



ENDING POVERTY STARTS LOCALLY

Municipal recommendations
for a Canadian poverty
reduction strategy

July 2017



July 4, 2017

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

ENDING POVERTY STARTS LOCALLY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A CANADIAN POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY

Dear Minister:

Canadians want to build a country less encumbered by poverty, where each one of us can find genuine opportunities to thrive. We hold this vision for ourselves, for our neighbours and for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

This vision is part of what it means to be Canadian, and achieving it is challenge shared by every order of government. Aligning our efforts is vital, and so we welcome your commitment to move forward with a Canadian poverty reduction strategy.

Municipalities form the order of government closest to people's lived experience of poverty. We are making the most of tools available to build local solutions. And we are pleased to present our broad recommendations—from the front lines—for your national strategy.

Earlier this month, you engaged local leaders directly at FCM's annual conference, on poverty reduction and in particular on housing affordability. Today's recommendations are a follow-up—another checkpoint in FCM's continuing conversation with your government.

We look forward to deepening our joint efforts to build a more equally prosperous Canada.



Jenny Gerbasi
Deputy Mayor, City of Winnipeg
FCM President

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INTRODUCTION

From coast to coast to coast, municipal leaders are on front lines of poverty. Every day, we see how poverty prevents individuals, families and communities from seizing their full potential. So on behalf of our 2,000 member municipalities—representing 90 per cent of Canadians—the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the federal government’s upcoming Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy.

New commitments in Budgets 2016 and 2017 underline the federal commitment to tackling poverty in our cities and communities. Low-income households will benefit from the new Canada Child Benefit, increases to the Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security, funding through a new National Housing Strategy, expanded transit infrastructure and the commitment to develop a National Framework on Early Learning and Child Care.

A Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy is an opportunity to build on these steps, on the challenging road to a more inclusively prosperous and livable Canada.

Nation-building starts in communities, and that certainly applies here. Poverty manifests differently across the country, and effective solutions vary locally as well. All actors—the federal government, provinces, territories, municipalities, community groups and businesses—will need to work together to develop locally anchored solutions.

Among orders of government, municipalities are Canada’s eyes and ears on the ground. They are catalysts for change, convening diverse actors and tailoring initiatives to local realities. They are also driving action on cross-sectoral issues. For instance, energy-saving grant and loan initiatives are lowering utility costs for renters—while increasing asset values for housing providers/owners and reducing climate-changing emissions.

However, while the face of poverty is profoundly local, other orders of government control investment and policy levers that are vital to an effective response. Federal, provincial and territorial actions should complement, enable and help scale up innovative local efforts to reduce poverty across the country.

That is the focus of FCM’s submission.

We have not set out to encompass all the intersecting issues that underlay poverty. Rather, from our frontline perspective, we are recommending the most essential federal action to prioritize through a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy. These recommendations focus on issues primarily within federal jurisdiction, while recognizing that all governments and actors must be aligned to achieve lasting results.

In short, we are all in this together, with distinct roles to play. And with clear and decisive federal leadership, remarkable progress is possible, right across Canada.



DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY IN CANADA

Defining poverty

While the Government of Canada has no official definition of poverty, there are several common indices, including the Basic Needs poverty line, the Market Basket Measure, the Human Poverty Index and Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-off (LICO).

Poverty is more complex than income level, however. Economic, social and cultural realities deeply shape the experiences of people living in poverty in Canada. Some provinces and municipalities have adopted their own definitions of poverty to more consistently evaluate local efforts to improve the economic, social and cultural vitality of their communities.

The federal government should engage all stakeholders in a process to establish a common definition to frame the Canadian poverty reduction strategy. Rather than exclusively tracking income, this definition should specifically incorporate a social-inclusion lens.

Vulnerable population groups

On any definition, poverty is both pervasive and compounding across Canada. From 1976 to 2010, the top 20 per cent of Canadian income earners saw their average market income rise by 28.9%, while the bottom 20 per cent saw theirs fall by 22.5%.¹

Between 3 and 4.5 million Canadians live in poverty, representing between 8.8 and 13 per cent of Canadians.

Using international measures, in 2013, Canada's ranked 20th out of 31 industrialized countries in terms of lowest overall poverty rate.²

Even on the most conservative measure (LICO: 8.8 per cent of Canadians living in poverty), poverty disproportionately impacts certain population groups, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1:

Poverty by population group (2014) ³	
Unattached individuals aged 45-64	30.2%
Lone-parent families (majority female-led)	23.7%
People with disabilities	22.5%
Recent immigrants	20.3%
Indigenous people living off-reserve ⁴	18.7%
Single seniors	11.3%
Children	8.5%

Poverty has a significant gender dimension. Women's employment rate is 57 per cent—compared to 65 per cent for men. Meanwhile, women working full time earn 73.5 cents for every dollar men make, ranking Canada's gender pay gap the eighth-largest among Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.⁵

Canadians living with disabilities are at higher risk of living in poverty. The employment rate for Canadians with a severe disability was 26 per cent in 2011, compared to 68 per cent for those with a mild disability, and 79 per cent for the non-disabled population.⁶

¹ Parliament of Canada (2013). *Income Inequality in Canada: An Overview*. Report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

² Government of Canada (2016). *A Background on Poverty in Canada*.

³ Statistics Canada (2014). *Canadian Income Survey*.

⁴ Statistics Canada does not publish annual data on income rates for those living on-reserve.

⁵ Statistics Canada (2010). *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*.

⁶ Statistics Canada (2014). *Insights on Canadian Society: Persons with Disabilities and Employment*.



Indigenous people in Canada are at special risk. More than 60 per cent live in municipalities, and while the data is not always readily available or current, it does reveal disproportionately high poverty rates. In communities of all sizes, the modern legacy of Canada's Indian Residential Schools continues to affect the economic, social and cultural well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Acknowledging past injustices and moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation is part of poverty reduction. Establishing new and respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada will result in stronger communities and a more equal society.

Underemployment and poverty are strongly linked, in ways that topline employment rates cannot capture. A recent McMaster University study showed that precarious employment has increased by nearly 50 per cent over the past two decades in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Region, at the expense of full-time, permanent work.⁷ Partly as a result, between 1980 and 2005, average earnings among the bottom 20 per cent of income earners fell by 20%.⁸ Today, approximately 746,000 Canadians live in a poor household where the main income earner is in fact working.

Beyond income in cities and communities

Income levels paint only a partial picture of poverty in Canada. Other factors affecting the lives of Canadians living in poverty include rising housing costs, food insecurity and poor access to vital services. Moreover, for those living in poverty, the necessities that fall out of reach first tend to vary by region and by community size.

In large cities, households may face expensive housing and inadequate access to quality, affordable child care. In rural, remote and northern communities, households may have few transportation options beyond privately-owned vehicles, impeding access to employment or public services. Affordable, high-speed Internet is unavailable in many communities, even where people are expected to have it to access income supports or employment.

Some 12.5 per cent of Canadian households—representing 3.9 million individuals—live in “**core housing need**.” This means their housing is unaffordable to them, needs major repairs, and/or has too few bedrooms for the household's composition—and they cannot access other local housing that resolves the need. That 12.5 per cent figure is a cross-Canada average. Housing challenges are far more severe in some jurisdictions, for instance in Nunavut, where 39 per cent of households are experiencing core housing need.

As many as 235,000 Canadians are expected to experience **homelessness** this year, with 35,000 homeless on any given night.⁹ In 2004, 80 per cent of available emergency shelter beds were used on an average night across Canada. By 2015, that average occupancy had risen to 90 per cent—too often reaching full capacity.¹⁰ And these statistics do not capture “hidden homelessness” at the local level. For example, in many northern and remote communities, growing numbers of vulnerable people resort to “couch surfing” or sleeping in cars in the absence of emergency shelters and other support services.

⁷ Statistics Canada (2012). *Income in Canada*, 2011. CANSIM Table 202-0804; as cited in Citizens for Public Justice (2013). *Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012*.

⁸ Heisz, Andrew (2015). *Trends in Income Inequality in Canada and Elsewhere*. Institute for Research on Public Policy.

⁹ Gaetz, Gulliver and Richter (2014). *The State of Homelessness in Canada: 2014*.

¹⁰ Employment and Social Development Canada (2016). *Homelessness Partnering Strategy: 2005-2014 – Highlights of the National Shelter Study*.



High-quality, affordable **early childhood education and care** (ECEC) supports the economic prosperity and social sustainability of communities. However, Canada lags well behind its OECD counterparts—on both the proportion of GDP spent on public funding for ECEC and on enrolment of children in preschool education, albeit with differences across the country, notably in Quebec which has a universal system with capped fees.

High-quality, affordable child care addresses multiple dimensions of poverty—empowering parents to seek employment, and offering children the strong foundation that is widely understood to improve their lifelong development. At present, there is a patchwork of services across provinces and territories. Low wages and insecure working conditions are the norm for child care workers, and there is no reliable financial foundation to build affordable child care systems across the country.

Lower-quality, less reliable care limits families' options—especially single parents—as they seek to reconcile work and family responsibilities without compromising their children's early development.

Between 2011 and 2012, 1.1 million Canadian households experienced **food insecurity**. This is defined as households who experienced at least some level of uncertainty over their access to food in the past 12 months. Figure 2 shows the prevalence of food insecurity by select census metropolitan areas in 2014.¹¹ Meanwhile, food bank use in Canada has increased by 27.8 per cent since 2008.¹²

Research suggests that individuals living in low income have lower life expectancies, have higher rates of suicide, and are more likely to suffer from heart diseases, chronic conditions and mental health issues.

Figure 2:

Households experiencing food insecurity (2014)¹³

Halifax, Nova Scotia	15.1%
Moncton, New Brunswick	16.3%
Saguenay, Quebec	14.2%
Trois Rivières, Quebec	12.4%
Peterborough, Ontario	17.6%
Windsor, Ontario	15.2%
Regina, Saskatchewan	13.6%

¹¹ Tarasuk, Mitchell, Dachner (2016). *Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2014*.

¹² Food Banks Canada (2016). *Hunger Count: 2016*.

¹³ Statistics Canada. *Household Food Insecurity: 2011-2012*.



FEDERAL ROLE IN POVERTY REDUCTION

Poverty is a national phenomenon experienced most acutely in the communities where Canadians live, work and raise their families. Despite its localized nature, the federal government has a powerful role to play in poverty reduction—by investing in critical areas and bringing all orders of government together to align efforts and maximize impact.

This federal government has already made new commitments to poverty reduction that respond to FCM recommendations. We especially commend the long-overdue commitment to develop a National Housing Strategy (NHS). As its fiscal framework, Budget 2017 commits \$11.2 billion over 11 years—including \$2.1 billion to expand and renew the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. On top of this, the budget commits \$4-5 billion through the preservation of baseline funding of expiring social housing operating agreements.

Budget 2017 also launched a \$20.1 billion long-term, allocation-based investment plan for public transit expansions in cities across Canada. In addition to cutting commute times and GHG emissions, better transit helps low-income Canadians access jobs, services and daily essentials. Additionally, an expanded Enabling Accessibility Fund will help municipalities and local organizations improve local levels of physical accessibility and safety.

This budget's welcome commitment to fund affordable child care spaces builds on the Canada Child Benefit launched a year prior. The recently announced Federal/Provincial/Territorial Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework may serve as pathway towards an ECEC system which is affordable, accessible and high-quality for all families, but especially those who are living in poverty.

Enhancements to Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement will benefit low-income seniors. Renewed funding for the former Urban Aboriginal Strategy, now the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples initiative, will support local Indigenous organizations and service providers as they deliver services to low-income Indigenous individuals and families in our cities and communities.

These federal initiatives underscore the federal government's readiness to tackle poverty, and to honour the guidance of FCM and the local order of government. These are first steps toward eliminating poverty in Canada—on a longer road that now requires clear federal leadership through a national strategy.

Significantly, in addition to working with FCM at a nation-wide level, local governments regularly identify where federal action can deepen the impact of local poverty reduction strategies. For example:

- Edmonton's poverty reduction strategy calls for a dialogue among municipal, provincial and federal governments to improve how housing, food bank and child care services are funded and delivered. Something as simple as being unable to produce proof of residence can block someone's access to federal services.

¹¹ CMHC (2011). *Canadian Housing Observer: Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need*. Figures rounded to nearest full percentage.

¹² Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (2013). *Affordable Housing Challenges and Innovations in the North: A CHRA Congress Session Summary*. Accessed at <http://chra-achru.ca/en/research-papers#2015>

¹³ As cited in Walker, Ryan (2008). "Social Housing and the Role of Aboriginal Organizations in Canadian Cities" in *IRPP Choices*, Vol. 14, no. 4, May 2008.

- Toronto recognizes that federal investment is critical to addressing local poverty through social and affordable housing. With a \$2.7 billion repair backlog due to chronic underfunding, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) expects in 2017 to close 425 units that are no longer safely habitable. More will close without long-term investment from other orders of government. Through its commitment of more than \$1.3 billion over 10 years (2013-2022) for capital repairs to TCHC and efforts to transform its social housing system, the city is showing why the National Housing Strategy must prioritize repairs for existing social housing while building new social and affordable housing. Under Victoria's new Social Procurement Framework, vendors strengthen their bids for city contracts by connecting into federal employment programs that support youth, Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.
- London, Ontario's strategy outlines roles for federal and provincial governments in creating more employment training programs—using an equity lens to target demographics facing special barriers to employment, such as persons living with disabilities or mental illness.
- Thunder Bay's strategy emphasizes federal investment in local public transit—to improve people's access to necessities, as well as provincial and federal services such as employment training, income support and mental health and addiction services.

Tackling poverty will require sustained collaboration with all orders of government, Indigenous organizations, Canadians with lived experience of poverty, community organizations and businesses. This is truly an historic opportunity to harness the expertise of local, regional and national actors to transform Canada's future.



¹⁴ Steele, Marion (2006). "A Tax-Based Affordable Housing Program for Canada" in *Canadian Housing Magazine*, fall 2006 edition.

¹⁵ Housing Supply Working Group (2001). *Affordable Rental Housing Supply: The Dynamics of the Market and Recommendations for Encouraging New Supply*.



MUNICIPAL ROLE IN POVERTY REDUCTION

Beyond identifying key federal investments needed locally, local governments are direct actors in poverty reduction. Among orders of government, municipalities are most deeply and routinely connected to their residents' daily lives. They want to ensure their residents can meet their basic needs and contribute to their community.

Across Canada, municipalities of all sizes are developing and investing in poverty reduction initiatives, plans and strategies. They are also filling gaps left by other support systems, and complementing essential federal, provincial and territorial leadership on income support, housing, mental health, education and skills training.

Some local poverty reduction plans are long-standing, such as those from 13 municipalities that joined forces more than a decade ago with three organizations—Tamarack, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and Caledon Institute of Social Policy—

to work on place-based poverty reduction. Some participating municipalities reported a 10 per cent reduction in poverty between 2002 and 2012, impacting the lives of 202,931 low-income Canadians. An additional 50 municipalities have since joined this network.

Among more recent municipal strategies, the most comprehensive build lasting connections among local actors. For example, Living SJ brings the City of Saint John together with more than 100 partners, including the United Way, the Community Foundation, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, and Vibrant Communities SJ—to coordinate resources and goals to reduce barriers to health, education and employment in low-income areas. Similarly, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, established in 2005, was driven by community members and non-governmental organizations, but is actively supported by the City of Hamilton at both staff and political levels.

Local governments are also directly identifying and implementing local actions aimed at poverty reduction.



For instance, in April 2017, the City of Calgary introduced an innovative sliding-scale fare structure for transit passes. Monthly passes cost as little as \$5.05 for those earning less than \$12,474, rising with an individual's income up to the Low Income Cut Off—easing barriers for Calgarians seeking to participate more fully in their community.

Municipalities across Canada are reducing barriers to participating in city-run programs that support healthy living, learning and social inclusion. Edmonton's Leisure Access Program supports low-income residents and new refugees by offering, to those that qualify, free annual memberships to city recreation and attraction facilities. Yellowknife's Recreation for All program offers low-income residents free access to public transit, all drop-in recreational activities, including family swims, skating and special events. Kamloops' Affordable Recreation for Community Health program provides \$300 in credit toward city-run activities, pools or museum memberships.

While affordable housing is not an explicit municipal responsibility outside Ontario, local governments recognize their central role in reducing poverty and strengthening communities. This is why so many are working to improve housing options for those in need. Recent examples include Ottawa's \$16 million capital contribution toward 314 new affordable supportive housing homes, Saskatoon's rental incentive grants, and Vancouver's \$24 million land contribution to a new 358 unit mixed-income affordable housing initiative.

Some 315,000 Canadian adults (aged 15-64) with a mobility disability could be working but are not—representing lost earnings potential of \$3.6 billion per year. Communities of all sizes are offering ranges of services to help facilitate social inclusion for many of their most vulnerable populations. For example, the City of Montreal's transportation authority guarantees accessible transportation availability by contracting to 14 taxi companies that in 2011 provided 86 per cent of Montreal's specialized transit services.



¹⁴ Tamarack Institute. *Vibrant Communities: Cities Reducing Poverty*. Accessed at <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/vibrantcommunities>



Municipalities are exploring social procurement models for goods and services, leveraging tax dollars and local investments to achieve poverty reduction goals. In Alberta's Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, a first Social Request for Quotes—for snow clearing services—rewarded vendors whose bids created jobs for formerly-homeless community members. The City of Toronto's social procurement program focuses on attracting diverse suppliers for city contracts, creating workforce development opportunities for vulnerable groups, and assisting Toronto-based public institutions to develop social procurement initiatives.

The living wage movement is also building momentum. This is an opportunity to support city employees in a decent quality of life, but also to create ripple effects of fairly paid jobs throughout communities. New Westminster, British Columbia, became Canada's first living wage employer in 2011, setting this standard not just for its own employees but for all firms that it contracts or subcontracts. Today, more than 60 Canadian municipalities have already adopted or are in the process of adopting living wage policies.¹⁴

Local governments can also take leadership in collecting and disseminating valuable data. The City of Gatineau—in partnership with community organizations, Université du Québec en Outaouais and the provincial health ministry—developed extensive portraits for 71 neighbourhoods with demographic, sociocultural, economic and health data from federal and provincial sources. The city and other actors used these portraits to inform evidence-based poli-

cy decisions on poverty related-activities—such as prioritizing transit route upgrades in low-income, transit-dependent neighbourhoods. This micro-scale dissemination, driven by municipalities and supported by local stakeholders, lends legitimacy and accuracy to local policy and program decisions.

In Ontario, a new place-based pilot project will test the effectiveness of a basic guaranteed income in reducing poverty and improving health, housing and employment. Study participants will be ensured a minimum income, using a tax credit model, at a level sufficient to meet basic household costs. A single person will receive up to \$16,989 per year—\$24,027 for a couple—less 50 per cent of any earned income. While the study is being led by the province, the municipalities of Hamilton, Brantford and Brant County, Thunder Bay and Lindsay, Ontario where the pilots are being implemented will play an important role.

Finally, from our position on the front lines of poverty, municipalities play a crucial role in guiding other orders of government—offering informed recommendations for transformational policy, action and investment. They do this work provincially through their provincial-territorial municipal associations. Nationally, local governments engage the federal government as the Federation of Municipalities, and this document forms part of that continuing dialogue.



FCM RECOMMENDATIONS

On behalf of our 2,000 member municipalities, representing 90 per cent of Canadians, FCM submits the following broad recommendations for the upcoming Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy. These recommendations are intended to frame and support FCM's continuing dialogue with the federal government.

Recommendation #1: Strengthen intergovernmental dialogue

All orders of government have a role to play in poverty alleviation and reduction. Education, health and parts of social assistance are key levers held at the provincial/territorial level. Any effective federal strategy must support and align with these roles, and with their complex intersections with municipal responsibilities and initiatives. Formally engaging the municipal sector through FCM, alongside provincial/territorial governments, is critical to achieving significant and lasting outcomes through a national strategy.

Recommendation #2: Systematically incorporate a gender lens

Gender inequality is connected to persisting poverty in Canada—starting from the population-level realities that women have less stable work, earn less income, assume more caregiving responsibilities, and are more likely to head single-parent families. Recognizing this, the federal government should continue its gender-based approach to policy development, as highlighted in Budget 2017. This should specifically include applying a gender lens in developing, implementing and measuring the poverty reduction strategy.



Clark Somerville (FCM Past President), Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development), Jenny Gerbasi (FCM President)



Recommendation #3: Prioritize social and affordable housing repair and construction

Safe, affordable housing is the bedrock of livable communities, and chronic shortages are deepening poverty in Canada. With new funding announced in Budget 2017, the upcoming National Housing Strategy has the potential to significantly improve housing affordability for those in greatest need. To achieve this, the NHS must prioritize the repair of social housing, alongside the construction of new social and affordable housing—at funding levels reflective of the need. This is the heart of the comprehensive recommendations FCM put forward in October 2016 to tackle the housing crisis. Through FCM, local leaders look forward to contributing to the design and implementation of an effective NHS.

Recommendation #4: Distinctly support newcomers' housing needs

Newcomers to Canada are more likely to struggle to access housing that is affordable and adequate to their family size. Government-assisted refugees, in particular, can face special challenges as the year-long period of financial assistance ends—including many of the Syrian refugees who arrived in 2015-2016. Recognizing these realities, the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the related National Housing Strategy, should distinctly address the housing needs of newcomers.

Recommendation #5: Expand and renew the Homelessness Partnering Strategy

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) is a model of federal investment enabling local innovation to address a complex issue. Budget 2017 both reinvests in HPS and kick-starts a process to renew it, including creating an advisory committee. FCM recommends expanding the number of communities designated for funding to reflect growing homelessness, while also boosting allocations for eligible communities with the greatest need. The renewed HPS should flexibly empower communities to fund initiatives that best reflect local realities—including by eliminating rules requiring them to dedicate a certain portion of funding to Housing First approaches.



Recommendation #6: Ensure low-income households can access quality child care

It remains unclear how much of the funding announced in Budget 2017 will support subsidized child care spaces for low and moderate-income families. FCM recommends that investment and the forthcoming Early Learning and Child Care Framework (ELCF) be designed to ensure Canadians living in poverty can access quality pre and post-natal care, early learning and child care services, and parenting support. The ELCF should be flexible enough to connect with municipal priorities. Federal leadership and investment should help ensure high standards across the country and foster new and expanded services, across all provinces and territories, which are accessible in all neighbourhoods and affordable for single parents and families in every income bracket.

Recommendation #7: Explore basic-income-guarantee models

The federal government should undertake a rigorous process to determine the most effective ways to strengthen Canadians' income security. FCM specifically recommends investigating and developing options for how a basic income guarantee could be delivered in Canada. This robust research process should directly engage local and provincial/territorial governments. It should also clearly outline next steps on implementation once the outcomes of this comprehensive research and engagement process are determined.

Recommendation #8: Distinctly support Indigenous peoples in municipalities

As the federal government renews its approach to supporting Indigenous people in cities and communities through the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) initiative over the next five years, FCM recommends emphasizing support for low-income Indigenous individuals and families in communities of all sizes. UPIP should provide long-term, flexible funding to Indigenous organizations. Specifically, UPIP should support the renovation and construction of community and cultural spaces; the reinstatement of urban Indigenous coalitions to strengthen service linkages among municipal governments; and culturally appropriate programs and services. UPIP should also seek to align with programs and services delivered by municipalities, as deemed appropriate by funded Indigenous organizations.



Recommendation #9: Boost access to quality public transit

The accessibility and affordability of public transit is closely connected to poverty reduction and social inclusion. The allocation-based transit investment plan announced in Budget 2017 can drive the next generation of efficient transit across Canada. However, to ensure transit expansions move forward, upcoming federal-provincial/territorial bilateral negotiations on infrastructure will need to secure full and fair cost-sharing. Furthermore, cities can face special challenges in making transit affordable for their lowest-income residents. Options to improve access should be considered through federal-municipal dialogue.

Recommendation #10: Align with legislation for people living with disabilities

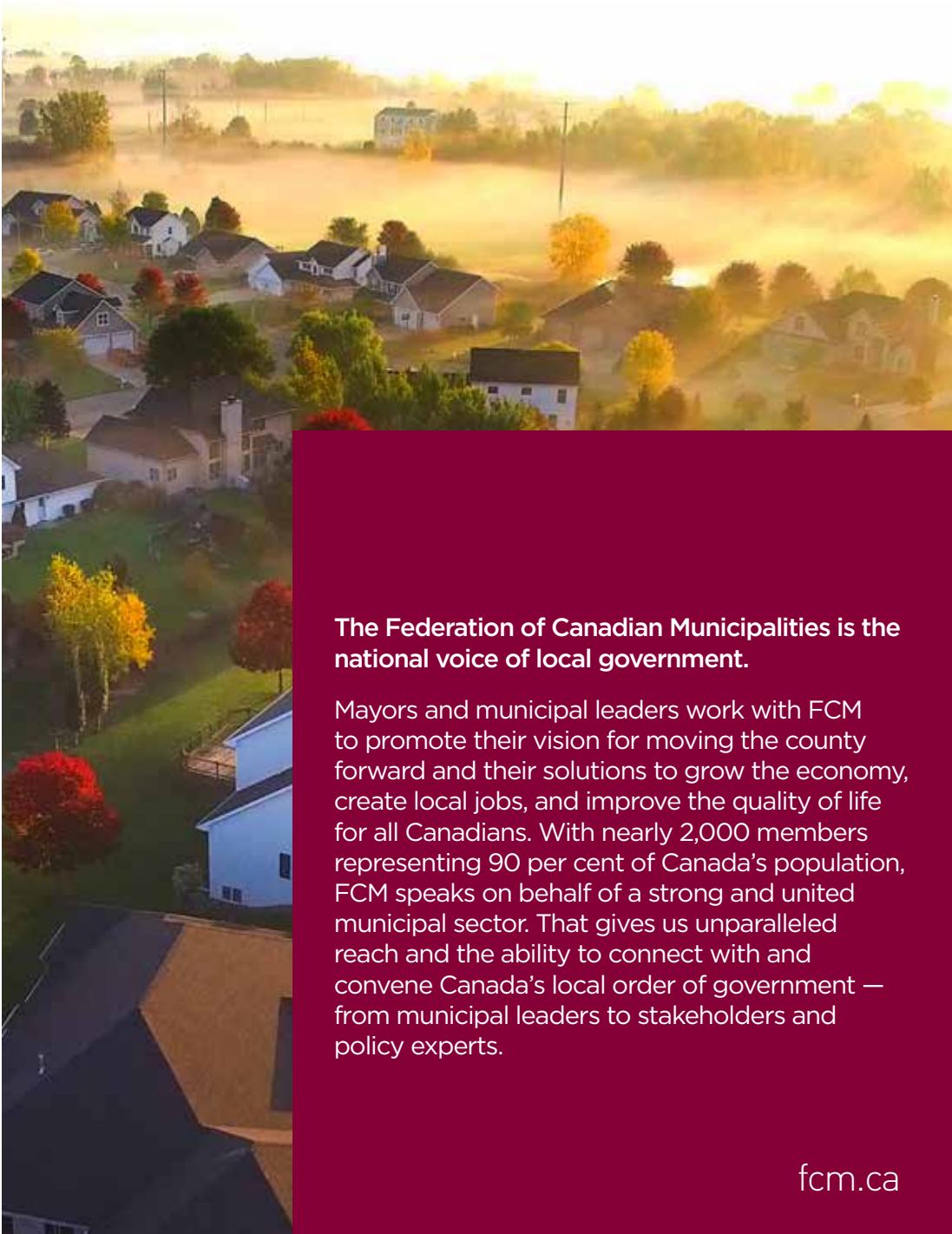
We know that Canadians living with disabilities are at a significantly higher risk of living in poverty. We also know that the federal government is preparing to develop accessibility legislation, including components that particularly impact services and supports for low-income Canadians living with a disability. For maximum impact, the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy should directly align with this legislation as it is developed.

Recommendation #11: Evaluate investments supporting low-income seniors

Older Canadians are at higher risk of living in poverty, and seniors on fixed incomes are especially vulnerable. The federal government has increased benefits for seniors through Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. These measures should be evaluated to assess their effectiveness at reducing poverty, as a basis for considering and developing further enhancements. Getting this right becomes more critical as our population ages—with Statistics Canada forecasting that, by 2031, nearly one in four Canadians will be over 65.

Recommendation #12: Boost access to essential telecommunications services

Many Canadians in rural, northern and remote communities lack reliable, affordable access to the high-speed Internet that is so essential to full participation in our modern Canadian society and economy. Poor broadband access can be a direct barrier to accessing local, regional or national services and supports to help individuals and families overcome poverty. FCM recommends that current and future federal broadband investments be substantive and designed to ensure that high-speed internet is affordable to low-income households in northern, rural and remote communities.



The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is the national voice of local government.

Mayors and municipal leaders work with FCM to promote their vision for moving the country forward and their solutions to grow the economy, create local jobs, and improve the quality of life for all Canadians. With nearly 2,000 members representing 90 per cent of Canada’s population, FCM speaks on behalf of a strong and united municipal sector. That gives us unparalleled reach and the ability to connect with and convene Canada’s local order of government — from municipal leaders to stakeholders and policy experts.

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