



Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy

Building a Better Thunder Bay for All Annual Report 2022–2023

by: Bonnie Kryswaty, MPH

Supported by:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front Cover.....	1
Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
Poverty Reduction Initiatives	4
Living Wage Campaign	4
Tiny Homes Thunder Bay	5
Guaranteed Basic Income	7
Coordinated Housing Access	8
Reaching Home - Canada's Homelessness Prevention Program	9
Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP)	10
Local Poverty Data - 2022	11
Average Earnings of CVITP users	12
Measuring Poverty - Market Basket Measure	13
Hourly Wages For Indigenous and non-Indigenous People	14
Poverty Statistics	15
Consumer Price Index	16
Housing in Thunder Bay	17
Conclusion	18
Thank you	19

Prepared by:

Bonnie Kryswaty, MPH, Coordinator, Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy

INTRODUCTION

This yearly report highlights the recently updated Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy Indicators from the Lakehead Social Planning Council's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program as outlined in the Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy for the period 2022-2027. These indicators are in accordance with provincial and national metrics, emphasizing income and financial empowerment.

In addition to presenting the current local poverty statistics, this report will showcase the ongoing initiatives pursued by the Poverty Reduction Strategy committee and outline future objectives.

The initiatives tackled by the Committee can only be successful with Collective Impact which refers to a collaborative and coordinated approach involving various organizations, agencies, and community stakeholders working together to address complex social issues. It emphasizes the need for a unified effort, shared vision, and coordinated action to bring about meaningful and sustainable change.

The concept of collective impact outlines five key conditions for successful collaboration:

1. **Common Agenda:** All participants share a common understanding of the problem and a collective vision for change.
2. **Shared Measurement Systems:** Collaborators agree on a set of indicators and metrics to measure progress toward the common goals.
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Organizations coordinate their efforts and activities to maximize impact and avoid duplication.
4. **Continuous Communication:** Open and regular communication fosters trust among collaborators, ensuring that everyone is informed and aligned with the shared goals.
5. **Backbone Support:** A dedicated entity (often referred to as a backbone organization) provides leadership, coordination, and support to the collaborative effort.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiatives

Thunder Bay Living Wage Campaign

The Thunder Bay Living Wage is a local advocacy campaign with the goal of all employees earning enough income for a satisfactory standard of living and prevent them from falling into poverty. Minimum wage is NOT the living wage. Minimum wage is a governmental standard mandated by law that requires business to pay employees above a certain amount or threshold. A Living Wage allows individuals to thrive and to be financially comfortable, allowing them to meet all of the social determinants of health. More information is available on the LSPC website [here](#).



Benefits to Employer

Paying a living wage can lead to improved productivity, increased employee loyalty, and decreased costs associated with absent staff, training, and recruitment. Paying a living wage is one way employers can show the community that they value their employees.



Benefits to Employee

Earning a living wage provides income to cover modest living expenses and can reduce financial stress. This can lead to: improved health, improved morale at work, increased support for healthy child growth and development, reduced barriers to social inclusion, and an overall improvement in the quality of life for the worker and their family

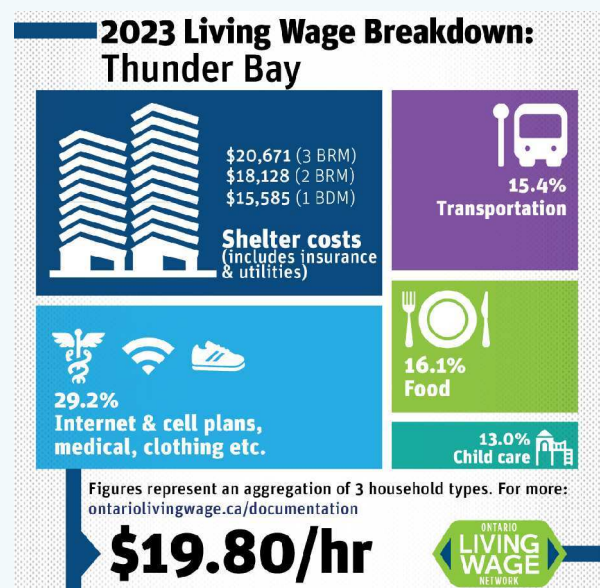


Benefits to Community

A living wage can support local residents in being healthier, happier, and more engaged members of society. A living wage can lead to increased consumer buying power, which helps the local economy grow.

How is the living wage calculated?

The living wage calculation consists of a weighted average including the original reference family of four, a single parent, and a two-person family. The 2023/2024 Thunder Bay living wage has been calculated at \$19.80 per hour.



Tiny Homes Thunder Bay

The Tiny Homes Youth Build initiative is an excellent example of being pro-active to reduce poverty. In 2017 the LSPC's Poverty Reduction Strategy began investigating tiny homes, and seven year later, the LSPC is managing a grant from CMHC to pay a living wage to Indigenous youth in the KZ Lodge Program at Hammar skjold high school to learn trades and build tiny homes. After networking with numerous partners, the Poverty Reduction Strategy created the Thunder Bay Tiny Homes Committee, and with the years of collective work multiple organizations, a second tiny home is being built. It is a very exciting poverty reduction initiative. In fact, since the LSPC began receiving funding for the program it is the first time with no reported absences and a 100% graduation rate. These youth also have earned valuable apprenticeship hours in trades.



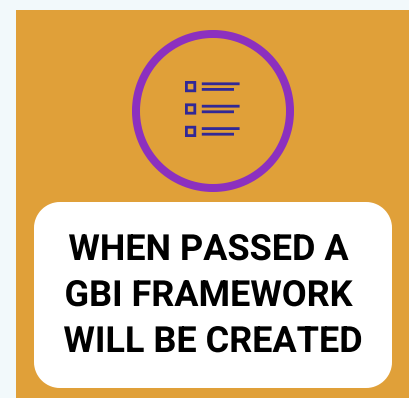
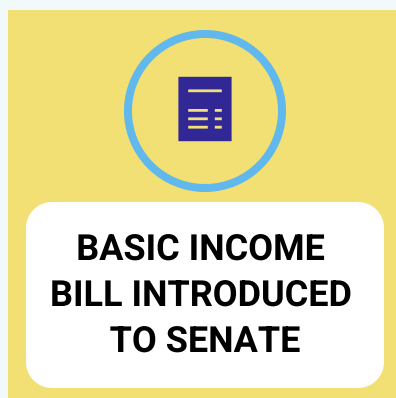
There are currently multiple organizations in the city applying for funding to build tiny homes as an option for those transitioning out of homelessness and for those at risk of homelessness and earning low incomes. Confronting homelessness poses an urgent and complex challenge that demands an unwavering, devoted, and united team for viable solutions. In Thunder Bay, while we've gleaned valuable insights from successful collaborations, there remains a pressing need to avert a worsening crisis. The reduction in the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness, achieved through these efforts, is a fragile success in the face of an escalating problem. Achieving absolute effectiveness regarding homelessness now hinges on immediate and imperative collaboration among municipal, provincial, and federal governments to prevent an impending catastrophe. This is paramount to ensuring that housing goals are met and the safety of community members is assured, granting them swift and unrestricted access to secure housing. Flexibility in policy changes, bylaws, and mandates are needed to address this dire situation.



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Guaranteed Basic Income

1. **December 16, 2021 Senator Kim Pate and Member of Parliament Leah Gazan introduced Bills S-233 and C-223, which if passed, would establish the first national framework for an unconditional Guaranteed Livable Basic Income for all persons over 17 across Canada.** Both bills include the same title and text and mark the first ever, coordinated effort from within the House of Commons and the Senate for Basic Income.
2. **Of the two bills Basic Income bills before Parliament, the Senate Bill S-233, is further along.** The Bill is currently being reviewed by the Standing Committee on National Finance where members will hear from expert witnesses, make revisions, and ultimately produce a report for their colleagues. Once this is complete, all Senators will have the opportunity to vote to send the Bill to the House, where, if passed, it will become law.
3. **If passed, this law would require the Minister of Finance, within one year, to create a Canada-wide framework for the implementation of a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income.** Simply put, this means that the federal government would need to put together the standards and plan from which it, along with the other levels of government, could create unconditional Basic Incomes in their jurisdictions.
4. **These bills merely require the government to produce a report on a potential framework for Basic Income.** The central feature of any Guaranteed Basic Income program is that it is unconditional on anything other than age, income and residency.



A basic income is a payment to eligible couples or individuals that ensures a minimum income level, regardless of employment status. Different than social assistance, a basic income can be given to anyone who meets the income eligibility criterion, given to someone who may be working but earning below the basic income level, and generally simpler to administer

Coordinated Housing Access in Thunder Bay

A Coordinated Housing Access System is the process through which individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness, are provided access to housing and support services, based on a standardized set of procedures for intake, assessment of need, matching and referral to housing.

For our community, coordinated access is a key element in moving towards an integrated systems approach with a common decision-making process and common goals, rather than a collection of service providers making individual decisions. It helps to highlight areas where there are gaps in services, reduces service duplication, and overall allows for seamless service delivery for individuals.

Funding for Coordinated Housing Access is provided by Reaching Home - Infrastructure Canada's Homelessness funding, and is delivered and managed by LSPC and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, with Lakehead University and Alpha Court Mental Health and Addictions as lead partners.

Goals of Coordinated Housing Access

- Ensure fairness and prioritize people most in need of assistance
- Guide people through the system more efficiently
- Reduce the number of new entries into homelessness
- Improve data collection and quality

Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT)

In Thunder Bay we have developed the Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT). CHAT is a group of service providers who offer housing and/or housing support services and resources to individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness. Any individual or family who is experiencing homelessness and not actively working with an organization to obtain housing is eligible for CHAT. For a referral to CHAT, individuals can contact an entry point of their choice, including 211. They will receive the same intake process regardless of which organization they choose.

Main Objectives of CHAT

1. Provide quicker access to housing options and supports
2. Ensure the same intake is carried out regardless of which entry point clients prefer
3. Uses client intake information to match services who can best support the client's identified needs.

Reaching Home – Canada's Homelessness Prevention Program

For nearly 15 years, the LSPC has been at the forefront of overseeing Reaching Home funding, a vital initiative within Canada's Homelessness Strategy. This community-driven program is dedicated to preventing and minimizing homelessness nationwide, offering financial support to urban, Indigenous, rural, and remote communities as they address their unique homelessness challenges.

Since assuming the role of Community Entity for this funding in 2011 with an initial budget of \$75,000, the LSPC has grown its management responsibilities to now handle over \$1.3 million annually. This crucial funding ensures the continuity of essential programs such as the Out of the Cold overnight emergency shelter, the Care Bus, and the warming and cooling centers, each playing a pivotal role in our community's well-being. Additionally, the funding empowers organizations like Elevate NWO to provide support and housing for individuals in encampments, and enables the John Howard Society Of Thunder Bay and Elizabeth Fry Society NWO to connect those experiencing homelessness with vital services and support.

In parallel, the LSPC allocates funds to The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a cutting-edge data collection and case management system. Managed cooperatively with Lakehead University and the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, HIFIS facilitates real-time data access for multiple service providers in Thunder Bay, promoting enhanced service coordination. HIFIS is more than just a local tool; it is important in supporting daily operations, data collection, and contributes to the development of a national portrait on homelessness. This cooperative effort provides valuable insights utilized by municipal, provincial, and federal governments, shaping not only local initiatives but also influencing the creation of new and improved policies and programs nationwide. The LSPC's commitment to managing these crucial funds underscores its dedication to building a stronger, more supportive community for all.

Funding Amounts for 2023/2024



\$100,000

Care Bus



\$450,000

Housing
Navigators

CHAT

\$76,000

HIFIS and
CHAT



\$189,000

Out of the
Cold
Program



\$550,000

Transitional
Housing
Units

LSPC's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP)

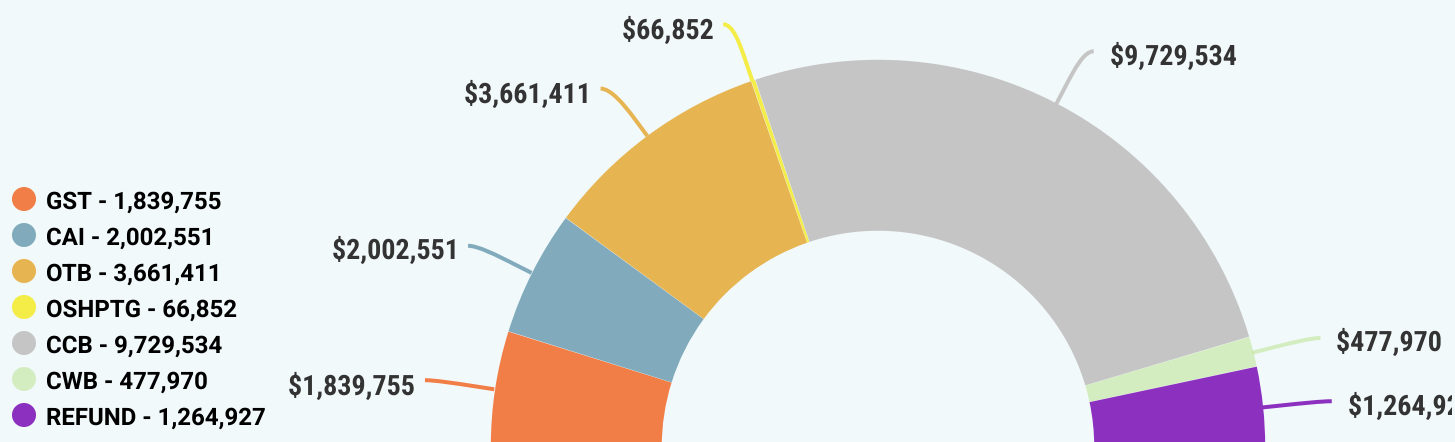
Every year, the dedicated volunteers of the LSPC's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) diligently complete thousands of tax returns for individuals and families with low incomes in Thunder Bay. This invaluable service opens the door for low-income earners to access various benefits and income tax returns, including:

- GST (Government Sales Tax)
- CAI (Climate Action Incentive)
- OTB (Ontario Trillium Benefit)
- OSHPTG (Ontario Senior's Homeowner Property Tax Grant)
- CCB (Canada Child Benefit, including Ontario Child Benefit)
- CWB (Canada Worker Benefit)

These benefits translate into funds that are reinvested into the local community each year. In 2021 alone, individuals and families received over \$18 million in benefits and refunds, and this number increased to over \$19 million for the 2022 tax year. The continuous efforts of the LSPC's CVITP ensure that an increasing amount of benefits are delivered annually, making a positive impact on the financial well-being of our community members.

The following chart shows the amount of benefits that individuals and families received after having their income taxes completed at the LSPC's CVITP.

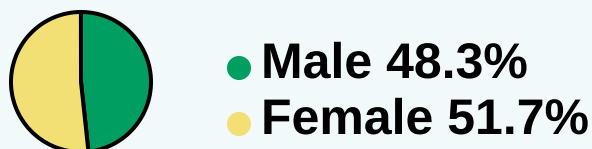
Benefits and Refund Amounts Individuals in Thunder Bay Received from Filing at LSPC 2022 \$18,389,312



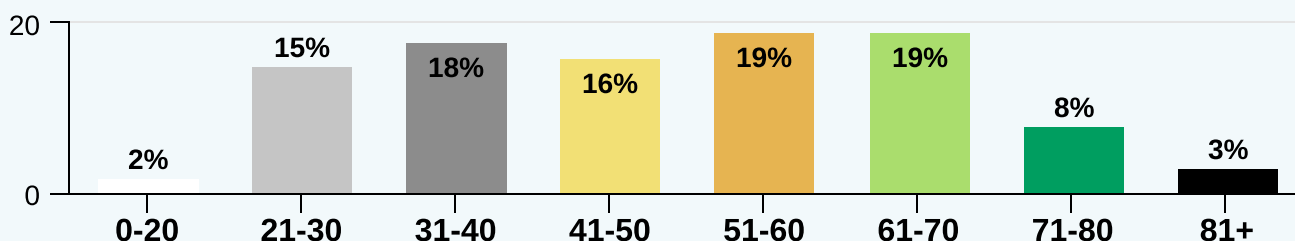
For more information about the CVITP please contact the LSPC at 807-627-1920

Local Poverty Data Collected by the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program 2022

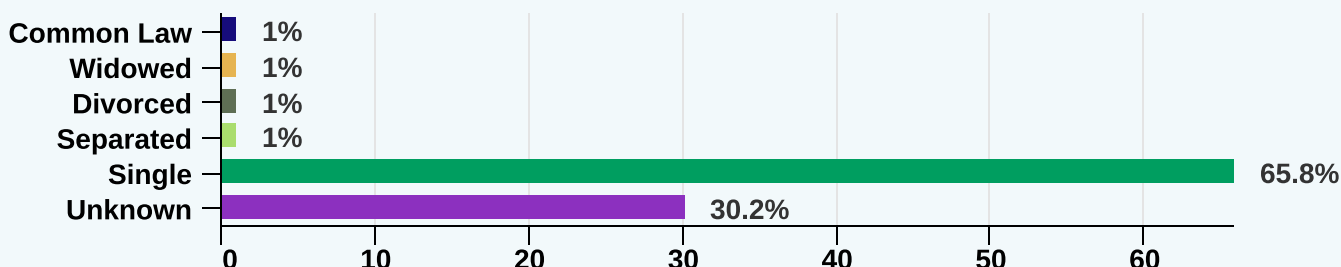
Gender of People Living in Poverty in Thunder Bay



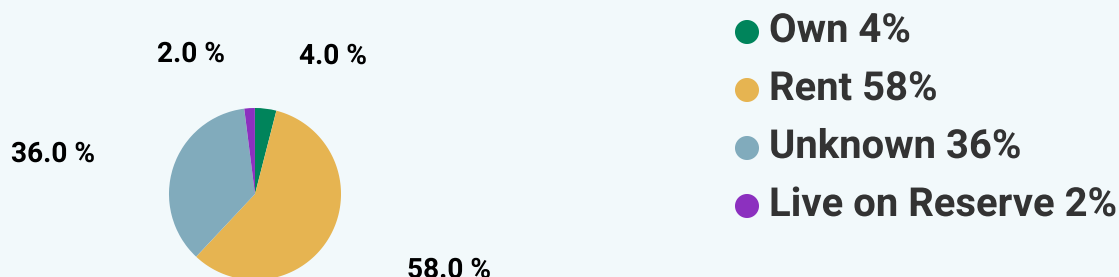
Age Groups of People Living in Poverty in Thunder Bay



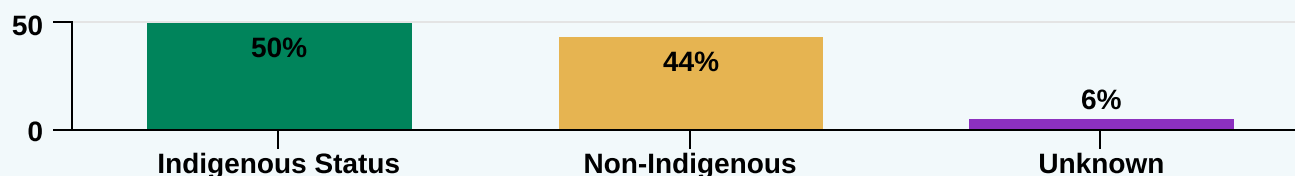
Marital Status of People Living in Poverty in Thunder Bay



Housing Status of LSPC's CVITP Tax Filers



Percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Low-Income Earners in Thunder Bay



Average Annual Earnings from CVITP Tax Filers in 2022



\$4,111.00

average annual income from employment earnings



\$4,748.35

average annual income from employment insurance (EI)



\$7,561.76

average annual income from Old Age Security (OAS)



\$9,712.00

average annual income from Ontario Works (OW)



\$10,530.43

average annual income from Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)



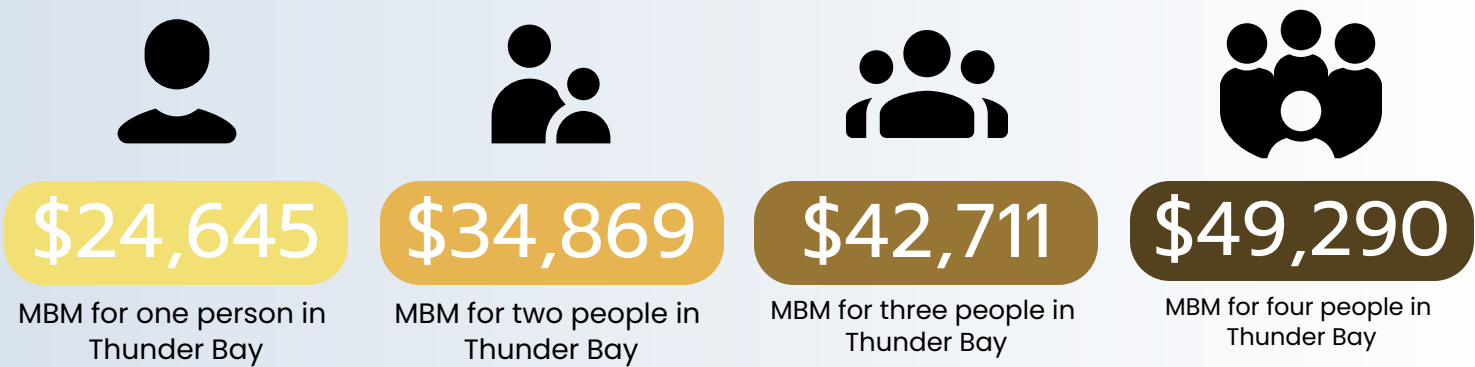
\$11,261.11

average annual income from Workers Security Income Benefits (WSIB)

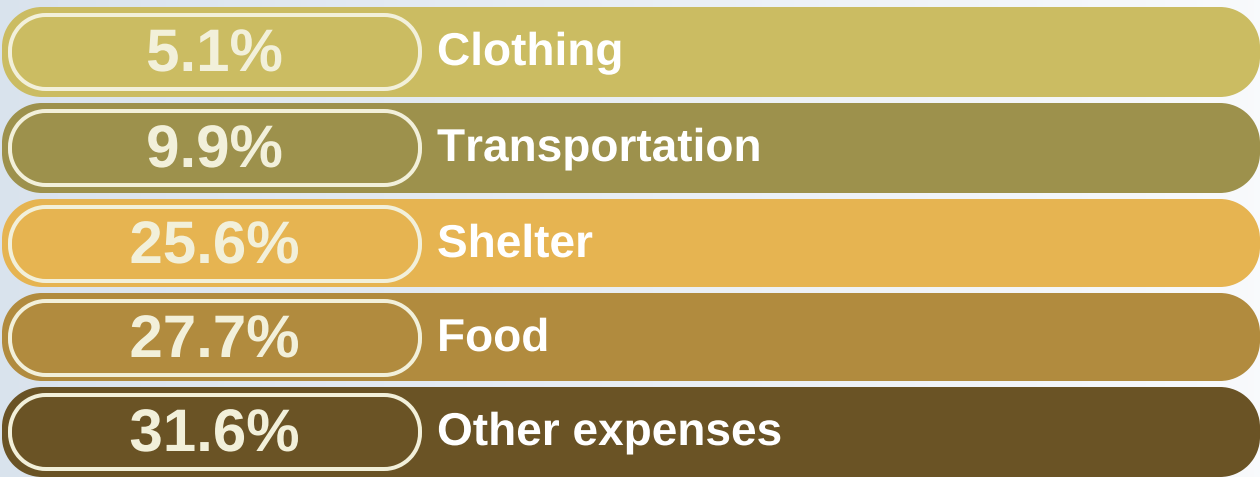
Measuring Poverty – Market Basket Measure (MBM)

As the MBM name would suggest, it is basket of goods and services meant to represent a modest, basic standard of living in Canada. The basket has five main components: clothing, transportation, shelter, food, and other necessities.

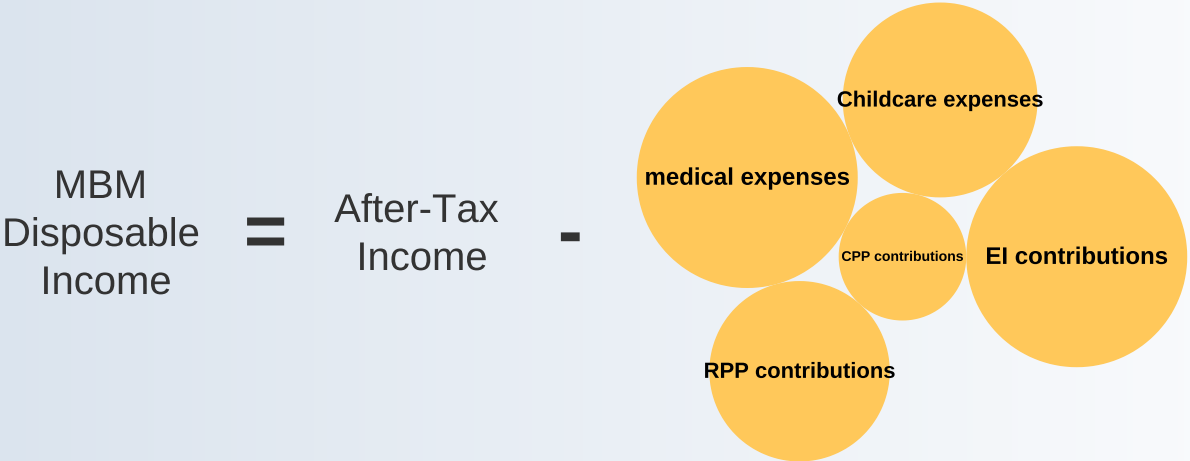
MBM for one, two, three and four person families in Thunder Bay – 2023



Component contributions to total MBM Threshold



For a family to be in poverty, its disposable income must be less than the threshold amount for its family size

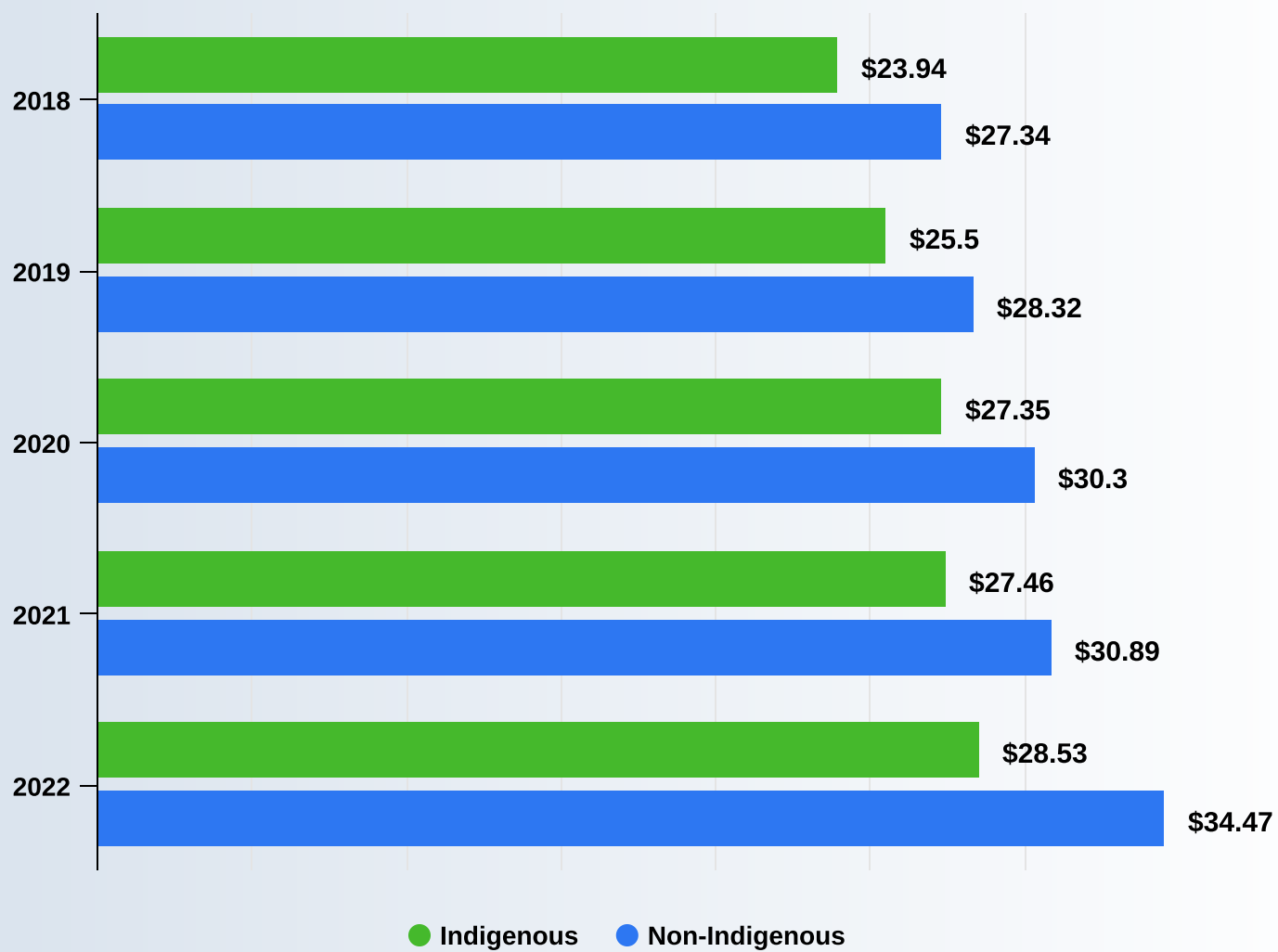


Average hourly wages for Indigenous people compared to non-Indigenous people

"When applying a consistent base group of comparison (that is, Canadian-born men) comparisons of the gender wage gap between groups of women can be made. The gender wage gaps are typically larger than those documented within groups since the average wages of men also vary by group. For example, Indigenous women earned 8.9% less than Indigenous men in 2022. However, compared with Canadian-born men, Indigenous women earned 20.1% and Indigenous men earned 12.3% less on average, than Canadian-born men.

Diverse groups of women experience the gender wage gap differently. Compared to Canadian-born men, gender wage gaps are largest for immigrant women landing as adults (20.9%) and Indigenous women (20.1%) and smallest for immigrant women landing as children (10.5%) and Canadian-born women (9.2%) in 2022." Statistics Canada

Average Wages per Hour for Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous populations in Thunder Bay 2018-2022



Poverty Statistics

For the fifth year in a row, Ontario Works (OW) incomes remain stagnant and well below the official poverty line for every family type. The provincial government did not make any increases to OW benefit rates.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefit rates have increased by 6.5% based on the cost of living formula determined by the Ontario Government, which will guide future annual ODSP increases based on inflation. Despite this inflation-related increase, ODSP incomes are still far too low to adequately cover food, housing, transportation, medication, costs related to disability, and other necessities of life.

Families with children saw an inflation-related increase in their monthly Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) amounts – of around \$8 per month (approximately \$98 per year) per child.

Individuals receiving OW and ODSP may be eligible for other provincial and federal benefits, such as the Ontario Trillium Benefit, the GST/HST credit, or the Canada Child Benefit (CCB). They may also qualify for other benefits through OW or ODSP. These additional benefits are not shown in the rates charts because amounts vary depending on each person or household's situation.

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Rates 2023

OW	2023 Monthly Payments	ODSP	2023 Monthly Payments
Family Type		Family Type	
Single	\$733	Single	\$1,308
Single Parent – 1 Child	\$1,135.91	Single Parent – 1 Child	\$1,903.91
Single Parent – 2 Children	\$1,324.82	Single Parent – 2 Children	\$2,109.82
Couple	\$1,136	Couple	\$1,960
Couple – 1 Child	\$1,324.91	Couple – 1 Child	\$2,165.91
Couple -2 Children	\$1,517.82	Couple – 2 Children	\$2,379.82

**Temporary Care Assistance
Caseload September 2023**

180

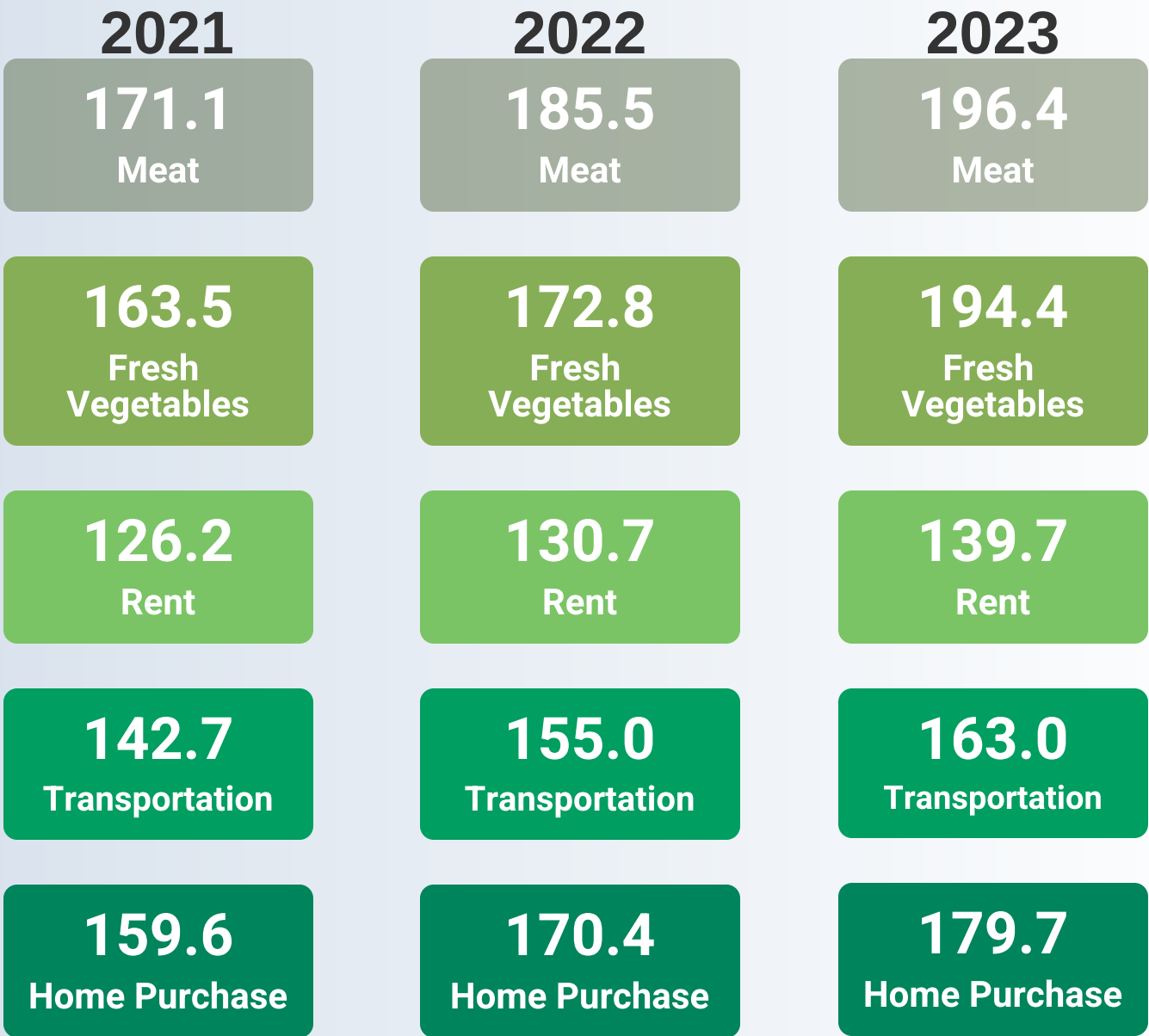
Temporary Care Assistance (TCA) provides support for children in financial need while in the temporary care of an adult who does not have a legal obligation to support the child.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) was developed by Statistics Canada to measure the rate of price change for goods and services paid for by Canadians. It is the most widely used indicator of price change in Canada.

The base year is set at \$100 for each item in 2002. So if a CPI is at 142 today, it means that price for that item or service has increased by \$42 since 2002. The following chart show some of the price increases through the CPI for residents of Thunder Bay from 2021 to 2023.

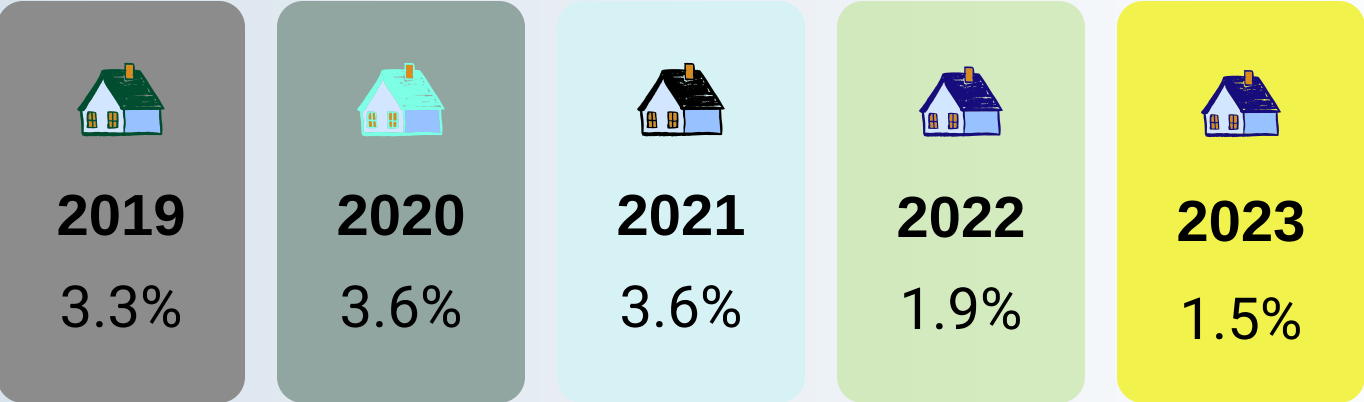
Consumer Price Index (CPI) 2021-2023



Housing in Thunder Bay

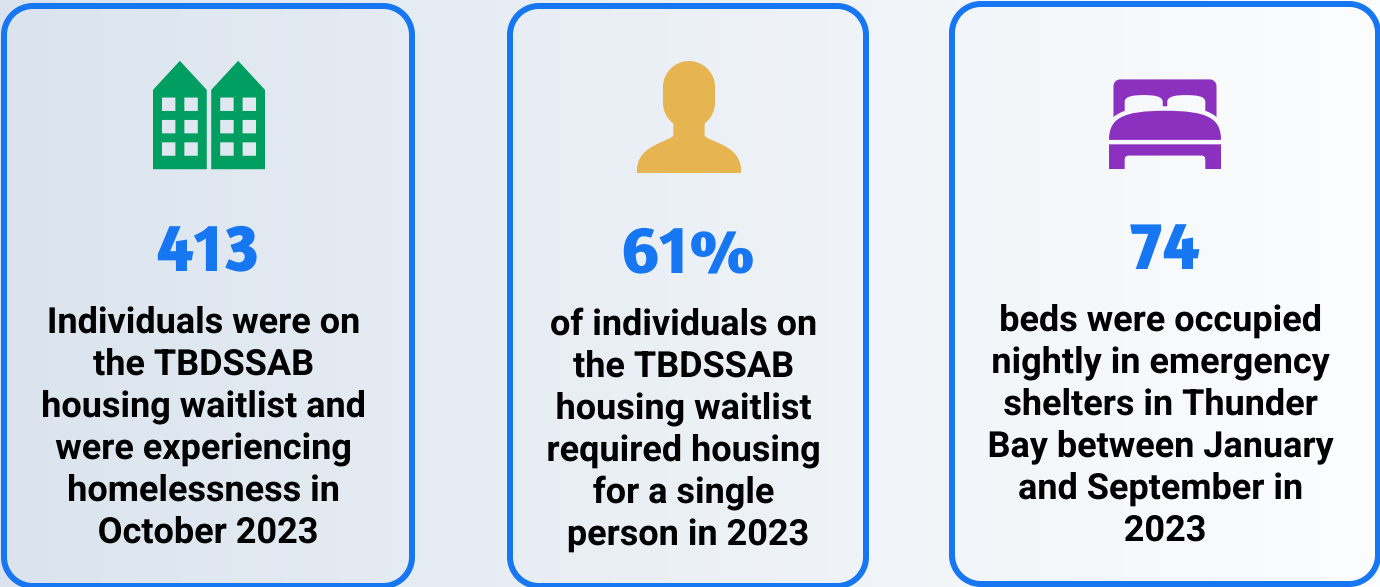
Canada faced an unprecedented challenge as rental vacancies dropped to a historic low of 1.5% in 2023, and this trend is continuing into 2024. Rent prices have increased faster than wages, making it more difficult for tenants across the country to afford their homes. Lower-income renters have been disproportionately impacted by the below-average vacancy rates, exacerbating the affordability crisis.

Vacancy Rates in Thunder Bay 2019 - 2023



Homelessness in Thunder Bay

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) manages the Community Housing and Homelessness Prevention system in the District of Thunder Bay. Their housing programs assists individuals and families by offering affordable housing and rent supports. They also work with community organizations and the emergency shelter system to support initiatives that aim to address homelessness throughout the district. the TBDSSAB manages the housing waitlist for Thunder Bay.



Conclusion

Reducing poverty is important for several reasons, as it has far-reaching impacts on individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. Here are some key reasons why addressing poverty is crucial:

Poverty:

- is often associated with suffering, deprivation, and lack of basic necessities. Addressing poverty is a moral imperative, as it involves improving the well-being and dignity of individuals who are struggling to meet their basic needs.
- can contribute to social unrest, inequality, and conflicts. Poverty reduction is essential for fostering social stability and peace, as it helps to create a more equitable and harmonious society.
- hinders economic growth by limiting the potential of human capital. When people have access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, they can contribute more effectively to economic development. A reduction in poverty often correlates with increased productivity and economic growth.
- is closely linked to poor health outcomes. People living in poverty often lack access to adequate healthcare, nutritious food, and clean water. Addressing poverty is essential for improving overall health and well-being, which contributes to a more productive and resilient population.
- often restricts access to education and skill development opportunities. By reducing poverty, more individuals can access quality education, which is crucial for personal development and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.
- is a major driver of social inequality. Reducing poverty helps bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, fostering a more inclusive society where individuals have equal opportunities for success and prosperity.
- Poverty is often associated with higher crime rates. By addressing the root causes of poverty, societies can work towards reducing crime and creating safer communities.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy 2022-2027 can be found on the LSPC website at: <https://www.lspc.ca/>



Thank you

On behalf of the entire community of Thunder Bay, I extend my deepest gratitude to the esteemed members of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee for their unwavering dedication, tireless effort, and invaluable contributions towards formulating a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Their time and expertise have undoubtedly paved the way for positive change, and for that, I am immensely grateful.

Throughout this collaborative endeavor, each committee member has demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and innovation. Their willingness to engage with diverse perspectives, listen attentively to community voices, and explore creative solutions has been instrumental in crafting a strategy that is both pragmatic and visionary. The dedication of committee members serves as a testament to the power of collaboration and underscores the transformative potential that emerges when individuals come together for the greater good.

Moving forward, let us continue to stand united in our pursuit of equity, dignity, and opportunity for all members of our community. Once again, thank you for your time, effort, and unwavering dedication to this vital cause.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy committee extends our sincerest gratitude to the City of Thunder Bay for its continued support of the Thunder Bay Poverty Reduction Strategy. Their commitment to addressing poverty in our community is truly commendable and embodies the spirit of compassion and solidarity. With the city's generous financial support, we have been able to implement crucial initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and creating a more equitable society for all residents.

Their partnership has been invaluable in fostering positive change and improving the lives of countless individuals and families. Together, we are making significant strides towards a brighter, more inclusive future, and we are profoundly grateful for their continued dedication and investment in this important cause.

