

## **Economic Opportunities Action Group of Jane Finch Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Task Force**

To the Members of the Budget Committee  
City of Toronto Budget Committee  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen St. W., Suite A11  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

February 13, 2019

### **Re: 2019 City of Toronto Budget**

Greetings,

This letter is regarding the 2019 City of Toronto Budget and our desire to communicate and have you act upon our most pressing concerns. As you know, the community of Jane-Finch has been designated a Neighbourhood Improvement Area under the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020. Now, in 2019, the City continues to fall short on helping to deliver the kind of changes we are more than ready for.

Our most urgent needs, which have been identified by community members and partners, include:

#### **Housing**

- Healthy, safe and dignified Toronto Community Housing units and repairs
- Rent controls within city boundaries, in addition to provincial legislation
- More rent-geared-to-income municipal housing
- Sufficient shelter beds

#### **Support for Families**

- Universal childcare program
- Living wage, job security (permanent contracts), employee benefits (including health, retirement, paid parental, mental health leave without penalty), and proper job standards across all city boundaries and, in particular, initiatives that support working families in low-income, racialized neighbourhoods such as Jane-Finch
- Improve physical conditions and quantity of spaces for recreational and educational programming.
- Improved recreational and educational programming
- Increase youth leadership and civic engagement from low-income, under-represented communities (i.e. actively recruit under-represented identities -- racialised, LGBTQ, etc.)
- Increased investment to reduce youth unemployment, particularly for those who are racialised, living with disabilities, in care/out of care, and with records/experience in the justice system

#### **Transit**

- Many Jane-Finch residents were outraged to learn that the next phase of the Fair Pass program is being delayed and that TTC fares are set to increase
- Fare integration between Toronto and other regions (Peel, York, etc.)

- Cancel the scheduled TTC fare hikes and reduce fares for all
- Fund the next phases of the transit Fair Pass immediately (for people receiving childcare and housing supports, and on low incomes) and implement deeper discounts: free TTC on extreme weather alert days and for people who receive social assistance, and \$50 passes and \$1 fares for people living on low incomes
- Fund the TTC fairly with a \$1.50-per-ride subsidy
- Implement a bold Ridership Growth Strategy, including more frequent service to fix overcrowding and transit priority to address congested and unreliable routes

#### **Better Partnerships**

- Law and order approaches and additional policing of already over-policed neighbourhoods like Jane-Finch are not the answer to safety issues many communities face. Instead, we need to see sustainable and increased support to community programs and services.
- Community benefits agreements for local projects like the York Woods Library renovation, Finch LRT and other projects in our community, large or small
- Meaningful participation and consultations with residents regarding local projects
- Active efforts to enable an integrated system of care to reduce rates of disconnected residents (those not in school, not connected to a social service agency, without supports from community/public services, etc.)
  - More dedicated pathways transitioning from education and employment (“Cradle to Career” model)
  - More integration of public services/agencies, particularly for accessing low income supports, as well as health and mental health)

#### **TSNS 2020 and Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy**

- There have been concerns regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of their abilities to actually reduce poverty in meaningful ways within the NIAs. For instance, Black Creek has the lowest Equity Score compared with all other neighbourhoods in Toronto (only around 21%). We need concrete infrastructural and capital investments in the community in terms of job creation and economic and social opportunities as opposed to small grants of a couple of thousand dollars here and there to do community BBQs and similar events; as important as these are, they won’t reduce poverty and they won’t increase our Equity Score in systemic and sustainable ways.

We believe that all residents of Toronto, including those in the Jane-Finch community, should be able to enjoy a decent quality of life in the city they call home, and call on you to pledge your commitment to work towards achieving the above objectives.

Sincerely,

Abdelrahman Shaalan

Resident Co-Chair, Economic Opportunities Action Group of Jane-Finch Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Task Force

CC: Jane-Finch community residents; Jane-Finch Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy Task Force; Humber River-Black-Creek Councillor Anthony Perruzza.