

Preparing for the CivicAction Summit



On Friday, October 13, 2023, CivicAction will gather 400+ leaders from the corporate, civic, charitable, and community sectors across the GTHA at our CivicAction Summit:
Changemakers Needed.

Held once every four years, the CivicAction Summit has been informed by months of structured research, consultations, and roundtables with civic leaders and experts to prioritize and validate the most pressing urban challenges affecting our region. Our Summit is a springboard to exchange ideas, facilitate connections, and speed commitment to action on the most promising actions for impact.

It is not an overstatement to suggest that only with your ongoing support and commitment can we unlock the true potential of our region.

To make the most of our short time together, we have crafted the enclosed summary to lay out the facts and insights that have led us to prioritize the affordability, prosperity, and trust gaps as our region's most pressing challenges, and to identify promising solutions that show the potential to close these gaps and help us build better, more inclusive cities.

In preparation for the day, we would kindly ask the following:

Before Summit: Reflect on our proposed areas of focus

We ask that you arrive at Summit ready to identify opportunities for greater collaboration and investment in solutions to our most pressing challenges. Please consider:

- ✓ Do the solutions, best practices, and areas of focus resonate with your own understanding and experience?
- ✓ Where do you see opportunities to scale solutions whose potential can only be unlocked through more coordinated, cross-sectoral collaboration?
- ✓ Have you observed challenges that we should be collectively aware of as we craft solutions and chart our path forward over the next four years?

During Summit: Accelerate the alignment of action

Given we have only one day to harness the collective insights and guidance from such a large and diverse set of civic leaders, we ask that our time is used to prioritize opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration. Please consider:

- ✓ Can you identify resources that you, or the organizations you work with, could mobilize to support more coordinated action in each of our proposed focus areas?
- ✓ Are there other organizations or groups that we should engage with in collaborative action on these areas of focus? Can you help by facilitating these introductions?

After Summit: Champion aligned action in the focus areas

Our work together is only beginning. Please consider:

- ✓ What is the commitment and resources it will take to get this right?
- ✓ Can you champion action on these focus areas in your network?
- ✓ Given the importance of equity and trust, how can these considerations inform your approach as you work towards solutions?



THE CASE FOR ACTION

CIVICACTION SUMMIT PRE-READ

OCTOBER 2023

The Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) is a unique and critically important part of Ontario and Canada – an economically vibrant innovation hub and multicultural region. Home to over 250,000 businesses,^{1,2} the GTHA contributes ~20% of our national GDP³ and is supported by over 20,000 registered non-profits.⁴ Not surprisingly, the GTHA is also one of the fastest growing regions in North America, home to 7MM+ residents today and anticipated to hit the 10 million megacity mark by 2045.⁵

However, as our region grows at such a rapid pace, it in parallel faces significant headwinds when it comes to more equitable prosperity and affordability impacting many in our community. These challenges are likely to grow in magnitude in the coming years if we do not address them now and together with coordinated focus and action.

Addressing these challenges is no small task. While significant effort is already underway across our region, the systemic nature of these challenges requires coordinated action. CivicAction is uniquely positioned to help bring together a broad range of stakeholders with a diversity of capabilities and experiences from across the GTHA to spur collective leadership on these challenges and materially improve prosperity and affordability for all. CivicAction acts as a compass – working tirelessly to help navigate us forward and away from dangerous waters.

In preparation for our Summit and the next four years ahead, we have consulted over 200 leaders and experts representing 175+ cross-sectoral organizations on the themes of prosperity, affordability, and trust to understand the challenges we face. The Summit comes at a unique and critical point in time and serves as an opportunity to convene 400+ leaders from across levels of government, sectors, and industries, including leaders working on the challenges today that we've identified and engaged, as a starting point to define our collective path forward. It provides us all with an invaluable platform to build the connections necessary to continue efforts, together, towards more inclusive growth and sustainable change for our region.

As you prepare for the Summit, please reflect on where you see opportunities for collaboration between organizations and where innovative solutions exist when it comes to supporting equality across prosperity and affordability. Let's use our time together and harness the collective energy and intellect during Summit to focus our efforts over the course of the next four years to truly move the needle on these critical issues. When we collectively get this right, the GTHA can continue to grow while also becoming a more economically accessible and prosperous community for the 7+M and growing who call our world-class region home.

¹ [City of Toronto, Toronto at a Glance, 2023](#)

² [Hamilton's Economic Development Office, Hamilton's business counts by size, December 2022](#)

³ [Statistics Canada, GDP at basic prices, by census metropolitan area, December 2022](#)

⁴ [Statistics Canada, Table 45-10-0083-01 Estimates of active non-profit organization counts, revenues, and employment by geography](#)

⁵ [Ontario Population Projections \(2022-2046\)](#)

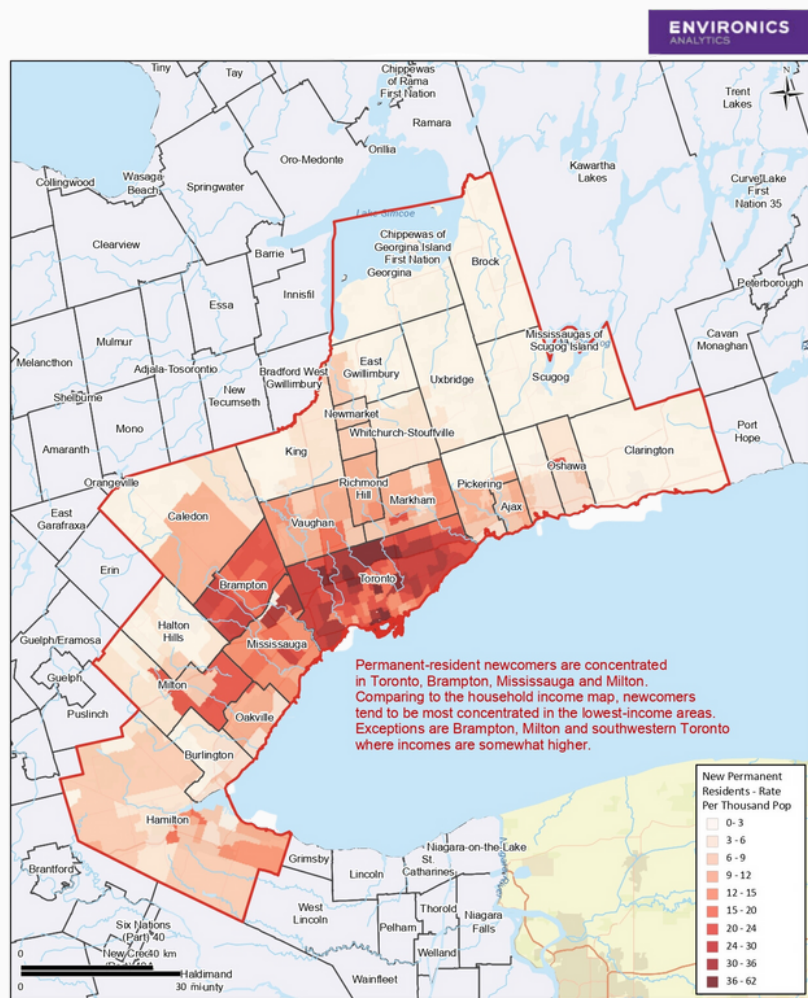
The GTHA, a region we call home, is experiencing rapid change and growth:

The 21st century has been a transformative period for the GTHA – one of expansive growth fundamentally changing our region and setting the stage for the GTHA as a world-class economic hub. The GTHA’s population has grown more than 30% over the last two decades, from 5MM+ residents in 2001 to 7MM+ residents in 2022.⁶ The GTHA’s growth over the last 20 years makes it one of the fastest-growing regions among the 10 most populated metropolitan areas in North America. As a point of comparison – during the same 20-year period, the New York City–Newark metropolitan area grew ~7%. Immigration is a large component of this growth in the GTHA. In 2021, ~30% of newcomers to Canada settled in the Toronto census metropolitan area.⁸ As such, the GTHA, driven in part by this rapid growth, faces a set of significant challenges.

✓ The Prosperity Gap

While the GTHA is an economic driver for Canada and growing rapidly, the benefits of its growth have not been experienced equally. Toronto’s income inequality is the highest in Canada, followed by Calgary and Vancouver.⁹ Our region’s median household incomes (Toronto \$84K, Hamilton \$86K) are lower than Ontario averages (\$91K).¹⁰

Knowing this, and anticipating continued growth, the question now becomes how we can create better pathways for prosperity and improve access to economic opportunity for all residents, including an increasing number of newcomers. If we succeed, GTHA residents will be able to share in the prosperity of our region’s growth.



6 Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001 to 2022

7 US Census Bureau, Metropolitan Statistical Areas Totals: 2001, 2022

8 Statistics Canada, Immigrants make up the largest share of the population in over 150 years and continue to shape who we are as Canadians, October 2022

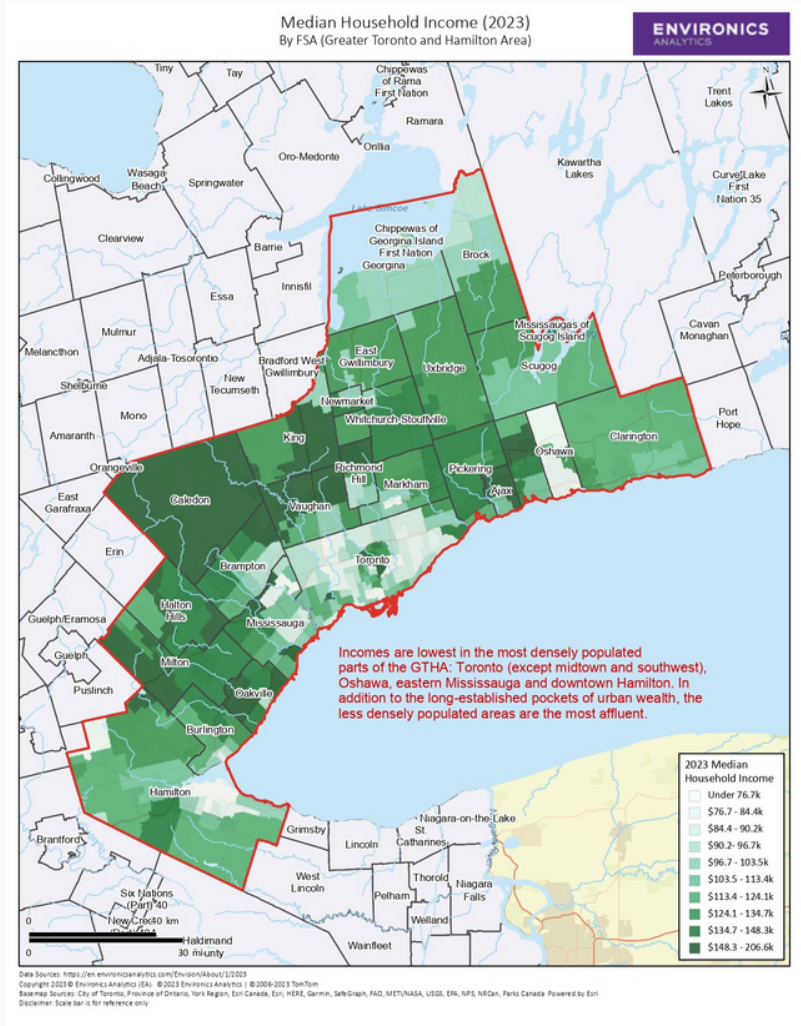
9 Statistics Canada, Income inequality highest in Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver, July 2022

10 City of Toronto, 2021 Census background: Families, Households, Marital Status and Income, July 2022

✓ The Affordability Gap

In 2022, 26% of Toronto residents reported that their income is not enough to support basic needs. This was reported on average 10% higher for residents with disabilities, LGTBQ2+ people, and racialized minorities.¹¹

As our population continues to grow and demand increases, the question at hand is how we can approach and continue to make material headway on this affordability challenge. We know that affordable housing, accessible transit, and lower costs of living are associated with overall well-being.¹² If we succeed in supporting affordability, we will support our region’s ability to live up to its world-class potential.



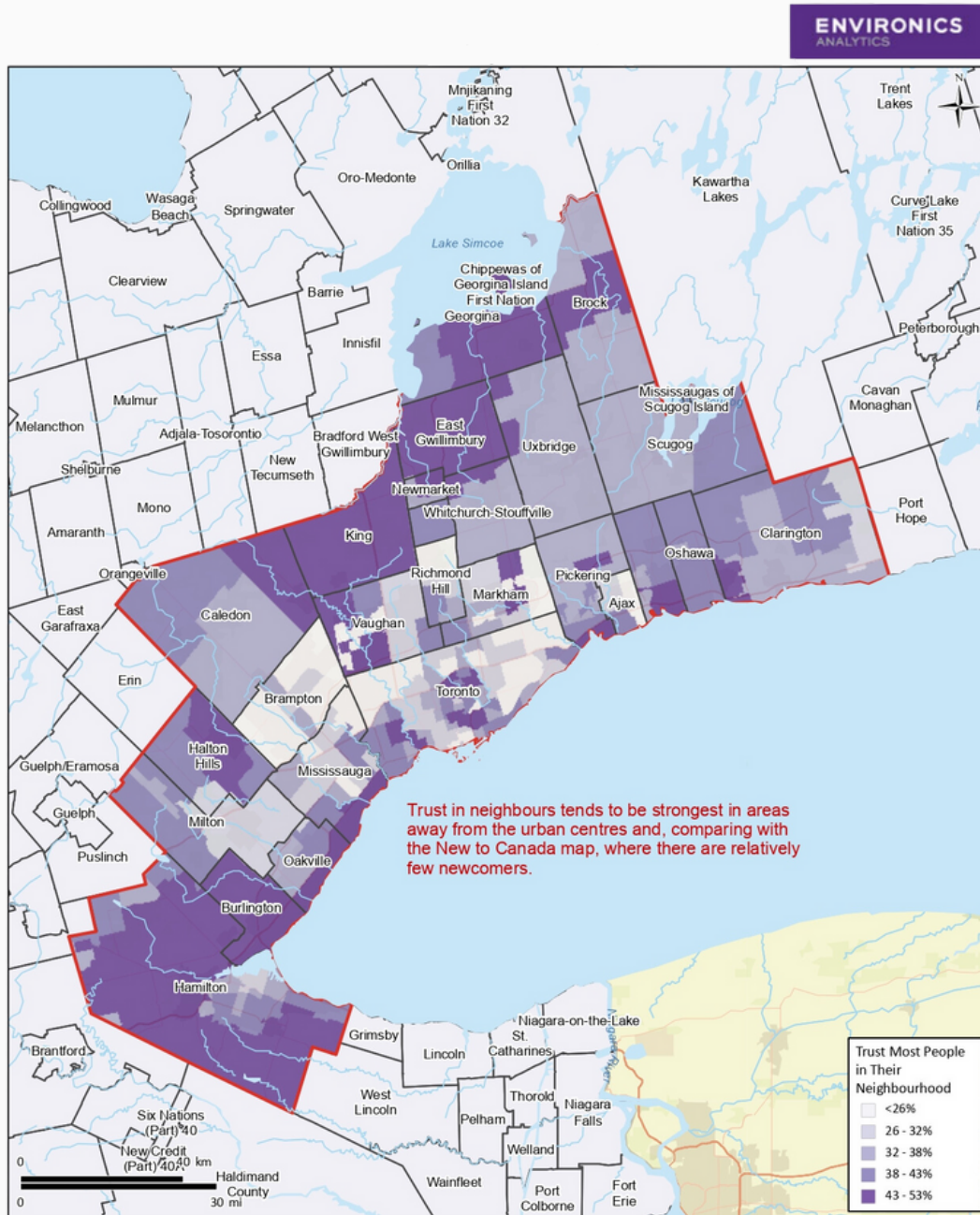
Trust-building can speed progress to address crises

Without trust, we will not have the speed needed for us to catch up and keep up with the pace at which crises are embattling us. Civic leaders have told us that trust and the creation of safe relationships is different for every community. For example, building trust between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples for truth and reconciliation will require dismantling some long-standing social and economic systems. Trust requires generosity – giving, not just to receive.



¹¹ Toronto Social Capital Report, 2022
¹² Statistics Canada, Economic and Social Reports, May 2021

The benefits of and need for trust permeate across the prosperity and affordability gaps. Rebuilding trust in one another, in our public and private institutions, and in the media can support more constructive dialogue and greater collaboration across sectors and stakeholder groups to work towards inclusive growth and equal opportunities for all GTHA residents.



Waiting is not an option

We have the capacity and knowledge to address these headwinds together, but time is not on our side. As a diverse group of civic-minded leaders from across the GTHA, we are blessed with an incredible depth of complementary skill sets, networks, and capabilities. And while COVID may have accelerated and amplified these headwinds, it also demonstrated our region's ability to mobilize as a community in the face of a crisis. Knowing our demonstrated history of acting together as civic leaders to respond decisively on urgent issues, and recognizing the opportunity ahead of us, we must now do the same for prosperity and affordability.

However, given the systemic nature of these headwinds, they cannot be solved through siloed efforts. They require collaboration across all sectors, industries, and levels of government. A collaborative approach can support the inclusive growth, prosperity, and affordability we aim for,¹³ while partnering across sectors and organizations can secure resources to address inequity.¹⁴ Through collaboration, we can unlock compound wins where our solution space grows and our potential for positive impact increases exponentially.

CivicAction is uniquely positioned to convene stakeholders and to sharpen our collective focus on the most pressing issues and promising solutions at hand to move this work forward, leveraging the strengths of our respective organizations. Together we can accelerate focus on and investment in solutions and opportunities that can deliver success at scale. Approaches to systemic challenges that incorporate decolonization and Indigenization can foster more innovative solutions. Collaboration rooted in respect, trust, and transparency can be a foundation for building a long-term equitable economy for Indigenous communities and the broader population.¹⁵ Given this, we hope to consider our actions and commitments through the lens of reconciliation and further allyship and empowerment of Indigenous peoples.

The Summit will sharpen our focus and propel collective action to address our region's macro challenges:

While impressive work is already underway across the GTHA to tackle these challenges across all levels of government and the private sector, we recognize that the nature of these challenges requires CivicAction to take even more leadership over coordinating efforts that will amplify our collective impact.

Informed by the learnings from our structured consultations in the lead-up to Summit, we are putting forward three areas of proposed focus within each of these macro challenges. With 400+ leaders present, Summit serves as an invaluable opportunity for us as a group to identify and coordinate efforts across our networks as we work together towards common goals and impact. Summit is a starting point from which we can map our first, coordinated steps from base camp and set the foundation for our work together over the next four years to successfully scale the mountain that these challenges present.

¹³ VoxEU, [Pursuing inclusive growth, October 2020](#)

¹⁴ MGI Report, [A Blueprint for Addressing the Global Affordable Housing Challenge, October 2014](#)

¹⁵ NIEDB, [Indigenous Economic Reconciliation Report, 2019](#)

Addressing the Prosperity Gap

- ✓ **Leveling the playing field: accelerating economic mobility.** Knowing the potential long-term consequences of unequal access to economic opportunities, we have the potential to work across sectors to raise the economic floor and shrink the region's growing equity gap. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)
- ✓ **Passport to prosperity: accelerating employment pathways for newcomers.** The benefits of our region's growth as a world-class economic hub can be made accessible to all GTHA residents. Recognizing the significant and growing labour market gaps in our region and the success that comes from inclusive approaches, we can improve our focus and how we work together to remove the systemic barriers newcomers face in the labour market. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)
- ✓ **Future-proofing the talent pipeline: addressing the GTHA's labour market gaps.** To address shortages in skilled trades, we can consider how to better attract and retain the talent needed, including from diverse communities, to address existing and anticipated labour gaps in the region. When we are successful, this, in turn, supports newcomers accessing opportunities while strengthening our labour market. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)

If we are successful across all of these, we build a labour supply that can match increasing demand as our region's economy continues to grow while increasing prosperity.

Addressing the Affordability Gap

- ✓ **A blueprint for collaboration: leveraging coordination and collaboration to build more affordable housing.** To build more affordable housing, we can collectively mobilize across private and non-profit spaces as well as all levels of government to coordinate an approach and speed delivery. Through cross-sectional collaboration to build more affordable homes, housing can be more attainable to GTHA residents. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)
- ✓ **Financial mobility: rethinking pathways to mobility and access.** In addition to supply constraints, factors including economic uncertainty, interest rates, and inflation can contribute to housing affordability challenges. Recognizing this, we can rethink economic pathways and financial systems, bringing innovation to help more people access housing in the GTHA. Alternative financing and ownership models can make house ownership opportunities attainable to communities that otherwise may not have access. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)
- ✓ **Starting local: centering community success in the housing and transit equation.** Affordability touches on aspects across communities and ecosystems, including transit, economic mobility, food security, high-quality infrastructure, and enhanced social connection. Centering "community" consistently in housing and transit discussions can unlock novel solutions to our challenges. With a community-centric approach, the GTHA can chart a course towards more equitable, affordable, and accessible living. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)

Supporting trust building

- ✓ **Reconcili-action: meaningful approaches to decolonizing organizations and institutions.** In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report, along with 10 Principles of Reconciliation.¹⁶ As we work on the macro challenges facing our community, we can establish new relationships that are built on respect. Organizations and institutions can build trust as they undertake decolonization and Indigenization initiatives. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)
- ✓ **Building safe communities with community: building safe and liveable communities for all.** Recognizing that safety can mean different things to different communities and in different contexts, fostering safe communities is a complex challenge requiring collaboration. We can work together to build trust and safety for communities across our region. [Read the Idea Starter.](#)

If we work together across these focus areas, the GTHA can reach its full potential while providing a prosperous, affordable, and equitable environment for all. Creating lasting and intentional collaborations across our networks can further the impact of individual initiatives and expedite successes. Centering these efforts on trust building and Indigenous leadership and embedding reconciliation within them can support solutions implemented with equity and community in mind.

We look forward to your active participation at our upcoming **CivicAction Summit: Changemakers Needed** on October 13, 2023, and trust that this document provides more background on the purpose and goals of Summit, and your role in turning collaboration into action to build better, more inclusive cities.

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¹⁶ What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada