

TO: Toronto Budget Committee

RE: Agenda Item BU22.2, 2021 Capital and Operating Budgets

Members of the Budget Committee,

As current and past members of the External Review Panel for the City's Equity Responsive Budgeting process, we commend the City of Toronto for its progress in incorporating an intersectional equity lens into its annual operating budget, and for its progress in examining the budget's impacts for Indigenous community members. Since the Equity Responsive Budgeting Process began in 2017, we have seen City divisions improve their understanding of how their spending decisions affect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, and equity-seeking groups. We further commend City staff, and particularly those in Social Development and Finance Administration, for carrying out the external review of the equity-responsive budgeting process in spite of the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic.

At the same time, members of the External Review Panel have repeatedly noted key limitations of the City's Equity Responsive Budgeting process. Of particular concern is that the current approach only considers equity impacts of proposed enhancements or reductions of divisions' operating budgets, rather than the City's base budget as a whole, including capital budget and revenue sources. This limited approach has resulted in budgets that maintain the status quo, and fail to take the bold actions necessary to address the fundamental drivers and consequences of colonialism and inequity.

The pandemic has intensified the life-and-death stakes of inequity and marginalization on the basis of Indigeneity, race, gender, class, disability, immigration status, age, income, wealth, and other factors. The conditions driving disproportionate COVID impacts for Indigenous Peoples and equity-seeking groups—from under-resourced Long-Term Care facilities, to cramped shelters, to packed buses, to overcrowded housing—are in part a product of the City's past failures to make bold, equity-promoting investments.

Nowhere is this failure more apparent than in the Toronto Police Services budget. At \$1.08 billion net, and with a staff complement of 7,524 positions, the TPS proposes to consume the second-largest share of Toronto's 2021 operating budget. The TPS budget is more than 100 times the size of the City's investment in new affordable housing, and includes seven times more staff positions than Shelter, Support, and Housing. The City's proposed 2021 TPS budget is 0% increase from 2020. This does not support the City's ability to pivot its spending towards operations that uphold the human rights of marginalized communities. It is also a failure towards the City's commitment to confronting anti-Black racism.

Action 18.2 of the 2017 Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism directs the City to ‘use an Anti-Black Racism Analysis to develop and implement alternative models of policing that focus on community engagement’. The recent police-involved deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, D’Andre Campbell, Chantel Moore, and Ejaz Ahmed Choudry have further brought to the forefront the need for Toronto to uphold its promise of more responsible spending and accountability within TPS.

Black Torontonians are twenty times more likely than white Torontonians to be killed by police. Anti-Black racism within the Police force is a growing and imminent threat to the well-being of Torontonians. As Black Torontonians and other impacted residents have brought attention to the anti-Black Racism within TPS, the knowledge has only become visible in the main stream more recently due to the events of 2020, and decades of work by Black Lives Matter Toronto, Standing Up for Racial Justice Toronto, and other groups.

With the 2021 budget, it is time for the Budget Committee and City Council to apply an anti-racist and gender equity approach to the management of the TPS budget. One that upholds the City’s commitment to confronting anti-Black racism, is Indigenous-centered, and based on an intersectional gender equity analysis. This will allow the City to direct funding towards operations that uphold the human rights of marginalized communities.

That is why we urge this Committee to adopt the recommendations of the recent report, “Rethinking Community Safety: A Step Forward for Toronto,” prepared by Toronto Neighbourhood Centres in partnership with Black Lives Matter and 21 other organizations. The recommendations include for the City to direct \$340 million of the TPS funds to instead invest into services that reduce homelessness, support those experiencing mental health crisis, protect those experiencing gender-based violence, and ensure those who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, gender-non-conforming, LGBTQ2S+, or disabled do not face discriminatory barriers preventing access to economic opportunities.

We join the organizations behind this report, and tens of thousands of other Torontonians, in calling on the Budget Committee and Toronto City Council to initiate the necessary processes to plan and implement the reallocation of \$340 million from policing to housing and programs for youth, survivors of gender-based violence, people facing homelessness, and people experiencing mental health challenges. Further, in implementing these reallocation processes, we call on you to engage the leadership of members of Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, persons experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges, youth,

survivors of gender-based violence, and others directly affected by over-policing and police violence.

Creating and implementing a community-led plan to reallocate funds from the Toronto Police budget would uphold the human rights of Indigenous, Black, and other marginalized communities. We support your leadership in this area, and we are ready to continue our partnership with the City and its staff to make these goals a reality.

Sincerely,

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