

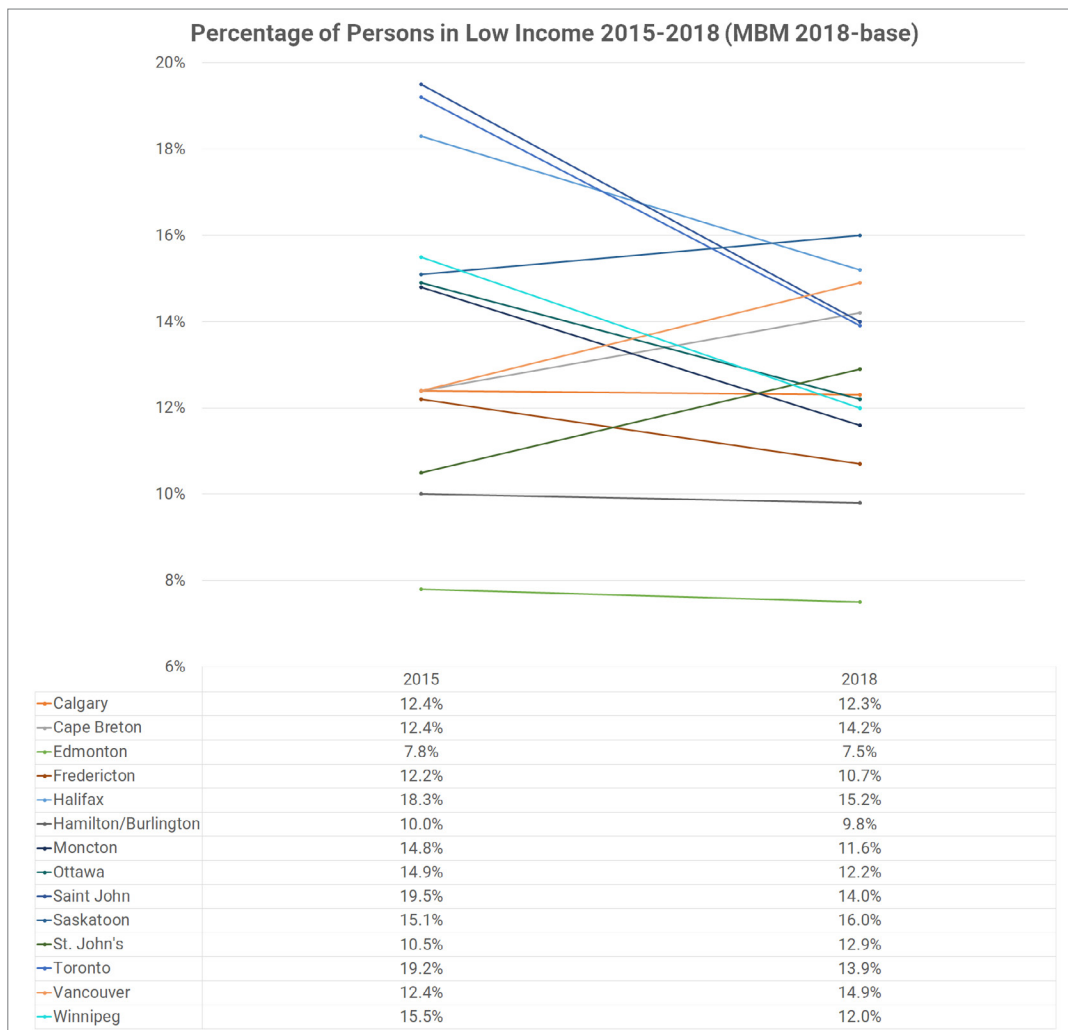
# CITIES REDUCING POVERTY –

## IMPACT REPORT 2020

**2020-10-22** – Tamarack Institute’s Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty (VC-CRP) is celebrating Canada’s progress towards ending financial poverty. **According to Statistics Canada (2020), one million fewer Canadians were living in poverty in 2018 than were in 2015, with the national poverty rate dropping by 24% – from 14.5% to 11.0%.** In addition, the number of Canadians living in relative low income (Low Income Measure – After Tax) also declined from 14.2% to 12.3% between 2014 and 2018. These rates represent the lowest in Canadian history (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019).

Child poverty rates have been following a similar downward trend, with 367,000 fewer children living in poverty in 2018 than were in 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2020), with much thanks to the new Canada Child Benefit. Poverty rates amongst seniors are the lowest of three age brackets, in large part due to benefits such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) that top up Canada Pension Plan (CPP) earnings for low-income seniors.

Prosperity is being shared geographically amongst cities and communities across Canada. In a scan of 14 large- and medium-sized CRP cities, poverty declined between 2015 and 2018 in 10 cities (with the exception of Saskatoon, Cape Breton, St. Johns, and Vancouver).



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In addition to income, other root causes of poverty trending positively are:

- A declining national unemployment rate
- Significant investments in housing and homelessness by all levels of government
- An increase in affordable transportation programs in municipalities across Canada
- Rising levels of high school graduation amongst young Canadians
- Fewer Canadians reporting having unmet health needs
- Greater access to quality affordable childcare spaces for parents
- Decreasing rates of food bank usage; and
- More Canadians becoming asset-resilient

The VC-CRP Team has compiled a number of short stories from the Cities Reducing Poverty network that exemplify innovative practices that members are employing or supporting locally. These exciting results cumulatively contribute to the national trends we are seeing by providing immediate benefits to individuals and families, demonstrating new best practices and influencing policy changes, initiating systems changes, and building the critical mass of support amongst the public and decision-makers to address poverty. Examples include:

- Awareness raising amongst policy makers and the general public (ex. the local costs of living, insufficiency of Social Assistance rates, affordable housing options, RESPs)
- Bridging communication between sectors and addressing gaps (ex. employers and unemployed youth, the food bank and health professionals doing home visits; food donors and non-profits)
- Delivering programs, projects and services to individuals and families (ex. literacy or financial literacy training for adults, funding eyeglasses and prescription drugs, eviction intervention, enrichment classes for young children and parents, a mobile food market, Community Volunteer Income Tax Programs)
- Raising collaborative funds (ex. Community Development Corporations or collaborative funding proposals)

- Running innovation labs and pilot projects to create the case to for new policies (ex. affordable housing and transportation models, and increasing teacher to student ratios)
- Introducing subsidies that ease the cost of living burden (ex. affordable transit passes, affordable child care, affordable recreation)
- Changing infrastructure (ex. increased night bus service, introducing dial-a-ride, creating neighbourhood-based health care, securing space for community food storage and distribution, launching a bus to the food bank)

Much momentum has been gained in the last decade. The CRP network has grown from 13 Trail Builders to 80 Cities Reducing Poverty, all provinces and territories have or are developing a poverty reduction strategy, and Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy was launched with significant early investments in families with children. Governments are taking the community's lead and are implementing innovative programs and policies originating in communities, with wide reaching effects for individuals and families.

The Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty 2020 Impact Report is our first attempt at capturing and communicating national trends in poverty reduction and the important ways in which member Cities Reducing Poverty collaboratives are contributing to those changes. The report is meant to give poverty reduction organizers, advocates, and public decision-makers a sense for how collaborative, multi-sectoral local roundtables with comprehensive plans contribute to poverty reduction in their communities and beyond. It spotlights a number of high-impact initiatives that are demonstrating promising results.

The 2020 Impact Report was prepared in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic using 2019 data. While the only certainty at the moment is that poverty will be exacerbated in many domains, this report reminds readers that we already have many good strategies for reducing poverty and that we should be emboldened knowing that when we work together, we can make big change.

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## ABOUT VIBRANT COMMUNITIES – CITIES REDUCING POVERTY

Vibrant Communities – Cities Reducing Poverty (VC-CRP) began in 2002 as a pilot experiment in which 13 “Trail Builder” cities explored whether poverty could be significantly reduced by non-profits, for-profits, governments and citizen sectors collaborating in a new way. Its first phase yielded outstanding results. Under the leadership of the McConnell Foundation, Caledon Institute and Tamarack Institute, from 2002-2012, 200,000+ Canadians benefitted from poverty reducing impacts.

VC-CRP continues to share the models and lessons learned from these first 10 years as we support cities to develop new poverty reduction initiatives and facilitate space for important peer-to-peer learning.

VC-CRP is now a national movement comprised of 80 locally-based collaboratives representing more than 300 cities across Canada and the USA.

As part of their membership package, VC-CRP communities are supported to explore the unique profile of poverty in their community, engage residents from all walks of life in identifying a shared vision, and determine local strategies for connecting and coordinating differently to achieve population-level poverty reduction.

For more information, visit <https://www.tamarack-community.ca/citiesreducingpoverty>



Production and printing of this report has been supported by:



Funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnership Program.



The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.