

TORONTO LEADS AGAIN

Innovation, Jobs, Talent & Prosperity

Build an economy where more Torontonians can learn, create, own, trade, build businesses and prosper in the AI age.

Campaign Policy Proposal - Not a City of Toronto Publication



Jamie Atkinson for Mayor of Toronto

Public release | August 2026

People first. Families first. Machines serve. Democracy decides. Nature sets the constraint. Art gives the future meaning.

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Why this matters

The Economic Watering Well

Government should build conditions from which many businesses and people can grow: skills, infrastructure, compute access, procurement pathways, financing navigation, research connections, trade access and simpler public interfaces.

Prosperity means progression

The goal is not only more jobs. It is more people moving from learning to practice, proof, earnings, advancement, ownership and business formation.

Executive Summary

Innovation, Jobs, Talent & Prosperity is an economic-development strategy built around progression. Toronto should be a city where people can move from learning to paid experience, from paid experience to skilled work, from skilled work to entrepreneurship and ownership.

The Economic Watering Well captures the approach: government should build conditions that help many firms and workers grow - talent, infrastructure, compute, procurement pathways, export support and easier navigation - rather than attempt to predict a handful of winners.

The first term connects Project Six, AI literacy, skilled trades, creative industries, small business, employment lands and supplier development to the real investment created by housing, transportation, energy and city-building.

Major commitments

- Launch an Opportunity Ladder connecting education, paid experience, skills and work.
- Use Project Six for paid civic missions and portfolio-building opportunities.
- Create small-business Economic Watering Wells combining navigation, tools, procurement and market access.
- Develop supplier pathways around housing, rail, energy, screen and public infrastructure investment.
- Protect productive employment lands and support advanced manufacturing and physical AI.

- Pair automation with worker transition, training and retention strategies.

How this fits the governing program

Financial treatment: first-term actions in this report must reconcile to Report 03. Unsigned partner funding and unverified technology savings are not booked in the municipal base case.

How to read commitments and numbers

Status	Meaning
OFFICIAL BASELINE	Current public evidence or an inherited program.
ADOPTED CITY TARGET	A target already approved by the City; not a new campaign promise.
CAMPAIGN COMMITMENT	A first-term action proposed by the campaign, subject to lawful Council/budget authority.
CAMPAIGN TARGET	A measurable result the campaign proposes to pursue.
PLANNING ASSUMPTION / SCENARIO	A decision-support input, not a guarantee.
PARTNER-DEPENDENT OBJECTIVE	Requires another government, agency, utility, institution or private partner.
LONG-RANGE ASPIRATION	Part of the 25-year direction; future Councils retain democratic authority.

Key public baselines and planning anchors

Indicator	Value	Date / status	Use in this report
Jobs in Toronto	~1.624M	2025 Official survey baseline	Current economic scale.
Net new jobs	23,410	2025 Official survey result	One-year result; do not extrapolate mechanically.
Youth unemployment age 15-24	16.8%	Apr. 2026 Official reported baseline	Comparator: 9.8% in April 2019.
Screen-sector direct annual spend	Up to ~\$2.6B	Current strategy high case Sector baseline	Direct spend, not City revenue/payroll.
Screen workforce	~40,000	Current strategy Sector baseline	Skilled workforce scale.
Studio space	Almost 3M sq ft	Current strategy Sector baseline	Industrial/creative capacity.
New cultural-space target	1M sq ft	2025-35 Official target	Track secured/construction/opened.

Indicator	Value	Date / status	Use in this report
Additional City culture investment target	\$35M	2025-35 Official target	Inherited target; separate from campaign increment.

Toronto Today and Inherited Work

Current Conditions

This strategy begins from the programs, infrastructure and conditions Toronto already has. Existing work is identified as the inherited baseline; new campaign commitments are stated separately. Baseline facts that control the plan Baseline What the evidence says Employment 1,623,710 jobs in 2025, up 23,410 (1.5%); 1,243,620 full-time and 380,090 part-time. [JOB1] Businesses 74,560 establishments, up 1.9%; 5,160 new establishments in 2025. [JOB1] Geography Downtown 664,650 jobs (40.9%); Employment Areas 381,270 jobs and down 6,490 year over year; manufacturing/warehousing employment down 4,000 (3.1%). [JOB1] Construction labour Ontario may require 126,100 hires by 2035; expected entrants could still leave a 27,300-worker gap. [JOB2] AI ecosystem Vector's Ontario snapshot reports 5,813 AI jobs created and 71,167 professionals requiring AI skills - evidence that diffusion into many occupations matters. [AI1] Youth Youth unemployment was 16.8% in Toronto in April 2026; the City system already employs >16,000 youth annually. [YOUTH1] Throughout this report, official baselines, campaign calculations, campaign proposals and partner-dependent decisions are identified separately.

Vision and Outcomes

The strategy is organized around a small set of outcomes that residents and delivery partners can understand and measure.

- More pathways into good-paying work.
- Small businesses able to navigate City opportunities and advanced tools.
- Employment lands that remain productive as the economy changes.
- Toronto-owned intellectual property and firms reaching global markets.
- Universities, colleges, apprenticeships and employers connected into practical talent pipelines.

Visualizing the Strategy

Selected campaign visuals from the earlier reference reports are retained here because they explain relationships that are harder to understand in prose alone. They are explanatory illustrations; the surrounding text and tables define commitments, costs, authority and status.

**Jamie
Atkinson**

Toronto Talent Pipeline.

A strong city grows talent from education to work to entrepreneurship.



Toronto Talent Pipeline: connect early learning, post-secondary education, AI literacy, skilled trades, work-integrated learning, entrepreneurship and long-term careers.



Opportunity should be broad enough to connect community life with the new robotics and AI economy.

Strategic Priorities

The prosperity strategy focuses on pathways that move people and firms from capability to paid opportunity, productivity, ownership and export growth.

1. Opportunity Ladder and paid pathways

Toronto's economic strategy should be judged by whether residents can move from learning to paid work, from entry-level work to skilled work, and from employment to ownership or entrepreneurship. The Opportunity Ladder

links City-supported training, procurement, apprenticeships and employer partnerships into visible progression routes.

Programs would publish eligibility, paid-work outcomes and progression measures rather than counting participation alone. The City would use its convening and purchasing power while leaving education credentials and many labour-market programs with the appropriate provincial and institutional partners.

2. Project Six youth/early-career missions

Project Six gives young and early-career Torontonians paid opportunities to work on real civic missions: housing, climate, AI, public realm, culture, accessibility and neighbourhood improvement. Participants should leave with a portfolio, references and practical experience rather than an unpaid line on a résumé.

The program would start with bounded cohorts tied to actual departmental or partner projects. Expansion depends on completion quality, participant outcomes and demonstrated demand from employers or institutions.

3. Robotics/trades shared equipment and training

Advanced construction and maintenance require both traditional trade mastery and new skills in robotics, controls, sensing, digital fabrication and systems integration. Toronto can convene colleges, unions, employers and equipment providers around shared training and demonstration capacity.

The goal is augmentation and higher productivity, not a promise that machines will replace skilled people. Training should lead to recognized experience, safer work and real employer demand.

4. Economic Watering Wells for SMEs

Small firms often need access to customers, infrastructure, advice, tools and networks more than another broad slogan about innovation. Economic Watering Wells are locally accessible points where entrepreneurs can reach procurement guidance, shared tools, mentorship, export support and connections to institutions.

The City would build on existing business services and community partners rather than create duplicative offices. Each location or network would be evaluated by firm survival, revenue growth, procurement participation and job creation.

5. Civic AI translator roles

Many organizations need people who can translate between frontline work, policy, data, procurement and AI tools. Toronto can create civic AI translator pathways that help public servants, nonprofits and small businesses redesign workflows responsibly instead of merely purchasing software.

Roles would emphasize problem definition, accessibility, privacy, human oversight and measurement. This creates a practical middle layer between technical specialists and the people who understand the work itself.

6. Supplier development around housing, rail, energy and screen production

Toronto's housing, rail, energy and creative ambitions can become a demand signal for local suppliers if procurement is transparent and appropriately scaled. Supplier-development programs would help qualified firms understand standards, form consortia, demonstrate capability and compete for work without guaranteeing contracts.

The objective is a deeper local industrial ecosystem that can serve Toronto and export elsewhere. Trade-resilience measures in Report 15 extend this logic to tariff and supply-chain disruption; Report 17 addresses AI job disruption and worker transition across the broader economy.

7. Procurement challenges with transparent evaluation

Well-designed challenge procurements can invite firms to solve a defined public problem while preserving fair evaluation and measurable outcomes. Toronto would use them selectively where conventional specification-based procurement would prematurely lock in a solution.

Challenges must still comply with procurement law, accessibility, cybersecurity and value-for-money requirements. Pilot results and evaluation criteria would be published so innovation does not become opaque sole-sourcing.

8. Worker transition and economic security before automation scale

Automation policy is incomplete if it begins after a worker loses a job. AI can also weaken entry-level hiring or change tasks without an immediate layoff. Report 17 establishes the dedicated transition framework: early-warning data, worker navigation, paid pathways, protection of the first rung, responsible City workforce adoption and coordination when AI and tariff shocks overlap.

For the wider economy, Toronto would coordinate with labour, colleges, employers and senior-government programs to help workers move into growing occupations. The Intellectual Lifeboat provides the human-capability principle; this report turns it into employment pathways.

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Targets, Scenarios and Planning Assumptions

Planning Assumptions and Key Calculations

Show the arithmetic and its limitations so optimistic assumptions cannot quietly become promises. Calculation register Calculation / model Method / interpretation Employment growth 23,410 / 1,600,300 2024 jobs = 1.46%, matching the reported ~1.5% year-over-year increase.

Employment-area signal Employment Areas lost 6,490 jobs while citywide gained 23,410: the spatial/industrial base moved opposite the aggregate trend, supporting targeted industrial retention/productivity policy rather than relying on headline job growth. Ontario construction gap 126,100 hiring requirement - 98,800 expected young new entrants = 27,300 potential gap by 2035. [JOB2] Skills diffusion A city with >1.6M jobs cannot transform through a few thousand AI specialists; the strategy will measure AI/robotics competence within construction, health, public service, finance, arts and manufacturing. Planning arithmetic is used as decision support. Where official forecasts or project-specific engineering supersede a campaign screening calculation, the official or engineered value governs.

Implementation and Delivery

First 100 Days

The opening 100 days connect existing workforce and business programs into visible Opportunity Ladder pathways, identify near-term employer needs and select paid mission or supplier-development pilots.

- Publish a talent and opportunity pathway map across youth, trades, AI, creative and entrepreneurship programs.
- Select first Project Six paid civic missions with measurable learning and public outcomes.
- Create a single small-business navigation route for procurement, export, AI and tariff supports.
- Identify priority supplier-development opportunities tied to planned public investment.
- Launch an employment-land and advanced-manufacturing retention review.

2027-2030 First-Term Action Plan

During 2027-2030, the Opportunity Ladder connects paid pathways, trades and AI skills, small-business capability, supplier development and export growth to measurable employment and productivity outcomes.

Phase	Action	Lead / authority	Resident result
Connect	Opportunity Ladder and paid pathways	Economic Development / partners	Residents can see realistic routes from learning to work.
Mission	Project Six paid civic work	City / institutions / employers	Young people build portfolios and public value.
Enable	Economic Watering Wells for SMEs	City / BIAs / partners	Firms reach tools, procurement and markets more easily.
Develop	Local suppliers around major city-building sectors	City / industry / labour	More public and private investment supports Toronto jobs.
Transition	Worker training before automation scale	Employers / labour / colleges / City convening	Productivity gains do not simply become displacement shocks.

2031-2051 Long-Term Direction

The long-term prosperity objective is a city where more people can turn skill into income, income into security and ideas into Toronto-owned firms and intellectual property that compete globally.

- Build Toronto as an AI-enablement and physical-economy city, not merely a headquarters location.
- Expand export, ownership and IP pathways so more value created in Toronto is retained locally.
- Use long-term infrastructure investment to support durable sector clusters and skilled career ladders.

Risks and dependencies

Risk	Specific mitigation
Training is disconnected from jobs	Tie programs to employers, paid placements and observable demand.
Public procurement favours only large incumbents	Use transparent challenges, supplier development and proportionate requirements.
Automation concentrates gains	Require transition planning, shared productivity benefits and access to tools.
Employment lands erode	Track conversions, job density and infrastructure needs in productive districts.
Economic strategy becomes generic promotion	Publish sector-specific actions and measurable outcomes.

Review and renewal

Economic programs will be reviewed against sustained employment, progression and firm outcomes; programs that generate activity without measurable opportunity will be redesigned or ended.

Accountability and Public Reporting

Performance framework

Prosperity reporting will track employment and participation, youth pathways, paid placements, apprenticeship/training progression, small-business outcomes, supplier participation and export/investment results.

Metric	Baseline	Target / direction	Horizon	Responsible body	Reporting
Paid pathway / work-integrated placements	Establish program baseline	Increase	First term	Economic Development / partners	Annual
SMEs receiving procurement/export/AI navigation	Establish baseline	Increase and track outcomes	First term	Economic Development	Quarterly
Employment-land jobs and productive space	Official baseline	Protect/improve productive capacity	Long term	City Planning / Economic Development	Annual
Workers supported through designated automation transitions	Establish baseline	100% of covered pilots/plans	Ongoing	Employers / labour / City convening	Annual
Toronto firms entering new export markets	Establish baseline	Increase	First term	Economic Development / partners	Annual

Sources and Notes

Primary public sources are listed by organization and title. Campaign commitments, targets, scenarios and long-range aspirations are distinguished from adopted government policy throughout the report.

- [City of Toronto - Sidewalks to Skylines](#)
- [City of Toronto - Toronto Employment Survey](#)