

**Giuliana Carbone**  
 Deputy City Manager

**Social Development, Finance and  
 Administration**  
 100 Queen St., West  
 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

 Tel: ( 416 ) 392-5207  
 Fax: (416) 392-8403  
 chris.brillinger@toronto.ca  
 www.toronto.ca

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## 2019 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

### Toronto Youth Equity Strategy Implementation Status

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#### Issue:

- The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) will be fully implemented in 2019, contingent on Council approval of \$2.578 million included in the 2019 Staff Recommended Operating Budget and from within existing City resources. The Staff Recommended Operating Budget also includes an additional \$468,000 for the expansion of Toronto Public Library Youth Hubs and Expanded Hours on Sundays.
- At the request of the Economic and Community Development Committee (EC1.6), this briefing note to Budget Committee reports on the implementation status of the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy's 110 recommended actions and the funding required to fully deliver the program including:
  - a) Which actions are fully funded, implemented, and sustained?
  - b) Which recommendations are not fully funded, implemented, and sustained?
  - c) What is the budget impact of fully funding, implementing and sustaining all of the recommendations in the Youth Equity Strategy?

A year-over-year report on City investments in TYES actions is provided in Appendix 1. A summary of the implementation status for all TYES actions is provided in Appendix 2.

#### Background:

- The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) was adopted by City Council unanimously in 2014. The goal of TYES has been to provide more accessible and relevant supports to youth who are most vulnerable to getting involved in serious crime and violence, within the City's authority to plan, manage, deliver and advocate.
- Structural, systemic racism and socioeconomic inequality are the roots of youth violence. Youth who are most vulnerable to getting involved in serious crime and violence experience substandard and inadequate housing, continuous racism and discrimination, poor learning environments and limited access to post-secondary education, job opportunities and career advancement. They encounter numerous barriers to accessing the amenities and services that encourage positive child and youth development (e.g. academic opportunities, food security and culturally appropriate recreation/ arts/ mental health support, etc.)
- These service barriers are frequently based on discriminatory policies and financial, geographical, cultural, racial or social biases.

## **Key Points:**

### **1. Implementation Status**

- Between 2015 and 2019, the City of Toronto will have invested \$103,284,613 to implement TYES, contingent on Council approval of the 2019 Staff Operating Recommended Budget (see Appendix 1).
- TYES will be fully implemented in 2019, contingent on Council approval of \$2.578 million in the 2019 Staff Recommended Operating Budget and from within existing City resources (see Appendix 2).
- Out of the 110 recommended actions in TYES,
  - 84 actions are fully funded, implemented/in progress;
  - 9 actions will be implemented in 2019 within existing resources;
  - 13 actions will be implemented in 2019 contingent on Council approval of \$2.578 million in the Staff Recommended Operating Budget ; and
  - 4 actions are no longer required, due to other system or programs changes.

### **2. Approach**

- Policing cannot be the City's only response to youth violence. The City also has the responsibility to connect youth to appropriate programs and services that can help them change their lives for the better. By highlighting this responsibility and opportunity, TYES is changing attitudes about how the City should relate to highly vulnerable and stigmatized young people.
- TYES is strengthening awareness across City government about the needs of youth who are most vulnerable to getting involved in serious crime and violence, and also about the ways that City services can help youth change their lives for the better.
- TYES has required City divisions, agencies, boards and corporations to stop relying on a "one-size-fits-all" approach to youth programming and to (i) redesign services or (ii) develop new services that are more relevant, accessible, and helpful to youth who are vulnerable to getting involved in serious crime and violence. Examples of innovative program changes and new services developed through TYES are presented below.
- As an equity-focused strategy, TYES was one of the City's first corporate-wide efforts to turn the spotlight on barriers to municipal services that are faced by stigmatized Torontonians and to focus on eliminating those barriers. The TYES model has ushered in a number of complementary equity initiatives and strategies over the past 5 years that are changing the way the City works for residents. These include Poverty Reduction (2015) Equity Responsive Budgeting (2016), Toronto for All (2017) and, especially, Confronting Anti-Black Racism (2017).

- Changing deeply-held stereotypes and misconceptions takes time and steadfast commitment. The City continues to build a more positive relationship with youth who are vulnerable to getting involved in violence and to take steps to make City services and facilities more accessible, relevant and welcoming.

### **3. Successes**

The following are some examples of actions taken as a result of TYES that are making a demonstrable difference in the lives of young people most vulnerable to getting involved in serious crime and violence:

- Employment secured and educational upgrading provided for 364 youth who are most vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence.
- Created Toronto's first-ever "extrajudicial measures", pre-charge diversion program to engage youth in life skills development as an alternative to criminal charges.
- Delivered over 100 life skills workshops for 1,000+ youth vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence.
- Case management provided for 24 youth on remand for gun possession throughout the period of their sentencing, incarceration and reintegration. The program will be expanded in 2019.
- Delivered a weekly lunch program in partnership with community agencies and City divisions to increase safety, provide mentorship opportunities and connect ~100 youth to services and positive youth development sessions in Scarborough.
- Trained 100 City staff from Parks Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Public Library and Toronto Employment and Social Services to work effectively through conflict with youth who are vulnerable to serious crime and violence.
- Delivered 6 workshops and toolkits for City and community-based frontline youth workers on how to reach and support youth vulnerable to violence and crime (topics include: employment for youth with criminal records, educational attainment for incarcerated and recently released youth, trauma-informed practice & self-care, mentorship, and outreach).
- Awarded nearly \$1 million in grants to grassroots and community agencies in 2018 for programming to youth who are vulnerable to violence and crime.
- Certified 50 youth as community healing peer leaders.
- Hired 5 youth outreach counsellors to support 2000+ youth from groups that are furthest away from the labour market (ex. LGBTQS+, youth involved with criminal justice, Indigenous youth, youth affected by gender-based violence and newcomer youth).
- Promoted professional development of youth arts entrepreneurs by awarding them \$210,000 in contracts to complete 52 projects for 7 City divisions.
- Supported the Employment Connections Central Intake Process to connect youth on probation to Employment Ontario partners.
- Helped secure full-time trades employment for 120 youth on probation or parole or who identify as having a conflict with the law.
- Partnered with school boards to deliver the Mentorship through Work Connections initiative, which provides mentorship to 1000+ high school youth who are directly entering the workforce.
- Developed a database to track service delivery for 500+ youth, while maintaining confidentiality for participants.

#### **4. Important Work Still Remains to be Done**

- Important work remains to be completed by the City so that the TYES approach and actions are fully activated across all City Divisions, Agencies, and Corporations.
- Priority actions for TYES in 2019 are highlighted in Appendix 2. Much of this work will be completed within existing resources. For example:
  - Reviewing criteria for participation in City programs and employment etc. to identify and address potential barriers for youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime (e.g. age, geography, criminal records, in/out of school, under/employed, lack of ID, gender, citizenship, Ontario Works status, language, literacy, culture);
  - Implementing a mediation/restorative justice program for City staff, residents, community partners and youth to create alternatives to exclusion/eviction/banning policies and practices at City facilities such as libraries, recreation facilities and Toronto Community Housing;
  - Developing a common set of indicators for monitoring progress and impacts of youth services on youth well-being (“youth outcomes framework”).
- TYES actions that will require new resources have been identified in the 2019 Staff Recommended Operating Budget and are highlighted in Appendix 2. These include:
  - Roll-out of pre-charge diversion programming for 460 youth;
  - Roll-out of case management services for 25 youth on remand for gun possession, during the phases of sentencing, incarceration and reintegration;
  - Parenting programs for 120 parents of youth who are vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence;
  - Grants to community agencies for programming to youth most vulnerable to involvement in violence and crime;
  - Training frontline staff in City facilities and public spaces in de-escalation, conflict mediation, anti-oppression in relation to youth who are vulnerable to involvement in serious crime and violence.

#### **5. Gun Violence in Toronto: A Changing Context**

- By many standards, Toronto is a safe city. In 2017, the Economist ranked Toronto as the fourth safest major city in the world and the safest major city in North America. Toronto’s homicide rate for 2017 was 1.47 per 100,000 – well below the national average of 1.8 per 100,000 and Toronto is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 33 cities on Statistics Canada’s violent crime index.
- Since 2015, however, trends in gun violence and homicides have been increasing. In particular, Toronto experienced a spike in gun violence and homicides in 2018. According to Toronto Police Services data, there were 96 homicides in 2018, compared to 65 in 2017 and 59 in 2015.

Shootings also increased from 288 in 2015 to 426 in 2018. Shootings causing death increased from 26 in 2015 to 51 in 2018.

- The preponderance of gun violence involves youth. Youth violence has changed in recent years and become more complex. City and community staff have observed changes in youth violence in Toronto such as the following:
  - Involvement of increasingly younger youth in gun violence;
  - More complex mental health challenges;
  - Heightened toxicity of drugs;
  - Role of social media in promoting gang culture, anti-social behaviours and retaliatory responses to violence/victimization;
  - Changes in gang structure that impact gang leadership and decision-making; and
  - Access to increasingly powerful weapons.

## **6. Impact of National Crime Prevention Strategy Grants on TYES**

- As authorized by Council in July 2018, the City requested a total of \$32.6 million over five years for community-based violence interventions from the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS).
- The federal government confirmed in January 2019 that the City will be awarded \$6.766 million over five years from NCPS to implement the Community Healing Program, which supports a TYES Action.
- Toronto will not receive any further NCPS funding through the 2018 competition. Work that was not funded through NCPS includes expansion of the City's Community Safety Unit and expansion of Parks, Forestry and Recreation programs focussed on youth leadership and employment.
- TYES work that was not funded through the NCPS has been included in the 2019 Staff Recommended Operating Budget.

## **7. Looking Forward:**

- TYES was developed to reduce barriers to City services in order to better serve and support marginalized youth. TYES focused on how youth become vulnerable to involvement in crime and violence due to socioeconomic inequality, discriminatory policies and barriers to receiving supports.
- Since TYES was introduced, the City's approach to dismantling inequality and racism has evolved and sharpened, with the adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2015) and Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Strategy (2017). These strategies emphasize community assets, strengths, knowledge and lived experience, in addition to community vulnerability.

- A City of Toronto Youth Services Review will be delivered to Council in 2020. This report will document the full range of programs designed for Toronto's young people, the extent of service coordination, and the effectiveness of these models for youth well-being. (*EC.1 – Optimizing Youth Service Delivery*).

**Attachments**

Appendix 1: TYES Budget 2015-2019

Appendix 2: TYES Implementation Status

Appendix 3: 2015 Operating Budget Briefing Note on Toronto Youth Equity Strategy

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**Prepared by:** Kelly Murphy, Policy Development Officer, Social Development, Finance and Administration (Social Policy Analysis and Research), 416-338-8368; [kelly.murphy@toronto.ca](mailto:kelly.murphy@toronto.ca).

**Further information:** Chris Phibbs, Acting Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration (Social Policy Analysis and Research); 416, 392-8614; [chris.phibbs@toronto.ca](mailto:chris.phibbs@toronto.ca)

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