

January 20, 2020

Good morning to the Councillors, City staff and members of the public who are here today.

My name is Heather Marshall and I'm the Campaigns Director for the Toronto Environmental Alliance.

My organization is over 30 years old and TEA reviews the City Budget every year, but this one was different. It's the first Budget of a new decade. And it's also the first City budget since you passed a climate emergency declaration and committed to accelerate the work that needs to be done to reach 'net zero' by as early as 2040.

It's good to see some new money in this budget for climate action (\$5.9 Million new or enhanced) as well as an increase in the number of staff working on TransformTO and the climate emergency.

But climate action spending in Toronto is still well below that of other cities, like our peers in Vancouver. We appear to be spending about \$7 per resident compared to \$80 in Vancouver¹. Why aren't we spending more?

Climate change demands that we not only reduce our emissions fast, we must deeply invest in climate solutions that also meet urgent everyday community needs like housing, transportation, jobs and our resilience to climate shocks and stressors.

HOUSING

Even though there is money in the budget for building new affordable housing, Toronto also can't afford to lose any of our existing rental apartment buildings. They are falling into disrepair, harming health, and wasting lots of energy. Thanks to Toronto's very-low-interest loan programs (HELP and Hi-RIS), some buildings are being preserved and retrofitted without downloading the cost onto their tenants. Demand for these programs is growing but the loan funding is shrinking. With another two years left to go and only \$5 Million left, we won't get enough retrofits done at this rate.

TEA is calling on Council to **ramp up energy retrofits in 2020 by increasing capital funding for HELP & HiRIS.**

TRANSPORTATION

Expanding public transit and making service affordable and reliable are key to attracting more riders. The delay in full implementation of the Fair Fare discount pass to 2021, the delay in the order of 200 streetcars needed for the system, and growing backlog of unfunded transit repairs are major concerns in this budget.

¹ Toronto's proposed operating budget for TransformTO in 2020, estimated at \$18M, works out to about \$7 per resident; Vancouver's \$48M operating budget for climate action translates into \$80 per resident

As is the nearly \$4 M gap in capital funding to realize your Green Fleet ambitions to have 45% zero emission vehicles by 2030² and 100% zero-emission TTC fleet by 2040.

TEA is calling on Council to **invest more capital dollars into public transit and Green Fleet.**

JOBS

Economic Development & Culture recently released an interesting report about the Green Industry sector in Toronto. Did you know that the green sector is growing twice as fast as other sectors in our city?

We appreciate that Councillor McKelvie asked for a staff budget briefing note on the breakdown of spending by sector, as we believe that spending on the Green Industry Sector is woefully inadequate.

TEA is calling on Council to **invest in Toronto's Green Industry Sector in 2020** to create local green jobs and 'Toronto-made' climate solutions.

RESILIENCE

Climate resilience has social, economic and environmental dimensions to consider.

While we have seen a welcome increase in staff positions for Environment & Energy Division, however the proposed reductions to staffing levels in other divisions (Social Development Finance and Administration, Children's Services, and Public Health) and large funding gaps for TTC and TCHC improvements are deeply concerning. The disproportionate impacts climate change will have on vulnerable and equity-seeking populations in Toronto demands that **these services must be enhanced - not 'maintained' - and certainly not reduced.**

Our natural environment provides many ecosystem services that increase Toronto's resilience to extreme heat and flooding, which is becoming much more common. While we have seen some new funding for tree maintenance and planting for Parks, Forestry & Recreation, there appears to be no funding in 2020 to kick start the Ravine Strategy and no 10-year capital plan for enhancing resilience beyond continuing to pay for the damage caused by past storms. **Council must proactively invest far more in protecting, restoring and expanding natural spaces and green infrastructure,** not wait for the next big - and inevitable - weather event.

FINANCIAL TOOLS

In this budget, we're asking "how are we paying for climate action?" because Toronto clearly needs new funding sources to do more.

² Green Fleet Plan capital funding required in next three years is \$9.291 million, of which \$5.661 million is unfunded. \$3.630 million will be funded from the Solid Waste Vehicle Reserve
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/gl/bgrd/backgroundfile-138120.pdf>



TEA supports Council's plan to increase the City Building Fund levy (and dedicate it to affordable housing and transit infrastructure). When built to the highest green standards, Toronto's public transit and affordable housing can tackle climate change head on and build a healthier, liveable city.

Everyone needs to pay their fair share for climate action, not just residents. And much more money is needed.

Today TEA is encouraging Council to **put the wheels in motion for a commercial parking levy**. According to the KPMG report, it could raise at least \$170M a year and be dedicated to public transit. This levy was strongly supported by the 2019 Residents' Reference Panel on climate change and previously supported by the Board of Trade and Canadian Business for Social Responsibility³.

When you passed the climate emergency declaration, you committed to "exploring all viable and equitable financing mechanisms to adequately finance and encourage climate actions and adaptation in the 2021 Budget cycle"⁴.

Financial tools like a commercial parking levy to help fund public transit and a mansion tax to help fund affordable housing need to be on the table.

TEA urges you to hold true to the climate commitments you made to all Torontonians. Increase investment in climate-friendly housing, transportation, jobs and natural areas so we can make some real progress in 2020.

Thank you.

Heather Marshall, Campaigns Director
Toronto Environmental Alliance

³ <https://davidsuzuki.org/press/business-group-environmentalists-urge-parking-levy-fund-toronto-transit/>

⁴ <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.MM10.3>