WSSD2 PEOPLE'S REPORT

CANADA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENTS 1995-2025

A COLLABORATIVE REPORT BY THE PEOPLE'S REPORTING NETWORK

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the People's Report

2025 is a landmark year for Canadian government and civil society leadership on the international stage. Historically a leader in human rights and social development, this year Canada has held leadership roles at the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocates group and served as host to the G7 Summit. At the same time, however, Canada is falling short or backsliding on putting the needs of people in the centre of development, on fulfilling its human rights obligations domestically and globally. In addition, Canada's SDG consultation and the Doha Declaration draft process have been critiqued for excluding certain communities in civil society from meaningful consultations and for inadequately addressing underlying systems and structures that perpetuate inequality. The 2nd World Summit on Social Development (WSSD2), held November 4-6, in Doha, Qatar, represented a critical opportunity for Canada to reassert its commitment to upholding human rights by confirming the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and its obligations under the SDGs; this report will offer reflections and analysis regarding these events.

Over 30 civil society organizations in Canada have come together, illuminating collective leadership to produce a WSSD2 People's Report to hold the Government of Canada accountable in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling its human rights and sustainable development obligations and commitments. These organizations are grassroots groups, community agencies, human rights organizations, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations, feminist, climate-focused, disability-led, Black-led, and Queer/2SLGBTQIA+ led organizations, academics, and faith groups.

This report also proposes evidence-based solutions to address gaps in progress on the SDGs and human rights. This report is uniquely situated to reflect the positions and recommendations of civil society organizations, and we intend for the report and subsequent processes to ensure those positions are reflected in Canada's upcoming, July 2026, High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the SDG report and Canada's role in formulating post 2030 SDGs.

This collaboratively produced report uses intersectional, rights-based, feminist, anti-oppressive and anti-colonial lenses to explore distinct experiences, outcomes, barriers, and solutions across specific issue areas that are foundational to the right to an adequate standard of living in Canada: housing, income security, food security, health, jobs and employment, and education and childcare.

Our research and recommendations are related to SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero Hunger, and SDG 5: Gender Equality. This Report is a call for greater transparency and accountability in Canada's human rights obligations and progress towards the SDGs. Additionally, this report is

set to inform Canada on current perspectives from CSOs in Canada for consideration of priorities for the remaining years of the SDGs and with regard to initial meaning-making for the beginning conversation on a post-2030 agenda.

1.2 Context of the People's Report

In 1992, Agenda 21 was adopted as the first global comprehensive plan for sustainable development at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This monumental event was followed by a series of four subsequent UN conferences including the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Beijing Conference on Women (1995), the Istanbul Habitat II Conference (1996). Finally, in 1995, 30 years ago, heads of state, government officials, and civil society representatives came together in a spirit of hope oriented toward action at the first World Summit for Social Development (WSSD1) in Copenhagen, Denmark. The WSSD1 underscored that social development is an essential pillar of sustainable development, inseparable from its environmental and economic dimensions. Canada played a major role in the development of the declaration, with a delegation of government officials, a youth representative and two appointed civil society observers (one for domestic issues and the other for international issues) led by Lloyd Axworthy. Additionally, a large group of civil society NGO leaders attended the summit after over a year of discourse and dialogue.

Recognizing the complexity of global social problems, the WSSD1 President, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, then Prime Minister of Denmark, said in his opening remarks "We are gathered here to promote social development and social justice, placing the needs, rights and aspirations of people at the centre of our decisions and joint actions. We want to open a new era of international cooperation between Governments and people based on a spirit of partnership."[i]

From a foundational commitment to the human right to development, as enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the WSSD1 aimed to solidify global commitment to placing the needs of people at the centre of development. It stated firmly that the three pillars of sustainable development are: economic development, social development, and environmental protection. All three are integral for the flourishing of people and the planet and are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The WSSD1 produced the Copenhagen Declaration consisting of 10 commitments to enact social development.

Then UN Secretary General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali proclaimed,

> "For the social development project is an opportunity for the international community as a whole to say: No to the inevitability of crisis! No to the persistence of inequalities! No to the division of the world! Giving social issues the status of universal priorities shows our determination to accept responsibility for the collective destiny of international society and to establish a new planet-wide pact of solidarity."[ii]

Thirty years later, the UN hosted the WSSD2, with the intention of solidifying commitment and accelerating action for sustainable development. The WSSD2 provided an opportunity for world leaders to recommit to the Copenhagen Declaration, address its gaps, and strengthen political will for the achievement of the SDGs.

The recent WSSD2 was a particularly important moment to refocus the global community on social development, and for Canadians to ensure that no one is left behind. This People's Report, written as a postscript to the WSSD2 and sets the tone for the relevance of human rights, social justice, equity and gender equality to begin the conversation on what is next after 2030.

Image source: https://social.desa.un.org/world-summit-for-social-development-1995

Ten Commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[iii]

Commitment 1: Creating an Enabling Environment

- Creating economic, political, social, cultural and legal environments that enable people to achieve social development, including through frameworks that promote equality, human rights, rule of law, transparent governance, and encourage partnerships with civil society organizations.

Commitment 2: Eradicating Poverty

- Eradicating poverty in the world, through national actions and international cooperation to reduce poverty and eradicate absolute poverty by target dates, ensuring access to basic needs, resources, and social protections.

Commitment 3: Promoting Full Employment

- Full employment is a basic priority of economic and social policies that enable all people to attain secure, freely chosen, and sustainable livelihoods. Incorporate measures to reduce unemployment, expand work opportunities in rural and urban sectors, and protect workers' rights.

Commitment 4: Promoting Social Integration

- Promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just, based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people.

Commitment 5: Achieving Equality and Equity Between Women and Men

- Promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men by recognizing and strengthening women's participation and leadership roles, in civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development.

Commitment 6: Accessing Health and Education Services

- Promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and universal access to primary health care.

Commitment 7: Accelerating Development in Africa and in Least Developed Countries

- Accelerating economic, social and human resource development in Africa and in the least developed countries by implementing structural adjustment policies with social development goals, providing debt relief, increasing development assistance, and supporting reform efforts in these regions.

Commitment 8: Including Social Development Goals in Structural Adjustment Programmes

- Ensuring that social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration are embedded within structural adjustment programmes.

Commitment 9: Allocating Resources for Social Development

- Increasing significantly and/or utilizing more efficiently the resources allocated to social development in order to achieve the goals of the Summit through national action and regional and international cooperation.

Commitment 10: Cooperating for Social Development

- Improving and strengthening frameworks for international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

1.4 Evolution of Social Development from the Commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

At the WSSD1, Heads of States and Governments recognized social development as both a goal and a process, made commitments to address social development in an integrated way - placing the needs of people at the centre of development, and emphasized the mutually reinforcing nature of social development, economic development, and environmental protection.[iv]

Since 1995, the social development discourse has evolved through multiple conferences and initiatives, including the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), and the Rio+20 Conference on the "Future We Want" (2012), which led to the current 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with the 17 SDGs at its core.

Conceptually, the three pillars of social development in the Copenhagen Declaration - economic, environmental, social - continue to serve as core principles underlying sustainable development and the SDGs. In addition, there was a movement away from a donor-recipient model of social development to a recognition of the universal applicability of sustainable development principles, acknowledging the disparities that exist within high income regions and not merely between high- and low-income nations. There was also an evolution from a focus on State obligations in social development to a multi-stakeholder approach. The SDGs were developed through multi-year successive consultations with a variety of stakeholders including civil society, the private sector, academia, and other institutions. Finally, there was a shift from broad commitments, such as those made in the Copenhagen Declaration, toward the concrete, measurable goals with targets and indicators that are found in the SDGs.

1.5 Canada's Human Rights Obligations, SDG Implementation and the Role of Civil Society

The evolution of social development from the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda demonstrates the essential role of civil society in contributing to the realization of sustainable development.

Civil society participation in government is enshrined in international human rights treaties primarily through the rights to self-determination and freedom of expression, assembly, association, and political participation. These rights collectively create the legal foundation for meaningful civic engagement. Treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enshrine these rights. Within the UN

system, the General Assembly acknowledged the important role played by non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors nationally, regionally and internationally in the promotion and protection of human rights in Resolution 60/25. Domestically, these rights are protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Civil society organizations play critical roles in advocacy and engagement with Government, upholding monitoring and accountability, and fostering and sharing innovative solutions and best / promising practices for sustainable development that are attentive to the needs and realities of vulnerable and marginalized communities and individuals. However, during the WSSD1 Summit the 1995 Budget was presented to Parliament, which made massive cuts to social programs and civil service and put an end to the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) that had set shared Federal Provincial funding formulas based on national standards for housing, income and health programs. The NGO and official delegates came home to a country that had been dramatically altered during their absence. We note that, as in 1995, Canada's 2025 federal budget was delivered during the WSSD2, and Canadian attendance at the Doha summit was notably limited. This WSSD2 People's Report therefore asserts the important role and contributions of civil society to realizing sustainable social development in Canada.

2.0 Methodology

This report employs a mixed-methods and collaborative research framework to evaluate Canada's progress on the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). The methodology aligns with the Copenhagen Declaration's people-centered development principles and is informed by existing, publicly available reports, data, and civil society contributions. It employs feminist, anti-colonial, intersectional human rights-based approaches that emphasize the indivisibility of human rights [v]and their interdependence with environmental justice.

2.1 Mixed-Methods Approach

The mixed-methods approach integrates quantitative indicators with qualitative insights that reflect lived experiences, systemic challenges, and evidence-based solutions. Quantitative and qualitative data were synthesized from existing research reports and other published resources, including official government statistics and reports, as well as non-governmental organization (NGO) and academic sources. Some NGO and academic sources include community generated data and other forms of primary research, such as case studies, as well as making use of official statistics.

2.2 Collaborative and Document-Based Research

This report is a collaborative project of over 30 NGOs, grassroots organizations, service providers, academics, labour unions, faith communities, and other advocates coming together across sectors and communities in Canada to call for greater human rights implementation and accountability in our public policy. Over 30 organizations and individuals were invited to

contribute existing published research and recommendations and to review drafts of the report. This report draws exclusively on existing, published materials.

2.3 Data Collection Tools and Sources

While no new surveys or interviews were conducted, the report utilizes the following existing research tools and documents:

- Official government statistics and reports.
- Civil society–administered surveys and policy reports.
- Published testimonies and case studies from grassroots organizations and direct service providers.
- Policy document reviews of legislation, budgets, and program evaluations.
- Academic research papers.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The report adopts intersectional, rights-based, feminist, and anti-oppressive approaches to explore distinct experiences, outcomes, barriers, and solutions related to SDGs 1, 2, and 5, across specific issue areas including housing, income security, food security, health, jobs and employment, and education and childcare. By collaborating with a variety of partners, the report explores each of these areas through the lenses of Indigenous rights, race, gender, (dis)ability, environmental and climate justice, immigration status, sexual orientation, and other factors that influence people's experiences and access to their right to an adequate standard of living in Canada. These approaches are consistent with "Leave No One Behind," the "central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[vi]"

The report explores actions taken towards Canada's obligations under the Copenhagen Declaration, international human rights treaties, and the Sustainable Development Goals and the impacts of these actions (or inaction) on various communities within Canada.

2.5 Validation and Quality Assurance

All data used in this report were synthesized from publicly available, peer-reviewed, and/or government-published resources, and were reviewed by a multi-sector working group including civil society researchers, academics, grassroots organizations, and people with lived experience of poverty in Canada. The report also maintains transparency regarding data limitations, such as a lack of disaggregated data or regional inconsistency in reporting[vii]. These steps are designed to **enhance transparency and support research credibility**[viii], aligning with international standards on reporting mixed-methods research and secondary data.

The working group and a broader network of contributors also reviewed early drafts of the report to conduct a gap analysis and then sought out additional sources to address lack of representation by certain sectors, communities, and rights-holders in Canadian civil society. Contributors were also provided the opportunity to review drafts for accuracy and ultimately to decide whether to be listed as endorsers.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used in sections 3 and 4 to support research synthesis, help verify citations, and facilitate drafting in areas where multiple sources needed to be summarized efficiently. These tools helped us convert extensive public data and published research into accessible, plain-language material. At all times, the interpretation of data, framing of arguments, and prioritization of recommendations were shaped by human judgment, lived experience, and community-driven expertise.

The report in general has been reviewed by a working group and a broader network of contributors.

3.0 Analysis of Canada's Response to Copenhagen

This section examines Canada's progress and shortcomings in meeting the commitments first made in relation to the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, with a focus on what is today stated in SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). In 1995, world leaders pledged to eradicate absolute poverty, ensure equitable access to food and livelihoods, and guarantee the full participation of women in all areas of life[ix]. The Copenhagen Declaration was groundbreaking in its rights-based, people-centred vision at the time. Canada was a leading country to advance social development. The Canadian negotiating team invested much time and resources in helping to draft the Political Declaration, attending the summit with a large contingent of civil society leaders. While recognized as progressive at the time, the Declaration lacked concrete, measurable targets, paid little attention to environmental sustainability beyond their enabling role for human development, and overlooked the specific realities of Indigenous peoples, gender-diverse communities, and other marginalized groups in industrialized countries like Canada.

Nearly three decades later, Canada has made measurable gains, particularly in poverty reduction from the mid-1990s to 2000s and over the 2015 to 2019 period as well as through the implementation of the Gender Results Framework[xxi]. Significant challenges however remain. In 2022, food insecurity affected 17.8% of households[xii], homelessness has skyrocketed[xiii] , the gender wage gap persists at 11%[xiv] , and Indigenous, racialized, low-income, and gender-diverse populations continue to face systemic and structural barriers that position them for greater hardship. Climate change further deepens these inequalities by undermining food systems, housing stability, and livelihoods.[xv] [xvi]

The analysis that follows asks three questions: a) What did Canada commit to in 1995, b) Where are the gaps in those commitments? and c) Based on the present evidence, what progress has been made on these, and where do we continue to fall short?

The over 30 civil society organizations who collaborated on this report suggest that these questions ought to have been central to shaping Canada's position at the WSSD2 regarding the development of a new Political Declaration to address the current global challenges of social development. These questions also serve to draw conclusions for the social challenges to address

at home as well as to define suitable ways forward in alignment with Canada's national SDG Strategy and further human rights obligations.

3.1 Introduction

The following analysis examines each SDG in turn, identifying what Canada committed to, where gaps existed, and what progress has been made. The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development was one of the first global agreements to put people at the centre of development in balance with the environment. Governments, including Canada, committed to eradicating absolute poverty, promoting full employment, and fostering social integration, alongside a strong emphasis on gender equality, education, and health[xvii]. The vision was rights-based and grounded in the belief that economic and social progress are inseparable from respect for human dignity[xviii]

While the Declaration represented significant progress toward social development, from the outset, there were notable gaps. Specific and measurable targets were not included in the Declaration, making it difficult to benchmark success and hold political actors accountable for their commitments. It gave minimal attention to environmental sustainability and offered little to redress the realities of Indigenous and other vulnerable peoples in countries of the Global North like Canada. Its development relied heavily on state-led processes that gave little voice to civil society and lived experience groups [xix]. Civil society engagement was still a relatively new concept at the time. UN stakeholder groups were only a few years old following the significant presence of civil society leaders during the Earth Summit in 1992 Global Forum[xx].

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) was central to the formation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two decades later, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 SDGs[xxi] built on this foundation and aimed to correct some of the weaknesses of the MDGs. The SDGs introduced 169 measurable targets, expanded the definition of poverty to include multidimensional aspects, explicitly recognized environmental sustainability, and applied universally to all member states rather than focusing exclusively on those from the Global South[xxii]. SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 5, in particular, align closely with the original Copenhagen priorities but integrate stronger language on equity, human rights, and climate action.

Canada served Copenhagen alongside their responsibilities within the wider framework of Agenda 21 and the MDGs until the SDGs introduced a more interconnected agenda. There have been advances, such as the adoption of the national *Opportunity for All* Poverty Reduction Strategy, which set a target to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030[xxiii], and the launch of the Gender Results Framework to track progress on gender equality[xxiv]. These achievements notwithstanding, poverty rates, albeit lower than in the 1990s, are climbing and continue to disproportionately affect Indigenous, racialized, and gender-diverse communities[xxv]. Food insecurity has grown, with nearly one in five households affected in 2022[xxvi]. The gender wage gap persists, and climate change continues to amplify these inequalities. [xxvii] [xxviii] The WSSD2

will now offer the opportunity to create new emphasis on the role of social development for the remaining years of the 2030 Agenda.

Building on this opportunity, the following section offers an in-depth analysis of selected SDGS with regard to social development. It addresses what Canada committed to in 1995, identifies areas where those commitments could be considered weak or incomplete, and examines present-day progress and gaps. The goal is to provide a civil-society perspective to inform the Government of Canada's 2027 SDG report, highlighting current and future realities,and advancing the principle of leaving no one behind. This analysis will also serve to support national implementation efforts of commitments from the WSSD2. It makes use of several national reporting schemes that Canada has implemented since 1995 at the national level including those in response to the SDGs.

3.2.1 SDG 1 – No Poverty

As signatories of the Copenhagen Declaration, the UN member states at the time committed to eradicating absolute poverty through decisive national action, robust social protection systems, and international cooperation[xxix]The vision was that poverty eradication would be a central priority of economic and social policy, with strategies tailored to address structural causes and to promote equity.

Measurable targets or timelines for poverty reduction were not specified in the Declaration, making benchmarking and accountability difficult. It also focused on redressing absolute poverty, offering little to remedy relative or multidimensional poverty. Moreover, issues such as income inequality, housing precarity, and the particular circumstances of Indigenous, racialized, and gender-diverse communities were not explicitly named and identified as areas for redress. While the voices of people with lived experience of poverty, and the civil society organizations representing them, were included in a robust process prior to the WSSD, and by the Observer in the official delegation at the WSSD, further collaboration with these groups would have offered an opportunity to address these gaps[xxx] .

Since 1995, Canada has taken considerable steps to institutionalize poverty reduction targets. The *Opportunity for All* Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018) established a goal to reduce poverty by 50% by 2030, using Canada's Official Poverty Line (the Market Basket Measure) as the benchmark[xxxi]. According to the Canadian Income Survey, the national poverty rate fell to 7.4% in 2021[xxxii] before rising slightly to 9.9% in 2022 due to inflationary pressures and the winding down of COVID-19 emergency support[xxxiii]. Poverty has been on the rise in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and has increasingly become 'normalized' in society[xxxiv].

Yet, the data reveal persistent inequities. Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, single-parent households, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals continue to experience poverty rates well above the national average. [xxxv] [xxxvi] Poverty is also increasingly linked to

climate-related disruptions, such as housing instability, displacement from extreme weather events, and higher food prices[xxxvii].

In practice, Canada's progress on SDG 1 reflects a partial fulfillment of the Copenhagen commitment. While there have been measurable reductions in overall poverty rates, particularly just before the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic inequities remain entrenched, poverty is now on the rise[xxxviii], and there has been insufficient movement toward distinctions-based targets that address the specific needs of marginalized populations.

3.2.2 SDG 2 – Zero Hunger

The Copenhagen Declaration committed to ensuring that all people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, recognizing food security as both a human right and a foundation for social development[xxxix]. Governments pledged to strengthen agricultural systems, promote sustainable livelihoods, and ensure that vulnerable populations were not left behind in the pursuit of national development goals.

The Declaration did not define measurable indicators for food security, making it difficult to track progress in a systematic way. It also gave little attention to the environmental and climate dimensions of food systems and did not account for the specific needs and rights of Indigenous peoples whose food sovereignty is tied to land, water, and cultural practices. In Canada, these omissions mean that issues such as the high cost of nutritious food in remote and northern communities, the decline in traditional harvesting practices due to environmental change, and the growing role of corporate concentration in food supply chains were not explicitly addressed in the original commitments.

Canada has taken steps towards addressing hunger, including support for food banks, school nutrition programs, and Indigenous-led food sovereignty initiatives. The Government of Canada's *Food Policy for Canada* (2019) set a long-term vision for everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food[xl]. However, there is still no legislated right to food, and the scale of food insecurity remains high[xli].

In 2022, 17.8% of Canadian households—over 6.9 million people—experienced some level of food insecurity, an increase from previous years[xlii]. Rates are significantly higher in Nunavut, where 46% of households experience food insecurity, and in other remote and northern communities.[xliii] Food insecurity is closely tied to income insecurity, but it is also being driven by climate change, which disrupts agricultural productivity, raises food prices, and reduces the availability of traditional foods for Indigenous peoples.[xliv] [xlv] These gaps are further exacerbated by an immense concentration of corporate control and processes of financialization within the global food system.[xlvi]

While programs such as the *Healthy School Food* initiative and local community-led projects have shown some positive outcomes, Canada's progress on SDG 2 falls short of the 1995 vision. The absence of a rights-based, legally enforceable framework for food security means that policy

responses are fragmented, and many communities remain excluded from sustainable, culturally appropriate food systems.

3.2.3 SDG 5 – Gender Equality

The Copenhagen Declaration called for the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of society, the elimination of gender-based discrimination, and the promotion of women's economic independence[xlvii]. Governments committed to removing legal, cultural, and economic barriers to women's empowerment, recognizing gender equality as both a human right and a prerequisite for social development.

While the Declaration recognized women's rights broadly, it did not establish measurable gender equality targets or clear accountability mechanisms. It also failed to address intersectional realities faced by women who are Indigenous, racialized, living with disabilities, or members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. The links between gender inequality and environmental issues, such as the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women's livelihoods and safety, were not made explicit.

Canada has introduced policy tools to track and advance gender equality, most notably through the *Gender Results Framework* (Women and Gender Equality [WAGE] Canada, and the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.[xlviii]

The gender wage gap among employees aged 25 to 54 narrowed from 18% in the late 1990s to 11% in 2022. [xlix] However, this progress has been uneven, and wage disparities are significantly larger for Indigenous women, racialized women, and women with disabilities.

Gender-based violence remains pervasive. One in three women in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence in her lifetime, and Indigenous women face rates nearly three times higher than non-Indigenous women[l]. Caregiving responsibilities continue to fall disproportionately on women, limiting workforce participation and career advancement.

Climate change acts as a "risk multiplier" for women, especially in northern and rural communities where disruptions to infrastructure, housing, and food systems exacerbate existing inequities[li]. For example, climate change, and extreme weather events increase caregiving burdens and heighten risks of displacement and gender-based violence in post-disaster contexts[lii].

While Canada has made important policy advances since 1995, the original Copenhagen vision of full gender equality has not been realized. Persistent wage gaps, high rates of violence, unequal caregiving burdens, and the lack of binding legislative measures for gender equality demonstrate that progress remains incomplete.

3.3 Lessons for WSSD2 and follow-up efforts in Canada

The analysis of Canada's progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) highlights three recurring themes: ambitious yet little measurable

commitments made since 1995, remaining critical gaps in those commitments, and uneven progress towards their implementation in Canada.[liii] These lessons can serve to guide Canada's engagement following WSSD2, responsive to current and future challenges and rooted in a rights-based, equity-driven approach.

Measurable, enforceable targets are essential

The Copenhagen Declaration's lack of measurable indicators and timelines hindered accountability[liv] The SDGs addressed this with 169 targets and standardized indicators, but Canada's national implementation still lacks distinctions-based measures for Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, and other marginalized groups. Future commitments must include clear, disaggregated data requirements and legislative backing to ensure that progress is monitored and enforced. [lv] [lvi]

Intersectionality must be built in from the start

In 1995, gender equality, poverty reduction, and food security were treated as separate policy areas, and the compounded disadvantages faced by people who live at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination were largely overlooked. This siloed approach persists today, undermining policy effectiveness. Future engagement must integrate intersectionality, recognizing that poverty, hunger, and gender inequality are interconnected and often reinforced by climate change.[lvii] [lviii]

A rights-based approach requires legal commitments

While Canada acknowledges the right to food, the right to housing, and gender equality in principle, these are not fully enshrined in enforceable domestic law. The lack of legislative guarantees leaves these rights vulnerable to shifting political priorities. The new Declaration should call for the domestication of key human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), into Canadian law[lix].

Civil society and lived experience voices must shape commitments

The Copenhagen process was primarily state-led, and Canada has historically engaged civil society in an ad hoc rather than institutionalized way. WSSD2 follow-up efforts should commit to formal mechanisms for involving civil society through community organizations, Indigenous governments, and people with lived experience in both the design and monitoring of commitments[lx].

Climate change must be addressed as a cross-cutting driver of inequality

Climate change now directly undermines the achievement of all three focus SDGs, from increasing food prices and displacing communities to worsening gender-based vulnerabilities. Any future commitments must explicitly integrate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies into poverty reduction, food security, and gender equality policies[lxi].

Public awareness efforts need to be improved

Public awareness efforts on social development including addressing the 17 SDGs remain fragmented and are insufficiently visible for communities across Canada. While government reports highlight progress, public understanding of the SDGs, their ongoing relevance to poverty, food security, and gender equality including the outcomes from WSSD2 is limited. Broader public engagement is essential to foster shared responsibility and accountability. Federal and provincial actors, in partnership with civil society, educational institutions, and media, should invest in sustained outreach campaigns and public learning initiatives. Strengthening awareness can empower citizens to demand progress, mobilize local action, and connect domestic priorities to Canada's global human rights and sustainable development obligations[lxii].

Taken together, these lessons underscore that Canada has made measurable progress since 1995 but developments have been uneven and, in some cases, stalled by the same systemic barriers that were overlooked in 1995. Commitments without measurable, enforceable targets have left equity gaps intact. Policies that fail to address the intersections of poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and climate change have limited impact on the people most affected. The next phase of this report turns to the cross-cutting section, where we examine how these challenges intersect, how climate change and environmental justice shape all three SDGs, and why integrated, rights-based approaches are essential if Canada is to fulfill both its domestic and international obligations. This holistic view is necessary not just to close the gaps of the past, but to design commitments that are resilient, inclusive, and truly leave no one behind.

4.0 Cross Cutting Analysis

This cross-cutting analysis represents a review of the current literature and reporting by people with lived experience synthesized in Appendix A and aims to review Canada's progress on Sustainable Development Goals: (1) End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere, (2) Zero Hunger, and (5) Gender Equality. The analysis reveals that progress toward these goals remains constrained by structural drivers, including income and wealth inequality, the financialization of housing, gendered and racialized labour market barriers, and fragmented social protection. Furthermore, climate change acts as a risk multiplier, deepening poverty, hunger, and gender-based harms and magnifying historic inequities for Indigenous, Black, migrant, disabled, 2SLGBTQ+, and youth communities[lxiii].

Current policy responses are often designed and delivered through market-first approaches that lack the nuance to sufficiently address issues like hidden homelessness, gendered evictions, disability access, migrant exclusions, and regional realities. Ultimately, Canada's human rights obligations serve as window dressing for the nation building project and fail to permeate policy action. The result is widening gaps in affordability, food security, care, and dignified work.

4.1 Current Context

When analyzed through diverse and intersectional frameworks, it is evident that the SDGs are interconnected. Traditionally, poverty is measured by income and purchasing power. By this measure alone, the goal of eradicating poverty remains elusive. Income and wealth inequality and inadequate income persist in Canada. In 2022, the average income for half of Canadians was only $20,800, while the 3,000 wealthiest Canadians averaged $7.44 million, approximately 355 times greater[lxiv]. Children and youth experience high rates of poverty, and unemployment; nearly 1.4 million children are living in poverty and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rates are increasing among youth[lxvlxvi]. Poverty rates remain high broadly, and equity-denied communities are disproportionately impacted, particularly among women.

In Canada, women shoulder the majority of unpaid labour, citing family responsibilities at a significantly higher rate (46%) than men[lxvii]. This burden closely ties to the high costs of childcare, which hinders caregivers' ability to enter and sustain employment[lxviii]. Women who can work, earn about 91¢ for every dollar men make, and racialized, and Indigenous women earn as little as 80¢ per dollar[lxix]. Additionally, women report experiences of violence including sexual harassment in the workplace and financial abuse from their partners which further exacerbate [lxx]. The issue of gendered inequality recurs across all measures of poverty.

Housing insecurity exemplifies this misalignment trend. 79 percent of women cite the high cost of housing as a primary concern for leaving intimate partner violence[lxxi]. Additionally, women and gender-diverse people experience largely "hidden" homelessness like (couch surfing, staying with abusers, and unsafe housing), yet funding and eligibility frameworks focus on visible chronic homelessness, overlooking and miss prevention[lxxii]. Indigenous- and women-led housing solutions work, but they are not scaled[lxxiii]. Eviction practices, especially "back-door" evictions tied to third-party actions, "renovictions," or lease-holder gaps, continue despite legal protections on paper[lxxiv].

Food insecurity, now at historic highs, tracks closely with inadequate incomes and housing costs. In 2024, over 10 million people in Canada's 10 provinces, representing 25.5 percent of Canada's total population, experienced food insecurity, which is the highest recorded rate since monitoring began[lxxv]. 55.8 percent of post-secondary students are food insecure, and 25 percent of children live with severe food insecurity[lxxvi]. These figures represent a large portion of Canadians, yet efforts toward an integrated policy framework to address food insecurity are largely absent. This is particularly concerning considering the interrelated nature of food insecurity and poor physical and mental health outcomes[lxxvii]. Food insecurity compounds the strain on an already struggling health care system.

The privatization and profit-driven nature of healthcare have further contributed to significant disparities in access[lxxviii]. Indigenous, racialized, and migrant communities face the greatest

barriers to health care access in Canada. The disparity in health is not due to individual choices but is rooted in systemic inequities, structural racism, and ableism[lxxix]. Equity denied communities exist within interlocking systems of oppression which simultaneously create the conditions of need and deny them access to services and supports to improve those conditions.

4.2 Current Policy Responses

There are several notable policy responses which are documented to reduce the impacts of poverty. These include $10-a-day childcare, Canada Child Benefit (CCB), Old Age Security, and the Pharmacare Act initial scope. It is important, however, to acknowledge these successes within the context of their limitations. Inadequate benefits, inconsistent implementation, and exclusionary eligibility criteria reduce the efficacy of these programs. These limitations are reflective of the broader fragmentation and insufficiency of Canada's poverty reduction policies.

The current framework of income support in Canada, falls short of alleviating poverty. For example, the Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) which aims to support low-wage workers fails to keep up with inflation[lxxx], and the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB) has been criticized for its inadequacy both in terms of benefit amount, and its vulnerability to provincial claw backs[lxxxi]. Due to these barriers, Campaign 2000 estimates that the CDB will lift only 25,000 of 1.5 million Canadians with disabilities out of poverty[lxxxii]. Additionally, the government's pursuit of repayments for low-income recipients of COVID-19 relief benefits entraps families in debt, disproportionately impacting women and racialized communities[lxxxiii]. This shortcoming is further highlighted by the significant variation and inadequacy of social assistance programs across the provinces and territories[lxxxiv]. Prime Minister Carney's administration exacerbates concerns about the commitment to addressing income and wealth inequality through recent policy reversals that include abandoning plans to increase the capital gains inclusion rate[lxxxv]. These actions signal a troubling neglect of the urgent need to tackle the growing disparities resulting from decades of economic growth that have predominantly enriched the wealthy while perpetuating deep poverty across the nation.

The relationship between income security and food security are deeply entrenched. A key failing of Canadian food insecurity policy is its heavy reliance on indirect and employment-based support and underfunded palliative measures that fail to address the root causes of income inadequacy. While the CCB has had a significant impact it is not specifically designed to guarantee food security[lxxxvi], and the CWB has failed to account for rising food costs[lxxxvii]. The consequence of these policy limitations is a skyrocketing need for emergency relief, evidenced by the Food Banks Canada recording 2.2 million national food bank visits in March 2025 alone[lxxxviii]. This massive reliance on food charity only provides immediate, symptomatic relief without addressing the systemic issue of insufficient income, which disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups like renters, lone-parent households (especially female – led) and racialized groups[lxxxix]. Federal food-focused programs, such as the Local Food Infrastructure Fund, and the

recent National School Food Program are criticized for failing to tackle income inadequacy and failing to implement a rights-based approach to food security. [xcxci]

Along with income and food insecurity, Canada's housing crisis remains a leading cause of poverty and gender inequality. While federal initiatives like the National Housing Strategy and the Rapid Housing Initiative aim to address urgent housing needs, progress on delivery has been slow, and federal and provincial commitments have not met the required scale[xcii]. Additionally, while zoning reforms in some cities allow for densification, 70 percent of urban land remains restricted to single-family homes, constraining supply where it is most needed[xciii]. This situation is further intensified by the widening gap in underfunded social housing and a problematic reliance on private developers, resulting in unaffordable rent[xciv]. A critical impact of these policy failures is the exclusion of marginalized groups, namely migrants, Indigenous, and racialized renters[xcv]. Another major gap lies at the intersection of housing and gender equality.

Canada's response to women's homelessness is limited, fragmented, and largely gender-neutral, failing to reflect the lived experiences of women, girls, and gender diverse people[xcvi]. Although the National Housing Strategy committed to applying a Gender-Based Analysis Plus, in practice, funding and implementation often fall short of addressing the root causes of women's homelessness such as gender-based violence, poverty, and caregiving responsibilities[xcvii]. One example of a policy which attempts to target these concerns is the Survivors of Gender Based Violence stream of the Canada Housing Benefit. Partnering with the province of Ontario, 2, 483 survivor households were supported by 2025[xcviii]. While this is a positive step, funding for the benefit is only allotted until 2028, with its renewal remaining uncertain at this time.

The current Canadian policy landscape demonstrates a critical failure to meet the fundamental targets of SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger), and SDG5 (Gender Equality). Fragmented, underfunded, and inequitable policy approaches undermine not only Canada's progress toward these goals, but also the implementation of human rights obligations more broadly.

Social Progress Case Study: Child Benefits

One of the most significant and lasting areas of social progress in Canada following the 1995 WSSD has been in income guarantees for children, building on the success of such guarantees for seniors established in earlier decades. Canada had ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and there was strong advocacy for child-centred policy.

Now known as the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), a new national child benefit system was introduced in the late 1990s through the cooperation of federal, provincial and territorial governments. It has evolved and grown in adequacy over the years. As an income-tested benefit going to parents, it ensures those who need help most get it, and partial benefits extend well into

middle income levels. As a result, it has a strong track record of preventing poverty, reducing inequality and increasing security for families with children 0-17. As an unconditional benefit, it trusts families to know what is best in their circumstances to improve health, wellbeing and future prospects.

Alone, however, child benefits are not enough to keep the whole family out of poverty. A key goal was to provide stability and support for parents to maintain employment, and it worked. Families with children became a much smaller percentage of social assistance caseloads and more opportunities opened up for children in all families. The success is evident, but gaps are too. Some children, like refugees, don't qualify. More widely, cutting benefits off at 18 in today's world can leave young people adrift. The loss of this income security to some families, especially if led by a female lone parent or a parent with a disability, can be devastating for all family members.

Times are changing and we need to keep evolving. Inequality and poverty are growing again, employment is precarious, too many people are working hard for too little pay, even with the benefit of higher education. The cost of living, especially for essentials like food and housing, has skyrocketed. Severe weather events, artificial intelligence, and threats to Canada's economy and sovereignty add to the risks any of us could face.

Social progress now means fulfilling the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living by expanding stronger income guarantees to 18-64 year olds among key solutions for a better social, economic and democratic future.

4.3 2025 Federal Budget

The 2025 Federal Budget, which passed through the House of Commons on November 17, 2025[xcix], has been highly anticipated in light of these uncertain and increasingly concerning trends in Canadian policy. Hopes that Canada may return to its historic human rights ambitions were quickly dashed, as the Canadian government ushers in an era of austerity for some, while implementing historic expansions in military spending, and tax cuts for the middle- and upper-income earners[c].

There are some elements of the budget that are worth celebrating. The budget dedicates $660.5 million over five years to funding Women and Gender Equality Canada, which will support the ongoing facilitation of women's programing[ci]. Additionally, Build Canada Homes promises to focus its $13 billion budget on non-market housing, with an additional $1.5 billion toward the Rental Protection Fund, and $1 billion toward transitional and supportive housing[cii]. The 2025 budget introduces additional, if limited, funding to the CDB, and the government plans to introduce legislation exempting CDB earnings from taxable income[ciii]. Most notably, the budget introduces automatic federal benefits, which will allow access to benefits like the CCB without

the barrier of filing a full tax return[civ]. While these positive steps cannot be discounted, they remain deeply inadequate, and in many ways offset by other budgetary considerations.

The budget plans to cut $57 billion in programs over the next five years, resulting in an estimated 40,000 cross-sectoral job losses[cv]. In contrast, the budget does not propose CCB, or CWB reforms, and reforms to Employment Insurance benefits are exceedingly limited, leaving Canadians without a safety net in the wake of these extreme cuts[cvi]. Precariously employed Canadians will experience this gap most severely, contributing to already existing income disparities. While current programs, like the GST/HST tax credits, and $10 a day child care, maintain their previous levels, the budget provides no improvements or additional funding[cviicviii]. As a result of these inadequacies, estimates show that Budget 2025 will not only fail to meet SDG 1, but it will also fail to meet the federal goal of reducing poverty to half of the 2015 rate by 2030[cix].

Food insecurity remains a largely unaddressed concern in Budget 2025. While the National School Food Program has become a permanent fixture, the budget fails to introduce a national rights-based strategy and offers no national targets for reducing food insecurity[cx]. Canadians experiencing food insecurity will continue to rely on the current piecemeal, charity-based approach which has proven wholly inadequate. This suggests that SDG 2 is not a priority for the current federal government. Furthermore, Budget 2025 fails to invest in reducing systemic barriers to health care access, choosing to focus on infrastructure development, and resulting in ongoing gaps for communities whose health outcomes are negatively impacted by food insecurity[cxi].

Budget 2025 has committed significant funding to the housing crisis, and while advocates agree that the proposed programs are a necessary improvement, the proposal is not without criticism. Namely, Budget 2025 fails to acknowledge housing as a human right, leaving many concerned that programs will not target populations most in need, like equity-denied, and low-income communities[cxii]. This concern is further elevated by the lack of protections for renters and existing affordable housing stock outlined in the budget. Additionally, despite its investment in housing, the proposed funding model remains inadequate to meet the scale of need, particularly among northern, rural, and Indigenous populations[cxiiicxiv].

These policy choices reflect a lack of progress toward addressing the increasingly dire fate of many Canadians. None more so, however, than the shift in the government's approach to climate change. It is well documented that climate change is a catalyst to worsening conditions in Canada, and abroad. Despite this reality, Budget 2025 plans to cut $3 billion in existing climate programs; these programs include investments in public transit, home efficiency, and tree planting[cxv]. Simultaneously, caps on the gas and oil sector's emissions have been deserted, and plans to rollback legislation regulating misinformation about the environment have been

introduced[cxvi]. This shift in approach presents a worrying trajectory of Canada's commitments to improving the climate crisis.

These circumstances presented in this analysis are grim, but they are not inevitable. Canada has the knowledge, the skills, and the resources, to make better policy and budgetary choices, which are proven to improve the conditions of all Canadians.

5.0 The Way Forward – Turning a 30-Year Slide into a Decisive Turning Point

For much of the post-war period, Canada helped build the international human rights architecture. Canadian experts and diplomats played important roles in shaping early UN human rights instruments and institutions. That leadership, however, has steadily eroded over time. Thirty years after Copenhagen's World Summit for Social Development (WSSD1), we stand at a crossroads.

The turning point at home was the mid-1990s, just as economic globalization and trade liberalization accelerated. In 1995, Canada arrived at WSSD1 in Copenhagen as a constructive player. We helped craft the Copenhagen Declaration, which put people-centred development, poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social integration at the heart of sustainable development. Civil servants, parliamentarians and civil society organizations had already spent years building the domestic capacity for human rights implementation.

Yet in March 1995, Canada chose a different path, while the delegates were attending the first WSSD in Copenhagen. The 1995 federal budget, framed as a response to deficit and global competition under North American Free Trade Agreement and the rise of corporate power, made deep cuts to social programs, gutted the Canada Assistance Plan and its national standards, and reduced the civil service capacity that had been working on human rights and social development. Since then, inequality, homelessness, and hunger have grown, while mechanisms for implementing economic, social, and cultural rights have weakened.

Over the same period, WSSD1 and the Rio process evolved into the Millennium Development Goals and then the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Canada now frequently presents itself as committed to the SDGs and invokes human rights language in international forums. But too often these commitments operate as "window dressing": visible on the international stage, but not embedded in domestic law, institutions, budgets and accountability.

This section charts a new path forward. Across Canada, when people have access to adequate, unconditional, and equitable supports, they become healthy, strong, and are equipped to thrive.

Communities breathe easier. Local businesses find their footing. The evidence is clear: poverty and hunger are policy decisions and can be remedied through political action.

What follows is a discussion of the evidence-informed solutions empirically proven to address poverty and hunger, as well as assuage gender inequalities. It offers synthesis of recommendations from national organizations, academic institutions, and government officials, and provides a viable roadmap to strengthen Canada's sovereignty, reduce costly crises and government expenditures, and deliver the dignity our human rights treaties promise and our communities deserve.

The Second World Summit on Social Development (WSSD2) in Doha, the Doha Political Declaration, the 2025 federal budget, and the reality of deepening social and ecological crises make it clear that the last thirty years have not merely been "uneven progress." They have been a long slide away from the kind of people-centred social development model Canada once helped promote. The outcomes are now undeniable: entrenched poverty, widening income inequality, rising homelessness and food insecurity, weakened public services, and stalled or reversed climate action.

This Way Forward chapter starts from that honest diagnosis. But it is not written in despair. WSSD2, this People's Report, and the growing chorus of allied efforts inside and outside Government can be a wake-up call to work together on solutions. They offer a chance to shift a 30-year slide into a polycrisis to a new direction, if Canada is willing to match its words with domestic action.

From Window Dressing to Real Human Rights Implementation

The research literature points to five key principles necessary to not only eradicate poverty but also ensure dignified and accessible means of support.

5.1 Adequacy with Real-Time and Accessible Delivery

Income supports must be designed to meet real costs, respond immediately when incomes dip, and be delivered without exclusionary eligibility criteria and onerous paperwork. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how rapidly income levels can change, adversely affecting people's health and livelihoods, and how quickly inadequacy returns when political will falters.

We can learn from the principles identified for income support mechanisms taking the form of a Basic Income Guarantee. These involve: (a) *adequacy* – support must be sufficient to meet basic needs; (b) *dignity* - support must be administered in such a way as to promote dignity and eschew stigma; (c) *equality of opportunity* – the support offered provides greater access to opportunities that can improve life prospects; (d) *non-conditionality* - supports do not impose

behavioural or work requirements and eligibility criteria are minimal; and (e) *universality of access* - anyone requiring support should be able to receive it[cxvii]

While Canada has yet to introduce a Basic Income Guarantee available to all who may be in need of one, and the working-age population specifically, it has offered variant forms of this policy proposal that have been shown to be highly effective in reducing poverty. Long considered a 'policy success story'[cxviii] , the suite of pension programs in Canada (including, among others, the Canada/Quebec Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement) have ensured that older adults in Canada have largely been protected from poverty and its adverse effects (although the rising cost of living is currently putting significant financial strain on this population)[cxix] . The Canada Child Benefit was also transformed in 2016 from a flat-rate, demogrant model to an income-tested one. By offering increased income supplementation for families with the lowest incomes, the changed income support policy yielded a significant decline in poverty. [cxx]

Lessons can also be learned from the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) offered over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic; a temporary cash transfer program that helped keep individuals and families–and the Canadian economy–afloat during the health emergency [cxxi], even while it could have been designed better to provide greater support for those most in need of assistance.[cxxii]

Literature from numerous Basic Income Guarantee pilot projects, both in Canada and abroad[cxxiii], have demonstrated the utility, efficiency, and efficacy of this policy innovation. The Mincome experiment in Manitoba[cxxiv cxxv], the Ontario Basic Income Pilot[cxxvi cxxvii cxxviii], and one-time cash transfer to people experiencing homeless in British Columbia[cxxix] all demonstrate the numerous positive health, social, and economic outcomes associated with an unconditional and accessible income support mechanism, including as a viable policy proposal to remedy poverty and food insecurity[cxxx].

The Government of Canada's (2025) recent decision to provide auto tax filing will be valuable in ensuring that income support benefits and tax credits reach their intended beneficiaries. There have been a number of suggestions made on how to offer greater income security, or a Basic Income Guarantee, in Canada in such a way as to be inclusive and efficient. This includes expanding the eligibility for and provisions of existing income security programs, like the Canada Workers Benefit[cxxxi] , the newly introduced Canada Disability Benefit [cxxxii], or by fortifying pension programs (i.e., the Guaranteed Income Supplement) or the Canada Child Benefit. Alternatively, greater income security could be provided through an enhanced GST Credit or via increases to social assistance benefits; recognizing that the latter, however, have been associated with punitive conditionality and stigma [cxxxiii].

Many organizations in Canada, including hospitals and health teams, have begun to hire system navigators that have been shown to be valuable in connecting people to necessary benefits and

supports that would help them be healthy and thrive. This includes ensuring such system navigators are embedded into health teams and community agencies that span not only urban centres, but in rural and remote communities as well. Ensuring that the Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer are adequately funded will remain increasingly important, particularly as Canada aims to respond to a growing aging population.

Positive gains have therefore been documented in some of our existing suite of income security programs, including through the Canada Child Benefit, the national $10/day childcare plan, early investments in housing, and climate action. But many of these remain inadequate to meet the growing need and are vulnerable to erosion, austerity, outsourcing, and policy choices that put corporate interests and short-term "competitiveness" ahead of human rights and ecological sustainability.

Certain lessons are now clear:

- When income supports are adequate and accessible, poverty and food insecurity fall quickly.
- When non-market housing and community services are funded at scale, homelessness declines and safety improves.
- When public services are strong and staffed, crises are prevented rather than managed in emergency mode.
- When Indigenous peoples and equity-seeking groups lead solutions, gaps close faster and trust grows.

To change course, three core shifts are needed.

First, economic, social, and cultural rights and civil and political rights must be integrated into a single framework, not bifurcated into 'real rights' and 'aspirational goals'. Canada has ratified numerous human rights conventions and treaties that affirm their commitment to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights – recognizing their interconnectedness and indivisibility. The SDGs explicitly refer to human rights as their foundation. Domestic laws and institutions must reflect that reality.

Second, budgets, trade, and industrial strategies must be tested against human rights obligations, not strictly endorsed on the basis of economic potential. Free trade and corporate tax cuts cannot be excuses for weakening social protections, eroding public services, and expanding fossil fuel subsidies. A rights-based approach means ensuring that fiscal and economic policy choices do not push people deeper into poverty or undermine climate stability.

Third, institutions and accountability mechanisms must be built or strengthened so that Canada cannot simply talk about rights internationally and ignore them domestically. This includes

independent oversight bodies, clear standards of adequacy, binding and non-regression clauses, and meaningful participation by those most affected.

A Canada that guarantees dignified access to income is both possible and fiscally prudent. We propose a clear pathway that begins immediately and is designed to ensure simplicity, efficiency, and efficacy.

The rest of this chapter translates those shifts into practical proposals for SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), with climate and inequality at the centre. They are framed as concrete steps to reverse the long slide since WSSD1 and begin a new phase of implementation after WSSD2.

5.2.1 SDG 1 – No Poverty: Rebuilding Income Security and Housing as Rights

For thirty years, Canada has managed poverty rather than ending it. Welfare and disability programs have been kept below poverty lines, federal transfers have lacked binding standards, and more people have been pushed into precarious work, encampments, and food bank lines. To reverse this trajectory, Canada needs a coherent income security and housing framework grounded in human rights, not patchwork charity.

We know that Indigenous, Black, and racialized peoples, as well as gender-diverse people, newcomers, and persons with disabilities, are disproportionately burdened by systemic barriers and discrimination, and are over-represented in poverty and homelessness statistics.[cxxxiv] The collection of robust, disaggregated data are needed to track trends and identify where we fall short on projected targets and timelines in realizing the rights to food, housing, an adequate standard of living, and gender equality.

Key directions under SDG 1:

a) A rights-based pathway to basic income adequacy

- Commit to a national pathway towards a basic income guarantee for working-age adults, with immediate measures to lift incomes toward, at minimum, the poverty line (i.e., the Market Basket Measure (MBM)), with additional income to support persons with disabilities who face greater costs owing to the presence of disabilities/impairments.
- Increase the GST Credit and convert it to a robust monthly benefit, integrate the Canada Worker Benefit and remove conditions that exclude those in deepest poverty.
- Strengthen and simplify the Canada Disability Benefit, setting benefit levels based on actual costs of living with a disability(ies)/impairment(s).
- Rebalance seniors' benefits to reduce inequities and protect the lowest-income seniors, many of whom are women and racialized.

b) Rebuilding national standards through the Canada Social Transfer

- Tie federal transfers for income security, services, and related programs to minimum adequacy benchmarks and human rights principles, with public reporting, non-regression clauses, and measures to prevent provinces/territories from offsetting federal gains with provincial/territorial cuts.
- Fund community-based organizations to help people access benefits in practice, especially in Indigenous, Black, racialized, disabled, newcomer, and rural and remote communities.

c) Scaling up non-market housing and ending chronic homelessness

- Set and legislate ambitious annual targets for non-market housing, with particular focus on deeply affordable and supportive units, and on protecting existing affordable rental stock from speculation and financialization.
- Implement a Renters' Bill of Rights to safeguard protections for renters.
- Use loan-equity blends, public land strategies, and a Rental Protection Fund to move units into public, co-operative, and non-profit ownership.
- Link rent benefits and housing supports to clear human rights outcomes, including reductions in encampments, shelter use, and involuntary displacement.

d) Implementing Indigenous rights in poverty reduction

- Co-develop an Indigenous Poverty and Rights Plan with First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations, with specific targets for closing gaps in income, housing, water, and core services.
- Move from short-term program funding to 10-year, needs-based, Indigenous-led funding arrangements, consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Canadian UNDRIP Act, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.
- Publish transparent timelines and budgets for closing remaining infrastructure deficits, including long-term drinking water advisories and overcrowded housing.

These measures begin to reverse three decades of erosion and place Canada back on a path where social security and housing are treated as enforceable rights, not residual spending.

5.2.2 SDG 2 – Zero Hunger: Ending Food Insecurity as a Policy Choice

The dramatic rise in food bank use and household food insecurity in Canada is not an inevitable result of global volatility. It is a predictable outcome of insufficient income, high housing costs, and underinvestment in local, resilient food systems. During the same period that Canada has spoken about food security in international arenas, food insecurity has become normalized

domestically. Hunger ends when incomes are adequate and food systems are proximate, fair, and resilient.

Significant resources have been allocated towards expanding charitable food programs, including meal and snack programs, soup kitchens, food banks and pantries, community gardens, among others. While there are a host of benefits associated with many of these programs, food security scholars have argued that they do not and cannot solve food insecurity. Food deprivation is directly related to income insufficiency, and thus to remedy hunger, individuals and families' income status must be addressed[cxxxv] . Food must be accessed in socially acceptable and dignified ways, including being culturally appropriate and meeting diverse dietary needs[cxxxvi] . Canada has not been able to assure that people have the income they need to meet their food requirements, nor has it enacted a food strategy to benchmark and advance targets and timelines to realize the right to food.[cxxxvii]

A rights-based SDG 2 strategy would:

- Recognize food as a human right, not a matter of charity, and legislate a Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act with binding targets to transform food systems and eliminate extreme food insecurity by 2030.
- Integrate food security outcomes into the monitoring of income security, housing, and health, rather than treating food separately from income adequacy.
- Invest in community-owned food hubs, Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives, and local procurement in public institutions to rebuild regional food systems that are resilient to shocks and inclusive of racialized and low-income communities.
- Transform programs like Nutrition North to be community-controlled, transparent and effective, rather than top-down subsidies that do not guarantee affordability or dignity.
- Design the National School Food Program as a universal, stigma-free, culturally appropriate program that supports local producers and reduces household strain, especially for low-income families.

Taken together, these actions shift Canada away from crisis-driven reliance on food charity towards a model where income adequacy, local food systems, and Indigenous food sovereignty are central pillars in the drive to end hunger.

5.2.3 SDG 5 – Gender Equality: Tackling the Material Roots of Inequality and Violence

Over the last 30 years, women, girls, and gender-diverse people have borne the brunt of austerity, precarious work, unpaid caring labour, and underfunded housing and social services. This has contributed to persistent gender pay gaps, higher poverty rates for lone-parent families, and continued gender-based violence.

A serious SDG 5 strategy must address the material conditions that underpin inequality and violence, including:

- Ensuring that income security measures, including any basic income pathway and disability benefits, are designed with gender and intersectional impacts in mind, and provide targeted support to lone-parent households and caregivers.
- Fully implementing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' (MMIWG) Calls for Justice and the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, with dedicated budgets, timelines and public reporting.
- Creating dedicated non-market housing streams and supports for women and gender-diverse people, particularly survivors of violence and those facing systemic barriers, and ensuring that no one has to choose between abuse and homelessness.
- Stabilizing and properly valuing the care economy, including childcare and long-term care, as a central pillar of gender equality and economic resilience.
- Embedding gender-responsive budgeting and intersectional analysis in all major economic, climate, and infrastructure decisions.

These shifts connect gender equality to the broader project of (re)building social protections, public services, and climate-resilient infrastructure, rather than isolating it in narrow program silos.

5.2.4 Climate, Inequality, and the Budget: Aligning with WSSD2, Not Sliding Further Back

The WSSD2 Doha Declaration calls on states to strengthen universal social protections, invest in sustainable and low-carbon development, and address the structural drivers of inequality. It recognizes that climate change, environmental degradation, and growing disparities threaten social cohesion and stability.

The recent federal budget moves in the opposite direction on several of these fronts. It cuts public sector capacity, scales back climate investments, reinforces fossil fuel subsidies and corporate tax incentives, and frames austerity as "efficiency" at a time when many households are already at the breaking point.

A Way Forward consistent with WSSD2 and Canada's human rights obligations would:

- Treat climate investments as essential social infrastructure that lowers household energy, transport, and food costs, creates decent jobs, and reduces disaster risks.
- Shift public finance away from fossil fuel subsidies and overly generous corporate tax expenditures toward social protection, housing, and community-owned green infrastructure.

- Embed just transition principles into economic, technological, and industrial planning processes so that workers and communities are protected and supported as the economy decarbonizes.
- Ensure that climate, economic, and AI development strategies are evaluated for their impacts on poverty, food insecurity, housing, emergency preparedness and gender inequality, not treated as separate policy streams.

5.3 Building New Accountability Architecture in Canada

For decades, Canada has been repeatedly advised—by UN bodies, parliamentary committees, and civil society—to create stronger domestic mechanisms for implementing human rights. Some steps have been taken, but a coherent human rights architecture is still missing. This absence is one reason why human rights and the SDGs remain easy to tout as policy ideals, but difficult to implement in practice.

Elements of a more robust implementation framework could include:

- Amending the Canadian Human Rights Act to include "social condition" as a prohibited ground of discrimination and explicitly reference this ground in core international treaties.
- Establishing a well-resourced Federal Human Rights Office with a mandate to track implementation of treaty and Universal Periodic Review recommendations, coordinate across departments, and maintain a public, user-friendly tracker of commitments, budgets, and timelines.
- Creating or strengthening independent oversight roles (for example, an SDG and Human Rights Commissioner) with powers to audit, report, and trigger parliamentary debate when Canada is failing to meet its obligations.
- Requiring human rights impact assessments for major budgets, trade deals, climate and security measures, with particular attention to economic, social, and cultural rights, Indigenous rights, and the rights of marginalized communities.
- Providing stable, multi-year core funding for Indigenous-led, Black-led, disability-led, feminist, youth and other equity-seeking organizations that play front-line roles in monitoring rights, supporting communities, and co-developing solutions.
- Ensuring that Indigenous Peoples and equity-seeking communities have meaningful power in the design, governance, and evaluation of programs that affect them, in line with UNDRIP, UNDRIPA, and the Doha Declaration's emphasis on participation and partnership.

5.4 A Wake-Up Call: Implementing Human Rights at Home

While Canada has ratified the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*[cxxxviii] , among other rights instruments, recognizing the right to food, housing and an

adequate standard of living, access to these rights hasnot always been forthcoming as they lack concrete resources, targets, and timelines. As such, the progressive realization of economic, social, and cultural rights has stymied and the judicial system has been reluctant to hold decision-makers accountable for their rights obligations.

Canada was once a strong leader on the international human rights stage. It was one of the original architects of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [cxxxix] and earlier made great strides in advancing employment and gender equity legislation, protecting citizens' rights and freedoms, and legislating social protections, including through robust pension programs and family benefits. Yet, over the years, as some have argued[cxl] Canada has lost its courage to not only respect and protect human rights, but to actively fulfil them, using the "maximum available resources" at its disposal to do so.

Given their democratic legitimacy to govern, political representatives in Canada have insisted that they must define and administer policy decisions related to economic, social and cultural rights, without undue interference by the courts. Likewise, judiciaries, particularly in the Canadian lower courts, have often interpreted such rights to largely be non-justiciable (not subject to judicial remedy). As a result, these rights have been imbued with an aspirational texture.

In the absence of an ecosystem of rights compliance, governments have harnessed less effective remedies (including an over-reliance on charity), instead of pursuing political choices that could in fact eliminate poverty and hunger, through, for example, a basic income guarantee.

There is, however, a path forward. Rather than wholly deferring to policymakers or usurping their policy-making responsibilities, legal scholar Sandra Fredman[cxli] makes the case that the courts should use existing legal frameworks to compel political actors to provide reasoned justifications for their distributive choices.

Regrettably, economic, social, and cultural rights will remain hollow in the absence of concrete accountability and enforcement mechanisms. These rights must be substantive, not merely aspirational, if they are to effectively curb poverty, hunger, and gender inequality. This is especially important as we look into the future. As climate disruptions grow and AI re-shapes employment patterns and social relations, Canadians must be assured social protections, and freedom from discrimination and inequality, to remain a prosperous country – a nation where everyone has the resources and capabilities needed to thrive. The courts, civil society organizations, and political actors must actively work together to ensure economic, social, and cultural rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled.

Canada, like most other UN Member States[cxlii] , will fall short in meeting the indicators and targets laid out for it through its nationally defined SDGs[cxliii]. The sheer volume of goals and indicators proposed, the conflicting priorities between them (e.g., economic over climate-related), and fit within the existing "techno- scientific-economic model of development" [cxliv] have drawn significant criticism, as has the largely absent drive to tackle the durable inequalities, policy failures, and colonial legacies that impede our ability to 'leave no one behind'. Indigenous knowledge and decolonial perspectives have not informed or been incorporated into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, denying the potential such insights might render.

While there is certainly pressure to maintain existing power hierarchies and continue unsustainable production and consumption patterns, all Member States, including Canada, must take dramatic action to shift away from the economic impulse for relentless resource extraction, neoliberal and austerity policy regimes, and dangerous carbon footprints – the future of all people and the planet depend on it.

Many of the social, economic, political, and ecological issues of today have been postulated to be 'wicked problems', too complex and deeply imbricated to be solved. Yet, we do have evidence-informed remedies demonstrated in the research literature to be effective. What is required is the political will to implement these solutions, and to ensure that human rights are not mere aspirations but constitute real, substantive rights that people can claim and hold political actors accountable to.

5.5 Shaping the Post-2030 Agenda

The current SDG framework expires in 2030. Canada has the opportunity to lead by example to demonstrate its commitment to substantive human rights, including proposing and implementing binding targets and timelines. This includes judiciaries who can hold state actors to account for their actions, decision-makers who can show leadership and the political will to ensure that policy decisions take a people-centred design and implementation approach, and a rights compliance and enforcement environment that is transparent, accountable, equitable, and just. Our credibility at global tables weighs on our domestic progress—we cannot champion human rights internationally while curtailing and diminishing them at home.

Garrett et al. argue that in a few decades we will run out of fossil fuel reserves and the industrial machine on which civilization has come to so intensely rely will stop churning[cxlv]. By bolstering oil and gas extraction and production we will quickly exceed planetary boundaries, as we appear to be doing at blistering speed [cxlvi]. At the time of writing, the Carney government has committed to funding significant nation-building projects[cxlvii], including the expansion of oil pipelines, liquid natural gas refineries, and the extraction and mining of critical minerals. These projects will impede our collective progress towards establishing a zero carbon society. It will become increasingly more difficult to ensure societal stability, equity, and justice amidst recurrent climate

calamities, which will only grow in frequency and magnitude over time. It is therefore heartening to see that some climate-related litigation cases appear to be challenging the non-justiciability of some human rights, and the propensity, to date, to eschew positive rights obligations, in order to demand that state and corporate actors be held accountable for their emissions plans and targets. [cxlviii]

At the next World Summit, it will be imperative that Canada will have demonstrated significant progress in closing our own gaps before assuming the moral authority to champion a renewed international framework built on equity, climate justice, and shared prosperity.

A Turning Point in Turbulent Times

The last thirty years in Canada tell a clear story: as trade agreements expanded, corporate power grew, and austerity took hold, domestic human rights implementation weakened, inequality deepened, and social and ecological crises intensified. WSSD1's promise and Canada's early leadership in human rights gave way to a politics that too often treated rights as slogans abroad and optional at home.

Today, we face a convergence of crises—climate disruption, growing inequality, geopolitical instability, and threats to social cohesion—that demands a fundamentally different approach. But turbulent times also create openings for transformation.

WSSD2, the Doha Declaration, and this People's Report arrive at a moment when Canada can choose a new direction. As a nation built by peoples from around the world, Canada has both the diversity of expertise and the resources to demonstrate how a wealthy country can align its commitments with action. We have the opportunity to show that human rights are not merely diplomatic rhetoric, but a practical framework for building resilience, stability, and shared prosperity in uncertain times.

The question is no longer whether we know what to do—the evidence is clear, the solutions are mapped, and communities are ready to act. The question is whether Canada will match the scale and urgency of the polycrisis before us with the political will to implement what we already know works: rebuilding social and economic security, strengthening public services, advancing Indigenous self-determination and green innovation, and embedding human rights in every budget, trade agreement, and policy choice.

If Canada chooses to act, the next chapter does not have to be a continuation of the decline since 1995. It can be the moment when we demonstrate global leadership not through words alone, but through the commitment to build a peaceful, sustainable, and more equitable future—at home and as a model for the world.

Appendix A: Cross-Cutting Analysis Table

SDGs in Focus:
SDG 1: End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere
SDG 2: No Hunger
SDG: Gender Equality

Context & Concerns in Canada	**Current Responses & Outcomes in Canada**	**Recommendations & Expected Outcomes**
What is the state of this issue in Canada today? What are the historical contexts?	How is this issue currently being framed/addressed? What policies and programs are currently in place related to this issue? What are the impacts of current policies/programs? How does this vary by social location, identity, community, or region?	What does evidence suggest works in terms of policies, programs, and approaches? How are people (e.g., grassroots groups, CSOs, governments) addressing this issue effectively and equitably today? Based on evidence in Canada or elsewhere, what could we expect to see as outcomes of these recommended approaches, policies, or programs?
Issue: Housing Security		
Women's Homelessness Women's homelessness in Canada is widespread but largely hidden, often taking the form of couch-surfing, staying in unsafe housing, or remaining with abusers due to lack of options.[cxlix] Access to shelters and transitional housing that are safe, women-specific, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate is severely lacking. Only 13% of shelter beds in Canada are available for women, and services for Indigenous women are especially underfunded despite being among the most affected. Regional disparities are stark. Northern and rural communities face acute shortages of housing and services, while urban centres are seeing rising death rates among unhoused women, driven by toxic drug poisoning, shelter violence, and lack of mental health support.[cl]	**Current Responses to Women's Homelessness** Canada's current response to women's homelessness remains limited, fragmented, and largely gender-neutral, failing to reflect the realities faced by women, girls, and gender-diverse people. ● **Reaching Home** and federal-provincial housing strategies aim to reduce chronic homelessness, prioritize visible homelessness and chronically homeless individuals, a category that often excludes women due to their hidden and episodic housing instability.[cli] ● **The National Housing Strategy** has committed to applying a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+), but in practice, funding and implementation often fall short of addressing the root causes of women's homelessness such as gender-based violence, poverty, and caregiving responsibilities. Evidence suggests that what is making a difference includes Indigenous- and women-led housing initiatives, investments in supportive housing tailored to survivors of violence, and community-based models that prioritize dignity, self-determination, and safety.[clii]	**Recommendations to Address Women's Homelessness** To effectively address women's homelessness in Canada, research consistently points to the need for gender-specific, trauma-informed, and rights-based policies and programs grounded in lived expertise and intersectional equity. Successful approaches prioritize prevention, recognize diverse experiences of homelessness including hidden and episodic homelessness and invest in long-term, safe, and supportive housing. ● Start investing directly in women-specific and Indigenous-led housing programs with core funding and long-term stability. ● Stop relying on gender-neutral, emergency-focused models that prioritize chronic, visible homelessness and exclude women, girls, and gender-diverse people. ● Continue supporting and expanding trauma-informed, culturally appropriate services, and shifting power to communities through participatory policymaking and funding mechanisms that prioritize equity.

Canada's Housing Crisis

Housing insecurity is framed as an affordability crisis and a human rights issue. Here is a brief overview of the state of Canada's housing crisis.

- 44% of Canadians said they were "very concerned" about affording rent or housing.[cliii]
- Over 235,000 people, including 35,000 youth, experience homelessness each year.
- Shelters in big cities are nearly full — Toronto was at 98% capacity in 2023.[cliv]
- Many non-status youth and families are denied housing due to lack of papers or discrimination.[clv]

Current Responses to the Housing Crisis

- **The National Housing Strategy and Rapid Housing Initiative:** The updated 10-year Housing Strategy addresses the urgent housing needs of Indigenous people living off reserve in BC. Progress on housing delivery has been slow, and federal and provincial commitments have not met the scale of need.The Strategy advocates for Indigenous-led governance and collaboration with governments to ensure Indigenous rights and self-determination in housing are respected.[clvi]
- **Rent controls and foreign buyers bans.**
- **Zoning reforms:** Some cities (e.g. Vancouver) allow densification, but 70% of urban land remains restricted to single-family homes.[clvii]

The impacts of programs are the exclusion of marginalised groups, namely migrants, indigenous and racialised renters and rents that remain unaffordable. There is a widening gap in underfunded social housing, reliance on private developers and climate disasters like wildfires, and floods displace indigenous communities, worsening the housing crisis.[clviii]

Federal and provincial governments should take stronger roles in:

- Measuring all housing need and hidden homelessness
- Providing consistent guidance and criteria for Housing Needs Assessments (HNAs)
- Including new data variables (e.g., students, people in co-ops, congregate housing, unhoused populations) in the census.[clix]

Recommendations to Address the Housing Crisis

Based on the evidence from No One Left Behind and other successful models, we recommend;

- Fund universal social housing with a massive federal investment in non-profit, rent-geared-to-income housing.
- Realize the Right to Housing for Children and Youth.
- Freeze rents nationwide with vacancy controls to protect tenants against displacement.
- Regularize migrant status and eliminate closed working permits. This will reduce the exploitation of workers by reducing deportation fears, improving housing access, and granting access to social programs like the Canada Child Benefit.

Foundational Funding & Structure:

- Support AHMA as an independent housing authority with appropriate funding and resources
- Fulfill commitments to establish an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy.
- Indigenous Housing Expertise: Develop Indigenous talent in housing provision and increase resources for Indigenous housing organizations and service.[clx]

Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Harm

Housing insecurity is an especially pressing issue for women experiencing intimate partner harm.

- **79%** of women report high housing costs cause challenges for leaving the place in which they were experiencing violence.[clxi]
- **45%** of women experiencing homelessness reported physical abuse and 35% sexual abuse as causes of their homelessness[clxii]
- **22%** increase in police-reported intimate partner violence between 2014 and 2023.[clxiii]
- **20%** of households already cannot afford housing costs greater than $1,050 per month and another **20%** cannot afford to pay more than $1,600 while average market rent nationwide is more than $2,200 a month.[clxiv]

Current Responses (The Canada Housing Benefit)

In 2020, the federal government rolled out a Canada Housing Benefit (CHB) in partnership with the provinces. In Ontario, there is a dedicated *Survivor's of Gender Based Violence* stream (SGBV). By 2025, the SGBV stream had supported 2,483 survivor households.[clxv] Other provinces, like British Columbia, have similar programs under the CHB that provide direct support to households who have experienced gender-based violence. While this benefit is a positive step, it is uncertain whether the current funding will be extended beyond 2028.

However, many survivors who access these benefits still face significant barriers to accessing housing that meets their needs. People living in rural areas, Indigenous people and people with disabilities face a particular shortage of suitable, private market, rental housing.[clxvi] A reliance on the private housing market is failing to meet the needs of people experiencing intimate partner harm.

Recommendations

Increased access to affordable housing is essential at a time when many Canadians cannot afford market housing. For thirty years Canadian Governments have relied almost exclusively on private developers to create market housing. At 3.5%, the proportion of non-market housing in Canada is only half of the average for OECD nations.

- Canada needs a multi-year strategy to scale up funding for Indigenous, non-profit and co-operative housing to double Canada's non-market housing supply from 3.5% to 7% in the short term and up to 20% over the long term, as the Federal Housing Advocate has recommended.[clxvii]
- National standards and funding for second stage shelters would ensure sustainability and consistency of services nationwide.These shelters are intended for stays of up to two years and serve as a bridge between emergency shelters and more permanent placements and they are an integral resource for survivors of GBV.[clxviii]

Gender-Based Discrimination in the Housing Sector

Eviction is a key pathway into homelessness amongst women and gender-diverse people in Canada, often done illegally, while existing data focuses on formal evictions.

- **90%** of people threatened with eviction in Toronto for the actions of third parties are women, who are far more likely to be evicted for actions they did not personally commit.[clxix]
- **80%** of women and gender-diverse people that become homeles reported experiencing one form of discrimination from a landlord or property manager.[clxx]
- **20.3%** of Indigenous participants (in a study on housing barriers for transgender Canadians) reported housing loss, with **35.8%** being forced to move because of who they are.[clxxi]
- Many **transgender youth** are kicked out of their homes due to their identities - due to this, they are more likely to experience the following:[clxxii]
    - Barriers to completing their education
    - Engaging in higher risk of survival strategies or illegal employment
    - Often turn to sex work and the drug economy, compounding landlord discrimination due to potential criminal records.
- Transgender and racialized people faced disproportionate discriminatory treatment and pre-judgement from landlords that lead them to be unjustly characterized as **"bad risk" renters** - even leading to blacklisting in cases where renters involve a Human Rights Tribunal.[clxxiii]

Current Responses to Gender-Based Discrimination in the Housing Sector

Despite laws prohibiting eviction and housing discrimination based on gender, identity, or other protected grounds, these practices remain common due to power imbalances, legal loopholes, and tenant vulnerability. Women, gender-diverse people, and marginalized youth often face backdoor evictions disguised as legal grounds, such as renovations or the actions of third parties, making discrimination difficult to prove. Limited awareness of legal rights, fear of retaliation, and underfunded legal aid further prevent tenants from challenging wrongful evictions.

While governments have introduced education campaigns, targeted housing supports, and oversight bodies like the Federal Housing Advocate, systemic change is needed. Closing legal loopholes, enforcing protections proactively, and strengthening tenant advocacy are essential to ending discrimination that persists in practice despite being illegal on paper.

Evictions linked to third-party actions or domestic violence, especially when the woman is not on the lease, expose a major gap in Canada's housing system. In these cases, survivors can be removed with little notice, even when the eviction is triggered by an abuser's actions. Existing "lease-break" provisions may let survivors leave without penalty but rarely allow them to remain or take over the lease. Without reforms that let survivors assume tenancy, block evictions tied solely to an abuser, and expand legal and housing supports, women will continue to face homelessness after experiencing violence. While provincial Residential-Tenancies Act efforts are being made, these vary significantly across provinces and generally focus on early lease termination rather than granting tenancy rights directly to the survivor or the person fleeing violence.

Recommendations: Gender-Based Discrimination in the Housing Sector

The National Housing Strategy must align with province-specific realities to be effective, especially for women, gender-diverse people, and youth facing eviction or discrimination. While federal goals provide a framework, housing rights, eviction protections, and support services are provincially enforced, and gaps vary across regions. To have real impact, the Strategy needs to coordinate with local policies and needs, funding culturally safe supports, legal protections, and affordable housing that reflect the challenges communities face on the ground.

In addition to this, legal protections must be strengthened at both the federal and provincial levels. Tenancy laws should explicitly prohibit evictions tied to gender, gender identity, race, or domestic violence, even when the tenant is not the leaseholder, and allow survivors to assume or transfer a lease rather than only terminate it, ensuring housing stability. Legal loopholes that enable backdoor evictions, such as claims of renovations or third-party actions, should be closed.

Access to legal support must also be improved through expanded funding for tenant advocacy and legal aid, alongside clear, multilingual campaigns to raise awareness of tenant rights and avenues to challenge discrimination. Provincial protections should be harmonized through minimum national standards for eviction and domestic violence tenancy rights, while monitoring and accountability mechanisms track eviction-related complaints by gender, identity, and age to identify systemic trends. Finally, federal and provincial governments must expand affordable, safe, and culturally safe housing options to prevent eviction from translating into homelessness, particularly for women, gender-diverse people, and marginalized youth.

Issue: Income Security

Over the past 40 years in Canada, economic growth has been concentrated among the top 1%. This has led to increases in both income and wealth inequality, distinct but interrelated concepts.

Income Inequality

- Since 1982, market incomes for the top 0.01% have increased by 951%, five and a half times faster than inflation, while market incomes of the bottom 50% have increased 150%, less than inflation over the same period.[clxxiv]
- The top 1% earned over 10% of total income in Canada in 2022, up from 7% in 1982.
- Half of Canadians averaged only $20,800 in income in 2022, while the 3,000 richest Canadians averaged $7.44 million, 355 times more. 74.4% of the top 1% are men.[clxxv]

Wealth Inequality

- The PBO has estimated that the wealthiest 1% of Canadians hold about a quarter of all of Canada's wealth.
- The average wealth of the top 1% is over $18 million.[clxxvi]
- Billionaire wealth grew by $113B in Canada in 2024.[clxxvii]
- The number of billionaires in Canada doubled during the 2010s.[clxxviii]

The continued financialization of housing is driving up housing prices, exacerbating wealth inequality and preventing young Canadians from being able to enter the housing market. Tax breaks for capital gains contribute to this problem.[clxxix] Racialized Canadians earn less income from wealth than non-racialized Canadians.[clxxx] Why did this happen? Broadly, neoliberal policy changes led to this outcome. These have included cutting corporate taxes and top personal tax rates, privatizing public companies, eroding labour rights, and signing free-trade agreements that empowered the owners of capital. Myriad tax loopholes allow the wealthy to convert their income into wealth while paying minimal taxes.[clxxxi]

The Trudeau government made tax fairness a central promise. They made modest steps towards tackling income and wealth inequality by:

- Increasing the top personal marginal income tax rate,
- Increasing the capital gains inclusion rate (a loophole that allows people who earn income from wealth to pay less taxes than those who earn income from working),
- Implementing a global minimum corporate tax, and a tax on large multinational digital firms.

However, these half measures left income inequality just as large at the end of his term as it had been at the beginning.[clxxxii] Prime Minister Carney has already reversed course by scrapping the increase to the capital gains[clxxxiii] inclusion rate and the digital services tax and allowing the US to leave the global minimum corporate tax. Now concerns are growing that:

- Tackling income and wealth inequality has not been noted as a priority by the current government. Unfortunately, decades of growth have increased rather than decreased inequality.
- Excessive inequality has many negative consequences, including higher rates of mortality and mental health problems, worse children's health outcomes, and worse happiness levels.[clxxxiv]
- Excessive inequality can also undermine democracy as a few individuals gain enormous power to influence policy and elections.

There are several tax policies that can be implemented to both tackle income and wealth inequality and raise revenue to fund programs that address the multiple intersecting crises of our time.

- The single most effective tool to tackle wealth inequality is a wealth tax. Wealth taxes have been used to ensure that the wealthiest pay their fair share in many countries, including France, Switzerland, and Spain. A graduated wealth tax that only affected the wealthiest 0.6% of families could raise $39 billion a year.[clxxxv] Fears of the rich fleeing are not borne out by the evidence.[clxxxvi]
- All income should be taxed the same way. Currently, people who earn income from investments are taxed at a lower rate than people who earn income from working. Capital gains should be taxed at the same rate as employment income.
- Corporations should not be able to avoid taxes by creating subsidiaries in tax havens.
- Windfall profits taxes should be implemented during crises to prevent corporations from profiteering. Since corporations are largely owned by the wealthy, this both reduces income and wealth inequality, and prevents the cost of living from spiraling out of control. Countries around the world implemented such taxes, especially on the oil and gas industry, during the COVID-19 pandemic.[clxxxvii]
- Canada should support international cooperation to end tax avoidance and ensure the effective taxation of ultra-high net worth individuals. Unfortunately, Canada has voted against a UN Tax Convention, and accepted the US' abandonment of the OECD/G20 agreement on global minimum taxation[clxxxviii]. Canada should take an international leadership role on taxation, helping to ensure that governments around the world have sufficient resources to meet the SDGs[clxxxix].

These measures would lower income and wealth inequality and raise public revenue that could be used to end poverty, fund public education and healthcare, invest in clean energy, fossil fuel reductions, and affordable housing.

1. Increase funding for Black-centred employment programs (e.g., CEE Centre).
2. Expand TTC service to underserved Black communities.
3. Form long-term partnerships with Black-led social service agencies.[cxc]

Income Insurance

Today, the Canadian income insurance program consists of the Old Age Security System, Canada/Quebec Pension Plan, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Spouse's Allowance, and a combination of private insurance plans.

The British Columbia Expert Panel on Basic Income described the income insurance system as a program of diverse and complex networks as opposed to an actual system.[cxci] Many of the shortcomings in income insurance lie in the gaps of available coverage for short-, medium-, and long-term illness as well as limited access to qualify for resources. Many disability efforts are also largely uncoordinated where the government pays around $32 billion in benefits, but the system is not designed to be directed towards low-income individuals, is partially indexed, is based on employment, and is constitutionally entangled.[cxcii]

The lack of organization in disability income insurance has led 75% of Canadian adults with intellectual disabilities to live in poverty earning an average income that is less than half that of a Canadian without a disability according to Inclusion Canada.[cxciii]

Canada Disability Benefit (CDB).

- CDB aims to pay $200 per month in additional income for those eligible with the aim of reducing poverty.
- CDB has been criticized by experts and disability rights groups for its lack of robustness. It does not protect against provincial and territorial claw backs. Alberta has already declared that they will claw back the CDB, and New Brunswick has not confirmed their stance.[cxciv]
- Individuals are only able to access the benefit through the National Disability Tax Credit Program, meaning that those in most need of the program would not be able to access it.[cxcv] Disability rights groups, like the Canadian Labour Congress, have condemned this as exclusionary.
- The CDB's reach is also limited; according to Campaign 2000, of the 1.5 million disabled Canadians who live under the poverty line, only 25,000 will be lifted out of poverty under the program.

Activists and disability rights groups have critiqued Canada's disability assistance policies for being inconsistent with human rights obligations and the country's commitment to upholding the right to an adequate standard of living.

Alternative options are being explored at the provincial level.

- The BC Basic Income Panel suggested reforming Disability Assistance into a targeted income.[cxcvi] This basic income would be complemented with more targeted services intended to support individuals with disabilities.
- Part of their proposed National Action Plan identified enhanced support for autonomy and active citizenship, a stronger federal role in alleviating poverty for disabled people, labor force inclusion, and national social development as the key areas of focus.

Unconditional Income Supports

Evidence suggests that unconditional, adequate income support has been extremely effective in supporting the needs of disabled persons.

- In South Africa, the Disability Grant provides a non-means-tested monthly transfer that has been linked to improved health outcomes and reduced household poverty.[cxcvii]
- In Finland, a national basic income experiment from 2018 led to better wellbeing and mental health among recipients, even though employment outcomes were neutral, demonstrating that unconditional cash transfer is effective in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities.[cxcviii]

Income Stacking

Additionally, programs that allow recipients to stack their income in different jurisdictions can prove to be an effective income distribution strategy. In Norway, the disability benefits consist of two components, a basic pension plus a supplementary earnings-related pension. Recipients of this benefit can work up to 40% of the basic pension amount without reducing their disability status or the amount they receive in benefits.[cxcix] This allows recipients to stack their income without a penalty to combine benefits and still work.

Evidently, programs that prioritize the needs of the recipients with unconditional cash transfers or allowing recipients to work while receiving benefits are effective and equitable. Enacting similar policies in Canada would provide equitable and equal access to benefits for disabled Canadians, thereby upholding its commitment to SDGs 1, 3, and 10.

Income Security & Food Security[cc]

- The after-tax poverty gap for a lone parent with two children (the largest family type in poverty) is $15,745.
- The child poverty rate in lone-parent households (mostly female-led) is 45.3%, highlighting a severe gendered and social justice crisis.
- The federal Canada Social Transfer (CST) is currently capped at 3% growth, leading to inadequate and geographically inconsistent provincial social assistance benefits.
- The AFB 2024 includes a dedicated chapter outlining strategies to address food insecurity, which is often linked to income inadequacy.

Current Responses & Intersectional Analysis[cci]

- The government uses the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) as a primary anti-poverty tool, but its current level is not adequate to eliminate deep poverty.
- The government is also pursuing repayment of debt from recipients of COVID-era benefits (CERB/CRB) who are often low-income, which traps families in debt. This disproportionately impacts women and racialized groups who have lower incomes.

Recommendations[ccii]

- Enhance CCB Adequacy: Increase CCB funding by an additional $5.9 billion, specifically targeting funds to families in deep poverty.
- Strengthen CST: Remove growth restrictions, invest an additional $2 billion, and add binding conditions requiring provinces to ensure social assistance meets basic needs and stops deducting child-related benefits.
- CERB/CRB Debt Amnesty: Immediately cease all pursuit of repayment debt for low-income individuals and retire the associated debt.
- Food Security Focus: Direct public investment and policy changes are proposed to tackle the root causes of food insecurity.

Youth Poverty in Canada

Many young people in Canada still face poverty, exclusion, and low wages.

- Canada ranks 26th of 41 wealthy nations in child poverty.[cciii]
- 1 in 4 children experience food insecurity.[cciv]
- Youth earn less — e.g., Ontario's student minimum wage is $14.60 vs. $16.55 for adults.[ccv]
- Marginalized groups — newcomers, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ, and disabled youth — face the most barriers.
- 25% of homeless youth identify as 2SLGBTQ, despite making up only 5-10% of all youth.[ccvi]
- Migrant and non-status youth are excluded from many protections.[ccvii]
- Closed work permits still trap migrant workers in exploitation.[ccviii]

How Canada Addresses Youth Poverty

Current Policies & Impacts Federal programs:

- Canada Child Benefit (CCB): Cut child poverty from 21.1% (2017) to 18.5% (2019), lifting 435,000 kids out of poverty — but excludes non-status families.[ccix]
- Canada Workers Benefit (CWB): Helps low-wage workers, but hasn't kept up with inflation.[ccx]
- CERB (COVID-19): Temporarily dropped poverty to 15.2% in 2020 — but excluded many migrants.[ccxi]

Local programs:

- Ontario's low student wage ($14.60/hr) keeps youth in poverty, while BC's inflation-linked minimum wage ($16.75/hr) helps.[ccxii] Social assistance rates (e.g., $733/month in Ontario) fall far short of covering basic needs.

Reducing Youth Poverty

- Canada Universal Basic Income (UBI) Ontario's pilot cut poverty & improved health. Expanding UBI could reduce poverty by 30% & help marginalized workers.[ccxiii]
- Canada Child Benefit (CCB) Expansion CCB already cut child poverty by 4.3 points. Including non-status families & boosting benefits could help 100,000 more kids & cut racial gaps by 15%.[ccxiv]
- Living Wage BC's $16.75/hr (indexed) prevents working poverty. Federal $23/hr standard & ending youth wage gaps could cut working poor by 40%.[ccxv]
- Community-Led Approaches Migrant regularization: Improves rights & access.[ccxvi]
- Indigenous-led programs: Faster poverty reduction & cultural continuity.[ccxvii]

Child Poverty

Poverty in Canada has been growing at alarming rates since the pandemic. Campaign 2000's latest report card on child and family poverty in Canada, released November 18, 2024, found an

unprecedented 5 percentage point increase in the rates of child poverty between the years 2020 and 2022 – that means 358,520 children under 18 fell into poverty during that time.[ccxviiiccxix]

- Nearly 1.4 million children (18.1%) lived in poverty in 2022, more than the number of children who lived in poverty prior to the pandemic.
- Poverty rates vary significantly depending on socio-demographic status, with groups who face systemic marginalization experiencing disproportionately higher child poverty rates
- First Nations children who live on reserve had a child poverty rate of 37.4%[ccxx]
- children who recently arrived to Canada had a poverty rate of 21.8%[ccxxi]
- children in lone-parent families, the majority of which are female-led had a poverty rate of 32.4%.[ccxxii]

Not only were more children living in poverty, but they were also living in families who had less income to meet their needs than in years prior. On average, families were $14,276 below the low-income threshold in 2022. This was an increase of $4,266 from 2015 when the gap was $10,050.[ccxxiii]

Current Responses to Child Poverty

On April 1, 2022, the federal minimum wage rose to $15.55 per hour. At that hourly wage, a lone parent would have had to have worked an additional 1,012 hours without payroll deductions, to close the gap and bring the family up to the low income threshold of $44,025.

Social and disability assistance programs vary across provinces and territories and are grossly inadequate. Yet the number of families relying on social assistance to meet day-to-day needs remains high. According to tax filer data,1.6 million families reported social assistance as an income source in 2022. Of family types, lone parent families rely on social assistance programs the most: 20.1%, or one in

five lone-parent families received social assistance in 2022, compared to couple families at 4.9%.[ccxxiv]

The rise of rates and depth of poverty is a significant concern as the cost of living has skyrocketed. Food and housing prices continue to grow at faster rates than overall inflation. Nearly half of Canadians have reported having difficulties meeting day-to-day expenses because of rising costs[ccxxv]

Recommendations

Build an Income Security System that Enables Children, Individuals, and Families to Thrive

- Create a new End Child Poverty supplement to the CCB (CCB-EndPov) targeted to children in deep poverty as detailed in the forthcoming Alternative Federal Budget 2026 ($5.3B).
- Expand eligibility of the Canada Child Benefit to children whose parents have precarious immigration status by repealing s.122.6(e) of the Income Tax Act that ties eligibility for the CCB to immigration status ($160M).
- Remove barriers to CCB access for children in customary care, kinship and informal arrangements, which would significantly support Indigenous families.
- Double the Children's Disability Benefit, create a caregivers benefit for families caring for children with disabilities and begin collecting statistics on the poverty rate of children with disabilities.
- Increase the annual amount of and expand eligibility for the Canada Disability Benefit, enable 'stacking' with other income benefits.
- Remove growth restrictions and add binding conditions to the Canada Social Transfer ($2B).
- Remove the eligibility requirement of earned income as an eligibility requirement for the Canada Workers Benefit to ensure those with the lowest or no earned income receive support.
- Restructure both the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Canada Child Benefit so that they reduce quicker for high income earners, redirecting resources to support those in low income.
- Retire CERB debt and immediately cease pursuing people for repayment. Appeals have been clogging up the federal court system and draining public and individual resources.
- Create a parallel cash transfer system for marginalized non-tax filers outside of the personal income tax system ($100M).

Gender Equity	Current Responses & Intersectional Analysis	Recommendations
The high poverty rate in lone-parent (female-led) households (45.3%) indicates the deep economic vulnerability faced by many women and their children.[ccxxvi]	• The success of the $10-a-day child care framework must be maintained through new investments to support women's economic participation. [ccxxvii] • The budget includes chapters on both "Gender equality" and "Racial equality."[ccxxviii]	• **Address Root Causes:** Recommendations to increase the CCB and social assistance (above) are core mechanisms for advancing gender equity and alleviating poverty in female-led families.[ccxxix] • **Fair Child Care Compensation & Expansion:** Provide new funding to incentivize provinces to fairly compensate the child care workforce to address staffing shortages, and expand child care facilities in publicly and non-profit owned sites.[ccxxx] • **Public Service Pay Equity:** Appropriately fund the Pay Equity Commission and hold to the spirit of the *Pay Equity Act 2021*.[ccxxxi]

Issue: Food Security

Youth Food Security[ccxxxii]	Current Policies & Programs[ccxxxiii]	Recommendations to Tackle Youth Food Insecurity in Canada[ccxxxiv]
• 1 in 4 children/youth experience food insecurity, with nearly 25% facing moderate-to-severe hunger • 1 in 3 children and young people below age 18 in Canada's 10 provinces live in a food insecure household (Statistics Canada, 2025) • Post-Secondary Students: 55.8% of students were food insecure in 2021, with food bank use rising from 5% (2019) to 8% (2023). • 39% of food bank clients cite high food prices as the primary barrier, while 13% blame housing costs. • 89% of Toronto clients live in unaffordable housing, spending nearly all their income on rent. • Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer youth face disproportionate hunger due to poverty and discrimination. • (2022–2024) Inflation Crisis: Food prices rose 15.8% (2020–2022), outpacing wages.	Federal: • Canada Child Benefit (CCB): Already cut child poverty by 4.3 points but excludes non-status kids & doesn't guarantee food spending. • Canada Workers Benefit (CWB): Doesn't keep pace with rising food costs. • CERB (2020): Cash transfers briefly cut food bank use by 30% (2020) but excluded migrants. Local & Grassroots: • Food banks: Used by 627,000 youth but are a band-aid, not a solution. • Living wage: BC's $16.75 wage (indexed) reduced working poverty by 25%. • Community fridges & mutual aid: Help locally (e.g., Toronto's People's Fridge serves 200+ daily), but can't replace systemic support.	• **Direct cash transfer:** A Newfoundland's pilot cut food insecurity by 45% and improved school attendance. A national basic income could help 500,000+ youth. • **Canada Child Benefit (CCB):** This should be expanded to include non-status kids and to add $500/month for lowest-income households to make. • **Eliminate Ontario's discriminatory student wage** ($14.60)[ccxxxv]. • **Support Indigenous-led food sovereignty:** Nunavut's programs achieve 30% better nutrition than food banks (Assembly of First Nations). • **School meals:** Toronto's program provides 50,000+ free meals weekly at half the cost of private models. • **Migrant kitchen collectives:** Ontario's "Harvest Hands" serves 800+ migrant families weekly, bypassing status barriers. If Canada moves away from charity (food banks) to rights-based solutions — cash transfers, living wages, school meals, and Indigenous partnerships — we would expect to see: • Up to a 25% drop in food bank use. • 15% rise in graduation rates. • 100,000 more kids food-secure in 2 years. • $3+ return per $1 invested.

Food Insecurity for Adults[ccxxxvi]

- In 2022, 17.8% of households in Canada's 10 provinces experienced food insecurity, which is the highest recorded rate since monitoring began.
- Food insecurity is closely tied to income, asset scarcity, and instability in employment or income supports
- Food insecurity is a powerful predictor of poor physical and mental health and higher healthcare usage and costs.
- 17.8% of households were food-insecure in 2022.
- 6.9 million people lived in food-insecure households, including 1.8 million children.
- 24.3% of children under 18 lived in food-insecure households.
- 4.5% of households were severely food insecure
- In 2024, over 10 million people in Canada's 10 provinces - 25.5% of Canada's total population - experienced food insecurity, which is the highest recorded rate since monitoring began. Of these people, 6.6 million were adults aged 18 to 64 (Statistics Canada, 2025)

Current Responses to Food insecurity

Food insecurity disproportionately affects renters, lone-parent households (especially female-led), racialized groups (especially Black, Indigenous, Filipino), those on social assistance or Employment Insurance, and working households with low income. At the same time, most food-insecure households rely on employment income, not social assistance.

Household food insecurity by main income source[ccxxxvii]:

- Social assistance: 69.9%
- Employment Insurance: 47.0%
- COVID-related benefits: 42.7%
- Employment income: 17.0%
- Public pensions: 15.4%

A sharp increase in food insecurity occurred from 2021 to 2022, linked to inflation and inadequate income support.

Pervasive reliance on emergency food services (food banks, community food centers, mutual aid). In March 2025, Food Banks Canada recorded 2.2 million food bank visits nationally, double the rate in 2019. Food charity provides immediate relief but does not address the root causes of household food insecurity[ccxxxviii]

Federal food-focused programs - e.g., Local Food Infrastructure Fund and the recent National School Food Program - exist but do not tackle the root causes of household food insecurity; they are also grossly under-funded.

Federal income programs also exist to support adults, e.g.,Canada Workers Benefit (CWB) and GST/HST credit. However, the CWB excludes some groups, including non-working adults. Also, both the CWB and GST/HST credit provide low benefits compared to other income programs for low-income households.

Recommendations[ccxxxix]

Volunteer groups are coordinating community food pantries, food banks, and soup kitchens to fill in the gaps for food access. They cannot keep up with the need and these are only a temporary answer to the underlying issue of food access and income insecurity. Recommendations to reduce food security include:

- Strengthen income supports:
  - Make programs like child benefits and social assistance more generous and better situated for inflation
  - Consider basic income/income floorplans
- Improve Canada Child Benefit (CCB):
  - Restructure for greater impact on lowest-income families.
  - Index more frequently (e.g., quarterly vs annually).
- Transform the GST/HST credit into an enhanced Groceries and Essentials Benefit to help low and modest income households afford basics (Affordability Action Council, 2023)
- Transform the Canada Workers Benefit into an enhanced Canada Working-Age Supplement to ensure all adults get a foothold in the labour market and to make work beneficial (Maytree & Community Food Centres Canada, 2022)
- Reform social assistance:
  - Align benefits more closely with cost of living.
- Address root causes, not symptoms:
  - Move away from reliance on food banks and charity.
  - Implement policy that improves household-level financial security.
- Focus on stability, not just amount:
  - Highlight the value of predictable, stable income streams, such as public pensions, over fluctuating employment income.
- Legislate a national target to cut household food insecurity in half and eliminate severe food insecurity by 2030.
  - Setting a target can drive action, foster accountability, and ensure policies are targeted where they are most needed.
- Support Indigenous and Black food sovereignty & local production through dedicated funding streams, community food programs, and Northern production programs (beyond short-term subsidies)

1. Expand access to growing spaces and urban agriculture.
2. Invest in Black-led food organizations.
3. Link food access with health/social services via initiatives like social prescribing. [38]

Strengthening Indigenous Food Systems (SDG 2, SDG 5, Equity, Climate) In The "Strengthening Indigenous Food Systems" brief (May 2023), the report mentions that First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in Canada have distinct food systems that have been nurtured and developed over many generations. Historic Government policies have disrupted these food systems by colonial policies and the need to advance reconciliation.	**What was included in Federal budget, November 2024:** $23.2 million in 2024-25, to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada for Nutrition North Canada's subsidy program to lower the cost of nutritious food and other essential household items; and, $101.1 million over three years starting in 2024-25, to support the Harvesters Support Grant and Community Food Program Fund and promote Indigenous communities in implementing culturally appropriate, local solutions to address food insecurity. $14.9 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to renew and expand the Northern Isolated Community Initiatives Fund to all regions of Inuit Nunangat to support local and Indigenous food production systems, including innovative northern food businesses, which contribute to food security in the North. $25.1 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, on a cash basis, to expand the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program to assist Indigenous communities to safely access shellfish harvest for food, as well as social and ceremonial purposes. $2.8 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA) Action Plan Measures to bolster the policy and engagement capacity among Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Inuit Treaty Organizations to co-develop legislative and policy options to facilitate the production, sale, and trade of traditional and country food.	**Policy priorities outlined in Eat Think Vote policy backgrounder, Support Indigenous Food Sovereignty (2021):** • Commit to Reconciliation As Relationship, and the 10 principles for Canada's political and legal systems, educational and religious institutions, corporate sector, and civil society to function in ways that are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada has endorsed; • Honour both the spirit and the letter of the law of Canadian Constitutional commitments to Indigenous peoples' rights and responsibilities; • Respect treaties (historic and modern) and other land rights, ensure Indigenous control over land and waterways; • Self-determination for Indigenous peoples and communities, and distinct approaches for First Nations, Inuit, Métis, as well as urban, remote, northern and rural realities; • Provide direct support to Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving groups that are focused on Indigenous food systems, for instance through the Local Food Infrastructure Program • Support communities to design new models, and support and reinvigorate Indigenous food ways like community kitchens, gardening programs, greenhouses, other community-led infrastructure, hunter support programs and goose camps; • Support Indigenous-led cooperative and other non-profit motivated grocery stores and other traditional/country food and supplies; • Initiate Nutrition North Canada (NNC) Reform, including increase in the land- based harvest supports to a minimum 25% of total NNC expenditures.
School Food (SDG 2, SDG 1, Equity): The "School Food" brief (May 2023) passionately argues for a universal, healthy, and culturally diverse National School Food Program. It notes that food insecurity is especially high among Indigenous, Black, and racialized children.	**What was included in Federal budget, November 2024:** In Budget 2024, the government proposes to provide a statutory appropriation authority in the Budget Implementation Act that would enable the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to sign bilateral agreements and transfer funding to provinces and territories to support National School Food programming for the 2024-2025 school year.	**The Coalition for Healthy School Food has prepared "Proposals for a National School Nutritious Meal Program".** The recommendation is for the Government of Canada to work in partnership with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples and non-profit organizations to develop and implement a National School Nutritious Meal Program and related School Food Policy, in support of and in line with the evolving Food Policy for Canada. Implementation should proceed as follows: • **Investment**: Allocate $1 billion over five years in the federal budget, with $200 million per year to contribute to provinces, territories and First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners to fund their school food programs that: serve food based on the 2019 Canada's Food Guide; are universal; do not market to kids; and provide effective monitoring, accountability and reporting that will support future evidence-based decisions on a comprehensive permanent Canada-wide Program. • **Cost-Sharing**: Negotiate cost-sharing funding agreements with P/Ts that are willing and ready to co-invest in, and implement, school meal programs in line with the proposed Guiding Principles set out below. • **Indigenous-led programs**: Enter into immediate discussions with Indigenous leaders to negotiate agreement for the creation and/or enhancement of independent distinctions-based First Nation, Métis and Inuit school meal programs, with long-term and sustainable funding.

		• **Global School Meals Coalition**: Actively participate as a member of the global School Meals Coalition to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal in school by 2030. • **School Food Policy**: Proceed with the development of a more comprehensive National School Food Policy: a) addressing such factors as food literacy, local production and supply, and best practices and standards; b) aligned with the Coalition's eight Guiding Principles; and c) supportive of the further development of the Food Policy for Canada and deliberations of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council's School Nutrition Working Group. • **Equipment and infrastructure**: Create an additional dedicated school food infrastructure fund to enhance kitchen, food service, and other production and preparation equipment and facilities so that they can reliably and efficiently serve healthy food in adequate volumes. This approach to Program design and implementation will enable immediate action and progress on a consistent Canada-wide approach to school meal programming, while: a) recognizing the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples and the need for much more substantial and dedicated funding for their school meal programs; b) ensuring consideration of needs and opportunities for a more comprehensive permanent Canada-wide Program; and c) addressing critical needs for investments in local capacity.
Access to clean drinking water on reserves The lack of clean, safe drinking water on reserves is one of the greatest violations of the UN-recognized human rights to water and sanitation. • As of September, 2025, there were 37 active short-term and 39 long-term drinking water advisories on public systems in place in First Nations communities.[ccxl] • There are close to 500 private drinking water systems on reserve that are not financially supported by the Government of Canada, they are not regularly tested by Health Canada. • Some households in First Nations reserves have no water source or sanitation system on their property. They cannot afford to put in a well, cistern, or septic system; some households rely on collecting rain water from rain runoff from their roof into a cistern.[ccxli] • Some households have gone into debt to deal with failing water or sanitation systems. An interviewer said she took out a $5,000 loan to fix her well, and if she had not gotten the loan, she would have lived without running water.[ccxlii] • Households reported their struggle to afford the costs of clean water. Extra costs of about $120 per month must be	**<u>Current Policies & Programs</u>** **Privatization of Water** The Liberal government has been promoting public-private partnerships (P3s) as a solution. History has shown that P3s not only cost more, but they also lead to the privatization of water and a loss of community control and jobs. P3s are not the answer to the drinking water crisis in First Nations. **Law & Regulation** Since there is no regulatory regime to ensure access to safe drinking water in First Nations communities, First Nations communities will not have drinking water protections comparable with other communities in Canada where drinking water is regulated.	**Updating Policy and Understanding First Nation's needs using Indigenous lenses** In order to identify culturally acceptable sustainable water policy and practical solutions on reserves, the government should work with Indigenous representatives to recognize the cultural aspects of water, to take into account Indigenous customs, laws, and practices, and conduct comprehensive study on all contaminated sites to assess the severity of the situation. The government should support First Nations–led engagement processes by working closely with Indigenous representatives. Ensuring that new system designs allow for population growth, account for sustainable life-cycle costs, and are adaptable to decreased source water quality over time **Increasing investment in Water System & Wastewater System** The government of Canada should increase water and wastewater spending on reserves for the sake of removing all the water advisories and preventing new ones from occurring. Advisories may be issued if there are problems with the water system (e.g., water line breaks, equipment failure, or poor filtration) and it may be issued if there is no trained operator to run the water system or no trained staff to test drinking water quality Therefore, more budget should be allocated to infrastructure building, implement long term solution (e.g., building new water treatment plant or upgrading an existing water system), water system maintenance and operation, support

spent to fill the cistern for household usage, and an additional $10-15 a week on drinking water. Rationing water toward the end of the month is common for residents when money is too tight. [ccxliii]		reserved-based operator training, and conduct regular water quality assessment and performance inspection not only on public systems, but also on private wells, cisterns and homes with no running water (which account for about one third of households on reserves).
Issue: Jobs & Employment		
Gender Inequality[ccxliv]: Gender inequality in the workplace is a systemic disparity that leads to unequal opportunities, pay, and advancement for women and other gender minorities. ● Women earn about 91¢ for every dollar men make. Racialized & Indigenous women earn as little as 80¢ per dollar.[ccxlv] ● Women are underrepresented in STEM (<30%) and overrepresented in low-wage, part-time jobs.[ccxlvi] ● Nearly half of women report sexual harassment at work, with higher rates for young and LGBTQ+ women. Many racialized women don't report it out of fear.[ccxlvii] ● Women shoulder most unpaid care work, keeping many out of school or jobs — 46% of young women cite family duties as a barrier, compared to just 5% of men.[ccxlviii] ● Women face bias and fewer opportunities in STEM, trades, and sports, limiting career pathways.[ccxlix]	**Government Responses to Gender Employment Inequities[ccl]** Gender inequality intersects with race, disability, and class — a human rights issue, economic priority, and UN commitment.[ccli] What's being done: ● Pay & Employment Equity Acts seek to tackle wage gaps and bias. ● $10-a-Day Childcare & Parental Leave strives to reduce unpaid care burdens. ● 50–30 Challenge & Women Entrepreneurship support diverse leadership and women-led businesses. ● STEM programs & mentorships open doors in underrepresented fields. Challenges: ● Weak enforcement — companies are in varying levels of compliance with pay equity legislation.[cclii] ● DEI backlash slows progress ● Gig work traps many women in low-pay, insecure jobs ● Rural, disabled & trans workers have fewer opportunities and face higher levels of discrimination.[ccliii]	**Recommendations for Gender Employment Equity in Canada** ● Implement laws like Ontario's Pay Transparency Act. This helps to close wage gaps by 2.2-2.4%.[ccliv] ● Fund affordable childcare & parental leave. Quebec's model boosted moms' employment by 12%; Canada's $10/day plan could add $150B to GDP over 30 years.[cclv] ● Introduce mandatory DEI & accountability. Firms with strong DEI policies retain more women leaders. ● Invest in STEM & trades programs. Scholarships, mentorships, and camps increase women's STEM enrollment by 30%.[cclvi] ● Sustain community-led initiatives. Indigenous and Black women's programs reduce unemployment gaps by up to 20%.[cclvii] To meet SDG 5 by 2030, Canada must scale proven policies, enforce equity laws, and center marginalized voices.
Youth Unemployment[cclviii] Rates of youths not in employment, education or training (NEET) have increased in Canada, particularly for youth aged 20–29. ● The increase is mostly driven by unemployment or labour force exits, with young men more affected than women. ● Racialized youth and highly educated immigrants have experienced disproportionate increases in NEET status, reflecting deeper systemic barriers. ● Youth aged 25–29 show the highest NEET rates, especially those without a bachelor's degree. ● Increases in NEET status among immigrants with degrees suggest mismatches between skills and labour market opportunities. Top reasons for NEET status (not in labour force): ● Illness/disability: 22.7% ● Caring for children: 18.6% ● Household work: 17.2% ● "Other": 23.9% (p. 10)	**Policies Failing to Address Youth Unemployment[cclix]** ● NEET rate (ages 15–29) in 2023/2024: 11.3%, up from 10.5% in 2021/2022 (p. 5) ● Youth employment rate (15–29) dropped 2.7 percentage points to 62.9% (March 2024 vs. March 2023) (. p4) ● Unemployment rate (15–29) rose to 10.9%, up 2.9 points over the same period (p. 4) ● NEET rate (25–29) increased 1.8 percentage points; 20–24 increased 1.0 points; no significant change for 15–19 (p. 6) ● Black youth NEET rate: 19.8% in 2023/2024 — up 3.9 points from 2022/2023 (p. 8) ● Chinese youth NEET rate: 14.3% in 2023/2024 — up 3.8 points, surpassing non-racialized youth (12.8%) (p. 8) ● Immigrants (with bachelor's+): NEET rate rose 3.5 points to 14.1% (p. 9) ● Canadian-born youth with degrees: Stable NEET rate at 6.8% (p. 9)	**Recommendations[cclx]** ● Targeted support for racialized youth and immigrant graduates ○ Address credential recognition, hiring discrimination, and labour market integration. ● Reengagement strategies for young men ○ Boost postsecondary access and reduce barriers to school/work re-entry for men aged 20–29. ● Childcare and flexible education for NEET women ○ Support women balancing caregiving and career re-entry (notably women aged 25–29). ● Mental health and disability supports ○ Address barriers faced by NEET youth with illness, disability, or caregiving responsibilities. ● Improved labour market matching for recent grads ○ Develop transition programs from education to employment aligned with youth qualifications.

Financial Violence, Unemployment and Housing Insecurity Financial violence as an extension of IPV often is a direct contributor to housing insecurity for women and girls. Abusers often limit access to money and streams of financial independence to keep their partner dependent on them. ● **82%** of homeless Muslim women report experiencing IPV at the intersection of housing insecurity, with **73%** of those participants reporting severe financial abuse such as being prevented from seeking employment or having their money controlled by families or partners.[cclxi] ● **63%** of shelter participants from the Kitchener-Waterloo Region reported experiencing financial violence.[cclxii] When having to flee violence, escaping conditions that did not allow them to work or have their own money leave women disadvantaged - with limited income, savings and work experience to be able to obtain employment. For newcomer women, language barriers and degree equivalency challenges were added barriers to leaving their abusers, or finding success living independently.[cclxiii]	**Current Responses to Financial Violence** The Government of Canada offers pre-arrival services and support for all newcomers with approved permanent-resident applications - however this would not apply to families living long-term in Canada through work-permits.[cclxiv] This has left many women and children fleeing violence with limited options for supporting themselves let alone qualifying for employment. Currently, the Government of Canada operates the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program, through which refugees are referred to Canada for resettlement. As a government assisted refugee, either the Government of Canada or the province of Quebec will support you while you settle in Canada - but this is only limited to one year, and support would be directly given to the applicant.[cclxv] Women and girls fleeing violence experience direct loss of support with respect to both income and housing. This may also potentially leave them with precarious status in Canada, limiting employment opportunities. As of February 2025, the federal government has introduced the Temporary Resident Permit (TRP) for Victims of Family Violence allows individuals experiencing family violence to remain in Canada temporarily, even if they are in Canada without status or are dependent on an abusive partner for immigration status. As of February 4, 2025, the TRP is issued for at least 12 months, and applicants are exempt from fees for the TRP, work permits, study permits, and biometrics. This permit provides survivors with legal status, enabling them to access services such as trauma counseling and healthcare. This will last up to one year - this is not enough to heal from trauma and obtain housing security.[cclxvi]	**Recommendations:** ● Expand support through GAR and TRP for women and children: Modify GAR and TRP programs so that women can maintain support even if they leave the household or family structure. ● Lengthen the duration of TRP assistance to reflect the long-term realities of trauma recovery, housing stabilization, and economic independence. ● Provide phased support that gradually transitions survivors to self-sufficiency, rather than ending abruptly after one year. ○ Focus on capacity-building initiatives such as language learning, and job skills alongside family-related support. ● Grant work authorization for women on TRPs or dependent visas. ● Fund credential recognition programs, language training, and employment-readiness initiatives targeted at newcomer women. ● Track outcomes specifically for women fleeing IPV and financial violence, including housing stability, employment, and legal status.
Disability Justice in Employment Economic and social services may be difficult for individuals with disabilities to access, resulting in issues of unemployment (p.9).[cclxvii] ● Women and girls who have a disability require access to services that universally address housing, education, and childcare necessities regardless of their ability to participate in the workforce (p.9).[cclxviii] ● In 2022 1 in 6 individuals with disabilities lived in poverty (p.7). [cclxix] ● 1 in 3 individuals with disabilities living alone are impoverished (p.4).[cclxx] ● Individuals with disabilities are underrepresented in the labour force as a result of lack of accessibility and workplace discrimination (p.29).[cclxxi] ● In 2022, 69.6% of individuals with disabilities were searching for work. Among them, only 61.8% were successful compared to the success rate of 77.8% of individuals without disabilities (p.29). [cclxxii]	**Current Responses to Disability in Employment** ● CERB funds during the pandemic assisted those with low income and those who did not qualify for social assistance (p.10).[cclxxiii] ● Government interventions are isolated due to the lack of communication among departments, turnover from ministers, and stigma regarding the disability portfolio (p.10). [cclxxiv] ● A collaborative solution is required by all ministers of federal, provincial, and territorial governments (p.10). [cclxxv] ● CDB funding is insufficient, criteria for eligibility are constricted, the delivery timeline is extensive (p.4). [cclxxvi] ● The 2022 CSD - Canadian Survey on Disability eliminated the questions regarding racialized identity and immigration status causing a significant gap in the collection of data (p.22). [cclxxvii] ● A lack of funds for accommodations provided to workplaces (p.16). [cclxxviii]	**Recommendations for Disability Justice in Employment** ● Make progress with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (p.11) [cclxxix] ● Increase the funds of CDB (p.38). ● Eligibility for CDB should be based on individual income and not family income to allow for equity and reducing levels of abuse (p.38). [cclxxx] ● CDB should not exclusively depend on Disability Tax Credit as it is much more difficult for certain types of disabilities to obtain this assistance (p.38). [cclxxxi] ● Develop methods to measure the progress of the implementation of programs regarding employment within provinces and territories (p.16). [cclxxxii] ● Strengthen methods of data collection (p.16).[cclxxxiii] ● Adapt from employment like sheltered workshops that segregate individuals with disabilities to employment that is inclusive (p.17). [cclxxxiv]

Issue: Health (Physical, Mental, Social, and Cultural)

Mental Health and Income Insecurity

Financial security and mental health are heavily linked, as negative mental health outcomes are more likely at lower income levels while mental health problems can also lead to financial insecurity.[cclxxxv]

Coupled with the growing income insecurity in the country is the fact that mental health services are underfunded and unequally provided throughout Canada.

- Out of 100 people, 14 fewer adults living in the lowest income group reported having their mental health needs fully met as compared to adults in the highest income group.[cclxxxvi]
- Adults in the lowest income group reported anxiety disorder at 2.4 times the rate of those in the highest income group.[cclxxxvii]
- Women in the lowest income quintile reported the highest life stress rates overall.[cclxxxviii]

Current Responses

Canada is currently dedicating only 6.3% of provincial health budgets to mental health, which is far below the levels of other Western countries. Additionally, only 50% of Canadians with mental health disabilities are employed, with the majority who are not depending on government income support.[cclxxxix]

Recommendations

- Increase investments in mental health services country-wide.
- Ensure that citizens, no matter the income, have the right to mental health care.
- Establish Universal Pharmacare and Mental Health Support
    - Implement a comprehensive, single payer pharmacare system ($3.5B annually).
    - Invest in a dedicated mental health transfer to expand access to high quality, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and community-based health care.

Canada's Health Equity Challenges

Indigenous, racialized, and migrant communities face the greatest barriers to health in Canada. The disparity in health is not due to individual choices but is rooted in systemic inequities and structural racism.[ccxc]

- Chronic illness and dangerous jobs are overrepresented by marginalized groups. [ccxci]
- 4 in 10 youth struggle with health inequality and migrants face stress and exploitation.[ccxcii]
- Black Torontonians face worse outcomes compared to the general population across nearly all indicators – income, housing, child care, food access.[ccxciii]
- These inequities are concentrated geographically in the northwest, northeast, and downtown east areas of Toronto, where many Black residents live.[ccxciv]
- Structural racism, underinvestment, and data gaps (especially in race-based early childhood data) compound inequalities.[ccxcv]

Health Equity in Canada

Access to healthcare in Canada is unequal — shaped by race, income, immigration status, and location. Efforts align with SDG 3 (health) and SDG 10 (equality).[ccxcvi]

- $4.5B for youth mental health.[ccxcvii]
- Indigenous-led care cuts ER visits by 25% (FNHA)
- More education for youth with precarious status

Challenges Include:

- Slow mental health funding rollout
- Underfunded rural Indigenous care
- Migrants excluded from care, fear deportation
- Climate impacts on Indigenous health

Health Equity Recommendations

Health equity means removing barriers that prevent Indigenous, racialized, and migrant communities from getting care. What's works:

- Black Youth Helpline peer support
- Migrant worker advocacy winning Quebec coverage[ccxcviii]
- Universal pharmacare Health coverage for undocumented residents
- Expand community-based programs Canada is making progress, but immigration rules, underfunding, and climate risks still create barriers.

Why it matters:

- Reduces disparities
- Tackles systemic racism, immigration exclusions, and rural underfunding

Culturally grounded, inclusive, and community-led policies work — and should be prioritized.

Health Insurance Gap Prior to the introduction of the Pharmacare Act, Canada was the only developed nation with a publicly funded healthcare system that did not include universal coverage for prescription drugs. ● In 2021, about 1/5 adults did not have the insurance they needed to cover their medication costs.[ccxcix] ● 29% of immigrants report not having prescription insurance to cover medication costs compared to non-immigrants (17%).[ccc] ● Prescription medication use was lower among people who did not have prescription medication insurance (56%) compared to those who did (70%).[ccci] Dental care The cost of oral health services as the major barrier to seeking care in Canada, particularly among those most in need of care but least able to access it. About one in four individuals avoids going to an oral health professional because of the cost. Cost-related avoidance of oral health services is associated with a higher risk of oral health diseases and disparities in health outcomes that extend beyond oral health.[ccii]	**The Pharmacare Act** The Pharmacare Act acts as the first concrete measures to implement universal, single-payer, public pharmacare in Canada. The new legislation commits federal funding to enable universal coverage for diabetes medications, devices, and supplies, as well as for contraceptive medications and devices. Provide first-dollar coverage with no deductible or out-of-pocket costs to patients. [ccciii] Challenges: The federal government must negotiate with the provinces and territories to reach agreements on how payments for diabetes treatment and contraception will work. Although British Columbia has already signed on, Alberta and Quebec have indicated that they will not December 2023,the federal government introduced the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) to help make oral health care more affordable for eligible residents with an annual adjusted family net income of less than $90,000. Challenges: The CDCP only pays for services covered within the plan at the established CDCP fees. Many oral health care services are provided at rates higher than the established CDCP fees, leaving the patient responsible for paying the difference and any copays depending on family net income. [ccciv]	**Eliminating the Health Insurance Gap** Expand range of drugs and medication to cover other necessary medications ● Increase support from provinces Match CDCP fees to provincial fee guides e.g., Ontario Dental Association (ODA) suggested fee guide, to more accurately cover costs of dental care.
Profitization of health care Poverty: When doctors and nurses move from public hospitals to higher-paying private clinics, the public system loses capacity, worsening wait times for people who cannot afford to pay. This creates a two-tier system where the wealthy access faster care, while low-income patients face longer waits and poorer outcomes. Australia's experience shows that a mixed public-private model leads to inequality: public patients wait more than twice as long for surgeries, and poorer patients have higher death rates, especially from chronic illnesses like cancer.[cccv] Food insecurity severely harms health, increasing the risk of chronic and infectious diseases, poor oral and physical health, and premature death. It also worsens existing conditions as individuals forgo medications and healthy diets due to cost, leading to higher hospitalization rates, more emergency visits, and shorter life expectancy, nine years less for severely food-insecure adults. [cccvi]	Clawbacks/ Canada Health Transfer (CHT) deductions in 2023 amounted to $82 million in response to provinces allowing extra-billing or user fees in private clinics during 2020-21 for medically necessary services that should be accessible to patients at no cost.[cccvii] Since 2021, Ontario's government has shifted millions in public funds to private, for-profit clinics and hospitals, licensing them to perform surgeries, MRIs, CT scans. Funding for private clinics doubled between 2022–2024, while public hospitals faced budget shortfalls, staff shortages, and real-dollar cuts. ● Knee replacement surgery in a public hospital, paid by the province, costs about $10,000. The same surgery in a private clinic can reportedly cost up to $28,000. [cccviii] ● Systems with higher rates of private financing are negatively associated with universality, equity, accessibility and quality of care[cccix] ● Ontario Health Coalition registered 50 complaints with the Ontario and federal governments who were extra-billed for medically necessary hospital and physician services that are covered under the Canada Health Act in private clinics.[cccx] ● As of 2020, financialized companies owned about one-third of Canada's seniors' housing 42% of retirement units and 22% of long-term care beds and also influenced other facilities through management and consulting services. ● For-profit, financialized or private equity owned long-term care homes show poorer care quality, with fewer staff, less direct care, and higher mortality and hospitalization rates compared to public and non-profit homes.[cccxi]	The federal government should explore the possibility of legislating criteria to which provinces must adhere in order to qualify for federal cash transfers for long-term care. [cccxii] Governments and policymakers should use regulatory instruments to curb the creep of Private Equity activity in the Canadian health care system. To improve access to care, focus should be placed on strengthening the fundamentals of Medicare and invest in team-based primary care, pharmacare and dental care. [cccxiii]

Issue: Education & Childcare

- The child care system is developed by policies that are neoliberal and market driven resulting in underfunding of the federal government, a lack of national policy, privatization, inadequate wages, and unsuccessful assistance for vulnerable families (p.2). [107]
- The child care system is interchanged from government to government from one election to the following (p.6).[cccxiv]
- Parents are forced to be absent from their employment to provide care for their children due to high costs and lengthy waiting lists (p.2). [cccxv]
- Highest vulnerability in language and cognitive development found in Black-populated areas (Etobicoke North, Scarborough) (pp. 29–30) Source: 2017–18 Early Development Instrument (EDI), via Raising the Village (City of Toronto) [cccxvi]
- Areas with highest Black child populations (age 0–3) had the lowest access to licensed child care — as low as 8% in Pelmo Park-Humberlea (p. 33) Source: Toronto Children's Services, 2022. [108]
- A Statistics Canada report disclosed that families in 2023 paid approximately $7,557 yearly for child care for children five years old or less (paragraph 4). An average of $630 monthly or $30 daily (paragraph 5). [cccxvii]

- Quebec's progress provides funds to child care services as opposed to subsidizing families (p.6). [107]
- Ontario's development of full day kindergarten programs within public schools provided by a teacher and early childhood educator allow for quality access to education (p.6). [107]
- In Jan 2025 licensed child care was capped at $22 for children under six years old (paragraph 2). [cccxviii]

Early Childhood Development:

1. Build child care centres in underserved areas.
2. Ensure sub-10-minute walk access to care
3. Increase child care subsidies.
4. Hire and retain Black early childhood educators.
5. Collect race-based early childhood data.
6. Implement EDI-based quality checks.
7. Identify and treat Black children's mental health and behavioural needs early.[cccxix]

- Continue to merge school programs and child care as these programs allow mothers to work, create full-time employment for education, and decrease transitions for children (p.14).[cccxx]
- "Afforfable Child Care for All Plan" recommends: a stronger leadership role from the government, meet international standards of funding, continue to work alongside Indigenous communities to further develop the Indigenous Framework within education, implement a federal infrastructure that includes legislation, secretariat, and funds to child care (p.15). [cccxxi]
- Child care fees capped at $10 a day for each family and a sliding fee scale for low income families (p.31).[cccxxii]
- A workforce program that establishes adequate pay for educators and addresses the shortage allowing families access to secure child care (p.31). [cccxxiii]
- Increase access by developing quality public and non-profit child care (p.31).[cccxxiv]

Disability Justice in Childcare & Education ● Child care allows opportunities for early recognition and intervention along with referral to appropriate services (p. 401). [cccxxv] ● According to "Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011" roughly 3.7% of Canadian children younger than 15 years have a disability (p.401). [cccxxvi] ● Inclusion is generally billed as a goal for child care services however, inclusion is not mandated (p.401).[cccxxvii] ● Centres might exclude children particularly if staff are not adequately trained or if there are insufficient human, professional, and financial resources for programming (p.401). [cccxxviii]	● In 2020 the federal government re-engaged with issues of child care and committed to outline a national care plan (p.400).[cccxxix] ● The announcement was prompted by the covid-19 as the pandemic emphasized how necessary child care is in order for parents to work and economies to grow (p.400). [cccxxx]	● Advance the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program (CWELC) ○ Standardize a $0-$10/day child care model. ○ Invest in new Early Learning and Child Care Workforce funds over five years, transferable to provinces and territories if/once they have developed. Funds must be restricted to spending for a Child Care Wage Grid and Child Care Pension and Benefits Plan ($10B). ○ Boost the existing Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund to fund the creation of early learning and child care and school-age child care programs in publicly owned facilities ($15B over 5 years). ● Fund disability services and universal access to child care programs. Funding should be allocated to allow sufficient staffing, training, and programming (p.407). [cccxxxi] ● Eliminate the exclusion of children due to their disability, lack of staffing, adjustments to how services are delivered, and lack of available assistance (p.407). [cccxxxii] ● Acknowledge that child care is a component of a variety of services that include family support, social services, and health care (p. 408). [111]
Youth ● A group of youth from diverse backgrounds such as Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, economically disadvantaged, new Canadian, Francophone, racialized and gender diverse youth (p.7). [cccxxxiii] From remote, rural, and urban communities from Canada's 10 provinces and 1 territory (p.7).[cccxxxiv] ● Raise awareness about discrimination based on disability, age, race, gender identity, and etc (p.7). [cccxxxv] ● Began a discussion regarding gender equality about routes that can be followed to achieve Goal 5 of Sustainable Development focused on gender equality in Canada (p.7).[cccxxxvi] ● Analyze Goal 4 of SDG regarding gender equality in education (p.8). [cccxxxvii]	● Research shows that half of all women in Canada have experienced one incident of sexual or physical violence by the age of 16 (p.8). [cccxxxviii] ● As of 2015 only seven of the ten provinces have elected at least one 2SLGBTQIA+ representative (p.8). [cccxxxix]	● The project requests individuals, communities, institutions, and government officials to implement these recommendations as a roadmap to achieve goal 5 by 2030 (p.28).[cccxl] ● The recommendations within the Roadmap reflect what young individuals identify as important (p.4). [cccxli] ● Train and educate those in authority positions, terminate gender discrimination in sport, prioritize Indigenous health and support for survivors, ensure survivors are not disregarded, update curriculums to be gender equal, include diverse narratives, implement inclusive sex-ed and support reproductive and sexual rights, verify that schools have resources to address gender-based violence, foster safe places for youth leadership particularly Indigenous youth, support and equality for young parents, ensure workplaces are exempt from harassment and discrimination, terminate the wage gap and grant equal pay, No unpaid work (p.16-27). [cccxlii]

Appendix B: Brief from Canada's Observer to the WSSD 1995 on Public Banking

This appendix has been prepared and provided by Josephine Grey, Canada's Observer to the WSSD 1995.

This appendix makes a practical, rights--based case for a Canadian public banking option that mobilizes affordable finance for nonmarket housing, community food systems, health and service delivery modernization, and climate adaptation—while private banks continue to finance the private economy. The goal is a balanced, agile, and resilient financial system that strengthens Canada's sovereignty and self-sufficiency and helps Canadians live with dignity in an era of climate and geopolitical shocks.

Human rights foundation (ICESCR Articles 1 and 2)

Article 1 affirms peoples' right to self-determination, including the freedom to pursue economic development and to benefit from their wealth and resources. A public purpose banking option operationalizes this freedom by retaining a share of financial intermediation in public hands and directing it towards essential social goods.[1]

Article 2 obliges states to take steps—using the maximum of available resources—to progressively realize economic, social, and cultural rights without discrimination. Public banking increases available resources by lowering financing costs and recirculating earnings into public purposes, and enables targeted lending that closes gaps for Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, women and gender-diverse people, people with disabilities, newcomers, and children.[1]

Alignment with the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) principles for Social Development (WSSD) principles

People-centred development, the eradication of poverty, full and productive employment, and social integration are core WSSD goals. A public banking option advances all four by anchoring affordability, creating good jobs through public projects, and stabilizing local economies—converting values into everyday security.

Constitutional and institutional footing (what enables action)

- Federal authority: Parliament's jurisdiction over banking and the issue of paper money provides a clear legal basis to establish or expand federal public-purpose finance institutions and payments infrastructure.[2]
- Provincial and municipal authority: Provinces can create Crown financial institutions and municipal finance authorities under property and civil rights powers; pooled borrowing lowers costs for municipalities and public providers. Indigenous governments can be full partners through codeveloped finance pathways and federal guarantees aligned with UNDRIPA.[3][4]
- Historical practice: From the 1930s through postwar reconstruction, public credit mobilized largescale, low-cost finance. Provincial pooled borrowing agencies and Crown financial institutions (e.g., ATB) show durable models that pair affordability with accountability.[5][6][7]
- Litigation note: Courts have not imposed a duty to provide interest-free credit. The pathway for reform is legislative design within existing constitutional powers, coupled with strong prudential and accountability standards.[8]

What public banking is—and is not

- It is a public purpose lender and payments hub focused on missions where markets underprovide or where affordability is essential: nonmarket housing, community food and health infrastructure, climate resilient utilities, and benefits delivery systems.
- It is not a replacement for private banking. Private institutions continue to finance corporate growth, entrepreneurship, mortgages, and innovation. Public and private roles are complementary.
- It is not a device to hide deficits or "self finance" ongoing operating costs. Wages and income supports are real resource outlays that should be funded by revenues. Public banking lowers the total cost of delivering the investments that make rights real.

Benefits Canadians can feel

- Lower and steadier cost of capital: Long tenor loans at public rates reduce rents and service charges for nonmarket housing, clinics, and community food infrastructure.
- Sovereign capacity and self-sufficiency: Interest margins and fee income remain in Canada and are recycled into public priorities; funding stays available through cycles.
- Stability and growth: Affordable essential services support household resilience, labour participation, and small business stability during climate and geopolitical shocks.
- Equity by design: Lending criteria and covenants can prioritize Indigenous communities, northern/remote regions, women and youth led coops, and projects that close documented gaps.
- Wealth recirculation: Public earnings flow to a dedicated social investment fund, building assets that lower living costs for future generations.

How a public option accelerates SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 5

- SDG 1 (No Poverty): Cheaper, longer term financing for nonmarket housing reduces subsidy requirements, helps meet income adequacy targets faster, and frees fiscal room to lift benefits with automatic access and delivery.
- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Financing for community owned food hubs, cold chain, and school food facilities lowers logistics costs, stabilizes supply in northern and remote regions, and expands procurement from local producers.
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): Dedicated lending streams for survivor focused housing, childcare facilities, and women and 2SLGBTQQIA+led enterprises improve safety, economic security, and leadership representation.

Design principles and safeguards

- Purpose-built mandate: A Social Investment window that prioritizes nonmarket housing, community food systems, climate resilient infrastructure, and service delivery modernization.
- Public value first: Transparent rate setting, capped fees, and open data on project selection, costs, beneficiaries, and outcomes.
- Rights based screens: UNDRIPA compliance and Indigenous partnership where rights are engaged; gender and antiracism impact tests; community consent for projects affecting rights and lands.
- Asset protection: Secure loans against predictable public cashflows (ground rents, utility revenues) rather than titles to essential assets; prohibit foreclosure on critical public goods.

- Prudence and accountability: Independent board with a public interest mandate; Auditor General audits; conservative loan-to-value ratios; periodic legislative reviews; nonregression clauses on affordability.

Implementation roadmap (federal, provincial/territorial, municipal, Indigenous)

- Federal Social Investment Facility (within or alongside the Canada Infrastructure Bank): Offer 30–50year loans and credit enhancements for nonmarket housing, community food systems, electrified cold chain, retrofits, and benefits delivery modernization; publish a transparent, multiyear pipeline and social outcome scorecards.[9]
- Federal–Municipal Finance Window: Pooled debentures with federal credit enhancement for eligible social and climate assets; affordability covenants and community benefit agreements attached to financing.
- Provincial public lenders and municipal finance authorities: Establish or expand Crown lenders and pooled borrowing agencies to deliver low-cost credit to coops, nonprofits, municipalities, and Indigenous governments.[6][7]
- Indigenous led finance facilities: Codevelop long-term, needs based financing with federal guarantees to close water, housing, broadband, and food sovereignty gaps under UNDRIPA.
- Public land as equity: Contribute ground leases and air rights as public equity to reduce loan sizes while preserving ownership and affordability covenants. Contribute ground leases and air rights as public equity to reduce loan sizes while preserving ownership and affordability covenants.
- Treasury and payments modernization: Treasury single account across departments and agencies; a public payments hub to reduce fees on payroll, benefits, and tax collection; savings recycled into social investment.

Relationship to private banking

Private banks continue to create and manage wealth for corporations and entrepreneurs and to finance household and business expansion. A public option ensures essential social investments are financed affordably and transparently, while the private sector competes and collaborates where it is strongest. This mix creates a more balanced, sustainable, and responsive economic system.

What success looks like (practical metrics)

- Cost of capital: Average rate on eligible public bank loans at least 100–200 basis points below comparable private financing; average tenor 30–50 years.
- Housing delivery: Nonmarket homes financed per year and net units protected via acquisition; average rent levels versus local market benchmarks.
- Food logistics: Ontime delivery reliability and price stability in northern/remote communities; share of institutional procurement from local/regional producers.
- Fiscal recirculation: Net earnings transferred to a Social Investment Fund; annual report on wealth recirculation to communities and on reductions in project financing costs.
- Equity outcomes: Disaggregated access to financing and benefits (Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, women, disability communities, newcomers); measurable gap-closing against baseline.
- Delivery improvements: Automatic access and delivery rates for key benefits; payment timeliness; reduction in emergency spending (encampments, ER visits) attributable to housing and service investments.

A short vignette (how it works on the ground)

A city contributes a serviced public site through a 99year ground lease to a nonprofit developer. The Social Investment Facility provides a 45year loan at a public rate; a provincial acquisition fund buys the neighbouring rental building into community ownership. Construction wages follow fair work standards and apprenticeships. The combined portfolio sets deeply affordable rents for survivors and lone parent families. Savings from the lower cost of capital, plus predictable ground rent cashflows, cover debt service. The public land stays public; the homes stay affordable.

Conclusion: Sovereignty through rights-based finance

Public banking equips Canada to fulfil Articles 1 and 2 of the ICESCR and to sustain progress on the SDGs.[1] It strengthens economic sovereignty and self-sufficiency, reduces avoidable financial leakage, and converts financial intermediation into tangible public goods—homes people can afford, nutritious food systems close to home, safer communities, and modern public services that are easy to access. In partnership with provinces, municipalities, Indigenous governments, civil society, labour, and ethical private finance, Canada can build the financial backbone needed to uphold rights, foster reconciliation, and secure a thriving future for the generations who will inherit this land.

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Appendix C: Brief from Canada's Observer to the WSSD 1995 on Responsible AI for Public Delivery

This appendix has been prepared and provided by Josephine Grey, Canada's Observer to the WSSD 1995.

Capacity, Care, and Due Process Purpose Set out practical ways to use AI to improve government capacity to deliver the chapter's solutions (basic income pathway, nonmarket housing, community food systems, Indigenous led services) while upholding rights, valuing civil service expertise, and guaranteeing the right to explanation and appeal.

Guiding principles (rights first)

- Human in charge: AI assists; humans decide. Every consequential eligibility or compliance decision must be reviewable by a trained officer with the authority to reverse it.
- Explainability and contestability: People have the right to a clear explanation, to human help, and to an easy, timely appeal/complaint process.
- Equity by design: Bias testing, disaggregated impact monitoring, and redteam reviews are mandatory prior to and after deployment, with public reporting by group (Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, gender, disability, newcomers, region).
- Indigenous data sovereignty: Data governance for programs affecting Indigenous Peoples must be codeveloped, with OCAP-aligned controls and community consent.
- Privacy and proportionality: Collect only what is necessary; use privacy-preserving techniques (data minimization, differential privacy where appropriate); no secondary uses without consent and legal basis.
- Labour positive transformation: AI should reduce drudgery, not dignity—paired with training, career pathways, and workload standards developed with unions.

Where AI helps immediately (use cases)

1. Automatic access and delivery rails (SDG 1/2/5)
   - Eligibility prefill and proactive outreach using consented tax/benefit data; multilingual chat assistants; document intake automation with fraud controls; real-time payment status and issue triage.
2. Nonmarket housing & infrastructure programs
   - Pipeline and permitting copilots; cost/energy modeling; risk flags for rent-gouging and renovictions; portfolio monitoring for arrears and building health.
3. Community food systems
   - Demand forecasting for school food and hub logistics; route planning; cold chain monitoring; market concentration and price-spike anomaly detection.
4. Benefits integrity with due process
   - Anomaly detection to flag cases for human review (never auto-sanctions); clear notice, evidence standards, and assisted appeals.
5. Service navigation and language access
   - 24/7, plain language assistants across Canada's languages—including Indigenous languages where communities agree—triaging to human agents on request.

Rules of the road (governance & safeguards)

- Algorithmic Accountability Standard
    - Model cards and data sheets for every system; publish purpose, data sources, validation, and limitations.
    - Impact Assessments (AIA) for all high impact uses; public summaries released prior to launch. – Independent audit rights for privacy commissioners, auditors general, and approved civil society experts.
- Due Process & Appeals Code
    - Standardized notices with reasons; 48hour expedited review for benefit suspensions; 30day appeal windows with assistance; compensation where errors cause loss.
- Human Capital Compact
    - Codesign with unions: training budgets, time to learn, new classifications (AI product owner, model steward, ethics lead), and redeployment guarantees to avoid layoffs.
- Procurement & Open Models
    - Safe cloud regions in Canada; preference for open weight or open standards models where feasible; no vendor lock-in; security reviews and red-teaming.
- Data Governance
    - Federated data access (bring compute to data), role-based controls, encryption in transit/at rest; log every access; delete or archive per retention schedules.
- Indigenous Rights Implementation
    - Consent-based data sharing, Indigenous led hosting where desired, and joint oversight bodies for systems affecting rights and services.

Delivery plan (12–24 months)

- Phase 1 (0–6 months): Stand up an AI Delivery Office (AIDO) with ethics, engineering, service design, and legal; publish standards above; select three quick win pilots (benefit access, housing pipeline, school food logistics).
- Phase 2 (6–12 months): Codesign with departments and communities; roll out pilots with A/B tests; publish model cards, AIAs, and early impact reports; negotiate labour compacts.
- Phase 3 (12–24 months): Scale what works; embed due process and audit workflows; expand language access and accessibility; build internal talent pipelines and community oversight boards.

KPIs (publish quarterly)

- Access: Percentage of eligible people receiving benefits through automatic access and delivery; average time-to-payment; language coverage.
- Quality: Appeal rate and overturn rate; resolution time; user satisfaction, including for people with disabilities and limited digital access.
- Equity: Disaggregated error rates; gap-closing in take-up for priority groups.
- Integrity: Confirmed fraud rate vs. flags; audit findings resolved.
- Workforce: Training hours per employee; share of civil servants in AI-augmented roles; burnout indicators.

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