

# Expo 2025: Health and Health Equity Impact Assessment

Submitted by Wellesley Institute

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September, 2016



Wellesley Institute aims to improve health and health equity in the Greater Toronto Area through policy and knowledge translation based on social determinants of health research.

We have undertaken a health and health equity impact assessment of the plans for Expo 2025. This assessment takes into account the 6 month Expo and the potential impact Expo has to be a catalyst for City development and the Port Lands legacy projects.

Expo 2025 presents Toronto with an opportunity to move forward initiatives that leverage the City's diverse population and neighbourhoods and drive the City forward socially and economically. In addition to leaving a site ready for further development, Expo 2025 could deliver more affordable housing, a stronger transportation network, and more green space as part of its legacy. There is potential for job creation, some of which would stay in Toronto beyond 2025. In order to best make use of the substantial investments that will be made in Toronto as an Expo host, the Coordinating Committee will need to carefully consider the potential health and health equity impacts of any developments associated with hosting Expo 2025.

## Improving Health and Health Equity

The main drivers of differences in health are in the social environment. The social determinants of health, which include income, employment, housing, transportation, education, gender and ethnicity, have impacts on our exposure to risk factors for diseases, access to care and outcomes from medical interventions. They change the chance of developing an illness and influence life expectancy. In Toronto the life expectancy of a man living in a low income area is about five years less than a man living in a high income area.

Well-researched, but lesser known, is the collective impact of community, trust and sense of belonging on our health. Together, community, trust and sense of belonging make up what we call social cohesion and social capital, and these have been shown to have a significant impact on the public's health. Most people are aware that on average smoking decreases a person's life expectancy by 7.5 years, but they are less aware that factors linked to low social cohesion and social capital, such as anxiety or isolation, also impact life expectancy to almost the same degree. Canadian research has found that a strong sense of community belonging is closely linked to better health outcomes. Canadians who report their mental health as excellent or very good are more than twice as likely to feel a sense of belonging to their local community.<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organization states that policy interventions that improve social capital directly improve health and improve communities.<sup>2</sup>

When assessing how changes to a city affect health it is important to consider the social determinants of health as well as social capital and social cohesion.

At Wellesley Institute we strive to improve health and health equity. When considering the likely impacts on health of a particular initiative we then consider its impacts for diverse populations and health equity.

It is difficult to calculate the exact health impacts of the Expo 2025 proposals because more detail is needed, but it is possible to consider the likely direction of the impacts of Expo 2025 on health and health equity in the GTA.

## Expo Timeline: Health and Health Equity Considerations

For the purposes of a health and health equity impact assessment, Expo 2025 can be considered in three phases.

**Phase 1:** planning and development of Expo 2025 from 2018-2025;

**Phase 2:** 6 months of the Expo itself in 2025; and,

**Phase 3:** development of the legacy site from 2025 onwards.

There are potential health impacts in each phase of development. The exact level of health or health equity challenges or benefits will depend on how each phase is implemented.

Phase 1 includes Toronto moving forward with planned transit improvements, flood protection, soil remediation, and waterfront revitalization. There may be a benefit from environmental remediation. This phase also includes the construction of the site and new local-global companies to populate country pavilions.

A forward thinking plan would use the development of the concept for Expo 2025 as a hub for innovation and community ownership. It would also include strategic management of communications, the use of competitions, and ideas to create population buy-in. The aim would be to produce a shared societal experience, which could include school lesson plans to excite students over the course of the development of Expo 2025 and volunteering opportunities. Expo is a chance for Toronto to do something for itself and to do something for Canada. The important business of being a standard bearer for Canada should not be lost.

Phase 2 includes the running of the Expo, the jobs which are produced specifically on the Expo site and attached local sites as well as through the influx of tourists and other industry linked to tourism.

Phase 3 includes the decommissioning of Expo, the development of legacy companies and the impacts of investment. It also includes the legacy projects. The resulting Port Lands are envisioned as an active port nestled within a vibrant mixed-use community. The site would be linked to Union Station and public and recreation spaces would be expanded and built upon. Both the pavilions and accommodation buildings provided for Expo have the potential to be converted into affordable homes. This new infrastructure would also be an attractive proposition to private developers and businesses. A robust digital infrastructure could offer opportunities for residents and businesses to be linked in the new community. An Aboriginal museum, park, art gallery, performance space, conference centre and pow-wow grounds are proposed. Of the many heritage buildings to be retained and repurposed across the Port Lands, the Hearn Building presents an opportunity to provide the City of Toronto with a new cultural anchor at the heart of its newest neighbourhood. The Hearn would become a technology hub where scientists, artists, engineers and designers work together to develop a sustainable energy future. Post Expo, the Port Lands will benefit from the continuing use of the Passenger Marine Terminal as a passenger port to Toronto from other parts of the Golden Horseshoe, Ontario, the U.S. and beyond.

## Health and Health Equity Impacts of Expo 2025 in Toronto

Large scale projects have a physical and psychological impact on health. The deleterious physical impacts can be decreased by good planning and the use of the normal health protections used in construction. The

psychological impact can be decreased by active social inclusion. The more people feel they have a stake in a project the more tolerant they are of its impact on their lives and the lower the potential health impacts.

Toronto will face construction and disruption challenges linked to Expo. It is easy to envisage the usual problems with dust and noise pollution to the Port Lands and surrounding areas. There will also be the impact of heavy machinery transportation. Dust is linked to increases in allergies and respiratory problems and noise is associated with psychological problems. There are also possible problems with commuter and other transportation delays which may be linked to the numerous projects that will all be striving for completion by 2025. Such delays are stressful and have impacts on health. Noise, dust and disruption of everyday life may disproportionately affect those around the Port Lands and those working on the Port Lands given the nature of particulate air pollution, but will also have effects further afield linked in part to commuting.

A focused strategy to use Expo 2025 developments as a way to bring Torontonians together behind a shared vision of a better, healthier version of the City may decrease the impacts of disruptions during Phase 1. But, more than that, large scale projects within a city can be a significant opportunity for improving health. Studies have demonstrated health benefits linked to major sporting events. Studies have also shown that communities that work together to deliver a common goal have better health. Community efficacy and pride are important factors in the development of resilient neighbourhoods and that benefits both physical and psychological health.

The development of an overarching strategy to use Expo2025 as a catalyst for the improvement of social cohesion and social capital in the City would decrease the negative impacts of Phase 1 of the development and may also increase any positive impacts on health of the rest of Expo 2025.

There are other possible benefits including new employment, and more and improved green space, transit and affordable housing. There may be increased revenues for the City through taxes as well as through the development of international collaborations and legacy companies.

Expo has the potential to improve health in the City through all of these areas, but there are safeguards that need to be in place to ensure this. For instance, if the jobs that are produced are mainly precarious and temporary this would not have a positive health benefit but if they are good permanent jobs then they could. Similarly the development of an inclusive mixed income community with affordable housing on Port Lands would have a more significant impact on health and health equity than the development of a new exclusive upscale neighbourhood. The development of new parkland could improve health, but it would need to be accessible to all and maintained. Similarly, the maximum benefit of transit on health is if it helps people with lower incomes commute to their jobs. The health benefits of any acceleration in transit infrastructure or any new transit hubs would depend on how they fit into the wider picture of commuter need in Toronto.

## **Health and Health Equity Implications by Social Determinant**

### **SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Greater Toronto is among the most diverse urban areas in the world. However, Toronto is experiencing deepening social, economic, and ethnic divisions. There is not one Toronto; there are several Torontos

with different trajectories. These divisions lead to health disparities.

### **Health and Health Equity Implications**

There is a health benefit derived from people feeling part of society and from being part of a project that delivers benefit to their community. Canadian research has found that a strong sense of community belonging is closely linked to better health outcomes. Canadians who report their mental health as excellent or very good are more than twice as likely to feel a sense of belonging to their local community.<sup>3</sup> The World Health Organization states that policy interventions that improve social capital would directly improve health and would improve communities.<sup>4</sup>

Expo 2025 could be an engine for improving social cohesion and social capital. Through this means it could improve the health of Toronto. A strategy to develop population participation in the concept and implementation of Expo 2025 between 2018 and 2025 could improve the health of Toronto and, if properly thought through, could specifically ensure inclusion, thus improving health and health equity.

If Expo 2025 is not truly inclusive in its development and in its legacy it runs the risk of exacerbating existing inequalities and fueling further disparities in health.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Good jobs are needed in Toronto, with more and more workers employed in low-pay, part-time, and precarious jobs. In Toronto in 2010, 23 percent of people lived with incomes below the Low Income Measure.<sup>5</sup> Precarious jobs do not offer stability and predictability, and usually do not provide high enough pay in order for workers to afford the basic necessities they require to lead a healthy life. Jobs are also more than just about income: our healthcare system depends on individuals receiving access to drug, dental and vision benefit insurance to meet these gaps.

Expo 2025 will produce jobs and it is possible to ensure they are good jobs. It also represents an opportunity to connect workers and communities to middle income jobs, while also improving our environment and helping to enhance connectedness amongst social, economic and health sectors.

### **Health Implications**

Having a good job and an adequate income is an important factor in determining if a person will enjoy good health. Research in Ontario consistently shows that individuals with lower income are likely to die earlier, spend more days in hospital, and have higher rates of chronic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease and poor mental health than individuals with higher incomes<sup>6</sup>. The benefits of good jobs extend beyond income: having job security, and a job which offers benefits such as prescription drug and long-term disability coverage, are essential to ensure individuals' resilience in the face of health problems associated with precarious work. The negative impacts of precarious work on Torontonians are a result of an increasingly unstable labour market, the chronic underfunding of community-based employment and training services, and an increasingly inaccessible housing market. Precarious work status is also correlated with the one-third of working Ontarians who lack prescription drug coverage.

### **Health Equity Implications**

In Toronto, some populations face more significant barriers to good jobs and high income than others.

Youth are particularly vulnerable to the recent shifts in the labour market away from full-time work towards precarious employment arrangements. Toronto's youth unemployment rate is 18.1 percent - the worst of any region of the province, and the widest gap between youth and adult employment, with a difference of 21.8 percent.<sup>7</sup> Inability to enter the labour market and have a decent job at an early stage of life has the potential to have health impacts throughout the life course.

Racialized individuals are more likely than others in Toronto to have a low income, and to be unemployed than non-racialized individuals.<sup>8</sup> Within racialized communities there is a further gender divide: racialized women earn 21 percent less than racialized men and 32 percent less than non-racialized men.<sup>9</sup> This puts racialized individuals at higher risk of poor health outcomes. Immigrants also have lower levels of unemployment, and this is exacerbated by de-credentialing and other barriers to employment, which may lead to a loss of pride, loss of hope and feelings of helplessness amongst residents.

Women in Canada working full time make 72 percent of what men earn on average.<sup>10</sup> Women are over-represented in low-wage jobs, representing 59 percent of minimum wage workers.<sup>11</sup> Women may be particularly at risk of the health impacts of low-income if they have children, and are single parents. Research shows that women are likely to skip meals to ensure children and other family members have enough to eat, which can lead to poor health.<sup>12</sup>

These trends become more pronounced within inner suburban neighbourhood improvement areas (NIAs), where a disproportionate share of low-income, racialized and immigrant groups are classified as "working poor."<sup>13</sup>

*With a secure and dedicated local revenue stream, Toronto's Expo 2025 could drive the development of a national model for creating equitable opportunities for goods jobs while enhancing public transit and connecting communities.*

## **Phase 1: 2018-2025**

Infrastructure projects during Phase 1 of Expo 2025 could provide the opportunity ensure that disadvantaged workers (i.e. the precariously employed and the working poor) and disadvantaged communities benefit from local transit development and construction projects. A more equitable labour market will prioritize better jobs and employment security, improved income support programs, reduced discrimination, and increasing people's access to important health and social services.

In Toronto there are currently no targeted employment strategies in relation to need (i.e. in low income neighbourhoods with comparatively high levels of unemployment, immigrant and new immigrant populations, aging apartment towers and health risks). At the provincial level, the Employment Standards Act and the Ministry of Labour's Changing Workplace (2016) report make no mention of the need to target good jobs to low-income areas. Toronto has an opportunity to follow in the steps of cities like Los Angeles, which has instituted a construction employment policy in which 40 percent of work must go to individuals who live in economically disadvantaged communities and in which journeywomen and men earn a living wage. The Coordinating Committee can also use this opportunity to build on the City's Youth Employment Action Plan to develop jobs that will enable work-based learning for youth to prepare them for the labour market. If Expo 2025 embraces new legislation linked to the use of local people to

work infrastructure projects and followed the City's decision to look at the diversity of companies before awarding contracts, it could maximize local benefits to health and health equity.

In addition to infrastructure development projects there will also be an influx of opportunities for local workers to work in local-global companies set up by international delegations in preparation for the Expo. The opportunity for the Coordinating Committee is to ensure that these companies meet defined standards for employment of these workers and that these jobs are available to people from across the City, including those living in NIAs and living on low-incomes.

## **Phase 2: Expo 2025**

During the Expo there will be opportunities for a wide variety of short-term jobs. In order to ensure that the City as a whole benefits from this influx of jobs, it will be essential that these jobs offer fair pay, and employ fair hiring practices. Employing individuals from across Toronto, and targeting those in NIAs who have higher barriers to accessing employment would be a benefit.

## **Phase 3: Legacy**

The employment legacy of Expo will be two-fold: in the lasting impact of the opportunities offered during the development stage of Expo and also in the jobs created which will remain in the new institutions and developments across the City.

The short-term jobs created by Expo 2025 for infrastructure development, hospitality, and administration could serve as important gateway opportunities for youth and other individuals currently unemployed or in precarious work. In particular, these jobs can be structured to coordinate with the City's Youth Employment Action Plan to create opportunities for youth to build skills and transition into the workforce. These jobs will also provide an opportunity for individuals living in NIAs and other areas outside the downtown core to connect with employers and coworkers from across the city, and gain experience working on an international exposition.

In the long term, Expo 2025 development projects hold the potential for creating lasting jobs in Toronto. By developing museums, recreation facilities, expanding affordable housing and transit networks, permanent jobs will be a legacy of the Expo. With careful planning and budget allocations now, there is an opportunity for an influx of good jobs that will be available to Torontonians from across the city.

## **HOUSING**

Good housing is essential for maintaining good health and well-being and developing communities where people feel safe and included. In Toronto good quality, affordable housing is out of reach for most. The costs of housing have increased much faster than Torontonians' incomes. The current supply of affordable housing units is simply too low to meet the pressing need: Forty-four percent of all renter households and 28 percent of owner households spend over 30 percent of their income on housing.<sup>14</sup> The waiting list for social housing continues to grow: As of March 2016, 97,433 households or 177,502 people were on the waiting list. Nearly 40 percent of these households include children under the age of 17.<sup>15</sup>

A homelessness survey estimated that there were 5,253 homeless people in Toronto as of April 2013.<sup>16</sup>

Due to declining funding for social housing providers and housing agencies, the quality of existing social housing and low-cost rental units has deteriorated. It is estimated that Toronto Community Housing alone will require \$2.6 billion in capital funding over 10 years, without which 91 percent of their units will deteriorate into critical condition.<sup>17</sup>

### **Health Implications**

Access to housing that is affordable, accessible, safe and in good repair has a direct, significant impact on the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. It also affects public health care costs. Research shows that poor housing conditions can increase people's chances of ill health and disease.<sup>18</sup> It can increase chances of developing respiratory conditions such as asthma and negative health effects from factors such as dust mites, cockroaches, heat and cold issues, and poor ventilation.<sup>19</sup> Also, unaffordable housing can increase stress and financial constraints.<sup>20</sup>

### **Health Equity Implications**

The health effects of poor housing disproportionately affect those with low income. Because the current housing system offers so few options to people with low incomes, many find their choices are limited to aging, low-quality rental buildings within less attractive neighbourhoods, which can further contribute to poor health. In this way, the housing system contributes to rising urban neighbourhood polarization, segregation, and concentrations of poverty.<sup>21</sup> Particularly, Aboriginal peoples, racialized persons, newcomers, seniors, youth, and single-mother families are more likely than the general population to live in housing need.<sup>22</sup>

The proposed Expo site could become an important new community where people with a mix of incomes live in a range of good housing types as members of vibrant neighbourhoods. A plan that addresses the issue of housing unaffordability and ensures improved access to affordable housing in legacy of Expo 2025 would significantly enhance the health of Torontonians.

Affordable housing is an important investment in people's health. Research shows that providing people who are homeless with permanent housing and support significantly improves their physical and mental health and reduces their use of health and emergency services. Investments in housing are cost-effective: Every dollar spent on housing investments results in a \$1.52 increase in real GDP.<sup>23</sup>

*The proposed Expo 2025 plan to revitalize the under-utilized Port Lands into a vibrant mixed-use residential, business and commercial area has the potential to improve the health and health equity of Torontonians.*

## **Phase 1: 2018-2025**

The Expo site planning would need to be integrated into long-term city planning in order to meet critical public policy goals. For maximum health benefit, leading up to Expo the Coordinating Committee has the opportunity to set up a clear strategic plan for the Port Lands site to achieve the proposed housing goal and monitor the progress of a vibrant, healthy communities development. The Committee should also consider working towards the goal of improving access to affordable housing for low-income, marginalized



populations by offering new social housing units and various affordable housing options.

Expo 2025 will be a stimulus for the completion of proposed housing and relevant projects in the Port Lands within the next eight years. To build a clean, healthy site for housing and community development, the Expo plan can leverage existing projects for flood protection and contaminated soil remediation like the Lower Don project by Waterfront Toronto which will naturalize the Don River in order to protect the area from flooding and service infrastructure into the Port Lands site by 2023. Prior to and during the Expo, the Committee should closely monitor the Expo site to ensure it remains clean and safe and offers a healthy residential area for current and future residents.

## **Phase 2: Expo 2025**

During the Expo, the Port Lands will transform into a new vibrant Toronto neighbourhood. New residents will enjoy a neighbourhood which is centrally located, well-connected to transit, and has a wide range of recreation and cultural facilities. The establishment of this neighbourhood will be a cornerstone for moving forward further mixed-income housing developments in the area.

## **Phase 3: Legacy**

Both pavilions and accommodation buildings developed for Expo could afterward be converted into affordable homes. Residents of the post-Expo Port Lands would benefit directly from long-term legacies of Expo 2025 including high-quality public transit, digital infrastructure, urban parks, public spaces, cultural activities, as well as affordable housing – each of them important for people’s health.

The new affordable housing units that would be the legacy of Expo 2025 are much-needed as Toronto works towards the provincial target of ending chronic homelessness in ten years. With the updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, Ontario is also committed to provide more affordable, suitable and adequate homes for Ontarians. The *Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016* would, if passed, help increase the supply of affordable housing through various measures including inclusionary zoning, allowing municipalities to require developers to set aside a percentage of new affordable units in new buildings. The prospect of enhanced funding beyond 2018, under the national housing strategy that is currently being prepared, could support new affordable rental housing on the Expo 2025 site. Much of the Port Lands is also publicly owned. There is a great opportunity for Toronto, Ontario, and Canada to meet the housing needs of many individuals and families, especially those from marginalized groups.

To achieve the long-term goal, it is important to ensure that social housing and affordable housing units stay clean, safe, and in good repair for many more years and decades after the Expo. Long-term legacy benefits for the Expo site will be realized only when there is a concerted and continued effort to maintain stable, affordable, and quality housing for all residents.

## **TRANSIT**

Expo 2025 presents an opportunity to help Toronto prioritize much-needed transit infrastructure development in the GTA. Currently, residents of the GTA commute an average of over one hour per day which is longer than the average in any other city in Ontario.<sup>24</sup> The City of Toronto’s current plans to expand

the subway and LRT lines are ambitious and will significantly improve the well-being of Torontonians. The development of the Don Corridor ensures that with proper planning North to South and East to West cycle routes are better linked. And the development of a new GO station provides commuters an alternative way to get to the part of the City they need to.

### **Health Implications**

Access to high quality, convenient and affordable public transportation can have significant positive health benefits. Adults who use public transit are more physically active and may have lower BMIs than those who drive. Further, shorter commute times have been shown to allow people to spend more time on physical activity, preparing food, eating with their families, and sleeping.<sup>25</sup>

### **Health Equity Implications**

In Toronto, not everyone has access to high-quality public transit. For those who don't have access, this can have inequitable impacts on their health. Torontonians living in the inner suburbs, which have higher poverty rates, have poorer access to transit than those living in the downtown core, where the highest concentration of wealth is found in the city. This is a striking inequity, given that despite poorer access in low-income neighbourhoods, low-income commuters are more likely than high-income commuters to take public transit to get to work.<sup>26</sup>

Toronto's public transit system faces a number of accessibility issues for older people and for those with disabilities. Only 34 of Toronto's 69 subway and rapid transit stations are accessible by elevator, and 20 percent of bus stops are not fully accessible because of barriers preventing bus ramps from being deployed, such as narrow sidewalks or stops where a concrete bus stop pad has not yet been poured. For Torontonians with mobility constraints this lack of accessibility to the TTC means they are at risk of social isolation and facing challenges getting to work, to the grocery store, or to accessing health care services.

*With targeted revenue and consideration of existing City of Toronto plans, Expo 2025 can drive forward a health enhancing plan for the City that would improve transit in under-served parts of Toronto, ensure all communities are linked to the downtown core, and make transit affordable and accessible for all Torontonians.*

## **Phase 1: 2018-2025**

Expo 2025 will provide an opportunity to develop Toronto's transit system into one that meets the needs of both visitors and residents. The City is currently taking impressive steps to improve transit, with the Union Pearson Express, plans to complete the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension, the Eglinton Crosstown and Finch West LRTs, which will dramatically open up the city. With Expo 2025, the City will have the opportunity to develop the downtown Yonge relief line, which will bring visitors down to the Port Lands for Expo, and increase the capacity of the TTC and bring more commuters from the suburbs into the downtown core. The City will need to develop a transit strategy which aligns with Toronto's current and future needs. This will mean prioritizing neighbourhoods with poor transit access, ensuring fare affordability for those who need to use transit the most, and developing a bike lane network throughout

the city.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* requires that transit across the province be 100 percent fully accessible by 2025, the year of the Expo. The TTC currently does not have the capital funds necessary to meet this goal.<sup>27</sup> The Coordinating Committee has the opportunity, with Expo transit infrastructure developments, to work alongside existing city projects to help ensure Toronto is able to meet this important goal of universal accessibility.

The substantial transit infrastructure projects which will be slated prior to 2025 will necessitate a strategy to mitigate these impacts. Prior to the Expo, the infrastructure developments will lead to further traffic and transit congestion in our already overburdened transit and road networks. The expansion of bus routes and bicycle lanes throughout the city will help ease some of this congestion, but will not be able to eliminate it. By committing to a long-term vision to improve Toronto's transit network alongside transit development required to host Expo 2025, the City will engage all Torontonians in working towards a better, healthier future for Toronto.

## Phase 2: Expo 2025

Expo will be host to over 30 million visitors in a six month period. The increased congestion in the City from these visitors will be mitigated by transit developments in Phase 1. Careful consideration is needed, however, to ensure transit routes run with increased frequency to ensure both visitors and residents are able to move efficiently throughout the city.

## Phase 3: Legacy

The legacy of Expo 2025 to Toronto's transit system will be substantial, but to get it right the Coordinating Committee can take an evidence-based approach to ensuring that transit is expanded in the city to equitably meet the needs of Torontonians both during and after the Expo. Careful analysis is needed of how best to improve access to NIAs from the downtown core, and how to ensure NIAs and other currently under-served areas are linked with essential services.

## GREEN SPACE

Access to good-quality green space in urban areas provides significant health benefits for residents, visitors, and communities. Good parks are safe, clean, and well-maintained and they provide a sense of community and access to washrooms and other amenities. In Toronto, access to good-quality green space is not evenly distributed across lower income and higher income neighbourhoods.<sup>28</sup>

### Health Implications

Evidence shows that there is a positive link between the built environment and health in urban areas.<sup>29</sup> Improving access to and quality of parks in cities has significant health benefits. Green spaces improve air quality, moderate poor mental health outcomes, reduce the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases and improve physical health.<sup>30</sup> A systematic review conducted by Toronto Public Health<sup>31</sup> found that green space improves urban residents' physical health, mental health and well-being and that frequent

access to nearby green space is important, especially for children. Proximity to green space is critical: the closer you are, the more likely you are going to use it. The review also pointed out the importance of quality of green space: green space that is perceived to be unsafe and poorly maintained does not provide health benefits. Green spaces in urban areas can also boost social connectivity by promoting meaningful engagement between residents, their communities and nature.

### **Health Equity Implications**

In Toronto, access to green space is not equal for all. Wealthy neighbourhoods offer better access to good-quality parks for residents, and this unequal access can contribute to further health disadvantage for low income individuals and families. Studies show that while all segments of the population benefit from exposure to green space, children and low income groups benefit the most from nearby green spaces.<sup>32</sup> Research also shows that populations exposed to the greenest environments have the lowest levels of health inequality related to income deprivation.<sup>33</sup> Building good-quality parks in NIAs and areas with affordable housing - like the proposed Expo Port Lands - could offer a considerable opportunity for the city to reduce health inequities.

*The revitalization of the Port Lands into a usable green space could significantly improve health and health equity in Toronto. A plan that improves access to green space and quality of urban parks in the Expo site and in marginalized areas throughout the city would contribute to the health of residents within and outside the Port Lands and fundamentally change the face of urban life in Toronto.*

## **Phase 1: 2018-2025**

In preparing for Expo 2025, the Coordinating Committee should ensure that the plan for building public green space is defined and directed in association with the development of other projects aiming to achieve the City's priorities, such as creating and maintaining a green city, connectivity and inclusiveness.

## **Phase 2: Expo 2025**

The urban parks at the Expo site would serve as a representation of Toronto's commitment to go green and allow visitors to view Toronto as a leading city that is equally green and urban. In addition, the Indigenous museum and artwork placed throughout the park would engage visitors in a significant part of Canadian history and introduces them to an important sector of our culture and art. During the Expo, in order for the sustainability of the parks' future use, it is important that the site is monitored closely to mitigate any potential harmful impacts from air pollution, litter and trash. To maintain clean and sustainable communities for the Expo site, there is an opportunity to create local jobs.

## **Phase 3: Legacy**

Added green space would become an important asset for Torontonians. It would diversify and expand the neighbourhood and provide chances for residents to actively engage with their community. With

more affordable housing for low-income households in the Port Lands area, residents of social housing and affordable homes would benefit from accessing nearby parks in their neighbourhoods. The legacy of such a park could mean the creation of community gardens and space for local markets that provide an important opportunity to promote the power of food by connecting communities with more positive food choices. The proposed Indigenous museum would be a valuable legacy of Expo 2025. The museum would create an interactive way for Canadians and tourists alike to learn more about Indigenous art as well as our colonial past. The museum would enhance Toronto's natural and cultural heritage as well as promote Indigenous employment and business that enhances health equity in Toronto.

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