)	3.52	2	141
Share more information about public transit and promote transit app	9.15% (13)	12.68% (18)	24.65% (35)	18.31% (26)	35.21% (50)	2.42	5	142

## Overall Experiences

Q34

Please share any other ideas or comments you have about reducing poverty in Orillia:

Answered: 98   Skipped: 160

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## Resources

Thank you for filling out this survey. Your answers will help us reduce poverty and make life better for everyone in Orillia. Your opinion is important, and we want to build a caring and helpful community for all. If you need help with something not on this list, please talk to someone from your host organization.

### **Mental Health Crisis Line (Canadian Mental Health Association)**

- Immediate crisis or suicide-related concerns
- Call: 9-8-8 (toll-free, 24/7)
- Text: 9-8-8 (toll-free, 24/7)

### **Crisis Services Canada:**

- Offers 24/7 crisis support.
- Call: 1-833-456-4566
- Text: Text "START" to 45645

### **Here24Seven helpline**

- 24/7 addictions, mental health, and crisis services
- Intake, assessment, and referrals for most local government-funded addictions and mental health services
- Call: 1.844.437.3247

### **National Overdose Response Service (NORS)**

- 24/7 \* 365 Confidential Virtual Overdose Prevention. Canada Wide.
- Call/ text: 1 (888) 688-NORS(6677)
- Email: weloveyou@nors.ca

### **Good2Talk**

- Post-Secondary Student Helpline
- Call: 1.866.925.5454

### **Kids Help Phone**

- E-mental health services
- Call: 1-800-668-6868 (24/7)
- Text: CONNECT to 686868

### **211 Ontario**

- A helpline and online database of Ontario's community and social services.
- Call: 2-1-1
- Text: 2-11

### **CFS Counselling + Wellness**

169 Front St S, Orillia, ON L3V 4S8 (The Common Roof)

- Counselling and therapy services in Orillia (all inquiries handled by the Barrie office)
- Call: 705-726-2503
- Call Toll-Free: 1-888-726-2503

**Enachtig Outreach Services**

334 West Street N, Orillia, ON L3V 5E3

- Support services to Indigenous individuals and their families
- Mental health and/ or addictions counselling, systems navigation and referrals to community programs and services, homelessness support
- Call Intake: 705-330-4059, ext. 130
- Email Intake: intakecoordinator@enachtig.ca

**Orillia Native Women's Group**

169 Front St S, Orillia, ON L3V 4S8 (The Common Roof)

- Supports the well-being of Indigenous women and their families
- Call: 705-329-7755

**Orillia Public Library - Human Services Coordinator (Kathryn Stapley)**

36 Mississaga St W, Orillia, ON L3V 3A6

- Social service navigation, resources, support
- Call: 705-238-8450
- Drop-in hours: Monday and Tuesday from 2 - 4 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Information Orillia**

36 Mississaga St W, Orillia, ON L3V 3A6 (Orillia Public Library)

- Connections to social services, mental health services, community resources, and advocacy
- Call: 705-326-7743

**Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital - Mental Health & Addiction Program**

170 Colborne St W, Orillia, ON L3V 2Z3

- Call: 705-325-2201 ext. 6337

**Chippewas of Rama Addictions Program**

200-5884 Rama Road, Rama, ON L3V 6H6

- Call: 705-325-3611 ext. 1423

**The Sharing Place Food Centre**

95 Dufferin St, Orillia, ON L3V 5S9

- Food assistance through the Food Bank Program
- Call: 705-327-4273

**The Lighthouse**

75 Queen St E, Orillia, ON L3V 8M2

- Emergency food and shelter, primary care, mental health and addiction services, and spiritual support for people who are experiencing a housing crisis
- Call: 705-329-2265, ext. 1

**Orillia Housing Resource Centre by Empower Simcoe**

35 West Street N, Orillia, ON L3V 5B8

- Services related to housing, affordable housing, and homelessness
- Call: 705-739-0485

**Youth Haven Orillia**

246 Oxford St E Unit B7 (The Gathering Place)

- Supporting youth (age 16-24) with emergency shelter, referral services, counselling, life skills, case management, and more
- Call: 705-790-6112 or 705-715-4920

**Green Haven Shelter for Women**

570 Sundial Dr, Orillia, ON L3V 8L7

- 24/7 crisis support for women facing emergencies related to gender-based violence
- Call: 705-327-7319
- Call Toll-Free: 1-888-285-6958
- Text: 705-345-1302

No Responses

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