

February 17, 2021

Toronto Youth Cabinet Budget Priorities

Dear Members of Toronto City Council,

The Toronto Youth Cabinet is the City of Toronto's official youth advisory body. We have been actively involved in the 2021 Budget process and this document outlines our priorities for the 2021 Budget which we believe will contribute to building a youth friendly City.

Executive Summary

- **Address State of Good Repair Backlog**
- **Introduce New Revenue Tools**
- **Expand Violence Prevention and Community Safety Alternatives**
- **Improve the Budget Process**

The City has a responsibility to provide high quality public services to all Toronto residents, and that requires adequately maintained infrastructure and assets. Toronto's state of good repair backlog has already reached \$8.4B. According to [Briefing Note 4](#), without decisive action, our City is on a path to reach a backlog of \$15B by 2030. Today's youth will be left with a transit system, road network and recreation facilities that are crumbling. We cannot let that happen. While some decisions can be made about priorities, such as immediately conducting a review of spending \$500m to rebuild 1km of the Gardiner Expressway, more revenue is required. It is inconceivable that the City will find \$15B in savings or receive \$15B from the upper levels of government. Decisive action is required to change course and leave today's youth with adequately maintained City infrastructure and assets.

Increased revenues are required for the City to address long standing issues including inequality, housing affordability and transit accessibility through the operating budget. This does not include approved projects which are unfunded and the \$15B state of good repair backlog. The TTC is facing a 10-year capital shortfall of \$10.3B including a lack of funding for key priorities such as RapidTO bus lanes which would deliver enhanced transit service to low income neighbourhoods. Important vehicle purchases, vehicle overhauls and track repairs are all at least partially unfunded. The Toronto Youth Cabinet looks forward to the implementation of the Vacant Homes Tax and continues to support examining all revenue sources which have yet to be exhausted. This includes raising the Municipal Land Transfer Tax on luxury properties, a Parking Levy, Vehicle Registration Tax, Stormwater Charge or raising property taxes by more than 0.7%.

The Toronto Youth Cabinet supports measures which have been taken in the 2021 Budget with regard to community safety including the expansion of the Mobile Crisis Intervention Unit, 911 call redirection to community agencies and the Community Crisis Support Service Pilot. It is regrettable that the Community Crisis Support Service Pilot will not launch until 2022, given that there is an immediate need for this service. The Toronto Youth Cabinet supports further investigating how tasks currently assigned to the Toronto Police Service could be reassigned to relevant city departments. We are frustrated to see that for the third consecutive year the City's 2018 Immediate Steps to Address Gun Violence Strategy is not funded.

Finally, we believe there are opportunities to improve the budget process, the most significant of which is through additional public consultation. The public should be consulted about their budget priorities before the budget is launched as opposed to afterwards. This would ensure the recommended budget reflects public opinion on municipal budget priorities.

Sincerely,

The Toronto Youth Cabinet