

**Impact of High Levels of Precarity on  
Urban Neighbourhood Economies and  
Particular Populations in Peel  
Case Study # 5**

**Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario  
(PEPSO)**

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# Introduction

- A brief introduction of Case Study #5 and its two phases of research and findings in select neighbourhoods in Toronto, Peel region and the Greater Hamilton Area
- We discuss some of the recommendations based on the personal experiences narrated through photo voice images.
- Finally, we introduce some preliminary reading of underway in the second phase of the research that includes interviews with community members, service providers and small business owners in the select neighbourhoods.

# Research Objectives

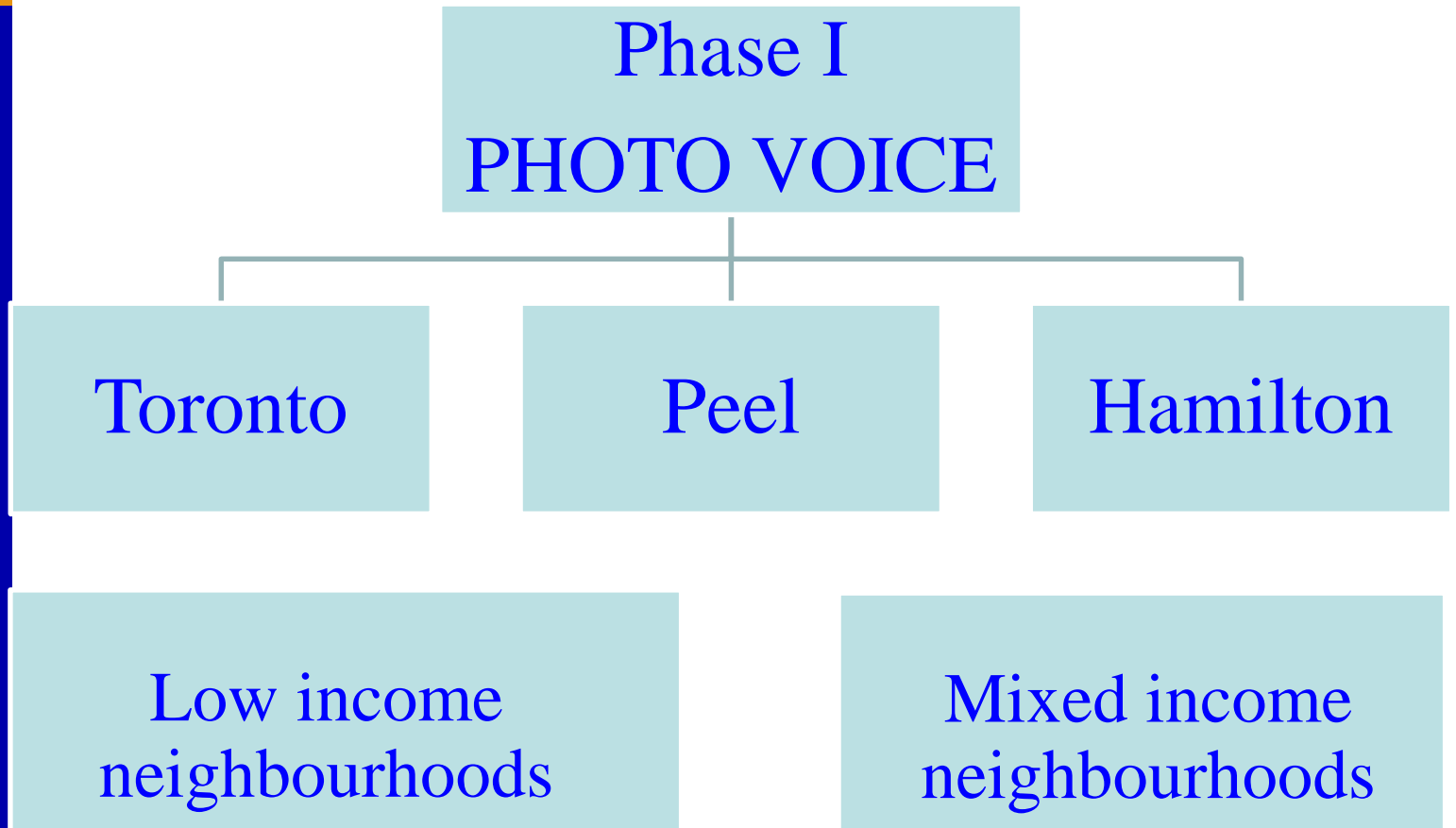
- To better understand how precarious employment is changing the nature of the urban social and economic terrain in select Southern Ontario neighbourhoods and communities and how it is impacting particular identifiable populations
- To explore the relationship between changing patterns of employment, people and the social and economic activities of neighbourhoods
- To explore the connection between the experiences of precarity and the capacity of neighbourhoods to respond to it

# Key research questions

- **Question 1:** How does precarious employment affect (good or bad) your livelihood and your neighbourhood?
- **Question 2:** What changes have you noticed in your neighbourhood as a result of precarious employment in the neighbourhood?
- **Question 3:** What resources are available in your neighbourhood for people experiencing precarious conditions (i.e. food banks, employment counseling, community services, clinics)?

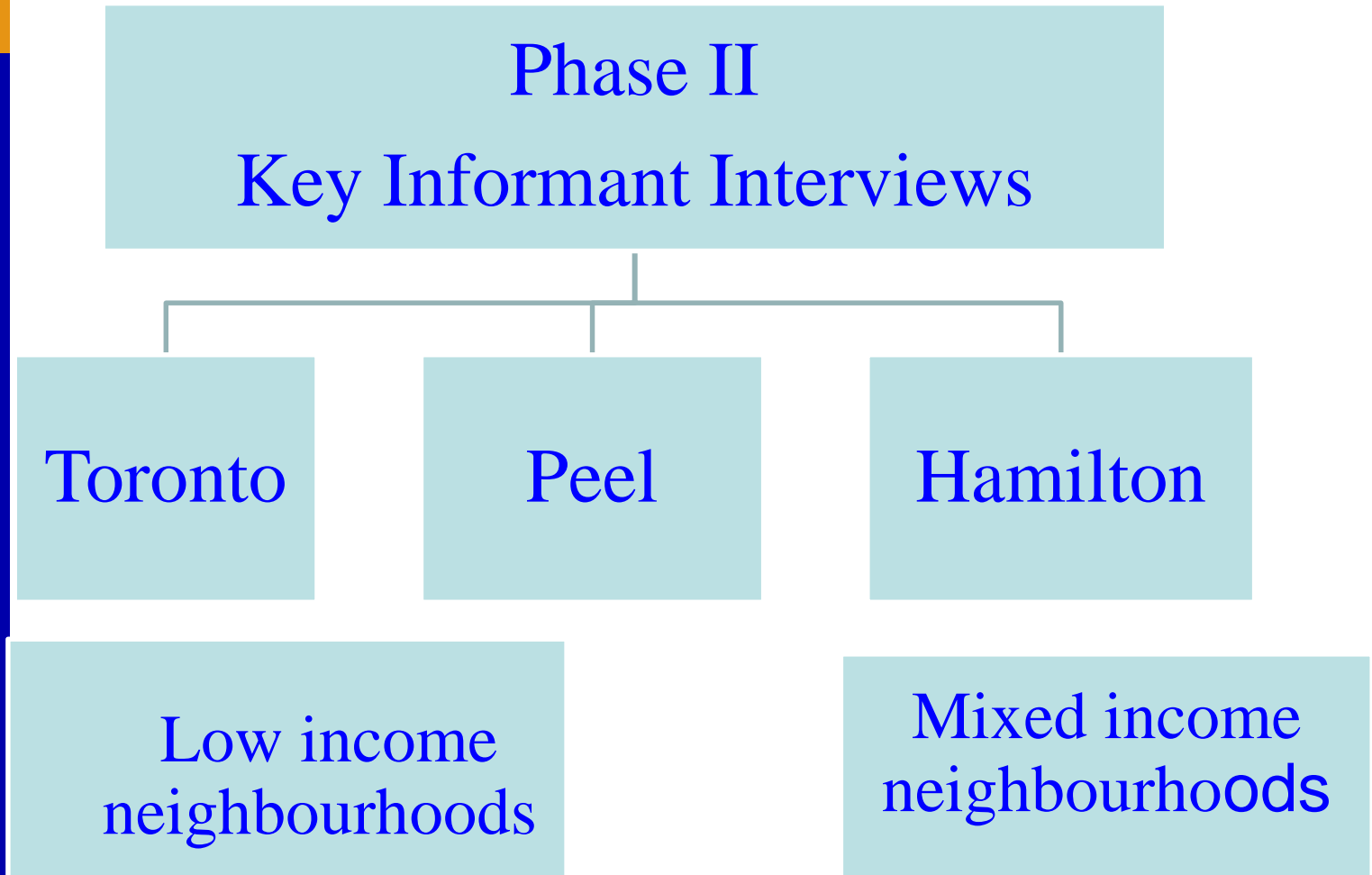
# PEPSO Case Study-5

## Methodology



# PEPSO Case Study-5

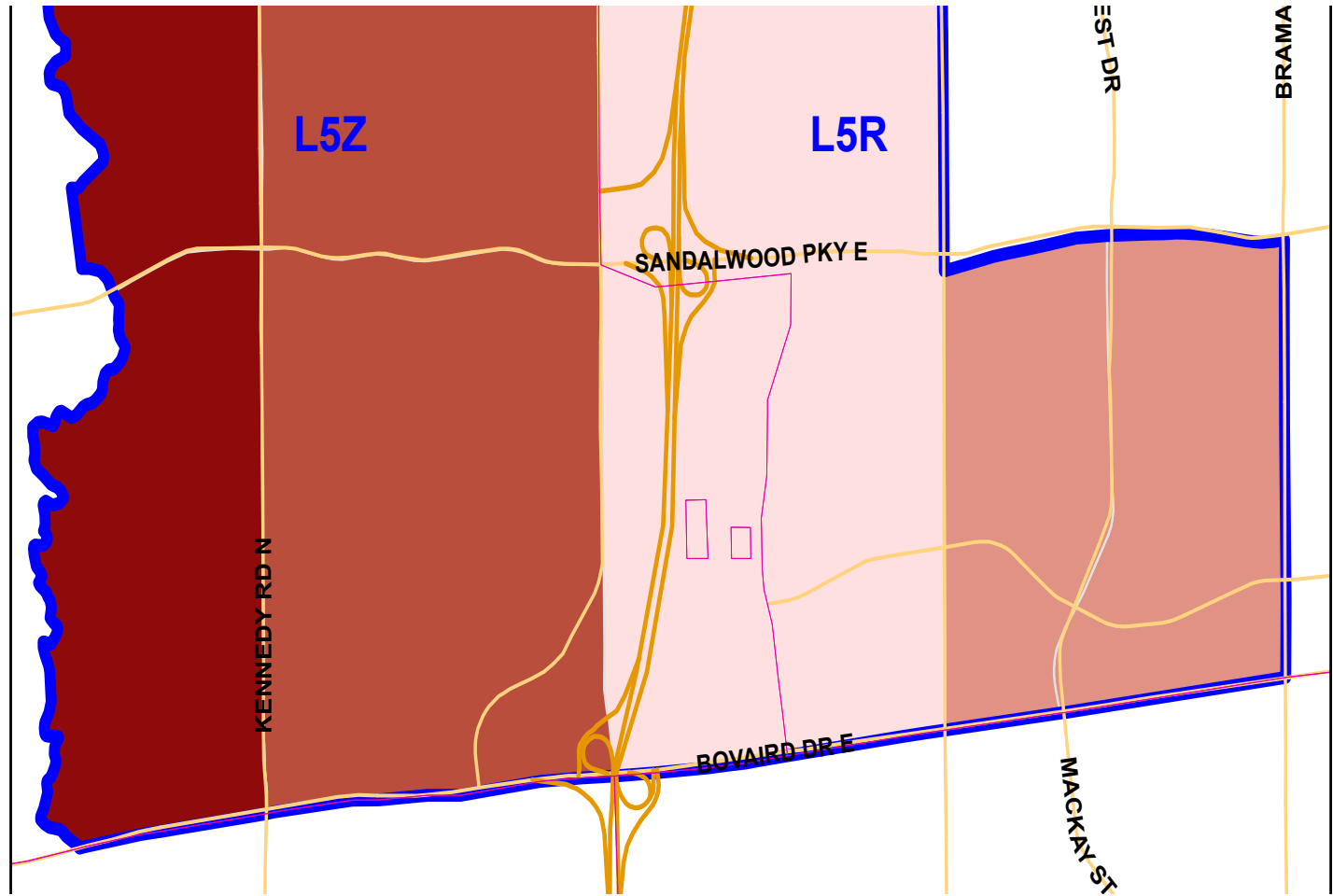
## Methodology



# Peel, Toronto, Hamilton

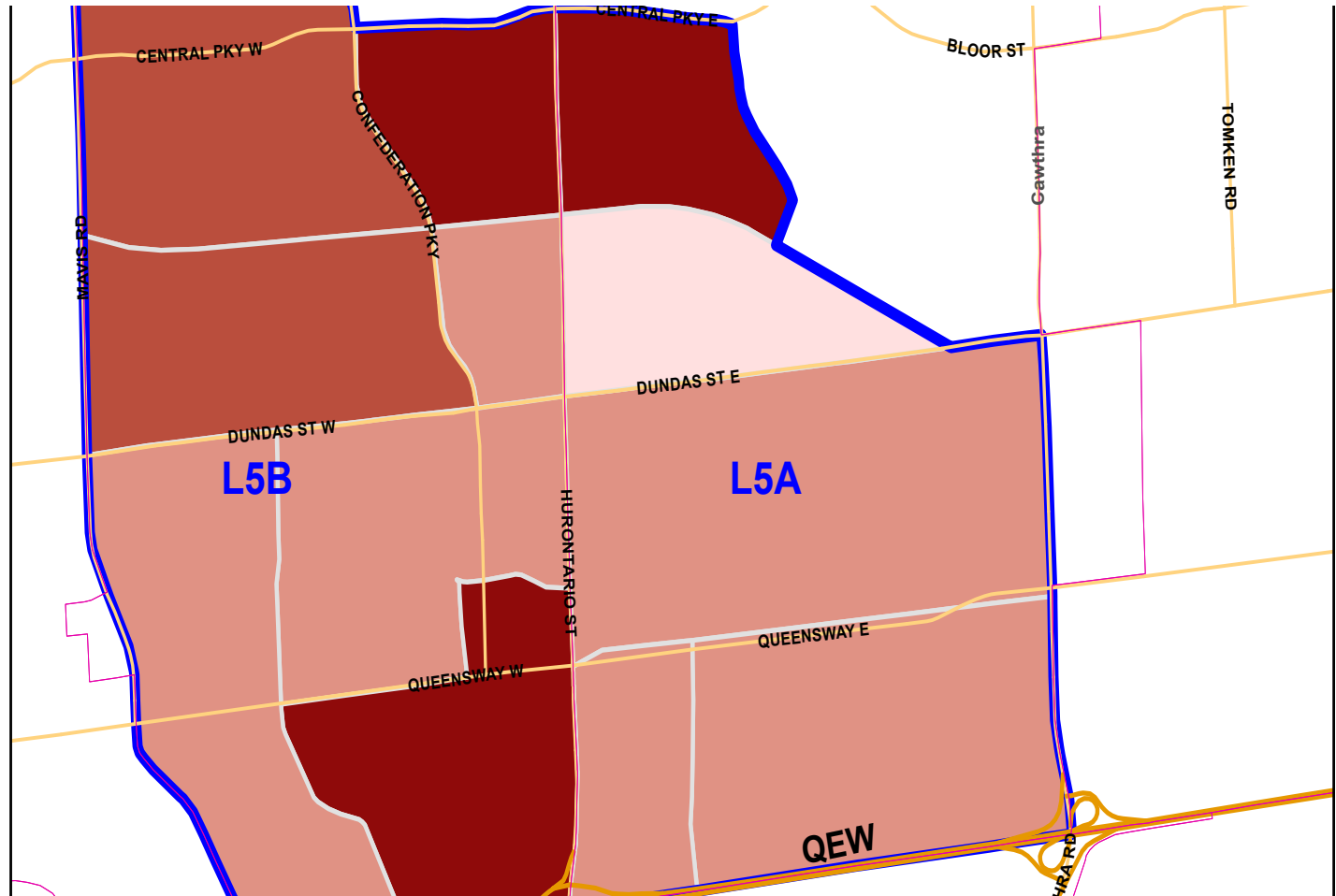
- Peel
  - Cooksville
  - Springdale
- Toronto
  - Downtown East
  - Weston-Mount Dennis
- Hamilton
  - Riverdale West/Riverdale East
  - Battlefield
  - Stoney Creek

# Springdale, Brampton



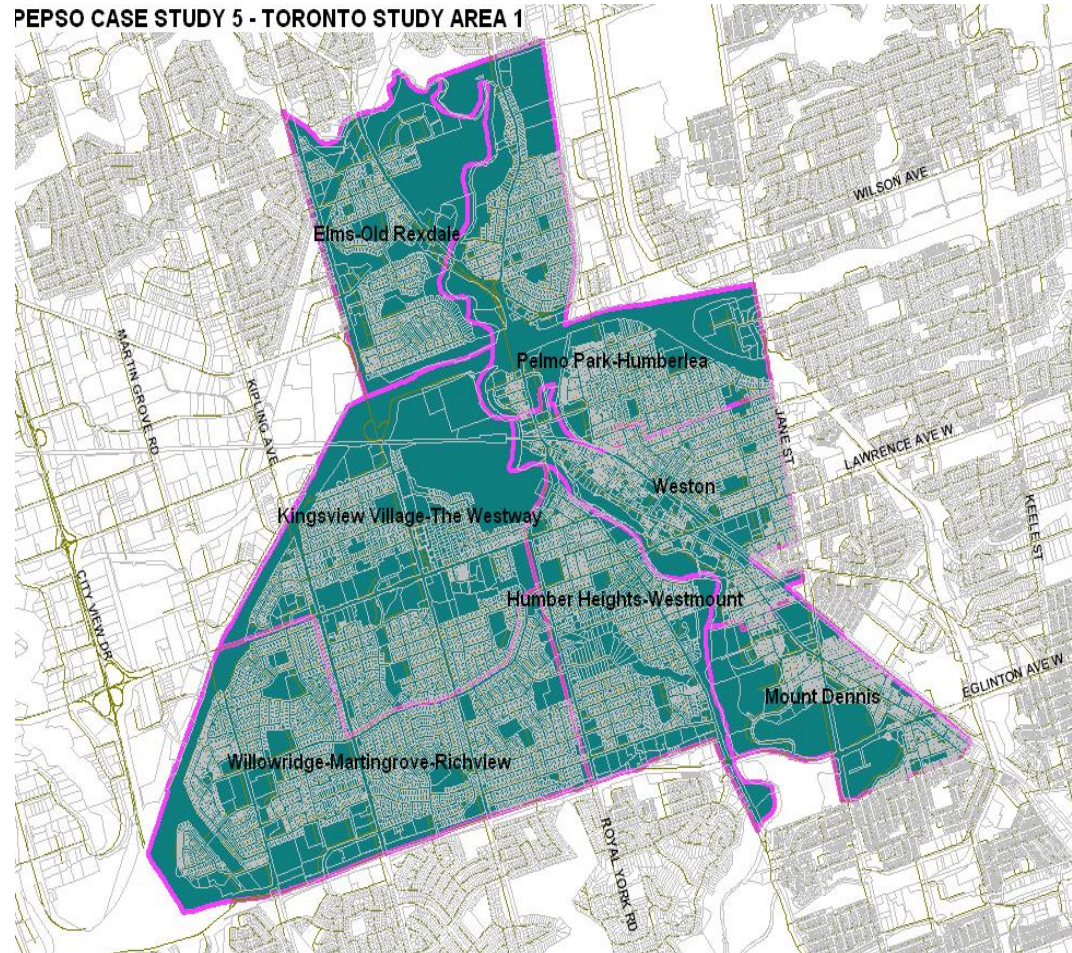


# Cooksville, Mississauga



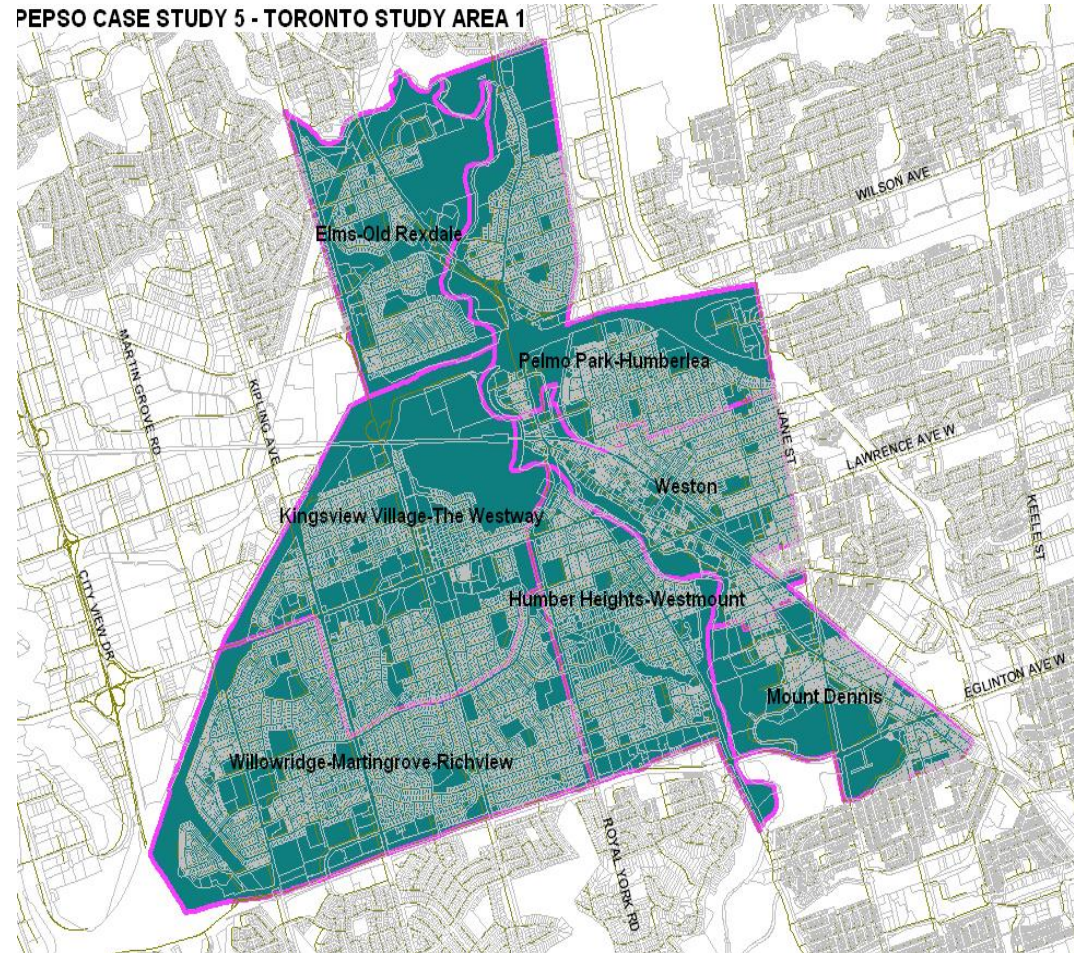
# Weston-Mount Dennis, Toronto

PEPSO CASE STUDY 5 - TORONTO STUDY AREA 1



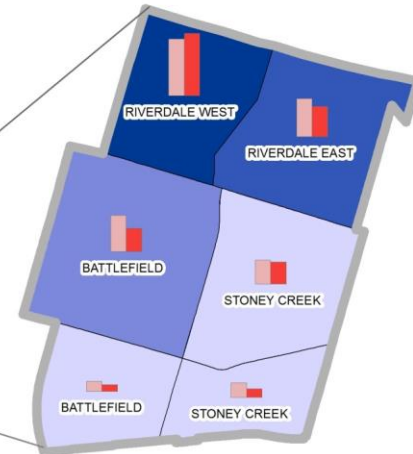
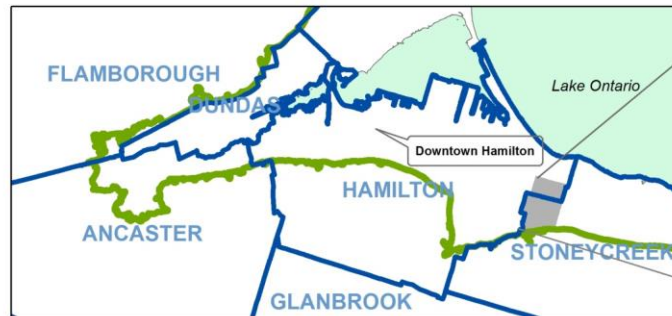
# Weston-Mount Dennis, Toronto

PEPSO CASE STUDY 5 - TORONTO STUDY AREA 1



# Riverdale, Stoney Creek and Battleford, Greater Hamilton Area

## Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario: Hamilton case study area



### Legend

- Hamilton Case Study Boundaries
- Former municipalities within the City of Hamilton
- Escarpment

- Number of full-time and part-time workers**
- 860
  - Number of full-time, full-year workers
  - Number of part-time or part-year workers

- % who identify with a visible minority group**
- 0% - 5%
  - 6% - 10%
  - 11% - 30%
  - 31% - 45%

Hamilton case study area boundaries: between Centennial Parkway and Gray's Road, from the escarpment to Barton. Includes Riverdale West, Riverdale East, Battlefield and Stoney Creek planning units. This area was chosen based on the PEPSCO precarious employment index used in Toronto, which includes % working part-time, unemployment rate, % visible minorities, % recent immigrants and median household income. For Hamilton, the index was adjusted to include % with Aboriginal ancestry, since the Aboriginal ancestry population is more significant in Hamilton than Toronto (2.7% of population in Hamilton, compared to 1.1% in Toronto). The case study area was chosen because it had a mix of high and low precarious employment neighbourhoods. The total population of this case study area was about 19,000 in 2006, with 37% of the population residing in Riverdale West. Riverdale West is the neighbourhood with the highest employment rate across Hamilton using the PEPSCO index (both adjusted with Aboriginal ancestry and without).

Map prepared by:

# Phase 1: Photo-Voice

- **The case study undertook a photo-voice exercise in three regions: City of Toronto, Region of Peel and Greater Hamilton Area.**
- Two sites with relevant income characteristics were selected in each region and ten participants were selected from each site.
- This allowed us to test the income diverse nature of precarious employment and its impact on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood resources

# Some Findings

- Precarious employment is prevalent in the neighbourhoods we investigated and represents a particular type of economy that demands worker flexibility
- Participants defined precariousness by changes in types of work – from permanent full time to contract, temporary, irregular schedules, low pay
- Participants: ‘**unstable forms of employment**’ especially when obtained through **Temp Agencies**
- Precarity has a discernible **unstable and change** impact on livelihood and neighbourhoods – mostly adverse but not exclusively so.

# Some Findings

- Precarious employment negatively impacts income security, housing, health risks, risks to community safety, transportation, access to employment and the labour market, food insecurity, abandoned dreams, lack of childcare and recreation, civic participation.
- There is a shift in the types of business activities – from industrial to retail (factories to Dollar stores), from close proximity to distant sites
- There is a high prevalence of precariousness among immigrants, racialized, Aboriginal people, women and LGBTQ community members

# Some Findings

- Neighbourhoods have varied resource capacities to intervene in these processes to mitigate the adverse impacts – health centres, community services, immigrant settlement services, food banks, employment services
- Municipalities through their planning processes influence the ability of residents to cope with a changing economy by providing such services as public transit, libraries, social services, housing, business supports



# Weston Mt. Dennis: Conditions of Despair

- “I chose a picture of the train tracks because it's representative of my employment and prospects. Like a long, desolate, lonely trek with no destination in sight”
- “Precarious employment has made surviving in this city extremely difficult for me. It's really difficult to find a job, any job, and those that I'm qualified for (and have had) are part-time, minimum wage, temporary jobs. These precarious jobs make budgeting next to impossible, especially because the hours are not guaranteed.”
- “I was hired as a cashier with a well-known corporation and was let go after the 3 month probationary period without cause. I felt that I was not liked because I constantly had to ask for more shifts than I was scheduled for, as many times I would only be scheduled for 10.5 hours”



## Cooksville, Mississauga: Neighbourhood Change/Payday Lenders

“The changes that I have noticed are lots of Payday Loans signs, employment agency, many adults are going back to school, lot of young people who had recently moved out from families are returning home because the high cost of rent and the low wages.”

“Also shared accommodation has increased, people are frustrated, sad and looking hopeless.”



## Riverdale, Hamilton

“The loss of jobs previously located in the neighbourhood were noticed by many even if those jobs had been seen as precarious when they existed.”

“The closing of the Wal-Mart at Eastgate Square late last year left a large empty store...the new Wal-Mart is in a more remote area not in a mall like before and is a distance. The jobs that were once here are now gone and unemployed people are waiting for these new stores to open to get a job.”



## Toronto, Downtown East: Community Services: Music

This is the Dixon Hall Music School for kids who cannot afford the cost of private piano lessons. The children have to fill out an application and waiting times are 2-3 years. When it's time to call for availability, the cost of the lesson for low income families is as low as \$5 per lesson. When it's private school, it's 8 or 10 times more.

Because these places don't have enough funding, my work is precarious. I work on and off throughout the year. During Christmas time, I have to go on unemployment because there is no work. I am always worrying about work. Sometimes I don't know if I will have enough work. It becomes very complicated when you have to go on and off unemployment.



## Stoney Creek, Hamilton: Dream Deferred

“In this picture we can see packed cartons and travelling bags. I am moving from Ontario to another Province, because of precarious work.”

“ I have a Social Service Worker Diploma and I think this is my strength and I am not giving up. I searched and found good opportunities in other province so I decided to move from here and I am hoping that I would be able to break this vicious circle of poverty after finding a full time job.”



## Springdale, Brampton: Hidden Poverty

“A picture of a beautiful house surrounded by dark background reflecting the insight story. A newly constructed neighbourhood, with beautiful houses from the view point of an outsider. Unable to see beyond the four walls of these houses, people live in darkness and the neighbourhood is still high rated as “RICH”.

“The realities behind those doors are extreme poverty and hardship due to high levels of precarious employment. Residents struggle every month to pay their mortgages, home and car insurances, property tax and other bills. There is instability due to insecurity in income... We came to Canada with big dreams hoping for a better life.”



## Riverdale, Hamilton: Mixed Blessing

RYERSON  
UNIVERSITY

THE GOOD: “Having a Ball with my son”

“Every cloud has a silver lining. Precarious Employment has affected my family, good and bad. The silver lining in this lingering cloud above my head each day is that when I am done one contract, looking for the next, I have more time to spend with my son.”

“While this hasn’t afforded us the most posh house or the fanciest neighbourhood to live in, it has given me something that money can’t buy. More time with my son.”

“The irony of it all is that we have more time together, but less money to do much in the way of extracurricular activities. By sourcing out subsidized programs in the community, I am able to stay involved in supporting his dream to go pro in basketball. By volunteering at his school with his team, I get to see his games and support other children in the community doing what they love.”



## Weston Mt. Dennis: Community Services Hub

The Jane Street Hub is closest to my home and it houses more than one resource. The Jane Street Hub is home to:

**Unison Health and Community Service**, which provides health care, preventative health services, counselling, seniors' case management and newcomer support; **COSTI**, which provides an Employment Resource Centre, a variety of employment services and counselling, settlement and post settlement services for newcomers, students, youth and people with disabilities;

**Macaulay Child Development Centre**, which runs an Early Years Centre to provide children 0-6 and their parents (or caregivers) with parent-child and parent education programs; **Midaynta Community Services**, which provides settlement services and family support for newcomers, especially for the Somali community;

**North York Community House (NYCH)**, which provides a range of women's programming with child-minding in several languages; **Yorktown Child and Family Centre**, which offers counselling, youth programs and parenting programs.





# Photo Voice Exhibits

- **Hamilton – Dominic Agostino  
Riverdale Community Centre -July  
2012**
- **Peel – Sheridan College – October 24  
2012**
- **Weston Mt. Dennis – February 27 at  
5:30 -8:30pm @ Jane Street Hub 1541  
Jane and Lawrence**
- **Peel – Peel Art Gallery Museum and  
Archives (PAMA) September, 2013 @ 9  
Wellington Street East, Brampton**

# Recommendations

- Policy level action on employment standards enforcement/Minimum wage
- Living wage campaigns for by-laws/ordinances at the municipal level
- Adopt ‘not-a precarious employer’ designation
- Increased apprenticeships and on the job training to improve technical and soft skills
- Reform Employment Insurance to meet the needs of precariously employed and reflect nature of the economy
- Federal/Provincial/ Municipal partnerships on housing
- Health Development Index
- Initiatives to support improved transportation options
- Unionization drives for precarious workers
- Regional Diversity roundtables

# Phase II

- **Phase II** involves semi-structured interviews with key informants, including community members experiencing precarious employment, service providers and small to medium size business owners and employers.
- Building on the data collected through photo-voice, the objective was to better understand the impact on precarious employment on livelihoods, the resources available to mitigate its impacts, and the impact on the local business landscape through in depth interviewing of key participants in the precarious employment process.

# Phase II

- We wondered whether neighbourhood small and medium size business owners had a particular perspective on the mechanics and logic of precarious employment and sought to explore that.
- We were interested in their evaluation of the implications of precarious employment on the local economies, given their stake in the spending power of residents and relationship between stable wages and effective demand.
- From each neighbourhood we sought to recruit 30 interviewees (10 business people/10 service providers/10 community members) for a total of 60 per region and 180 for the project. This was subsequently adjusted to 150 interviews over the three regions.
- We have completed 103 residents and service provider interviews and are in the field with the business ones

# The changing nature of the economy a determinant of neighbourhood well being

- We are finding that in tight economic times, employers have increased control over work and create new job prerequisites that intensify the role key characteristics such as immigrant or racial identity play in making hiring and retention choices
- Under conditions of economic insecurity, vulnerable groups experience exponential bouts of victimization as considerations about the human capital value of their identity become more significant in decision making.
- Near full employment conditions ensure greater access to good jobs for minoritized populations as demonstrated in studies of local labour markets (Freeman, 1991; Osterman, 1991)
- Tight labour markets provide opportunities to challenge long standing discriminatory structures such as segmented labour markets and closed shops.

# Stable communities

**Stable Jobs = Stable Communities**

**‘If we work together to fix the window,  
we get a clearer view’**

