

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
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January 30, 2026

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS) is a multiservice charitable organization with services across the City of Toronto – childcare, home care, employment, housing, youth services, newcomer services and much more. We welcome this opportunity to share our recommendations for the 2026 Ontario budget. Our recommendations are based on engagement with low-income program participants, who have lived experience with poverty and unemployment.

**Affordable Housing:**

Our program participants are facing a deepening housing crisis in Toronto, with people increasingly becoming homeless. We ask you to reinstate and expand provincial rent control to buildings in Ontario built after 2018 to stabilize the lives of people, communities and local economies. Construction of new deeply affordable housing must be a provincial priority going forward. The private market has shown that it is incapable of providing a reasonable supply of safe, secure and affordable rental housing, so we ask that your government provide the necessary support for public and private non-profit rental housing construction and operation.

**Employment Supports:**

With youth unemployment at critically high levels, Ontario must reinvest in proven, targeted youth employment programs that deliver results. We urge the Province to restore three high-impact initiatives: **Summer Jobs Service** (ended in 2015), which supported students to secure meaningful summer employment; **Youth Job Connection** (ended in 2025 in Toronto), which provided intensive supports to youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET); and **Youth Job Connection Summer** (ended in summer 2024), which helped high-school students with higher needs find and sustain their first summer jobs. These programs offered intentional, age-appropriate supports that the current Integrated Employment Services (IES) model does not adequately provide for young people. Investing in youth today is an investment in Ontario's future workforce—reducing long-term unemployment, strengthening labour market attachment, and driving inclusive economic prosperity across the province.

**Minimum Wage:**

TNGCS repeats our call to increase the provincial minimum wage, especially given rapidly rising inflation. Many of our participants are increasingly food insecure. Statistics Canada research shows that one in four people in Ontario faces food insecurity. Further, we know that food security leads to housing insecurity. This situation would drastically improve if the Ontario Government would increase the

minimum wage and index it to inflation. The Ontario Living Wage Network now puts the living wage in the GTA at \$27.20 as of November 2025.

**Social Assistance:**

We note that the deep poverty line adjusted for inflation is now \$1,725 a month. People on Ontario Works (OW) fall far below this line, with single people receiving just \$733 a month, which leaves them unable to maintain any form of housing. Doubling OW would still leave people below this line but would be an improvement, especially as inflation continues to rise. Although tying the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to annual inflation was a step in the right direction, ODSP rates are still below the deep poverty line. Doubling ODSP would bring rates to the poverty line plus adding around \$500 to account for the additional costs associated with living with a disability. We urge you to tie OW to inflation as well. It has been estimated that over 30% of OW recipients have a disability that prevents them from working (Source: ODSP Action Coalition) but people face barriers to accessing ODSP, especially since 2.5 million Ontarians do not have a family doctor.

**Childcare:**

Our organization runs 11 childcare centres across Toronto and we hear frequently from parents who desperately need affordable childcare. We are still waiting for the \$10 a day childcare to be rolled out in Toronto. At present parents are paying between \$19 and \$22 a day. We are concerned that this agreement expires at the end of 2026, and urge you to fully implement \$10 a day childcare across the province.

**Health Care:**

As a non-profit provider of home care and other health services, TNGCS hears from our low-income program participants that they need non-profit health care services open to the public and value receiving care at their local public hospital. We urge your government to follow the Canada Health Act and keep all health care services public. Ontario funds our health care services at the lowest rate per capita in Canada. We spend \$1,025 less per person than the average of the other provinces. Multiplied by Ontario's population (2023) of ~ 15 million people this equals a shortfall of \$15.4 billion. Imagine if we even came close to the average of the rest of the provinces. Your government also funds our public hospitals at the lowest rate in Canada. Our public hospital funding is \$439 per person less than the average of the rest of the provinces. Multiplied by 15 million (Ontario population 2023) this equals a shortfall of \$6.6 billion. Ontario can do so much better to secure quality public healthcare than it is now.

We look forward to your reply and are happy to meet with you in person to discuss our recommendations in more detail.

Sincerely,



Bill Sinclair  
President & CEO