

NEW BRUNSWICK HOUSING SUMMIT 2022

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Housing Canada





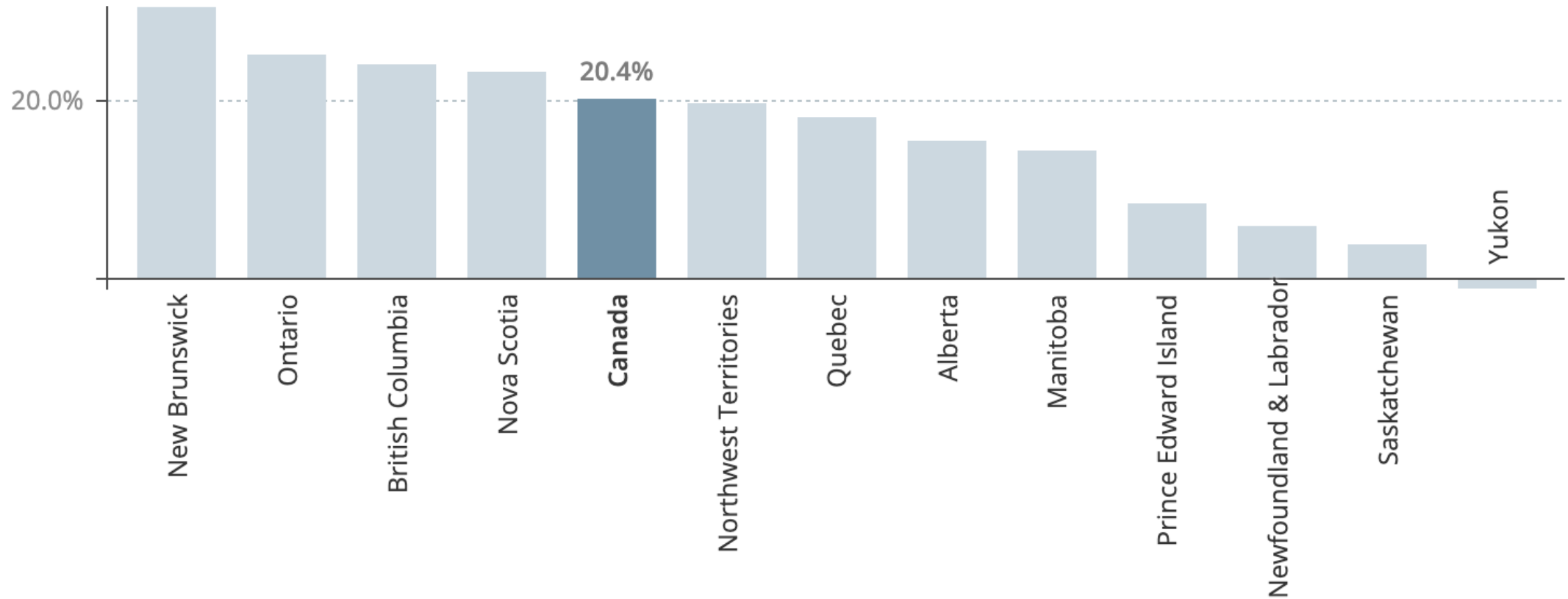
CANADA IS EXPERIENCING A
HOMELESSNESS CRISIS OF
PROPORTIONS UNSEEN "SINCE THE
GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930S"
(LAIRD, 2007)



“POOR HOUSEHOLDS GENERATE A
‘SOCIAL NEED’ FOR HOUSING RATHER
THAN A ‘MARKET DEMAND’ FOR IT. A
HOUSING SYSTEM BASED ON THE
MARKET MECHANISM CANNOT
ADEQUATELY - IF AT ALL - RESPOND
TO SOCIAL NEED.”
(HULCHANKSI, 2006)

Change in average house price by province

This chart shows the one year change in average house prices across Canada*



CHANGE MAR 2021 – MAR 2022



Average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Canada has soared 13.7 per cent from the start of the year

“DEMAND ON THE RENTAL MARKET HAS REALLY TAKEN OFF AS A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT WERE WOULD-BE BUYERS ARE NOW FORCED TO RENT.”



WE NEED
TWENTY 5%
SOLUTIONS

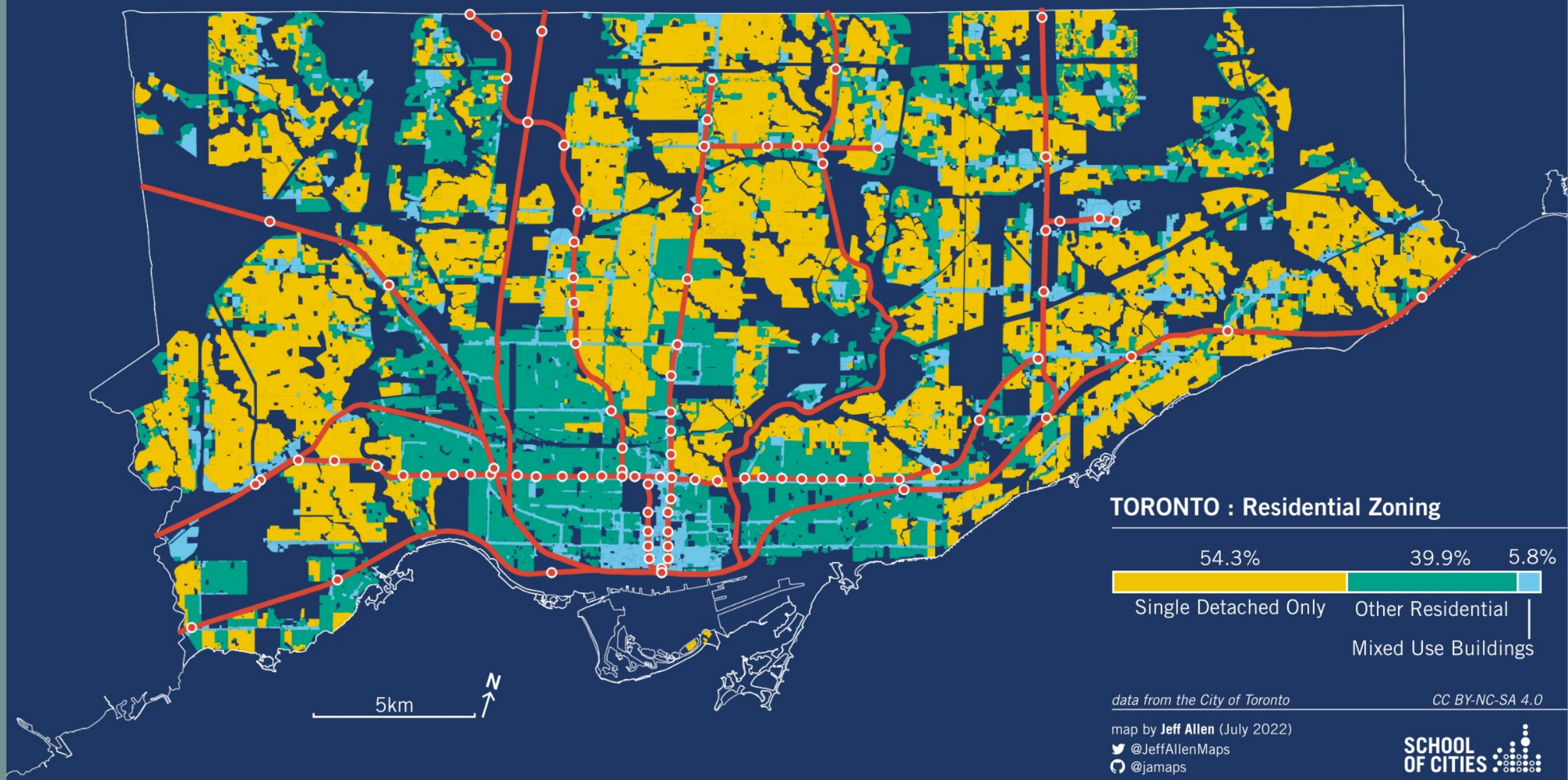
HERE ARE
THREE

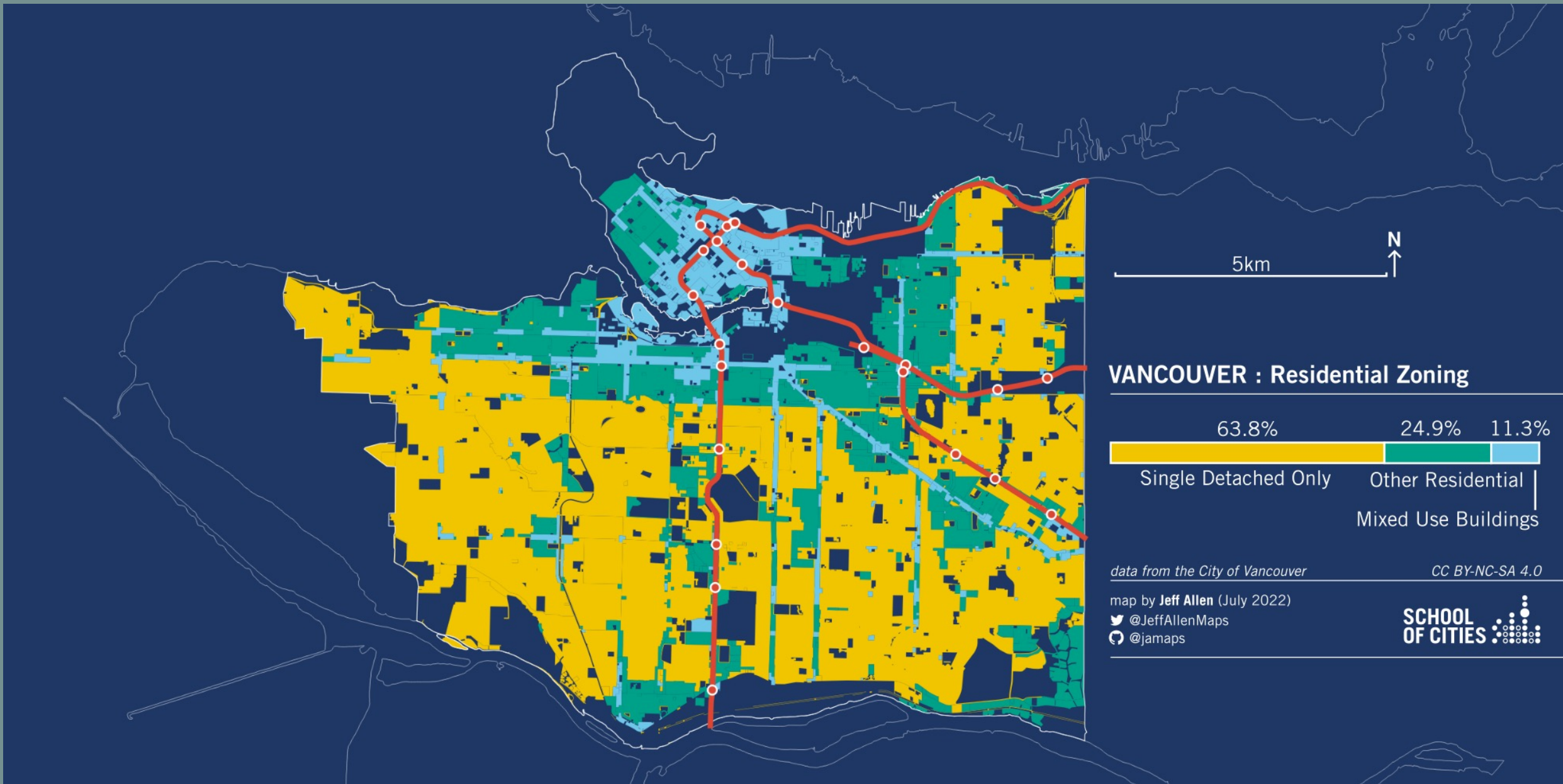
1. UNLOCK NEW SUPPLY
WITHIN CITIES
2. REVISIT AND ACT ON THE
HOMELESSNESS CRISIS
3. ADDRESS INCOME
INEQUALITY



1. UNLOCK NEW SUPPLY *WITHIN* CITIES

- **Problem:** most land in Canadian cities is zoned for low-density residential uses
 - Single family homes
 - *May or may not* allow duplexes etc. as minor variations
 - **Excludes** row houses, apartments, condos and most forms of commercial development





EDMONTON : Residential Zoning



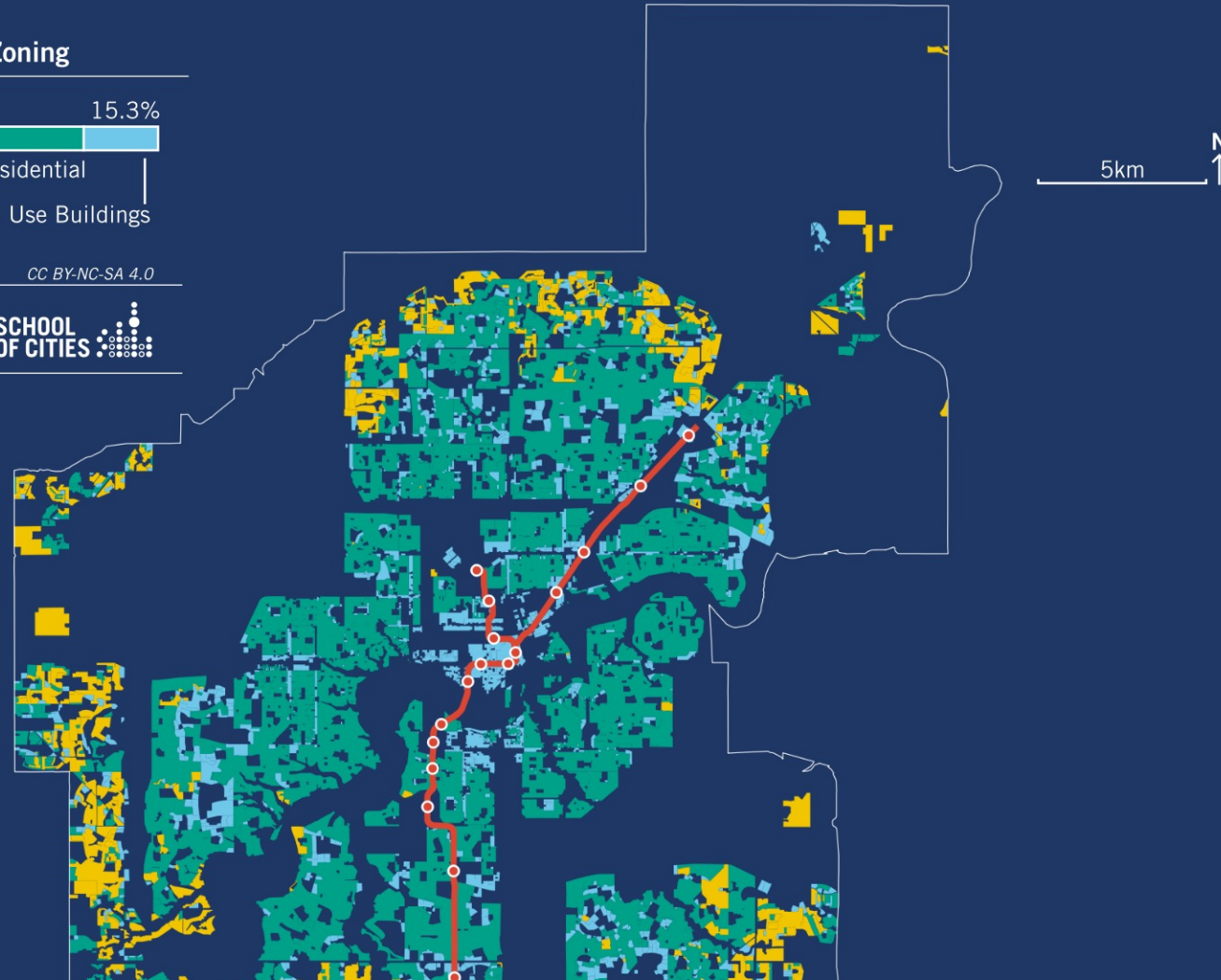
data from the City of Edmonton

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map by Jeff Allen (July 2022)

@JeffAllenMaps

@jamaps



EDMONTON'S MAIN RESIDENTIAL
ZONES ALLOW DUPLEXES, ROW HOUSES
AND SECONDARY SUITES AS OF RIGHT

PROBLEMS WITH THE 'YELLOW BELT'

- Very difficult to *add* housing supply *within* most of existing urban area
- Mandates low densities – and thus automobile dependence
- Drives up prices of land zoned for higher densities
- Creates a 'gap' in supply between single detached homes and high-rise towers



‘MISSING MIDDLE’ TERM COINED BY CANADIAN
ARCHITECT DANIEL PAROLEK IN 2010

EXAMPLE: ALLOWING SECONDARY SUITES

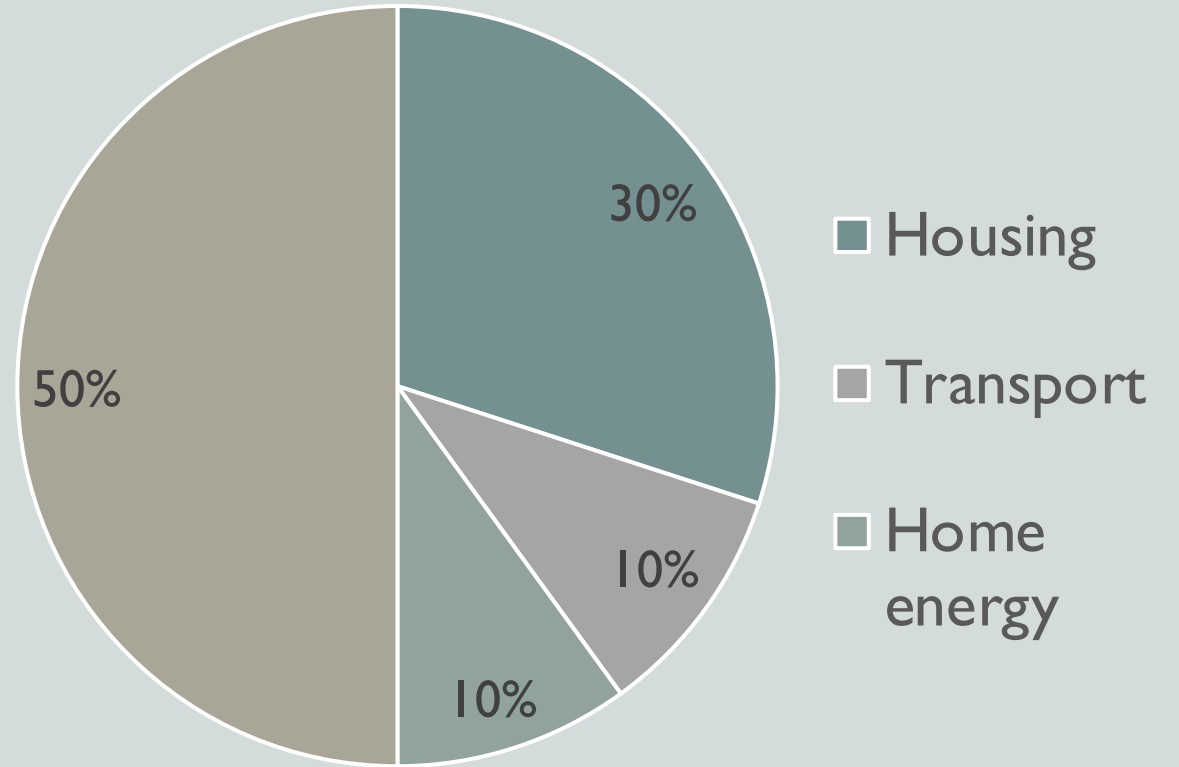
- Basement suites (attached)
- Garage suites (detached)
- Increases supply of lower-cost market rentals
- Increases density (gently) in existing neighbourhoods
- Supports aging-in-place and multi-generational living



LOCATION EFFICIENCY

- Mixed use, mixed density urban neighbourhoods are *efficient locations*
- Support access to transit, services, and employment *within* neighbourhoods
- Reduce total cost of living by reducing transport costs

A HOUSEHOLD BUDGET

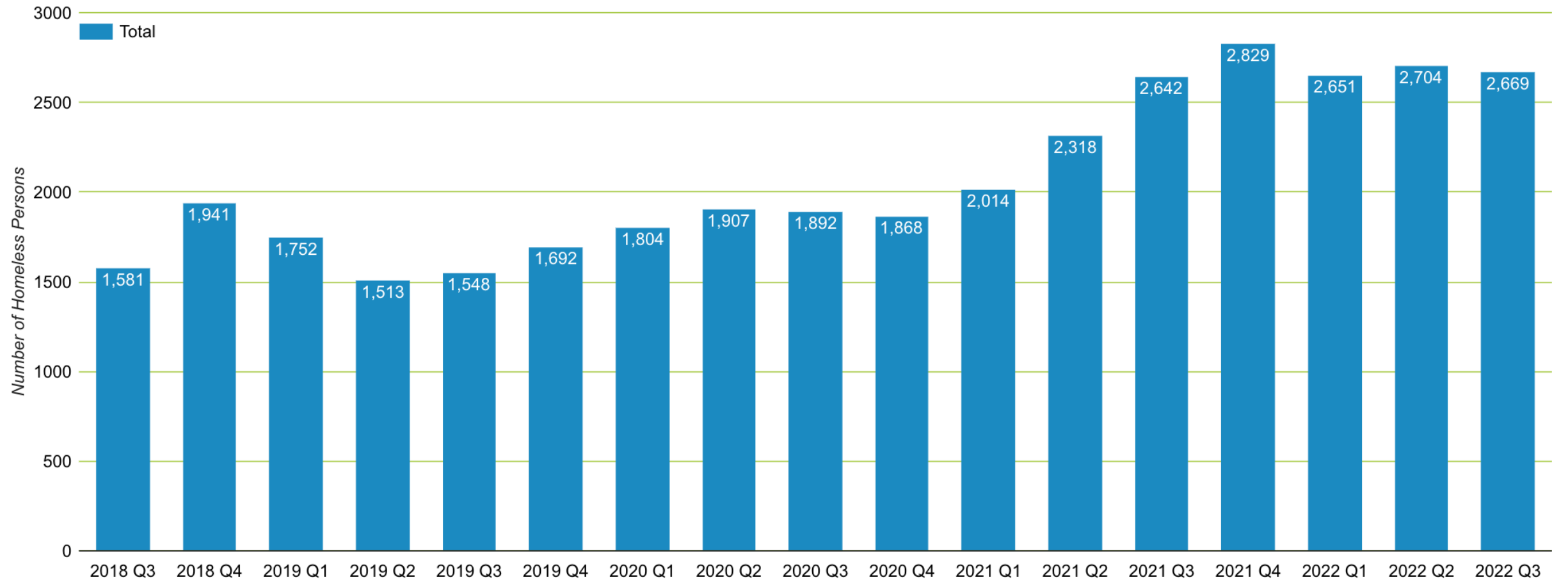




2. REVISIT AND ACT ON THE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

- **Problem:** homelessness is persistent and increasing
 - Outdoor encampments have become a 'feature' of Canadian cities
 - Promise of 'ending homelessness' through Housing First not realized
 - Housing market makes homelessness easy to enter, hard to exit

E4 Number of Homeless Persons - Edmonton City





A PLAN FOR ALBERTA

ENDING HOMELESSNESS
IN 10 YEARS



A Place to Call Home
Edmonton's 10 Year Plan
to End Homelessness

DID HOUSING FIRST FALL SHORT?

- 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness called for investments in social and affordable housing *as well as* Housing First programs
- In practice, programs were delivered to individuals, but new affordable units were not added to housing system
- Housing market unaffordability greatly impedes the (re)housing process

DID HOUSING FIRST FALL SHORT?

“You can take people out of homelessness, but if you’re not stopping new people from falling in, it’s a cycle that will never end.”
(Anderson-Baron & Collins, 2018)

“With no housing, we were assessing acuity, putting people on by-name lists, and then having them wait...and wait...and wait. There was nothing ‘rapid’ about re-housing anymore because there was no housing.”
(Abeshorn, 2022)

HOUSING FIRST: NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT

- Housing First can end homelessness *for individuals*, through its person-centred, choice-driven programs
- But it cannot end homelessness *as a social and economic phenomenon*
- A broader intervention in the housing system is essential to create and sustain affordable units



3. ADDRESS INCOME INEQUALITY

- **Problem:** too many Canadian households cannot exercise ‘market demand’
 - No adequate housing that is also affordable for those on very low incomes
 - Cruel trade offs between paying rent and meeting other necessities (“heat or eat”)
 - Homelessness coexists with vacancy rates $>2\%$

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN CANADA: A NATIONAL SHAME

- Provincial social assistance rates leave almost all recipients below the poverty line, and often in *deep poverty*
- Rates bear no relationship to costs of market housing
- Recipients highly dependent on very limited stocks of deeply subsidized social housing

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ALBERTA

- **Basic rate:** \$866/month (including \$330 'shelter allowance')
 - 37% of the poverty line
- **Disability rate:** \$1685/month
 - 95% of the poverty line
- 1 bedroom apartment in Edmonton: \$1039/month

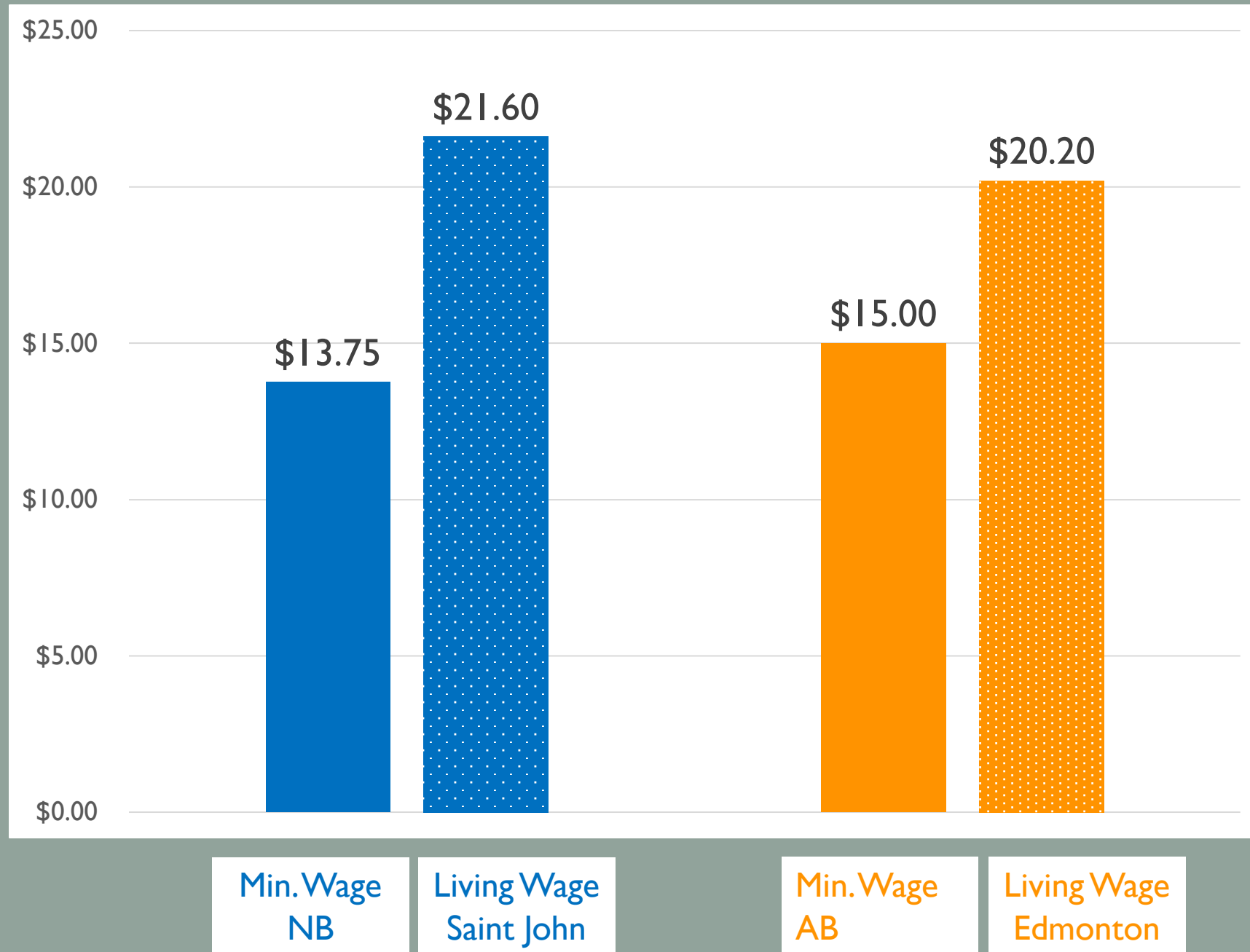
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ALBERTA

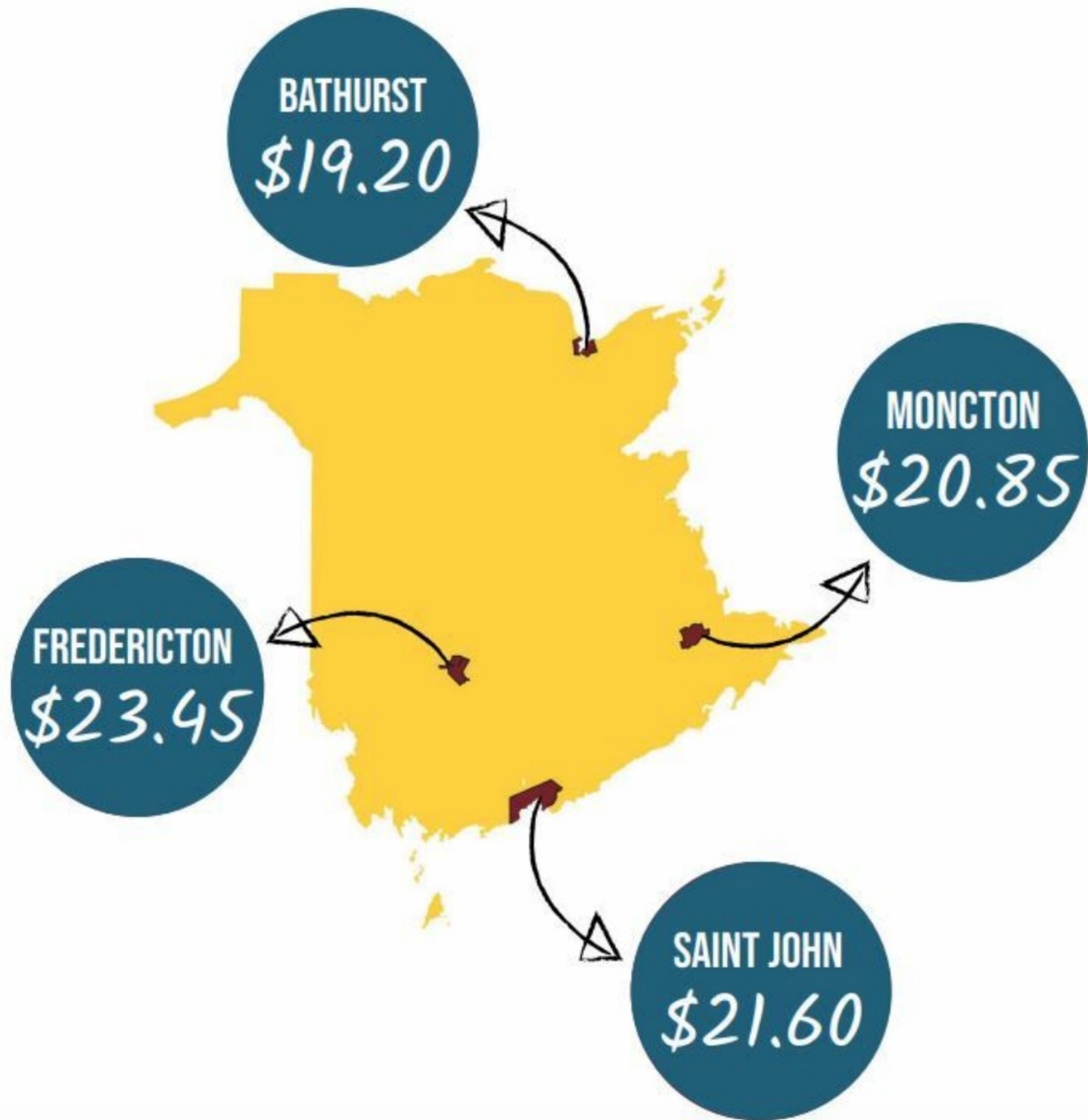
“People just don’t have enough income, which is why they’re looking for social and affordable housing in the first place. And the more your income goes down, the harder it is to access housing, because there’s not enough of the deeply subsidized housing in existence.”

(McDowell & Collins, 2023)

THE LIVING WAGE

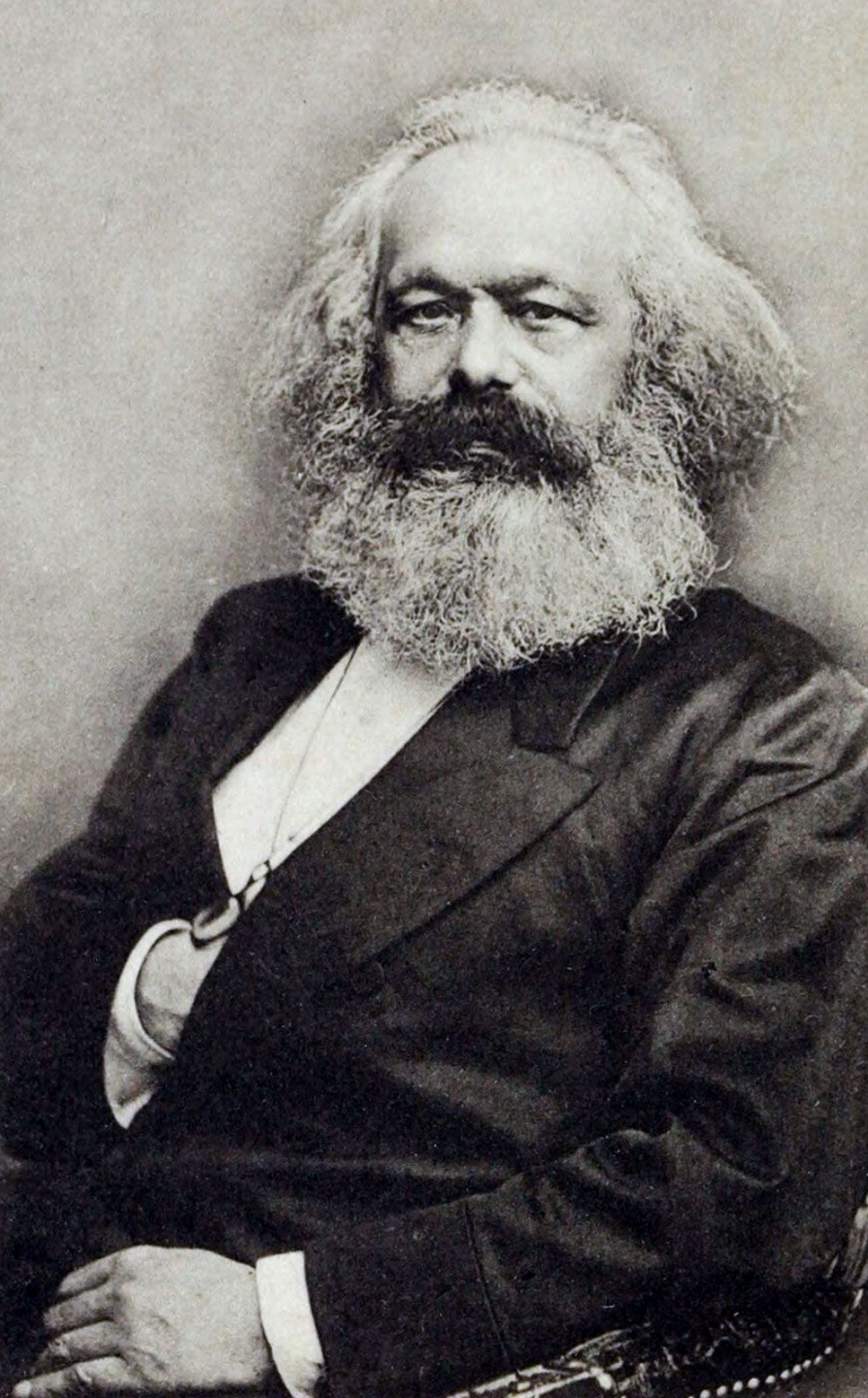
- Hourly wage required to provide the basic necessities of life (including **rent**, transportation, food, childcare)
 - Allows participation in society
- Calculated for a hypothetical family of four, with two children (aged 2 & 7)
 - Both parents working 35 hours/week





WHY PAY THE LIVING WAGE?

- “Advantageous for employees and their families, employers, and communities” (HDC, 2022)
- Lifts individuals and families out of poverty
- Improves mental and physical health; supports healthy child development
- Boosts employee morale and reduces absenteeism and job turnover
- Ensures employees can afford housing



- Karl Marx theorized that as capitalism advances, labour is increasingly devalued
 - “The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious”
- Today, income inequality is driving the **immiseration** of ever larger numbers of households

ACTION ITEMS

1. SUPPORT MIXED USE, MIXED DENSITY ZONING
2. INSIST ON SOCIAL & AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS
3. ADVOCATE FOR INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE AND BECOME A LIVING WAGE EMPLOYER