

Debt Help Roundtable: Insights Report

The challenges and opportunities for action outlined in this report will inform Prosper Canada's ongoing work to close the debt help gap for Canadians with a low income.

Debt

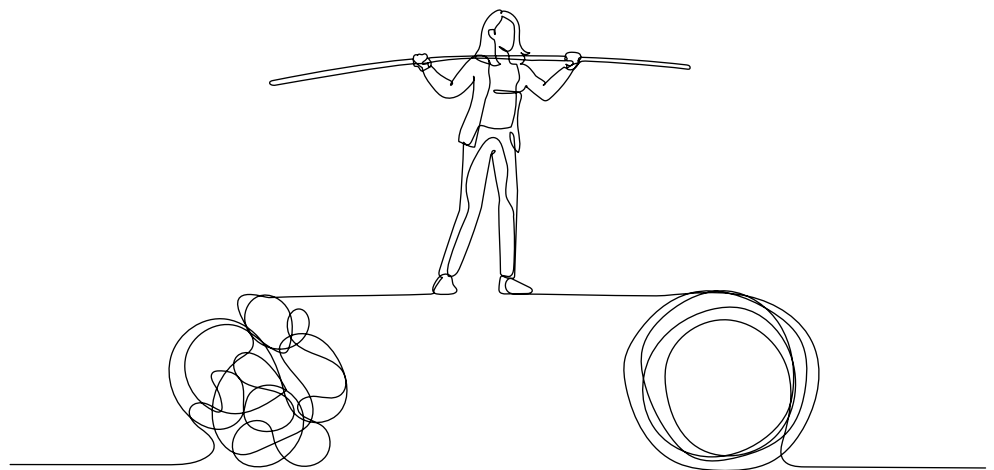


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Executive summary

Consumer debt is a growing challenge to Canadians' financial well-being. People with low incomes are disproportionately affected due to overall financial strain, high cost of living, high cost of servicing debt, and limited access to the supports needed to navigate and pursue appropriate debt management options. Addressing this debt help gap would support the financial well-being of low-income Canadians and aligns directly with the federal government's efforts to improve affordability, reduce costs and help households get ahead.

To gain a better understanding of the debt help gap, [Prosper Canada](https://www.prospercanada.org) convened a cross-sector roundtable on March 10th, 2026, with more than 20 stakeholders from the community, government, and business sectors to discuss challenges in the debt help landscape particularly for people with low incomes (see appendix). This report summarizes the insights shared during the roundtable discussion, as well as insights from conversations with community partners and other organizations across the country.

Key challenges in accessing debt help for people with low incomes include:

- Access to trustworthy information and navigation support is limited.
- Cost and payment terms can limit options for consumers with low incomes.
- Poor and deceptive practices in the debt advisory marketplace undermine consumer protection.
- Gaps in regulatory oversight.
- Aspects of bankruptcy and insolvency legislation can create barriers to a fresh start.

Opportunities to improve the debt help landscape for people with low incomes include:

- Improving lender accountability and consumer protection
- Reducing the cost of debt help for people with low incomes
- Increasing information-sharing
- Updating bankruptcy and insolvency legislation to better reflect the realities of people with low incomes
- Strengthening oversight of the debt advisory marketplace

The challenges and opportunities for action outlined in this report will inform Prosper Canada's ongoing work to close the debt help gap for Canadians with a low income.



Growing household debt

Consumer debt is a growing challenge to Canadians' financial well-being. In 2020, nearly half of all households with a low income carried debt, and on average, households with low incomes spend 31% of their income servicing that debt.¹ Thirty-four per cent of all households reported borrowing money for daily expenses in 2025,² and consumer insolvencies rose 2.3% to the highest level in 16 years.³ Despite this, Canadians experience major gaps in access to appropriate, affordable, and trustworthy help to navigate debt and insolvency.

For many Canadians with a low income, debt is unavoidable. While falling into unmanageable debt can happen quickly, the pathway out of debt is not linear and can be arduous and long. Canadians with low incomes face challenges at every stage of their debt journey—from awareness and availability of appropriate credit products, navigating income and payment shortfalls, to seeking support with unmanageable debt, to navigating insolvency, and rebuilding to find financial stability. It is easy for consumers to access low-quality, misleading, and costly debt help, and hard to access affordable, trustworthy, and appropriate help



Structural drivers of debt for people with low incomes

Structural drivers of debt for people with low incomes is most often driven by structural barriers rather than behaviour.

Many Canadians living on low incomes have to make difficult trade-offs each month—deciding which basic needs can be covered with their paycheque and which will be deferred or financed through borrowing. The financial pressures that most often destabilize these households are the high cost of everyday essentials relative to their low income, leading to rent and utility arrears, skipping meals, food bank usage, and short-term borrowing to meet urgent needs. The cost of housing is a central driver. When rent or mortgage payments consume an outsized share of income, disruptions including job loss, a cut in hours, or unexpected cost can quickly trigger missed payments rent arrears. Rising eviction risk and renovations (when a landlord evicts a tenant by claiming they will complete major renovations) can also contribute to financial challenges, especially in larger cities.

At the same time, the widening gap between social assistance rates and the cost of living can deepen reliance on debt. Social assistance shelter allowances are typically significantly less than actual housing costs. Finally, debts owed to government can compound financial strain. For many, benefit overpayments and student loans that have entered Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) collections are a significant source of distress. Additionally, some recipients later declared ineligible for the *Canada Emergency Response Benefit* (CERB) and the *Canada Recovery Benefit* (CRB) face onerous repayment obligations, even though a significant portion of their pandemic relief may have been actually clawed back by provincial social assistance and other social programs.⁴

Racialized Canadians, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities face additional barriers that increase their risk of debt.

These barriers can include labour market discrimination leading to under-employment and lower incomes. People with disabilities may also face accessibility barriers and higher living costs due to their disability. In the case of some Indigenous Peoples, distrust of mainstream financial institutions related to their role in colonization can be a compounding factor, as well as the higher cost of food, housing, and utilities in remote communities.

Canadians with low incomes are more likely to be underbanked and lack access to safe and affordable credit options.

Canadians with low incomes are less likely than Canadians generally to trust and feel comfortable using mainstream financial institutions and these typically do not offer affordable and appropriate debt help solutions to meet their needs – e.g., affordable small dollar credit, quality debt advice, and support to navigate debt help options. Additionally, households with lower incomes that attempt to borrow from mainstream institutions typically face higher fees and interest rates as they are determined to be higher risk due to poor or limited credit history and income volatility. Many are turned away.

To access credit, some Canadians with low incomes turn to high cost, high risk lenders and credit products that charge high interest rates and fees – e.g., payday and installment lenders, and rent-to-own schemes – that are frequently concentrated in low-income neighbourhoods.⁶ Some Canadians with low incomes turn to payday loans not only because these lenders are nearby, but also because they offer a more accessible—and at times seemingly more respectful—experience than mainstream institutions.

The credit products available to people with low incomes often have high interest rates, and people living on low incomes are more likely to fall behind on payments, triggering additional fees and compounding their debt. High interest, missed payments, and/or taking on multiple credit products (a practice that is risky, and increasing) can quickly make debt and debt payments unmanageable. As debt grows, multiple barriers discourage consumers from discussing their debt with people they trust and seeking help, such as shame, stigma, and fear of the perceived impact of missed payments such as a lower credit score, bankruptcy, and even losing their immigration status. As time passes, debt grows, and their options become more limited.

The journey to accessing debt help

When a person decides to seek debt help, every step of their journey can bring new challenges that demand time and resources that many consumers do not have, making it extremely difficult for consumers to forge a path out of debt. This journey is non-linear. The debt help system is fragmented and hard to navigate, with a patchwork of supports and a wide range of actors providing services of uneven quality.

People often start their search for debt help online and search results can vary based on location, personalization, platform, settings, paid search results, and other factors. A simple search for debt help yields a range of results that individuals must sift through: for-profit and high-fee intermediaries, non-profit credit counselling, Licensed Insolvency Trustees (LITs), financial institutions, and others offering a range of solutions to consolidate loans, or file for bankruptcy or a consumer proposal. Some actors and options are more suitable and trustworthy than others, and a person is typically left to navigate these options on their own.

Eventually, Canadians with a low income might meet with a credit counsellor to discuss their options or engage a LIT who, after assessing their financial situation, will discuss the available non-insolvency and insolvency options (including whether to pursue a consumer proposal or bankruptcy). But in needing, seeking it, and accessing help, consumers contend with fragmented online information, limited resources, misinformation, high fees, and predatory debt advisory services. Even after accessing formal relief, a person's finances might stabilize but they will often face longer term consequences: reduced access to mainstream credit products, higher future borrowing costs, and other barriers that will set them back financially for years to come.

The sections that follow outline key debt help challenges and potential solutions shared by our Roundtable participants, and by community partners across Canada that we spoke with beforehand.

Key terms

Service providers in the debt help ecosystem

Credit counsellor:

An individual or organization that works with people to help them repay their debt through budgeting, debt management plans, and referrals to legal insolvency services. Credit counsellors negotiate with creditors to consolidate debts and reduce interest rates. Credit counsellors are not federally regulated, but some belong to voluntary accreditation bodies like Credit Counselling Canada. Non-profit credit counsellors are provincially regulated.

Licensed Insolvency Trustee:

A federally regulated professional who provides advice and services to individuals and businesses with debt problems. LITs are the only professionals authorized to administer regulated insolvency proceedings to discharge your debt, such as a consumer proposal or bankruptcy.⁷ As part of their duties, LITs are required to undertake an assessment of an individual's financial situation, to identify and discuss all options available to help resolve financial difficulties and help determine whether an insolvency option or a non-insolvency option is appropriate.⁸

Debt advisor/consultant:

An individual or organization that provides advice or referrals related to a person's insolvency options. Many debt advisors and debt consulting firms are unregulated and not subject to any qualification or practice standards. Debt advisors are not licensed to administer consumer proposals or bankruptcies, which can only legally be filed through a LIT.

Financial advisor:

An individual or organization that provides advice on managing money, including budgeting, savings, and debt. Some financial advisors are regulated and licensed depending on the services they provide. They cannot administer consumer proposals or bankruptcies.

Debt collector:

An individual or company that attempts to recover unpaid debts on behalf of creditors or debt purchasers. Debt collectors are provincially regulated and must follow rules related to communication and consumer protection. They cannot administer consumer proposals or bankruptcies.



Debt management options in Canada

When individuals experience financial difficulty due to debt, there are several options that may help them manage or resolve what they owe. These options range from improved budgeting, and/or increasing income (where possible), voluntary repayment and/or ad hoc arrangements between creditors and debtors, structured repayment arrangements and formal legal insolvency processes that require creditors to release a person from debts. The appropriate option depends on a person's financial situation, including their income, assets, and ability to repay their debts over time.

The options outlined in more detail below are listed in order of increasing legal formality.

Informal debt settlements are:

negotiated agreements
debtors negotiate with their creditors to repay less than they owe.

- May be negotiated directly with creditors or through for-profit debt settlement companies.
- Creditors may agree to accept a lump-sum payment for a reduced amount.
- These arrangements are not legally binding across all creditors, and consumer protections may vary.
- Debt consolidation: combines multiple debts into a single debt with one creditor, typically at a lower
- Depending on the province of residence, other options may be available.⁹

Debt Management Plans (DMPs) are:

structured repayment plans arranged through non-profit credit counselling agencies.

- Credit counsellors negotiate with creditors to reduce or eliminate interest.
- Individuals repay the full principal amount of their debt over time through one consolidated payment.
- Usually applied to unsecured debts such as credit card balances.
- Creditor participation is voluntary and certain creditors do not participate in DMPs.
- This is a voluntary arrangement, not a legal insolvency process.

Consumer proposals are a:

formal legal process governed by the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*.

- Administered by an LIT.
- Allows individuals to pay their creditors only a percentage of their debt or to extend the time they have to pay off their debts.
- Under the law, individuals cannot take longer than five years to make the payments set out in a consumer proposal.
- This option is available to individuals whose total debt does not exceed \$250,000, not including debts secured by their principal residence.

- Creditors vote on the proposal; and once accepted by majority of creditors, it is legally binding on all unsecured creditors.
- Collection actions are stayed while the proposal remains in effect.
- Interest is generally addressed through the terms of the proposal, but creditors may be entitled to claim interest in certain circumstances, including if the proposal is annulled or deemed annulled.¹⁰

Bankruptcy is a : formal legal process governed by the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*.

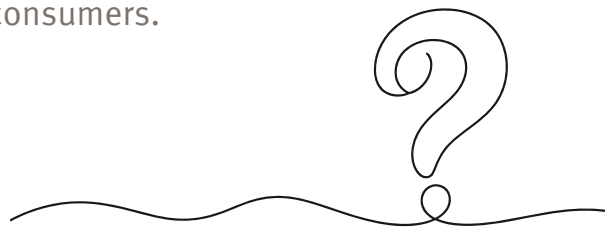
- Administered by an LIT.
- Individuals are required to surrender certain assets to the LIT.
- The LIT's role includes selling off those assets to pay outstanding debts.
- Interest stops and collection actions are halted, including garnishment of salaries, subject to applicable exceptions and/or special circumstances.
- After completing required duties (e.g. financial counselling, reporting income), most individuals' debts are legally discharged.

Challenges to accessing affordable, appropriate, and trustworthy debt help

Access to trustworthy information and navigation support is limited

There is a documented, structural, market gap in access to appropriate and trustworthy information on debt help options for people with low incomes, and help to navigate those options, in Canada.

When a person with a low income has unmanageable debt, information and resources outlining their options, and guidance on where to look to for help, is not always available or appropriate to their needs. While the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) and Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy (OSB) offer accurate and trustworthy online information, the people who most need this information may not find it due to low awareness, online search optimization algorithms, ads, and limited digital access for some consumers.



Consumers may seek guidance from a range of actors across the debt help ecosystem, including credit counselling agencies, LITs, and other advisors and service providers. While many organizations help individuals understand their options, the ecosystem is fragmented and uncoordinated. Organizations do not always collaborate or refer between services, and support is delivered within set organizational mandates and business models that can shape the options presented to consumers.

As a result, consumers lack consistent support and the ability to easily navigate across the full spectrum of available services.

Navigating debt help options can also require significant time, capacity, and financial literacy—resources that many households experiencing financial stress do not have. Consumers in rural and remote communities face additional barriers, as affordable in-person services are scarce, and digital options may not be realistic for individuals with limited internet access or digital literacy.

Lenders, including financial institutions, are not required or mandated to provide broader debt relief information and navigational support to customers who are struggling. In many cases, financial institutions do not have sufficient information to be able to offer guidance and effectively support households experiencing financial hardship. For instance, when a lender (e.g., bank, credit union, payday loan company, or private mortgage company) engages a debt collector to recover a consumer's unpaid debt, this is a key opportunity to refer consumers to available resources that can help them navigate their options. But there is no clear mandate for lenders or debt collectors to refer consumers to appropriate and affordable help.

Cost and payment terms can limit options for consumers with low incomes

For people with low incomes struggling to manage debt, the payment obligations associated with some debt relief options can be difficult to manage. Debt Management plans and consumer proposals both require that debtors make payments over time. Debt management plans and consumer proposals generally require consumers to repay all or a portion of their debt respectively, through regular monthly payments, but some consumers may struggle to do if their income is insufficient to cover this and necessities, or if they have significant monthly income and/or expense volatility.

For bankruptcies, costs are generally paid from the bankruptcy estate, however in situations with limited income and assets individuals may still be required to make payments during the bankruptcy period. Although there is no legislated minimum cost for filing bankruptcy, many LITs require a commitment to make payments totalling approximately \$1,800 over the course of a first-time bankruptcy (typically nine months).

As a result of these costs and payment terms many people living on low incomes can't afford to access these processes given the rising cost of necessities, income volatility, and competing financial priorities. While some credit counselling organizations, community financial help organizations, and LITs offer services designed to support lower-income consumers, affordable options are not consistently available that provide access to all debt management and relief options.

In comparison, in jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom (UK), publicly funded debt help is available free of charge through a national network of service providers, helping reduce barriers to accessing trustworthy debt advice and help.¹²

Poor and deceptive debt advisory practices exploit consumer financial distress

Parts of the debt help marketplace use aggressive and/or misleading marketing practices to steer consumers to costly services that duplicate existing free or lower-cost options or add unnecessary steps. As a result, some people pay significant fees without receiving meaningful additional support.

When people with debt seek help, they often encounter a confusing mix of options and messages. This includes:

- misleading paid advertisements;
- misinformation about available debt relief options and requirements; and
- search results and promotions designed to target and exploit people in financial distress.¹³

People facing financial stress may be especially vulnerable to promises of quick, simple solutions from unregulated or unlicensed debt advisors. In some cases, these services encourage consumers to take costly and unnecessary steps before pursuing a consumer proposal or bankruptcy, leading to delays and additional expense.

At the same time, organizations providing lower cost services often struggle to compete with the visibility and marketing resources behind paid advertising and sponsored online content.

Gaps in regulatory oversight leave consumers unprotected

In Canada, a fragmented regulatory environment contributes to consumer confusion and makes it hard for individuals seeking help to distinguish between legitimate and exploitive debt help providers. The Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy (OSB) supervises compliance with the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* and

regulates LITs. It has publicly raised concerns about unlicensed debt advisors who claim to be authorized to assist with insolvency options or market unnecessary services before, during, or after a consumer proposal or bankruptcy filing.¹⁴ Because the OSB is not mandated to regulate credit counsellors and debt advisors, however, it has no ability to oversee these other industry players, including bad actors. This fragmented regulatory environment contributes to consumer confusion and makes it harder to distinguish legitimate providers from untrustworthy advisors.

As there are also no provincial regulatory frameworks governing debt advisory services, debt advisors are not subject to education or experience requirements, service standards, or fee caps. Some debt advisors misrepresent themselves as LITs and can lure unsuspecting consumers into paying for duplicative services, including services that can only be provided legally by an LIT.¹⁵ Some debt advisors misrepresent themselves as LITs and consumers can end up paying for duplicative services, including services that can only be legally provided by an LIT.¹⁶ Consumers may also be charged unwarranted fees simply to connect them to an LIT by debt advisors or other unregulated intermediary services.

This practice, known as lead generation, targets consumers with debt and exploits regulatory gaps to sell referrals to LITs. In some instances, lead generators have approached non-profit organizations and offered financial incentives in exchange for client referrals. If accepted, these arrangements can create conflicts of interest and undermine the provision of unbiased, appropriate and trustworthy financial help. Limited resources, uneven knowledge of the marketplace, and differences in experience across non-profit organizations may make some organizations more vulnerable to these arrangements.

Aspects of bankruptcy and insolvency legislation create barriers to a fresh start

Rules governing consumer proposals and filing for bankruptcy, as set out in the federal *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act*, can present administrative hurdles for people with low incomes that limit their access to these debt relief solutions. For other low-income individuals seeking debt relief, the repayment obligations associated with consumer proposals and filing for bankruptcy may not be financially feasible. In both cases, the result is fewer debt relief options being available to them.

If a person's income exceeds the threshold amount OSB deems sufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living, they are required to make additional payments that can prove challenging during their bankruptcy. Critics maintain that the OSB threshold amount is actually too low to provide a reasonable standard of living in parts of Canada where the cost of living is higher, making it difficult for people to both achieve a reasonable standard of living and honor their repayment obligations.

While most debts can be discharged through bankruptcy, student loans are treated as “non-releasable” debts. This means student loan debt is not normally addressed through formal insolvency proceedings if the filing occurs within 7 years of the individual being a student, or within 5 years in some cases with court authorization. The rationale for this rule is that it prevents students from filing formal insolvency proceedings directly before entering the workforce. The 7-year waiting period also resets if a consumer becomes a student again, whether or not they receive government loans for that schooling. This reset can negatively impact people struggling with repayment who then engage in upskilling to improve their financial circumstances.¹⁷

Bankruptcy discharge of debts in Canada

In Canada, a **debtor discharge** is the final step in the bankruptcy process. Once granted, it legally releases a person from repaying most pre-bankruptcy unsecured debts and stops creditors from collecting on those debts.

A discharge frees individuals from their obligation to pay back certain unsecured, **releasable debts** as of the date the bankruptcy, including:

- Credit cards;
- Personal loans and lines of credit;
- Payday loans;
- Income tax debt owed to the Canada Revenue Agency;
- Utility bills (electricity, gas, phone).

Other debts are **non-releasable** and typically include:

- Secured debts, such as mortgages and home equity lines of credit;
- Support payments to a former spouse or to children;
- Fines or monetary penalties imposed by the Court;
- Debts arising from overpayment of government benefits (e.g., EI, social assistance) and acts of fraud;
- **Student loans** if less than a minimum of five years have passed since the bankrupt stopped being a full-or part-time student.

Discharge can be absolute, conditional, suspended (takes place at a later date) or refused depending on individual circumstances.

Opportunities for action

While the purpose of the Roundtable was to define the challenges associated with our debt-help ecosystem, participants also proposed solutions to strengthen to trustworthy, affordable and appropriate debt help in Canada. Participant suggestions were supplemented by desk research to better understand how these and other solutions have been applied in other jurisdictions. The resulting list below is not a comprehensive solution framework, but provides an important starting point for further work.



Improve lender accountability framework and consumer protections

The Government of Canada, along with the provinces and territories could jointly **explore introducing new legislation and regulations to strengthen creditor accountability and consumer outcomes**. Ideally, lender accountability obligations would be harmonized across federal, provincial, and territorial jurisdictions to provide greater consistency for consumers but, if necessary, the federal government and individual provincial governments could proceed on their own.

Since 2008, the UK has shifted towards an outcomes-based regulatory model that requires lenders to consider affordability risk (i.e., what a customer can realistically afford) rather than credit risk alone (i.e., how much credit can be extended before repayment risk is too high). These reforms also require that institutions act in good faith, and prevent foreseeable harm to consumers.^{18, 19}

The UK introduced the *Financial Services Act* (2012, updated in 2021) and created the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) with the mandate to protect consumers and ensure market integrity.²⁰ The FCA's [Consumer Credit Sourcebook](#) requires that financial institutions assess both a customer's creditworthiness and whether or not the debt is realistically affordable for them.²¹

More recently, the UK introduced [UK Consumer Duty](#) (2023), which requires that firms deliver good outcomes for customers across products and services, price and value, consumer understanding, and customer support.²² In practice, these reforms have strengthened protection for consumers seeking credit and/or carrying debt by requiring that firms consider affordability, identify customers at risk, and provide appropriate supports.

The UK government also introduced “breathing space” rules which provides temporary relief from creditors and freezes interest charges while individuals seek debt advice and develop a repayment plan.²³

Similarly, requiring companies in Canada to conduct affordability assessments prior to extending consumer loans or credit could strengthen lender accountability and improve consumer outcomes. Such assessments could help reduce situations where consumers take on unmanageable debt. However, stricter affordability requirements could also result in reduced access to credit for some consumers, particularly those with low incomes or irregular earnings, creating important trade-offs that would need to be carefully considered. Additionally, lenders could be required to refer clients who are struggling with repayment to appropriate support, including services that could help to develop structured plans to manage their debt. However, to ensure consumers are directed to trustworthy and appropriate services, stronger regulation and guidelines for the debt help sector would also be needed.

Reduce the cost of debt help

As the cost of debt help remains a significant barrier for people with low incomes, the Government of Canada could **consider options to provide consumers with free debt help**. This could be achieved through government subsidies or direct funding. For example, the UK offers government-funded debt advice facilitated through the [Money and Pensions Service \(MaPS\)](#). In this tri-sector model, a government levy on financial services firms funds the provision of debt advice to consumers by non-profit community organizations nationwide. Canada could explore a similar model: scaling free, community-delivered debt help through direct federal government funding or a levy on federally regulated financial service providers.

The cost of bankruptcy services also remains a barrier for people with low incomes. The government could consider **subsidizing the cost of LIT services for qualifying consumers**. Existing mechanisms such as the OSB's Bankruptcy Assistance Program enables qualified individuals with low incomes who have been unable to obtain LIT services to have one designated by the OSB. These provisions could be reviewed and adapted to further reduce the cost burden of LIT services.

Provide timely, accessible information on how to access debt help to consumers

Accessible and timely information and resources can make it easier for consumers to access debt help. Communications from creditors and collection agencies to consumers in arrears offer an ideal opportunity to **provide timely and relevant information on debt help options**.

Because some creditors may be federally regulated (e.g., banks and federal credit unions) and other creditors and collection agencies provincially regulated, it may prove challenging to align on regulation to require companies to provide information on affordable, trustworthy and appropriate debt help options to consumers in arrears. However, FCAC could both lead by example, requiring financial institutions it regulates to communicate available debt help supports and resources to consumers in arrears, and support provincial governments by sharing related, evidence-based, effective practices from other jurisdictions. As an example, collection notices could be required to include information about debt help resources and creditors could also be encouraged, or required, to offer referrals to safe and affordable debt help services, consistent with practices in the UK under *Consumer Duty*.²⁵ Any changes would need to take into account existing relationships between collection agencies and lenders, particularly when collection agencies act on a lender's behalf.

Update bankruptcy and insolvency legislation

To address challenges related to the surplus income threshold, the federal government could **update OSB's reasonable standard of living standard to better reflect regional differences in housing and basic living costs** (similar to its [Market Basket Measure](#) of poverty). It could also examine whether additional non-discretionary expenses, such as saving for emergencies or other essential costs, should be recognized when calculating surplus income. Government benefits could also be excluded from income assessments, ensuring that people would keep the full value of those entitlements.

To address issues related to government student loans, the government could reconsider the discharge rules so that additional periods of schooling do not reset the waiting period for discharging student loan debt, particularly where no new government student loan has been received. This would require a legislative change.

The government could also **consider alternative options for people with low incomes with low or no assets**. In the UK, the [Debt Relief Order \(DRO\)](#) was created for people with low incomes, low assets, and debts under a specific threshold (£50,000). Under this model consumers can access free debt help to facilitate the DRO, which pauses debt payments for one year. If eligibility requirements are maintained during this period, the debt is written off.²⁶

Strengthen oversight of the debt advisory marketplace

Unregulated activity in the debt advisory marketplace can result in consumers paying for unnecessary, and/or low-value services. As noted above, regulation and oversight of LITs, credit counsellors, debt advisors, and other actors in the debt help marketplace crosses federal and provincial/territorial jurisdictions and in some instances leaves gaps.

Federal and provincial/territorial government entities could **collaborate to strengthen oversight, transparency and accountability across the marketplace with particular attention to reducing the influence of unregulated debt advisors**. Potential measures for further exploration include standards for education and/or experience requirements, service delivery standards, and rules on the cost and value of services to consumers.

Conclusion

The debt help challenges and solutions identified by participants will inform Prosper Canada's work to further develop and advance solutions to close the gap in affordable, appropriate, and trustworthy debt help for people with low incomes. We are deeply appreciative of the contributions of all our Debt Help Roundtable participants and look forward to continuing to engage partners and stakeholders from all sectors in this shared effort.

About this project

To gain a better understanding of the debt help gap, [Prosper Canada](#) convened a cross-sector roundtable on March 10th, 2026. More than 20 debt help stakeholders from the community, government, and business sectors came together to discuss challenges in the debt help landscape (see Appendix). As a part of this work, Prosper also spoke with partners across the country and other organizations to get a better understanding of existing consumer debt challenges, with a focus on debt help.

This initiative is a component of Prosper Canada's *Advancing Financial Well-being and Protection for Canadians with a low-income* project, funded by Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada's Consumer Protection Initiative.

This report summarizes the debt help challenges shared during the roundtable discussion. As participants also identified potential solutions, we have captured these ideas as well. It was agreed that participants' contributions would not be attributed in this report to encourage them to speak freely.

For more information on this initiative, please contact Sanah Manickam, Manager, Policy and Systems Change, Prosper Canada at smanickam@prosperscanada.org.

About Prosper Canada

Prosper Canada is a national charity driving bold change that enables more people to prosper. With government, business and community partners across Canada, we are expanding life-changing financial empowerment services, innovating for greater inclusion and impact, and removing barriers to financial well-being for people with low and modest incomes. Our goal is a Canada where everyone has the opportunity and support to achieve financial well-being and live with dignity, stability, and possibility.

Supported by a \$60 million investment from the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program – Children and Families (ESDC), in 2025 Prosper Canada launched its *Resilient Futures* program, funding 97 community organizations across Canada to deliver free, high-quality, financial empowerment services, including tax filing, benefit assistance, and financial education, coaching and counselling. The program is expected to reach 1 million Canadians over four years, connecting them to an additional \$2 billion in unclaimed tax and benefit income.

Appendix

Roundtable participants

- **Corinne Baggley**, Director, Employment and Social Development Canada
- **André Bolduc**, Senior Vice-President, BDO Debt Solutions, Immediate past chair of Canadian Association of Insolvency and Restructuring Professionals
- **Ansley Dawson**, Senior Manager of Service Integrations, Research & Partnerships, WoodGreen Community Services
- **Stephanie Duhaime**, Director, Program & Policy Innovation, Financial Consumer Agency of Canada
- **Martha Holmes**, Director, Program Operations Branch, Employment and Social Development Canada
- **Karen Hopeson**, Director, Counselling & Client Services, Credit Canada
- **Simon Howard**, Co-Founder, Smartie
- **Miranda Killam**, Deputy Superintendent, Regulatory Policy and Public Affairs, Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy
- **Julie Kuzmic**, Head of Consumer Advocacy & Compliance, Equifax Canada
- **Robin Larrett**, Manager, Financial Health Services, Thunder Bay Counselling
- **Anne Loosen**, Senior Project Leader, Financial Institutions Division, Finance Canada
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- **Rebeckah Smylie**, Manager, Financial Empowerment, West Neighbourhood House
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- **Maria Vranas**, Manager, Financial Literacy and Collaboration, Insights, Policy and Financial Literacy, Financial Consumer Agency of Canada
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- **Adam Fair**, Vice President, Strategy and Development, Prosper Canada
- **Sanah Manickam**, Manager, Policy and Systems Change, Prosper Canada
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Facilitation support

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- **Noah Zon**, Co-Founder and Principal, Springboard Policy

Notes

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