

# 8 | Theme: Climate Change and Resilience

COVID-19 is a powerful reminder that the everyday stresses that Torontonians face are significantly exacerbated by external risks emerging from the natural world. COVID-19 emerged suddenly and with little warning. In contrast, climate change has long been recognized as another change in the natural environment that could undermine Toronto's efforts to build prosperity, equity and well-being.

A resilient city is better able to adapt to near- and long-term impacts of climate change and other natural events, such as a pandemic, that can disrupt City operations, impact people's lives and have a negative effect on the economy. A resilient city is focused on reducing inequities so that communities are better able to bounce back when they face a shock. A resilient city can generate new sources of economic opportunity by excelling in the development and adoption of sustainable technologies and practices.

Toronto should continue to address climate change and improve resilience through its recovery and long-term rebuild efforts to ensure the momentum and ground gained through past strategies are not lost. The City's existing efforts under the TransformTO Climate Action Strategy and the Resilience Strategy are generating ideas and partnerships that can help accelerate recovery and align rebuild with the City's strategic goals.

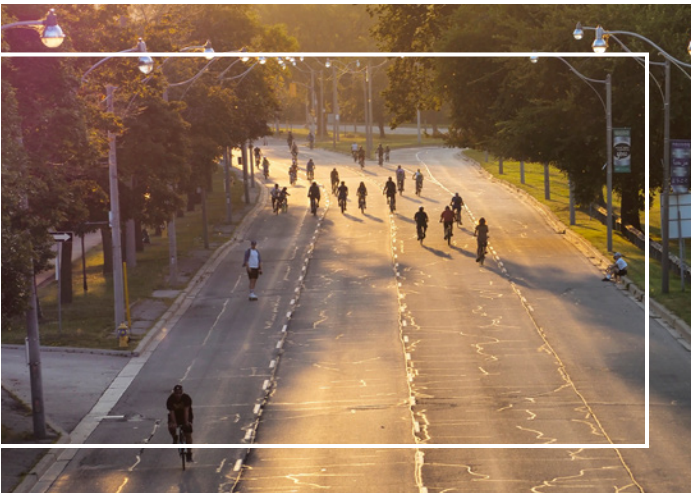
## City already working to build a more resilient Toronto

Toronto's Resilience Strategy provided a community vision developed with the input of about 8,000 Torontonians and more than 80 organizations over two years. It was developed as part of the City's partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative to:

- Protect the health and well-being of those who are at highest risk or are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- Support City priorities to maintain affordability and the quality of housing by, for example, protecting homes from extreme weather.
- Support asset management and state of good repair by taking account of climate change to avoid future costs.
- Improve preparedness for extreme weather and other shocks, and capacity to recover from shocks.
- Advance TransformTO and improve alignment with federal and provincial policies that promote climate resilience.
- Maintain Toronto's leadership nationally and globally as a resilient city.

Based on these engagements, the Resilience Strategy identified a set of 10 goals and 27 actions in three focus areas: people and neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and leadership for a resilient city.

The [Resilience Strategy](#) was released publicly in June 2019 and Toronto City Council directed staff to institutionalize resilience into City decision-making and integrate the Resilience Strategy with TransformTO. City Council approved resources in the 2020 budget.



## Key resilience concepts: shocks and stresses

Shocks are sudden, sharp events that threaten the immediate well-being of a city. Toronto faces potential shocks due to extreme precipitation (which leads to flooding), heatwaves, blizzards and cold snaps, terrorism, power outages and, most recently, the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Stresses are chronic, meaning they exist day after day. Stresses weaken the ability of a city to bounce back in response to a shock. In Toronto, these stresses include increasing economic inequality among residents, systemic racism, a worsening housing crisis, congestion and mobility challenges, and aging infrastructure. A number of these factors have been experienced to a greater extent, and inequitably by some individuals and communities, due to COVID-19, and the result has been an exacerbation of stress to the city.

Climate change can manifest itself as both a stress and a shock, and its impacts are further compounded by critical urban pressures such as inadequate housing and inequality.

## Climate goals, actions and emerging policy tools

TransformTO, Toronto's Climate Action Strategy, was unanimously adopted by City Council in 2017. The goal of TransformTO is to achieve Toronto's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission-reduction target while creating an equitable, healthy, prosperous and resilient city that benefits all. Given the scope of the challenge, the City's divisions, agencies and corporations must all play a role. That includes extensive external partnership with the private sector, the non-profit sector, residents and other levels of government.

To develop TransformTO's next steps, in 2019, the Environment and Energy Division (EED) gathered input from approximately 3,800 residents through various channels, including child engagement and a partnership with Indigenous Climate Action.

In October 2019, City Council, along with many other cities, declared a climate emergency. Council committed to accelerate the TransformTO climate actions while integrating the findings and recommendations of the Resilience Strategy. The declaration strengthened Toronto's TransformTO carbon-reduction goal by establishing a net-zero greenhouse gas emission target for Toronto by 2050 or sooner. This is the target required globally to limit average global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The City's Net Zero Strategy is now being developed. More detailed information is available online at the City's [TransformTO](#) web pages.



To support progress toward a net-zero carbon target, the City is developing a climate lens to help evaluate the climate impacts and considerations of major decisions across the City organization. The insights could also improve the resilience of infrastructure to future climate events, reduce operating and service disruption and associated costs, and improve the City's accountability and transparency. It will also provide data and insights to secure intergovernmental funding, strengthen evidence-based policy-making and build a more complete understanding of performance-based decision-making – outcomes also related to COVID-19 recovery and rebuild.

The City is also focusing on carbon budgeting in support of a net-zero carbon target. Carbon budgeting means restricting the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that the City can emit over a year. This would embed climate considerations in planning initiatives and track progress on greenhouse gas reductions City-wide. Much like a traditional annual fiscal budget, implementing a carbon budget would involve establishing targets on carbon reductions at the start of the year, along with an action plan on how these targets will be achieved. The City could allocate and transfer carbon between different divisions or projects to balance the City's overall carbon budget. Carbon budgets can also help clearly communicate the impact of carbon reduction efforts to the public, organizations and stakeholders.



## Other City strategies that contribute to resilience and address climate change

City strategies on equity, prosperity, health and city building intersect with and support the City's resilience and climate change goals. Understanding the relationship between these actions and goals will support the City's decision-making and consideration of budget and resource implications and how to address inequities magnified by the pandemic.

These strategies include:

- Overarching strategies: City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan;
- Equity-focused strategies: Indigenous Affairs Office Path to Reconciliation; Toronto Food Strategy; Housing TO; Poverty Reduction Strategy; Climate Change and Health Strategy;
- Transportation strategies: Vision Zero; Cycling Network Plan; Bike Share Toronto; Electric Vehicles Strategy; Freight and Goods Movement Strategy; Automated Vehicles Tactical Plan; TTC Corporate Plan, Capital Investment Plan, and 5-Year Service Plan and 10-Year Outlook; Pathway to Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets;
- Environmental strategies: Long-Term Waste Management Strategy; Ravine Strategy; Biodiversity Strategy; Strategic Forest Management Plan 2012-2022; Tree Planting Strategy; Parkland Strategy; Downtown Energy Strategy; The Atmospheric Fund Strategic Directions 2019-2022;
- Asset strategies: City-Wide Portfolio Management Strategy; City Asset Management; Parks & Recreation Facilities Master Plan 2019-2038.

## Sources of greenhouse gases in Toronto

In Toronto, the largest source of local greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is buildings (52 per cent), followed by transportation and waste.<sup>117</sup> Emissions from buildings are primarily from residential buildings (51 per cent), followed by commercial/institutional buildings (36 per cent) and industrial buildings (13 per cent). Approximately 94 per cent of GHG emissions from buildings result from the combustion of natural gas to heat space and water.

Transportation is the second greatest source of GHG emissions in Toronto, responsible for an estimated 38 per cent of local emissions. Passenger vehicles are responsible for the great majority (79 per cent) of local transportation GHG emissions, with light commercial vehicles at 11 per cent and heavy vehicles at 9 per cent. Transportation is also the greatest source in Toronto of air pollutants that impact health.

Waste is responsible for approximately 10 per cent of Toronto's GHG emissions. The majority of these emissions are from landfill.

These sources of GHG in Toronto point to areas of potential remedies and areas of focus for a green recovery.

It is possible that GHG emissions in Toronto decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Daily carbon dioxide emissions around the world are estimated to have fallen by about 17 per cent by early April, relative to 2019 average levels.<sup>118</sup> This decrease in emissions was generated by a massive shift in human behaviour. This indicates that GHG-reduction efforts in the future will need to be ambitious and implemented thoughtfully and early in rebuild plans to ensure they result in co-benefits for residents, such as improved air quality, enhanced employment opportunities and economic activity.



**Rather than needing to be better prepared to combat climate change, active steps should be taken to reduce the impact - a proactive approach rather than reactive.**

Comment from Consultation

## What COVID-19 tells us about achieving resilience and climate change goals

COVID-19 has demonstrated that communities, governments and nations are able to mobilize to address significant shocks. It has also demonstrated that Toronto's public health and safety, economy and quality of life are vulnerable to environmental threats that can emerge from anywhere on the planet, and that there is value in coordinating action with other major cities.

City leaders from around the world have already linked the need to consider COVID-19 recovery in the context of global change. Mayor John Tory became a signatory to the C40 Global Mayor's COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce *Statement of Principles* focused on a low-emissions, equitable recovery. These principles speak to the need "to rebuild our cities and economies in a way that improves public health, reduces inequality and addresses the climate crisis".<sup>119</sup> To date, 45 mayors from major cities have endorsed the principles.

In May, in the largest international mobilization of health care professionals since the 2015 Paris climate agreement, more than 350 healthcare groups representing about 40 million healthcare professionals from 90 countries called on G20 leaders to "prioritize investments in public health, clean air, clean water and a stable climate in the economic stimulus packages" currently being considered in response to COVID-19.<sup>120</sup>

## Climate and resilience – engagement and key findings

### ***Engagement overview and data sets analyzed***

Both TransformTO and the Resilience Office conducted extensive consultations that included City-led and community-led processes, stakeholder consultations, public events and workshops, online surveys, pop-up conversations, a telephone-based town hall, activities created for children, and talks by community leaders, prior to COVID-19. The City also partnered with Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) to design, host and [report](#) on the outcomes of a 2019 workshop with Indigenous communities on urban climate action.

The consultation undertaken by TransformTO and the Resilience Office produced a wide range of recommendations. The observations in this Theme report were also informed by these consultations, as they share many common objectives with recovery and rebuild.

The Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild climate change and resilience theme leads also engaged a broad range of individuals and organizations, from community and non-governmental organizations to labour and business. More than 70 organizations and numerous participants were engaged through short-format discussions. Two larger consultations were convened with networks of organizations working on climate change and resilience issues. A consultation coordinated with Social Planning Toronto included a climate change and resilience question. A joint facilitated discussion was coordinated by the City's Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) was also held on climate change and resilience. Staff also analyzed input from the Mayor's Roundtable on Green Industries and the Academic Roundtable - Toward a Green and Just Recovery for Toronto.





## What we heard – consultation findings and observations

In consultations that informed TransformTO and the Resilience Strategy, one message that echoed across all consultations was for the City to take faster, bolder and more strategic action on climate. Participants urged the City to ensure actions are commensurate with the climate emergency declaration.

Other frequent messages on the overall approach to recovery and rebuild from a climate and resilience perspective included:

- There is a critical need to address inequities through recovery and rebuild.
- Recovery and rebuild presents an opportunity and a need to do things differently.
- Toronto should “build back better,” and successful COVID-19 recovery and rebuild means addressing issues of equity, economy, resilience and climate change together.
- Climate change is a slower moving crisis; recovery and rebuild in response to COVID-19 presents an opportunity to accelerate climate action.
- Problem-solving for multiple issues at a time to achieve co-benefits will be important.

## Equity and Community

### Issues, desired outcomes and opportunities

Equity was one of the most frequent themes raised by stakeholders during TORR consultations on climate and resilience. The need for the City’s recovery plans to directly address disparities in access to infrastructure and services was raised in discussions on economy, jobs, mobility, buildings, community, governance and finance.

Those consulted highlighted the uneven geographic distribution of COVID-19 impacts in Toronto and recognized how pre-existing stresses in some communities likely contributed significantly to increased severity in those areas of the city. It was also noted that the pandemic will have exacerbated the vulnerability of marginalized people and communities. There is a need to address and improve the social determinants of health throughout all stages of recovery and rebuild.

Consultations and other research note that climate change impacts will also be disproportionate and uneven and have greater impact on marginalized and racialized people. For example, extreme heat,

## KEEP COOL AT HOME

**BLOCK THE SUN**

Keep blinds or curtains closed to block out the sun during the day.



**AVOID USING THE OVEN**

Limit the use of the oven or stove; they make your space hotter.



**USE A FAN**

Use a fan near an open window to bring in cooler air from outside.



**PLAN AHEAD**

Ask your landlord about providing an air-conditioned common area that residents can visit.

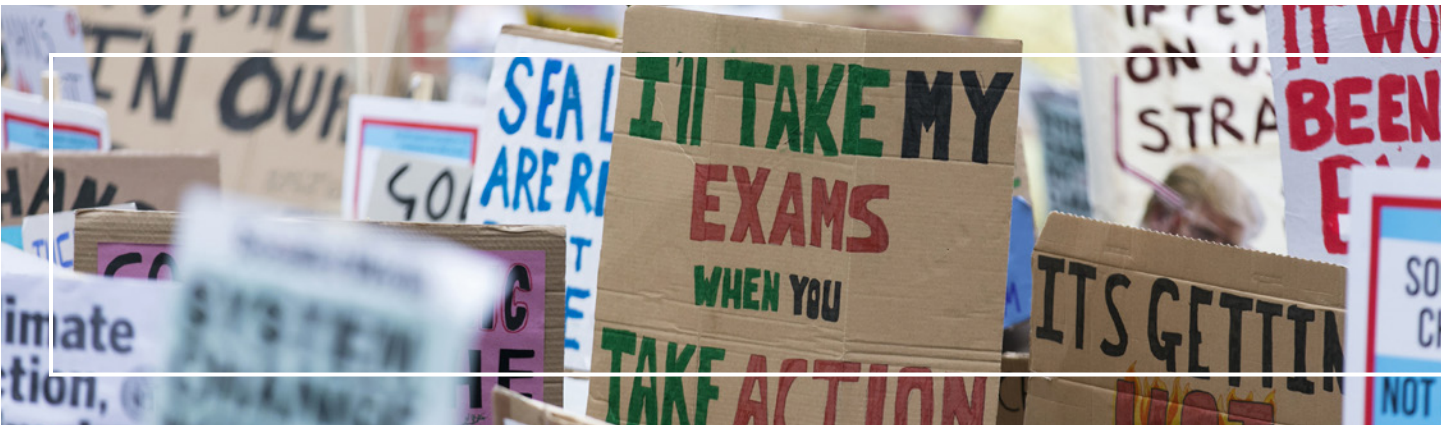


an issue the City is working to address and one that is anticipated to worsen due to climate change, is recognized as a major health challenge for vulnerable populations including seniors. Others who are vulnerable to extreme heat include those with pre-existing medical conditions, children, those living in poor housing conditions with no air conditioning, social supports or access to cooling options. Closures due to COVID-19 resulted in significantly fewer cool spaces (such as libraries, malls and community centres) for people to use for cooling. COVID-19 added another acute risk to these existing challenges and added a layer of complexity given the need to manage multiple risks simultaneously.

Recommendations in the Resilience Strategy are applicable to COVID-19 recovery, including overcoming any potential second wave. For example, residents from neighbourhood improvement areas suggested neighbourhood-based emergency preparedness plans for each community based on their respective challenges, assets and infrastructure.

Engagement participants agreed that successful reopening, restart, recovery and rebuild must be planned using an equity lens, just as equity is central to building resilience in a changing climate.

Groups emphasized the need to enable and support structures that facilitate meaningful participation and political inclusion of equity-seeking groups, including those impacted by systemic racism, in decision making processes. Others identified support for universal



basic income and changes in the City's and other governments' budgeting processes to focus on indicators such as wellness, or other outcomes-based measures that more holistically reflect improvements in communities' socioeconomic and health status.

Participants also highlighted the critical importance of connectivity, access to fast, reliable Internet as centrally important to economic and social participation (likely increasingly important as governments work to rapidly digitize services).

Applying an equity lens to recovery and rebuild, including efforts to improve housing and social services, decrease poverty and increase economic participation and improve health, will also reduce the drivers and impacts of climate change.

Significant ideas and input from various groups and recovery-focused initiatives highlighted the central role of equity and health, including from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), the Pembina Institute, Sustainable Prosperity Canada, and the Just Recovery for All and Inclusive Recovery initiative.



#### ***Key suggestions from engagements and consultations***

- Prioritize spending associated with recovery and rebuild, including any stimulus funding, in COVID-19 impacted communities through the explicit consideration of equity objectives, including considerations of Indigenous Reconciliation, efforts to address anti-Black racism and the social determinants of health, alongside a climate lens analysis.
- Make advancing equity and confronting anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and all forms of systemic racism, central goals of the recovery by using an intersectional gender, race and equity lens in recovery and rebuild planning.
- Meaningfully and deliberately involve the residents of Toronto's communities most impacted by COVID-19 in planning and decision-making relevant to the implementation of recovery and rebuild activities in their communities.
- Build on community-led initiatives in response to COVID-19, support community and neighbourhood-based resilience initiatives to continue to address COVID-19 challenges and opportunities and also prepare for future shocks that impact communities, for example a potential second wave of COVID-19, heat waves, flooding, etc.
- Expand the City's Hot Weather Response program to provide more cooling options for members of vulnerable communities, to renew and cool older apartment buildings, and to reduce urban heat through green infrastructure.
- Support connecting marginalized communities through access to high speed Internet to maximize opportunities for socioeconomic inclusion and access to increasingly digitized government services.
- Recognize the significant impacts of COVID-19 on food security and accelerate and support initiatives to improve access to healthy and affordable food for Torontonians.



## Economy, business and jobs

### Issues, desired outcomes and opportunities

Climate change and resilience featured significantly in discussions related to economic recovery, as well as challenges and opportunities for businesses and employment. Those consulted emphasized the need to remember the climate crisis and said the investments made now in new businesses, the economy and the workforce need to be “futureproofed” to ensure they remain relevant and valuable.

Stakeholders referenced two distinct levels of action - systemic change in the way the economy functions and practical considerations for addressing the immediate needs and opportunities of businesses and the workforce. Observations and questions raised included:

- An economic model built around constant growth and measured only by GDP is not sustainable, and alternative models should be explored.
- COVID-19 has highlighted the fragilities and interconnections associated with a global economy.
- How could immediate challenges of COVID-19 align with the challenges and opportunities associated with the economic transformation and transition needed to address climate change over the longer term.
- How to address the tension between measures taken to ensure well-being (lockdown) during COVID-19 and the impact of those measures on the economy.
- What does a successful economy look like in terms of well-being, “doughnut economics” and the a circular economy.
- How to move toward zero-waste in a way that creates economic opportunities for materials recovery, reuse and repair.



Participants identified opportunities for creating meaningful employment that could aid recovery and advance climate change goals. Proposals included:

- Retooling, building workforce capacity and addressing skills gaps and in the process building out a competitive, greener, decarbonized economy.
- Helping local small business transition to a hybrid of relying on neighbourhood patronage while taking advantage of broader online marketplaces for sustainably produced products.
- Supporting Toronto’s emerging but “infant” clean technology sector.
- Applying Toronto’s research and innovation capacity to create a well-being-oriented economy that situates the environment, climate change and sustainability as part of a more inclusive economy.
- Improving processes and creating new business opportunities to improve the “last mile” challenges of connecting people and goods between key transportation hubs and final destinations.
- Accelerating existing programs that build economic opportunities in neighbourhoods hit hardest by COVID-19 through reducing and reusing waste and building a local circular economy.
- Recognizing the value of the “caring economy” made up of workers who care for children, seniors, the ill and the vulnerable, work that makes it possible for others to enter the labour force.



While the opportunities for creating “green” employment are well recognized, so are the challenges. There is a critical need to invest in people and labour in transitioning to jobs in a low-carbon economy. For example, mechanics asked to transition from maintaining vehicles with internal combustion engines to vehicles with electric motors need significant new knowledge and training.

Some stakeholders highlighted potential economic opportunities of the City of Toronto's goal to work toward zero waste and a circular economy. A circular economy aims to reduce waste and maximize resources by replacing the linear take/make/dispose approach to production and consumption with an innovative system that focuses on product longevity, renewability, reuse, and repair. A circular economy represents a fundamental change to current economic systems, a change that decouples human prosperity from the use of natural resources and the depletion of ecosystems. For cities, a circular economy can significantly reduce waste, improve quality of life and foster economic growth through clean and sustainable innovation, while reducing resource dependency and environmental impacts. There is an opportunity to intentionally design and implement a transition to a circular economy to support a bold, prosperous, equitable and sustainable recovery.



## External research

The International Energy Association (IEA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), through their Sustainable Recovery report, speak to the opportunities for economic and social uplift through investments in a climate-aligned recovery.<sup>121</sup>

The Science-Based Targets Group, a coalition of more than 155 companies (e.g. Unilever, Sanofi, Salesforce, Zurich Insurance) with a combined valuation of than \$2 trillion dollars employing more than five million employees, have called for a “policy that pairs recovery with ambitious climate action”.<sup>122</sup>

In Canada, one industry-led initiative, Resilient Recovery,<sup>123</sup> supported by 280 signatories representing 2,112 companies, has been advocating for a resilient (climate-action-focused) recovery, and by extension supporting the interests of 298,000 Canadian employed by the sector. These jobs range from insulating houses to developing new technologies for renewable energy, and more. Moreover, as others have highlighted, incredible opportunities exist to grow this aspect of the economy while the broader economy is being decarbonized.

The Building Back Better with a Bold Green Recovery<sup>124</sup> report was supported by 50 corporate leaders from a range of Canadian industries and businesses.<sup>125</sup> Yet another coordinated by International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), based in Winnipeg, released a report *Green Strings: Principles and Conditions for a Green Recovery from COVID-19 in Canada* supported by leading environmental and policy groups, representing close to two million people, identified seven “green strings” strategies that should be attached to any recovery efforts. While directed toward the federal government, many are relevant in the municipal context, specifically the need to support companies working toward net zero, and the need to support a just transition that prepares workers for green jobs as well other principles aligned with the City’s equity, climate and resilience goals.<sup>126</sup>

Researchers from a group of UK universities published a paper stating that strategic investments scaled appropriately to achieve net-zero emissions would contribute significantly to the economic recovery required to address COVID-19. The researchers highlight strong evidence that “green stimulus policies”, compared to traditional stimulus measures, lead to greater job creation and are localized, in the short-term. In the longer run, the operation and maintenance of productive clean technologies make them less intensive and generate multipliers arising from energy cost savings.<sup>127</sup>



Canada's Economic Strategy Table on clean energy indicates that by 2030, a \$26-trillion low-carbon economy will create 65 million jobs worldwide.<sup>128</sup>

The need for climate and resilient focused recovery was also supported by a McKinsey and Company analysis. Their analysis of options in one European country suggest that mobilizing €75-150 billion in capital could yield €180-350 billion in gross value added, generate up to three million new jobs, and enable a carbon-emissions reduction of 15 to 30 per cent by 2030. Alternatively, if a high-carbon recovery is pursued, it would make it challenging to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and might leave governments challenged to pay for emissions cuts later.<sup>129</sup>

#### **Key suggestions from engagements and consultations**

- Coordinate with economic and business sectors to develop a green jobs strategy aligned with COVID-19 recovery that supports the growth of green industries in Toronto (cleantech, green buildings, caring economy, local manufacturing, sustainable production, etc.) with a focus on workforce development, capacity building and re-skilling that supports unemployed, underemployed and equity seeking groups.
- Facilitating labour market transition given a need for decarbonisation and the increased digitization of the economy.
- Support initiatives to promote the development of a circular economy through recovery and rebuild efforts.
- Work with the provincial and federal governments to accelerate the development of a circular economy model focused on zero waste that supports local and regional business by creating economic opportunities through materials recovery, reuse and repair.
- Re-evaluate current methodologies for assessing economic prosperity (e.g. GDP measures) with a focus on a more holistic, outcomes-based approach (e.g. well-being budgets, doughnut economics).
- Coordinate, consult and compensate the workers in the “caring economy” to sustain a level of care in the continued response to COVID-19 as well as recovery and rebuild efforts.

## **Buildings and Energy**

### **Issues, desired outcomes and opportunities**

Toronto's buildings are where residents live, work, and play and it is essential that they are safe and resilient, that they promote well-being, and that they are part of the City's low-carbon future. Through COVID-19 recovery and rebuild efforts, opportunities exist to improve the quality of the buildings, and in doing so make them healthier and more resilient. In Toronto, 500,000 Torontonians live in highrise apartment towers that are more than 35 years old, and there are key resilience risks in those buildings.

Emissions from all buildings represent 52 per cent of the city's overall GHG emissions, with a significant relationship to existing energy systems.<sup>130</sup> Prior to COVID-19, it was broadly acknowledged that significant investments and improvements were needed to enhance resilience and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from existing buildings.

COVID-19 has had significant impacts on built form – buildings and energy systems – from several perspectives. Comments and input received on this topic represent a significant proportion of the input received through engagement on resilience and climate change.

**Like the pandemic, climate change is an existential threat to our communities and creating resilience to climate change is the most important thing the city can do. Learning from this pandemic, I hope the city focuses on building climate resilience and taking action on what seems like 'far off' risks.**

Comment from Consultation

## Short-term impacts

COVID-19 has resulted in entire buildings being emptied of their occupants, while others have seen an increase in occupancy as COVID-19 has forced millions of people to be at home for much of the time. COVID-19 also impacted the industry that designs and engineers buildings and building systems, manufacturers and suppliers, as well as the labour and building professionals that construct and renovate buildings. While many aspects of the building, engineering and construction industry are considered essential and activities have continued, there has no doubt been an impact, from the need for physical distancing on job sites to permitting and approvals to project financing.

Given these challenges, stakeholders highlighted specific concerns with respect to progressing and ultimately accelerating climate action in this area. For many, the exceptionally low price of natural gas (prior to COVID-19 and at present) is a significant barrier to advancing decarbonization. Those consulted also highlighted that financing for green buildings projects may become more challenging in the current economy. If financial constraints contribute to building projects being less ambitious in the use of green technology, these buildings will have higher emissions for decades to come.



## Building renewal

A broad range of organizations including the David Suzuki Foundation, Pembina Institute, Efficiency Canada, the Canada Green Building Council, The Atmospheric Fund and others have identified significant opportunities for cities, including Toronto, to make progress on climate goals through retrofitting and increased use of clean electricity. Measures identified by these groups and currently being explored by the City include zero-emission building requirements for new and existing homes and commercial buildings, policies and regulation to drive energy efficiency, electrification and the specification of low-carbon building materials. Additional inputs speak to co-financing for public and commercial retrofitting, efforts to de-risk and encourage project financing, investment in low-carbon research and development and substantial investments in upskilling and workforce development.

Toronto's older apartment towers have been identified as one of the most pressing priority for the city's resilience. These buildings are home to one in three low-income families and many equity-seeking groups are overrepresented in the buildings, including seniors and newcomers. International evidence shows that deep retrofits of towers - which go beyond state of good repair to include improving the building envelope to improve insulation, new heating/hot water equipment, better ventilation and cooling, accessibility upgrades, fire system upgrades, and emergency backup power - result in significantly improved health and well-being outcomes for residents, improved resilience to the building and reduced GHG emissions. COVID-19 underscored the importance of retrofitting these buildings so they provide healthy and safe places to live for marginalized communities in Toronto.

Despite challenges, stakeholders emphasized the relative speed at which stimulus monies could be applied to retrofitting buildings and consequently support economic activity and livelihoods linked to this sector, from energy efficiency professionals to trades and labour. Given the broad range of building types and building stock, the predominant suggestion was that efforts should be concentrated on retrofitting public and institutional assets, for example schools, community centres and libraries. It was proposed that the City use anticipated stimulus dollars to jump-start retrofitting efforts through investment in its own portfolio and, in doing so, demonstrate the benefits.

Such activity could support economic activity while developing the industry and workforce required to facilitate the decarbonization of building stock over time. Many who commented pointed to research and studies highlighting considerable economic opportunities in this regard. While the benefits of retrofitting



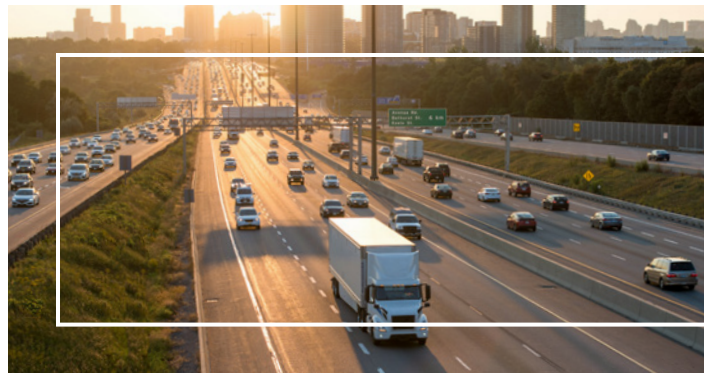
have been studied and articulated, practical implementation has proven more challenging. Many individuals and groups thought the City should also play a supportive role working with partners (public, private and not-for-profit sector) to aggregate potential projects. Stakeholders spoke to Toronto's competitive advantage in developing a pipeline of projects, given the knowledge developed through its implementation of Energy and Water Reporting and Benchmarking (EWRB), and a history of City-led programs, for example, the Better Buildings Partnership (BBP). There was enthusiasm for the potential of using the City's data assets, such as EWRB data and existing ASHRAE Level 2 building audits, to build a case for a large-scale retrofitting effort.

## Energy policy

Many highlighted an incompatibility between Toronto's focus on decarbonization and the province's current energy policy, which will increase use of natural gas for electricity generation. Stakeholders highlighted that many of Toronto's efforts toward net zero could be nullified by provincial energy policies and that the City needs to advocate to the province to address this issue, similar to the ways the City supported the phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation. The input received from stakeholders on the need to electrify light, heat, cooling and powering the city is significantly tied to this issue.

Those consulted emphasized the need to use energy significantly more efficiently, to move from fossil fuel to electricity in order to heat and cool buildings, but also to decarbonize the electricity grid. Repeatedly those engaged highlighted the province's role in these issues, including regulations and priorities for utilities, and specifically Toronto Hydro's role. Some of those consulted supported the use of hydrogen and renewable natural gas within the existing natural gas system, while others supported the City taking the position that the City intends to move away from fossil fuels and toward electrification.

Those consulted saw a central role for Toronto Hydro in leading energy efficiency measures and supporting future planning for electrification (the electrification of transportation will be addressed separately). They emphasized the need for Toronto Hydro to take a more innovative and future-forward approach to supporting decarbonization. As Toronto Hydro's main shareholder, the City could use its influence to work with the utility, while recognizing the role of provincial authorities and the Ontario Energy Board (OEB).



### ***Key suggestions from engagements and consultations***

- Support socioeconomic recovery and rebuild, workforce development and Toronto's green economy through a City of Toronto commitment to retrofit existing buildings and to ensure any new buildings constructed by the City of Toronto (and agencies/corporations) are built to a standard aligned to meeting Toronto's climate objectives while improving health, air quality and resilience;
- Support the broader public and private sector in an accelerated effort to retrofit their buildings, including Toronto's older apartment towers;
- Support the public and private sector in an accelerated effort to construct any new buildings to a standard aligned to meeting Toronto's climate objectives;
- Explore opportunities to aggregate retrofit projects to achieve efficiencies of scale working with major property owners, including major institutions;
- Increase policy ambitions and use the City's regulatory powers to support these efforts;
- Advocate to the provincial and federal governments for funding and support;
- Accelerate efforts to electrify heating and cooling in buildings, using policy and regulation to encourage electrification in building back better;
- Advocate to the province to prevent carbon lock-in of the provincial electricity grid by prioritizing conservation and demand management, efficiency and renewable energy generation rather than increased consumption of natural gas;
- As the sole shareholder of Toronto Hydro, apply influence working in collaboration with Toronto Hydro to accelerate efforts toward electrification of both building heating systems and vehicles as well as other activities required to support decarbonisation such as conservation and demand management, efficiency and renewable energy generation.

## Mobility

### Issues, Desired Outcomes and Opportunities

Transportation demand, patterns, modes and capacity in Toronto have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Access to transportation with physical distancing will be critical for getting people back to work, school and daily life.

In the immediate term, stakeholders focused on urgently improving mobility options in Toronto to allow for physical distancing, especially for those without access to private vehicles. Over the long term, stakeholders talked about transformational changes to how people and goods move around the city and region to provide people with more access to employment and services, improving livability and well-being in the city and contributing to climate goals. Stakeholders urged the City to think about equity and roads - how to improve public health, disadvantaged communities and air quality.

### The situation before COVID-19

Diverse stakeholders spoke of the need to improve transportation options throughout the city. Prior to COVID-19 inequitable access to mobility was cited as a major concern by many. People expressed the view that downtown, people wishing to use transit, cycle or walk have a very different experience than residents of Toronto's vulnerable communities in the inner suburbs, and the disparities have been exacerbated by COVID-19. One stakeholder compared the situation downtown and in other parts of the city, referencing the need for separated cycle tracks with safety barriers, green infrastructure and shading: "If Richmond is worthy of barriers," busy commercial corridors in northwest Toronto "should be too."



**A lot of resilience has been shown at the community level in responding to COVID-19, and this should be supported so that we are in a stronger position as a society during the next waves, and the next pandemics. Communities know what they need, and often have the skills within them to meet their needs.**

Comment from Consultation

## Transit

Stakeholders frequently cited a need for transit to be more reliable, available and affordable, and highlighted a need for more transit funding on an emergency basis as well as consistently over the long term.

Many stakeholders spoke about a need to support and expand transit availability immediately, particularly in vulnerable communities, including lower-income inner suburban communities. Methods identified include reallocating road space, particularly by expanding the use of buses operating in transit priority corridors. There was positive reaction to the acceleration of planned changes to surface transportation in response to the pandemic, specifically recent announcements on bus rapid transit. Participants spoke of the need to make the expansion of convenient transit permanent. In the city's most challenged neighbourhoods, such investment and action would improve access to jobs, services and other needs, both immediately during recovery and in the long term.

These opinions are consistent with those expressed during TransformTO consultations in 2019 when participants expressed a need for more robust and reliable transit, including more transit priority zones.



## Active Transportation – Cycling and Walking

A strong focus of stakeholder feedback was on increasing access to safe, separated cycling and walking infrastructure. Cycling and walking were cited for their value in offering a healthier, less expensive way to travel in the city.

A common theme in TORR consultations was the need to re-allocate road space for access to jobs and other services in the recovery period and long-term. Many stakeholders cited the need for the City to satisfy unmet demand for more kilometres of safe-cycling infrastructure.

Stakeholders mentioned the City’s success in rapidly creating much-needed space for cycling and walking through ActiveTO, and expressed a desire to see these measures expanded and made permanent. A number of the responses to the pandemic, such as accelerated development of cycling infrastructure and more safe space for pedestrians, have climate and resilience benefits. ActiveTO is about making sure people have space to get around and maintain physical distancing, and it supports essential trips, front-line workers and vulnerable road users.

A number of stakeholders noted that the first major ActiveTO measures were centred downtown, and said the next major ActiveTO announcement should be about measures in the inner suburbs that experience the greatest long-term stresses of inequality and racism, and that have been the hardest hit by the impacts of COVID-19. Numerous stakeholders encouraged the City to consider lessons from cities that are more advanced in re-allocating road space to the modes that are in demand today during COVID-19 recovery, and over the long term.

These opinions are consistent with input received in the development of Toronto’s Resilience Strategy on the importance of expanding active transportation infrastructure. Active transportation infrastructure can exist alongside, or locally in place of, other road uses where appropriate. A number of options exist to balance the use of road space while moving as many people as possible and meeting the City’s goals on congestion, climate and resilience.

## Electrification

A frequent theme in TORR stakeholder discussions was the importance of putting Toronto on a path to electrify the movement of people and goods as part of building back better and to maintain the cleaner air experienced as a result of this difficult time. Fossil fueled vehicle traffic is the primary source in Toronto of air pollutants that affect health, and impacts are greatest in lower-income communities that are more likely to be located near a major road or highway.<sup>131</sup> During TORR consultations, participants emphasized the importance of “multi-solving” – addressing multiple needs/challenges simultaneously. One opportunity is enabling electric mobility, particularly using a shared model, to address climate, air quality, health and equity concerns. Discussions about electric mobility included private vehicles, the need for shared models of electric vehicle (EV) ownership, building on the TTC’s success with e-buses, and e-micro mobility such as e-cargo bikes. Accelerating the implementation of the City’s Electric Vehicle Strategy may be a specific opportunity to drive a green recovery and build back better.





## Goods Movement

Numerous ideas were put forward about the movement of goods. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a considerable increase in trips by delivery vehicles carrying the groceries and goods people have ordered online for delivery, rather than purchasing in person. Stakeholders spoke of the need to manage the number of trips by delivery vehicles to homes and retail outlets in the short- and long-term, to manage air pollution, noise, congestion and infrastructure usage, and to meet the City's climate commitments. One group suggested a tax on items delivered to reflect the increased costs borne by the City as a result of increased delivery activity.

Stakeholders' ideas for improving goods movement in Toronto included considering equity and environment in Toronto's freight strategy by ensuring that freight routes, along with associated air pollution and noise, avoid residential areas, particularly lower income communities. Innovative ideas included freight depots, with electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be used by multiple freight companies with electric vans and using cargo bikes as "last-mile" solutions. Some people suggested using City properties for that purpose. Stakeholders also emphasized the opportunity to promote cargo bikes to enable residents and businesses to make local trips while carrying goods and equipment.

Consultation findings are consistent with strategies put forward by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) and its recent report, *Healthy Recovery*. That report highlights the

critical importance of investments for the financial sustainability of public transit systems, the need to increase federal investment in active transportation infrastructure, investments in zero-emissions vehicles and charging infrastructure - in light of not only the health and environmental benefits, but also the economic opportunities, ideas echoed by others, including McKinsey and Company and the Pembina Institute.

## Transportation behaviour

COVID-19 has had a major impact on how and how much people travel in Toronto. Stakeholders spoke about teleworking (working at home) for those who are able to do so during recovery while physical distancing is required. This transportation demand management (TDM) approach is being used by the City and many other Toronto employers. Some stakeholders suggested a broad TDM strategy for Toronto's public and private employers to manage demand for transit and other transportation infrastructure during COVID-19 recovery while physical distancing is required. In the short term, a TDM strategy working hand-in-hand with ActiveTO would help employers manage teleworking, and help residents find their best commute or telework option. In the long term, TDM can improve quality of life, reduce congestion, improve air quality and help meet Toronto's low-carbon goals.

Other stakeholders identified transportation-based revenue tools such as road tolls and congestion charges to create revenue for the City while rewarding desirable transportation behaviours.



**Key suggestions from engagements and consultations**

- Develop a comprehensive surface transit network plan to increase transit priority throughout Toronto, a plan that incorporates social equity as a critical criterion for siting transit priority corridors, and continue to identify transit priority corridors for accelerated implementation.
- Accelerate the development of, and make permanent, safe active transportation infrastructure for cycling and walking throughout the city, including through the Cycling Network Plan, and include equitable access to transportation options in the criteria for choosing sites.
- Assess and prioritize potential sites for fossil-fuel-free transportation zones for use by pedestrians, cyclists and fossil-fuel-free transit to enable and support physical distancing and transition to cleaner transportation, and also create a plan to establish a fossil-fuel-free zone.
- Explore ways to align transportation infrastructure capacity with the travel modes and demand required during COVID-19 recovery, and anticipated in the future, on a complete streets basis as a standard approach to transportation projects.
- Accelerate implementation of the City's Electric Vehicle Strategy, including the expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the city, and advocate to other levels of government for funds to support this work
- Work with TTC to accelerate its successful bus electrification program and examine opportunities for TTC-wide electrification, including Wheel-Trans and non-revenue vehicles.
- Develop a transportation demand management strategy and expand the Smart Commute program, to address COVID-19 recovery needs, vehicle emissions and congestion.
- Consider introducing transportation-related revenue tools to generate revenue while providing an incentive for desirable transportation behaviours.

**Space & Planning****Issues, Desired Outcomes and Opportunities****Space and Mobility**

During the TORR climate and resilience consultations, issues about space and recovery and rebuild were raised, a conversation that touches on complete communities, ways the city is changing and greenspace.

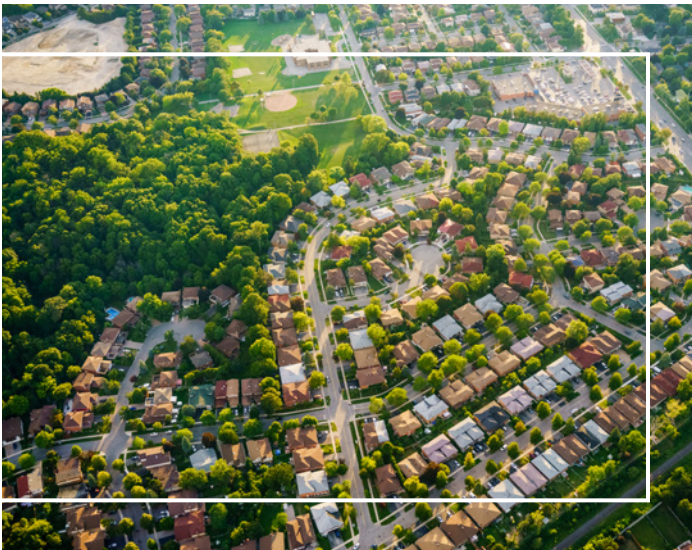
Stakeholders observed that physical distancing will be in place for the foreseeable future, and how people use public space will change. COVID-19 has created increased demand for safe cycling and pedestrian space. This demand has led the City to repurpose/reallocate road space to match road users' needs. Other stakeholders expressed concern that COVID-19 may make people less likely to want to live in dense urban environments given challenges with access to outdoor space and access to transportation, combined with other factors including the high cost of living. This may be particularly true of downtown highrise condominium residents who are now working remotely, are affluent enough to have more choices about where to live, and no longer see benefit in living downtown near their former place of employment. Stakeholders expressed concern that if Toronto loses talent due to these space-related and other issues, the City may become less competitive in attracting companies and economic development unless quality of life is maintained and enhanced.

**Complete Communities and Density**

Numerous stakeholders described a need for Toronto to develop complete communities, which many referred to as a "15-minute city" where residents can obtain the goods and services they need in their neighbourhood by cycling or walking within a 15-minute travel radius. Complete communities reduce pressure on transit and other transportation infrastructure by enabling people to travel less for necessities. This is particularly beneficial when the transportation systems are faced with the challenges of physical distancing. Reduced trips also provide emission-reduction benefits, improve air quality and help to meet the City's climate and resilience goals. Stakeholders connected complete communities with a need to increase gentle density in the city's "yellow belt", creating "middle" forms of housing and contributing to housing affordability. The yellow belt refers to an area of Toronto that represents almost one-third of Toronto's entire area that is now zoned only for detached houses.



Stakeholders also noted the importance of ensuring that jobs are created in the process of increasing density and encouraged the use of community benefits agreements. In that regard, policies and programs that ensure new and existing buildings are constructed with a focus on net zero GHG emissions and resilience will be critical. A key issue raised by stakeholders is that of high density and COVID-19 concerns, with a focus on addressing perceptions that population density is negative/problematic. As highlighted by stakeholders, carefully managed intensification and density support socioeconomic objectives, reduce emissions and create a more livable city.



### **Greenspace**

Numerous stakeholders suggested the City protect and expand greenspace in order to improve residents' health and quality of life and improve resilience. The health and mental health benefits of greenspace are well understood, as are the benefits of the tree canopy to cooling the city and improving air quality.<sup>132</sup> There was discussion of current disparities in access to quality greenspace. Stakeholders emphasized the particular importance of access to usable green space during pandemic recovery, given the need for physical distancing, limited availability of recreation and physical activity options and limitations on travel within the city. Stakeholders noted a need for the City of Toronto to consider who has access to greenspace and who does not, and to look for opportunities to correct the imbalance.

The critical role of space was further emphasized in consultation with members of Toronto's Indigenous community, who spoke to the critical role natural spaces play in supporting important ceremonial and cultural roles. Those engaged also highlighted the opportunities for Indigenous placemaking as part of recovery

and rebuild and opportunity for green jobs development through green infrastructure investment. Broadly speaking those engaged also spoke to a need to review City policies through an indigenous perspective and to explore how the incorporation of Indigenous values could inform current and future thinking about land and water.

There was a lot of discussion about the need to maintain and enhance the tree canopy to improve resilience and quality of life and, critically, to provide cooling during extremely hot weather. There was reference to the creation of employment (again, green jobs) specifically concentrated on improving, expanding and restoring natural assets.

Feedback included a desire for City capital projects to include, as a default, green infrastructure to shade sidewalks, help manage stormwater (flooding) and provide other resilience benefits. That opinion is supported by the City's Resilience Strategy (Action B1.5), which recommends the City expand the green infrastructure program to improve resilience and stimulate the economy.

Critically, other stakeholders spoke about equity and increased challenges with access to food during the pandemic. Stakeholders who participated in TransformTO and TORR consultations emphasized the need to address poverty and equity as the root cause of food insecurity. They also emphasized the need to increase food production in the city, including the expansion of community gardens and the planting of food-bearing trees.

### **Key suggestions from engagements and consultations**

- Support the development of complete communities in Toronto with a focus on creating a "15-minute city" through zoning changes that support local economic opportunities.
- Accelerate the roll-out of gentle density in the "yellow belt" with a focus on net-zero building and development that supports economic activity and job creation through the development of housing and employment opportunities.
- Assess equitability of access to greenspace throughout Toronto, and look for opportunities to enhance access for those communities that currently have the least greenspace.
- Facilitate and support Indigenous communities in accessing space to support ceremony in response to COVID-19 and moving forward, and also, create opportunities for Indigenous placemaking and recognition through recovery and rebuild efforts.
- Expand efforts to utilize green infrastructure to improve resilience, stimulate the economy and support resident well-being.



## Governance and Finance

### Issues, Desired Outcomes and Opportunity

Governance and finance were also raised during the consultations, with connections made to equity. Groups emphasized the importance of fulfilling the City’s commitments to reduce GHG emissions and increase resilience, through immediate and long-term decision-making.

Those engaged emphasized that what the City and partners do in the next few years will determine whether the City takes a low-carbon path or locks in high-carbon energy usage. Stakeholders indicated they expect the City’s decision-making on climate to be guided by science, in the same way that the City’s COVID-19 response has been managed based on the advice of health professionals and science.

Organizations said climate change and resilience should not be presented by TORR or the City as separate or competing with key needs such as housing. Rather, they should be integrated into the development of broader, overarching solutions.

Groups engaged in consultation recognized the financial pressures facing the city, as well as the broader socioeconomic challenges facing Toronto’s residents, but emphasized that a delay in pursuing climate action would add to these challenges and increase the cost over the long term.

Those engaged raised the following points:

- The current situation calls for a non-traditional response to recession; there is an opportunity (not only for the City of Toronto) to be transformational.
- Those engaged also highlighted whether it was advisable to move ahead with high-carbon projects such as rebuilding the Gardiner Expressway.
- They emphasized the need to frame the urgency of climate action in a discussion of governance and finance, as that discussion will need to inform the City’s decision-making process and prioritization.
- Others highlighted the potential value of a “moonshot” project that the public could get behind in advancing some major initiatives collectively through recovery and rebuild.
- Multiple groups highlighted that applying a climate lens should inform decisions on recovery response from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ongoing City decision making. This was a sentiment echoed in TransformTO consultations as well as a recommendation in the Resilience Strategy.



## Procurement

Stakeholders highlighted existing City policies related to social procurement and the leadership role the City took in developing its framework for community benefit agreements (CBAs). Those engaged, however, emphasized the need for more effective use of these tools to realize the social equity outcomes these agreements and policies are intended to support. It was also highlighted that the City's predominant lowest bidder procurement methods often result in short-term solutions. Carefully considered procurement was also seen as an opportunity to support workforce development, such as through energy retrofitting of buildings and major infrastructure investments (e.g. transit expansion). By more effectively leveraging procurement, the City could use its purchasing power to leverage additional monies and realize opportunities to support social and community infrastructure.

## Revenue tools

Those engaged also suggested the City should focus on revisiting the results of the 2016 City of Toronto Revenue Options Study. Those engaged highlighted previously proposed measures, from the vehicle registration tax, parking and/or stormwater levy, road tolls and congestion charging to taxes on plastic bags. Moreover, groups noted that while the City would need to continue to advocate to federal and provincial governments for emergency and sustained funding, it also needs additional revenue powers.

Others pointed out that revenue tools provide a dual function, not only generating revenue but also potentially motivating behaviour change that supports broader City objectives. For example, a congestion charge would generate revenue, and could also dissuade vehicle use and encourage greater use of public transit in congested areas, resulting in decreased travel times, improved air quality and positive health impacts.

## Intergovernmental funding and stimulus

In reviewing the ideas put forward by various organizations, it was found that some of them highlight the role of higher tiers of government. Other orders of government will need to be involved in Toronto's recovery and rebuild efforts.

Prior to the pandemic, the Environment and Energy Division in partnership with the City Manager's Office initiated a green infrastructure "call out" to identify green infrastructure projects that are seeking intergovernmental funding. Through this call out, 48 infrastructure projects were identified, totalling approximately \$900 million in total project costs. This is a roster of projects that are ready to proceed and would contribute to the City's environmental sustainability, but they require capital funding.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, work has been underway to seek additional input from divisions on other potential shovel-ready, and importantly, shovel-worthy, projects. The intention of this second round of infrastructure identification is to prepare the City for stimulus funding that may be announced. In evaluating these projects, equity, climate and resilience have been considered.

As the federal and provincial governments move to support economic recovery through stimulus spending, the City has proactively worked to identify and prioritize projects to support recovery and rebuild.



### ***Key suggestions from engagements and consultations***

- Accelerate and formalize the application of a climate lens, alongside equity analysis, in any decisions around stimulus funding for recovery and rebuild and in future City Council decisions, to ensure climate risks and opportunities are appropriately factored into decision-making in order to meet Toronto's net zero greenhouse gas and resilience goals.
- Expand the improved use of social procurement and community benefit agreements in advancing recovery and rebuild efforts to support communities, working with stakeholders to improve these policies and programs.
- Explore the use of revenue tools to generate funds to support programs, services and investments in infrastructure that align with the City's strategic goals, while discouraging activities that negatively impact Toronto and its residents.





# 9 | Theme: Equity, Vulnerable Communities and Partnerships

## Toronto's Equity Framework

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Toronto had adopted and is implementing various equity-related strategies, policies and commitments (see list at the end of this section) to strive to ensure Toronto is a leader in fairness and equity. COVID-19 has highlighted existing inequities through the disproportionately negative social, economic and health impacts on vulnerable communities, potentially setting back the progress that was being made through the implementation of Toronto's varied actions.

During COVID-19, vulnerable communities and individuals experienced:

- Higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to social conditions
- Restricted access to medical or other support services
- Potential discriminatory enforcement of emergency or public-health-related measures
- Hateful acts, racism, discrimination and/or harassment
- Loss of employment leading to loss of household income and increased poverty
- Loss of housing/housing affordability
- Disruption of education
- Family violence and threats to safety and well-being
- Separation from caregivers
- Greater difficulty accessing safe and affordable child care options
- Potential involvement of child welfare agencies
- Negative impacts on the treatment or management of pre-existing disabilities, mental health needs and/or addictions
- Risk of forcible return for refugees who are deported or denied entry to Canada
- Social exclusion
- Higher risk of food insecurity
- Greater need for emergency benefits (e.g., CERB)

**As we enter into the recovery phase, unless we intentionally design for equity and inclusion, the very people who were disproportionately affected by stresses before the pandemic will become more vulnerable.**

Comment from Consultation

- Greater barriers to accessing a range of affordable services required for daily living (e.g., transportation, broadband internet)
- Greater difficulties and financial strain in delivering community-based supports and services to specific populations (e.g., Indigenous, Black, people with disabilities)

Moreover, people with multiple, intersecting identities (for example, Indigenous women and girls, Black Queer/Trans youth, older East Asian people) continue to be at greater risk to these impacts or the cumulative effects of these impacts.

While social distancing and self-isolation are essential to flattening the COVID-19 curve, Toronto's successful recovery will need to address the unintended and disproportionate consequences for people living in vulnerable circumstances. As the current situation evolves, there are other surging curves (i.e. echo pandemics) that are deepening inequities in Toronto, particularly related to unemployment, food insecurity, mental health and housing stability.

A focus on equity will be essential to Toronto's approach to recovery and its ability to build resilience to mitigate the effects of future emergencies. Toronto's many existing equity-related strategies and action plans can serve as anchors for Toronto's equitable recovery. Renewed commitment and accelerated implementation of these strategies is an immediate option for the City.

## COVID-19 Impact on Black Torontonians, People of Colour

While social distancing and other public health measures successfully flattened the curve in wealthier, less diverse neighbourhoods, the pandemic impacted people of colour, in particular Black Torontonians, and low-income Torontonians in a significantly disproportionate way. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that there are significant systemic vulnerabilities in the social and economic infrastructure of communities. This resulted in COVID-19, combined with social inequities, leading to disproportionate negative public health impacts on communities that have historically and systemically experienced barriers, particularly Black Torontonians.

On July 30, Toronto Public Health released the data presented in Figure 1 and 2 demonstrating the disproportionate cases of COVID-19 among various ethno-racial groups and low-income Torontonians.

There is growing evidence that racialized populations and low-income groups are more at risk of COVID-19. Toronto Public Health has suggested the reasons for this are unclear but could include:

- Existing health disparities linked to social and economic factors,
- Stress caused by racism and other forms of discrimination,
- Challenges in participating in the public health response to COVID-19, including
  - difficulties in limiting COVID-19 exposure because of being an essential worker, and
  - difficulties in physical distancing because of overcrowding,
- Inequitable access to health care and social services.

A focus of Toronto's response and recovery needs to account for the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has on racialized populations.

**Figure 1: Share of COVID-19 cases among ethno-racial groups compared to the share of people living in Toronto, with valid data up to July 16, 2020, Toronto Public Health**

Ethno-Racial Group	Share of COVID-19 Cases	Share of Toronto Populations	Comparison
Arab, Middle Eastern or West Asian	11%	4%	
Black	21%	9%	
East Asian	4%	13%	
Latin American	10%	3%	
South Asian or Indo-Caribbean	20%	13%	
Southeast Asian	17%	7%	
White	17%	48%	

**Figure 2: Share of COVID-19 cases by household income compared to the share of people living in Toronto by income group, with valid data up to July 16, 2020, Toronto Public Health**

Household Income	Share of COVID-19 Cases	Share of Toronto Populations	Comparison
\$0-\$29,999	27%	14%	
\$30,000-\$49,999	26%	15%	
\$50,000-\$69,999	16%	14%	
\$70,000-\$99,999	15%	17%	
\$100,000-\$149,999	11%	18%	
\$150,000 or more	6%	21%	



### COVID-19 Impact on Seniors

COVID-19 is a serious health threat with increased risk of more severe outcomes for those in vulnerable populations, including people with underlying medical conditions, with compromised immune systems and age 65 and over. COVID-19 in Canada has hit many seniors especially hard, whether living in community or in long-term care settings.

A study from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (2020) found that the proportion of Canadian COVID-19 deaths that have occurred in long-term care facilities is about twice the average of rates from other developed nations. LTC residents made up 81 per cent of all reported COVID-19 deaths in the country compared to an average of 42 per cent among all countries studied.

Outside of LTC, COVID-19 had significant impacts on seniors in the community. On March 30, 2020, the Provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health recommended that everyone 70 years of age and older stay home and avoid contact with others.

Many agencies serving vulnerable seniors in the community, as well as SSLTC Community Programs (adult day programs, homemaking services and supportive housing services), had to scale back or suspend operations due to COVID-19. Seniors were unable to access the same level of home supports, transportation or congregate activities that they usually depend on for aging in place. That is in addition to closures of seniors active living centres, libraries, community recreation centres and other locations that form an important part of healthy, active living for many seniors. Accessing necessities such as a bank machine or a laundry or mail room became challenging, as well as being able to safely travel to and use emergency cooling centres on days with heat warnings.

**The City needs to have more advocates from the community that have a permanent seat at City hall and allow these individuals to be part of the decision-making process.**

Comment from Consultation

**I would like the City to address the issue of systemic inequality by taking the action of increasing race-based data collection and by investing in understanding what factors are leading to greater vulnerability: e.g. race, income, education... to make the city better in the ways of support vulnerable communities.**

Comment from Consultation

The isolation recommendations and the closure of seniors programs and services, while critical to maintaining safety, further exacerbated social isolation and in turn mental health challenges, as well as challenges accessing food, prescriptions and other essentials for some vulnerable seniors. Intersecting vulnerabilities including race, background, income, housing situation, health and mobility, sexual orientation, immigration status and many others can further exacerbate the challenges faced by many seniors throughout COVID-19. Specifically, Black and Indigenous seniors in Toronto – through experiences of systemic racism and oppression – have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social issues that have resulted from the situation.

There was a rapid shift during COVID-19 of programs and services, medical appointments, access to benefits and social visits to virtual platforms, which has allowed many seniors to stay connected to their social network, medical care, finances and more. However, this shift has also exacerbated existing digital access challenges faced by many vulnerable seniors, which may lead to increased social isolation, disconnection from necessary health and community support services, difficulty applying for benefits and other programs, and a lack of full and equitable participation in society.

**I would like the City to address the issue of possible increase in cases or second wave by taking the action of continued public health measures and make the city better in the ways of safety of all citizens especially the most vulnerable.**

Comment from Consultation

## TORR Engagement and Consultations

To consider how to mitigate the inequitable impacts on Torontonians due to COVID-19, the TORR's Vulnerable Communities and Strategic Alliances Theme undertook both internal and external engagement with stakeholders, including Social Development Finance and Administration (SDFA) Program Advisory Groups, SDFA supported partnerships, the City-Community Response Table and the Community Coordination Plan, and City Service Work Groups along with key public sector partners including post-secondary institutions.

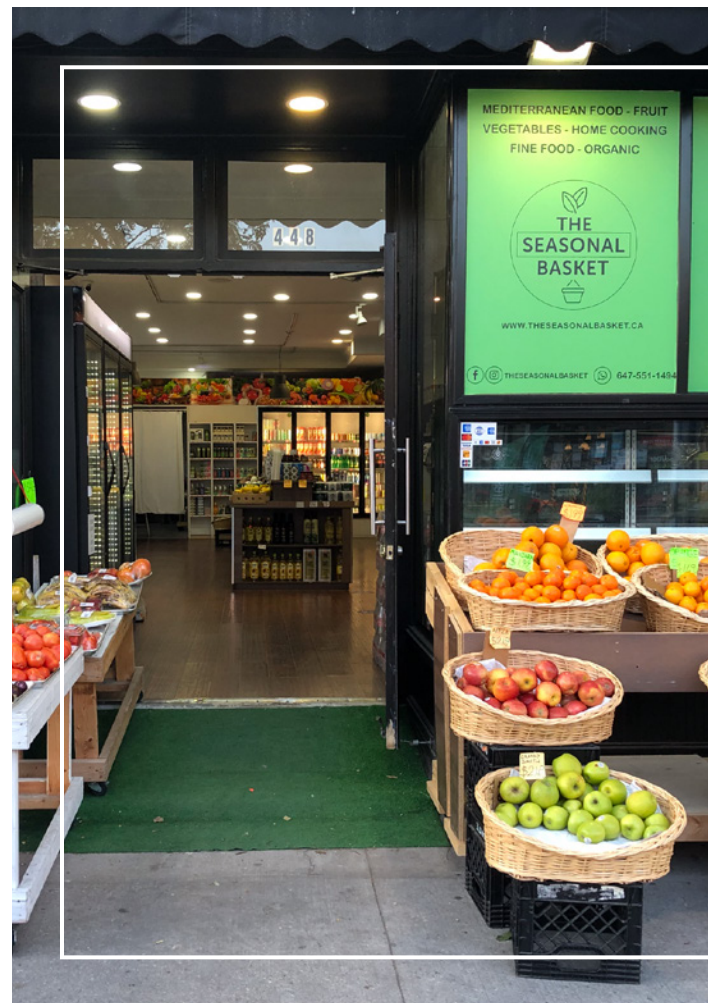
The City engaged Social Planning Toronto (SPT) to coordinate grassroots and community sector engagements with residents from equity-seeking communities. SPT designed and conducted consultations, on behalf of the City, with organizational partners and provided their data to TORR. Other community sector organizations have indicated they will submit input directly to the City for consideration. SPT worked with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) to support Indigenous organizational engagement. Additional focused engagements were held with the Partnership and Accountability Circle in collaboration with the City's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit.

City staff consulted with large public- and private-sector property owners including the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic School Board, faith groups, Infrastructure Ontario, BILD and the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board. Discussions with these groups focused on the opportunities and challenges associated with COVID-19.

## Summary findings

Across its engagements on the themes of vulnerable communities and strategic alliances, TORR found common issues identified by groups and individuals. These issues, most of which existed pre-COVID-19, were noted to have been exacerbated by the pandemic, leading to a heightened level of concern by residents, community groups, institutions and elected officials. Participants commented that the issues don't exist in isolation, rather, each crossed social, economic and cultural lines and was experienced throughout the city's community centres, libraries, schools, buses, shelters, streets and open spaces. Decisions and actions on one issue were seen to have impacts on one or more of the other issues across all recovery and rebuild themes.

A common finding was that as the City considers each issue and actions that will support the City's recovery and rebuild strategy, work must include deliberate, ongoing engagement with residents, community agencies and the City's partners.





### Examples from Findings

Consultations with grassroots groups, community organizations and City staff who deliver social services that are critical to the City's social development goals have provided some clear themes and intersecting ideas for Toronto's recovery:

#### **Equity**

- Proactively address the multitude of deep inequities that are so prevalent in the city,
- Embed Black voices, experiences, knowledge and expertise in the decisions the Mayor, City Manager and City of Toronto staff are making in all sectors,
- Develop decision-making alliances for healthcare for Black Torontonians – between community-based health care and institutions to address supports for personal support workers (PSWs) and long-term care homes pertaining to the health of Black Torontonians,

**Find innovative ways to support NGOs and other organizations that aim to educate, empower and address pressing issues. Individuals have jobs in turn they can put money back into our economy. The job market has changed greatly. I am a new graduate and am struggling to afford bills and cannot find a job. I am volunteering my time to address food insecurity in south Etobicoke.**

Comment from Consultation

- Implement equitable transit solutions,
- Address systemic racism and inequality, particularly in policing.

#### **Role of all Government(s)**

- Build recovery through public investment and strengthen rather than weaken the social safety net,
- Pursue a social and an economic recovery,
- Address the need for affordable child care and a more resilient child-care system, affordable housing and reformed income supports.

#### **Economic Development and Rebuilding**

- Maximize community benefits, job creation and decent work conditions,
- Increase climate resilience and accelerate Toronto's transition to a sustainable and low-carbon economy, and
- Ensure gentrification is not a priority of rebuilding.

#### **Need for key municipal services**

- Parks and public spaces,
- Reliable and safe transit,
- Access to libraries and library services,
- Spaces for people to meet safely in the community,
- Access to recreational facilities and programming.

Stakeholder groups and residents emphasized that action must focus on the inequities that were exacerbated by COVID-19 and that Toronto should build upon and accelerate the Council-adopted strategies that are already informed by extensive consultation.

City staff who were consulted emphasized that Toronto should also focus on issues that advance systems of support, rather than just on specific issues, in order to be most effective. They suggested building on the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy as an important foundation.

## Key themes and considerations from Engagement Findings

The consultation findings speak to the success of the City's Community Coordination Plan, which provides an example of how a systemic, coordinated approach can enable innovative and agile responses to barriers experienced by vulnerable residents. In this model, the City brought together key community-based agencies across several regional clusters in Toronto. Information was disseminated, issues were flagged for attention and responses to protect residents were implemented. This approach demonstrates the value of the City investing in the development of a plan to systematically and intentionally connect all parts of the economic and employment support system so vulnerable communities are empowered and can better withstand any further economic downturn. There is also a need for the City to collaborate with residents with lived experience and community-based organizations as equal partners in decision-making. Two issues in particular may necessitate a more active City role in convening and coordination: access to food and inclusive economic recovery.

## Housing

Housing was the predominant and most consistent issue raised during consultations on the Vulnerable Communities and Strategic Alliances theme. Housing security was already a major concern before the pandemic, as recently described by the Housing Now program, one of the Mayor's key initiatives tasked with providing 40,000 affordable rental units over 12 years. Housing findings in this report were informed by the City's initial response to COVID-19 and the need to increase space to provide social distancing within City shelters. Additional recommendations to address housing security from the Mayor's Task Force report signal the need for significant intervention from other orders of government, such as expediting and expanding the Canadian Housing Benefit and/or increasing funding provided for affordable housing under the National Housing Strategy.

The City of Toronto will struggle to meet its housing needs post-COVID-19. Additional demands to allocate increased housing options for all residents in proximity to community services, employment and schools, specifically in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) hardest hit by the pandemic, will be a

reality for the foreseeable future. It has been made clear during TORR's consultations that residents of NIAs travel significant distances, often on public transit, to go to work, school or shop, and they want to see significant change to the way the City plans its neighbourhoods. The most recent sites allocated by the City to the Housing Now Program have a maximum yield of 620 affordable units. These units will be added to the approximate 4,000 affordable rental units planned for the already allocated sites. The first group of sites represent the best available options for densification, with limited availability of other possible sites.

## Housing for Toronto's Indigenous Communities

There has historically been a significant need for all forms of purpose-built housing for Indigenous communities in Toronto. Some housing pressures include:

- No dedicated long-term care beds for Indigenous communities
- Very few housing options dedicated to youth and family housing
- Very few supportive and shelter beds devoted to Indigenous men

These pressures were exacerbated by COVID-19.

There are currently no dedicated long-term care facilities in the GTA purpose built for the Indigenous communities of Toronto. The Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) and the City's Indigenous Affairs Office have identified that locating a purpose-built long-term care facility for this community would require proximity to green space, ravines, rivers and other bodies of water, and building in open spaces.

## Mobility – Transit Options

A common thread throughout the TORR consultations, specifically from vulnerable communities and community organizations, is that Toronto needs to re-think how the City views transit and transportation. Many people noted the need for Toronto to increase the availability of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. This need was important before the pandemic and has become even more acute. Increasing the number of separated bike lanes, specifically in Scarborough and Etobicoke, would have a direct and significant impact on racialized and equity-seeking groups in those areas increasing access to local employment and retail shopping.



## Community Space

The pandemic required the City to advance its remote workforce strategy much more quickly than previously contemplated. The City is now considering its needs as an employer for office and workplaces. That includes looking at the use of current assets such as civic centres, Metro Hall and community spaces, and determining how use of those spaces may need to meet the challenges of work in a COVID-19 context.

A common challenge articulated by the participants of the community consultations, specifically in many of the Community Cluster meetings, was access to appropriate, affordable community space including office spaces for community groups and residents. Community work spaces could help to address some of the challenges of working from home, including access to hardware and remote meeting technology, working while caring for children and/or the need for a change of scenery.

The lack of community space has been identified by approximately 400 non-profit organization through the Employment and Social

Services Working Group and the City's Community Coordination Plan that was developed in response to COVID-19. The following points identify challenges faced by vulnerable community members, equity-seeking groups and supportive non-profit organizations, along with some potential solutions.

The TORR engagement findings mirror other City consultations and research on the challenges related to community space, including:

- General lack of community space in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), including meeting rooms, kitchens, program space, gyms, shelters/respite spaces, City and school board facilities;
- Inconsistent and highly administrative permitting processes and high fees are barriers to booking space available through the City and school boards;
- Many available spaces within non-profit organizations are small, which makes social distancing impossible;
- Pre-existing permits create "gatekeepers" that control access to certain community spaces and effectively shut out new/emerging groups;
- Residents often need to travel outside their immediate neighbourhood to access space, which can present challenges to providing place-based programs/supports and can potentially raise community safety issues;
- Lack of capital resources to upgrade existing spaces;
- Financial pressures, access to financing to purchase/redevelop land or buildings to increase space and the cost of leasing private spaces for use by non-profit organizations is increasingly challenging; and
- Access to City-owned community space for community groups during emergencies (i.e. food banks accessing community centres).

A message heard repeatedly during the consultations is the importance of access to affordable space for community organizations, groups and individuals. The ability for the City to improve and increase the availability of those types of spaces within its property inventory was emphasized, along with the concept of a "Community Recreation Centre" in a pre-pandemic Toronto not going far enough to meet the needs of these groups. The community sector played an essential role in meeting the urgent needs of vulnerable Torontonians through the pandemic and the work of the sector will be critical for an inclusive recovery. As the City reimagines its services and programs, developing spaces to strengthen and stabilize the sector and strengthen the City's relationship with the sector will be important.

**There has been unprecedented collaboration and coordination between hundreds of agencies and funders, who have stepped up with innovative and rapid responses to all the new challenges caused by this pandemic. But there have also been problems in coordinating and ensuring populations facing barriers and exclusion are not left further behind.**

Comment from Consultation



Feedback from the consultations suggested that the City is well positioned, as an employer and social service provider, to explore how its employees work in the future and how to leverage surplus office space. Surplus office space could be made available to non-City community members for meetings or work. If many City employees continue to work from home, can flexible, affordable space be made available within the City's current inventory of office space? Pursuing it might include modifying space in civic centres, libraries and community centres as touchdown spaces for small business incubators for local entrepreneurs and the general public.

### Creating Opportunity – Strategic Partnerships, Regulatory Change and Capital Realignment

Community-based organizations and groups often play an unacknowledged role of being the community's first line of support against shocks like COVID-19. The current public health crisis has made clear that such public-benefit organizations, which take on a significant burden of supporting vulnerable communities, do not have access to space and other infrastructure required to do their jobs adequately. With so many different entities working in a city as diverse as Toronto, coordination is a significant challenge. It may be difficult for one organization to know what others are working on, or if they are even working toward the same goals. That difficulty is exacerbated by current project-based funding models that encourage the implementation of one-off solutions or pilots, rather than sustainable, mutually reinforcing systems/initiatives.

#### **Regulatory Change**

The City's current challenges create a unique opportunity to evolve how public spaces, specifically those spaces that fall within the designation of "Open Space", are defined in the City of Toronto's

Official Plan. The Open Space designation is the prevailing zoning for the vast majority of the City's park and green space, along with significant "hard" built form, primarily community recreation centres and ancillary parking facilities.

Staff identified that expanding allowable uses on City property would realize significant opportunity to meet the needs outlined by the City's Housing Secretariat and address some of the issues identified by vulnerable communities as noted throughout this report.

In 2019, the Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division received City Council approval for their "Facilities Master Plan", which would see 17 new or rebuilt community recreational facilities across the city. Thirteen locations have already been identified and the plan, which is fully funded, will be implemented over the next 10 or more years. Along with the sites identified in the Master Plan, there are a significant number of other locations across the city that offer opportunity to intensify to meet the needs identified by the community.

Along with the opportunities to meet a significant number of the city's needs by reimagining how to approach the Open Space Designation, the ability for the City government, through its regulatory powers to enable and activate a significant number of housing opportunities, along with supporting main streets and local retail, was identified in a recent "Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods" staff report to City Council by the City's Chief Planner. That report puts forward a work plan to engage and report back over the next 18 months on how Toronto would add density to the "yellow-belt" or "missing middle"; an area of Toronto that represents almost one-third of Toronto's entire area that is now zoned only for detached houses.



### **Capital Realignment**

The City of Toronto does not have a consolidated view of its capital budgets, which may be limiting the ability to see economies of scale and maximize land and building assets.

Changing how the City approaches its urban planning and related decision-making could help address Toronto's growing space needs and support a Complete Communities view that would shift from a horizontal capital program approach to a vertical approach.

Participant comments that the City is missing opportunities to consolidate uses and build complete communities suggested that there is benefit in taking a holistic view when planning major capital projects. Examples of that approach include the TTC's Easier Access Program and Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Facilities Master Plan.

### **Complete Communities – Creating New Opportunity**

Building a more resilient Toronto, one able to evolve in response to this pandemic, but also able to respond to future crises is a message that has come through consistently with many of the groups engaged to date. The idea of resilience is rooted in accessibility and equality for all residents: accessibility to housing, jobs, schools, community services along with parks and recreation facilities. When speaking to many of the community agencies and community clusters, a common sentiment was that Toronto had been very good at providing “complete communities” in the older, more affluent areas of the city, primarily downtown, but there was a feeling that the older suburbs had been “forgotten” and had not evolved with the rest of the city.

What representatives of these communities feel is needed is a focus on creating complete communities that offer a range of affordable housing, allow for active transportation, offer a range of jobs, variety of food and retail options and that are sustainable from an environmental perspective.

Input from research and the TORR consultation suggests that the City of Toronto should look to create hyperlocal communities located close to existing or future community centre and transit developments. These communities should include an appropriate mix of affordable housing, community space, flexible work space and community services accessible to Indigenous communities and equity-seeking groups.

### **Public Property – Collaborative Approach to Decision Making**

Along with the City of Toronto, other public-sector property owners including the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board and faith groups face space pressures. As

the City works to solve its space needs, it should work with other public institutions with significant land holdings, as often they share a common customer or client. TORR engaged with the Toronto Catholic District School Board, the Toronto District School Board through the Toronto Lands Corporation, and the United Church of Canada's Strategic Real Estate Delivery Group to discuss how groups could work together to respond to community needs including coordinating decisions about assets.

One suggestion was for the City to change its Open Space policy to create opportunities for complete communities on these properties by incorporating new schools. Including schools within a City-initiated community would allow public school boards, especially the TDSB, to deal with its state-of-good-repair backlog. Additionally, school boards would be able to free up significant real estate, which could be reimaged as new communities, which would further increase opportunities for much-needed space. The City and the school boards had begun to slowly explore these opportunities prior to the pandemic. Increasing the speed and scope of their conversations would support this evolving thinking about public assets.

Participants suggested that school sites with significant state-of-good-repair issues could be identified by having the City, the school boards, the local councillor and the community in any of the 17 sites identified in the City's Facilities Master Plan work together and consider them for inclusion in new complete communities.

**We need to invest in our Black and Indigenous communities, to reduce structural barriers to full participation in Toronto's social and economic life.**

Comment from Consultation

Faith groups and inter-faith organizations that participated in conversations during the TORR engagement acknowledged the importance of their historic contribution to providing community services, and acknowledged that these contributions will in many cases need to evolve. Both the Anglican Church and the United

Church of Canada acknowledged their strong working relationship with the City of Toronto. They also acknowledged a need to evolve that relationship to meet the needs of the broader community through housing developments on their properties, building in resilience with respect to being more flexible in opening up spaces during broad emergencies and formally connecting with the City, specifically the Social Development, Finance and Administration division to coordinate and align service delivery.

The United Church of Canada acknowledged its evolving congregation and said the church is becoming much more of a provider of flexible secular community space, with less focus on sanctuary spaces for individual congregations. In many cases, there is a desire to look at partnering with the City on reimagining how to best leverage opportunities for public use of church-owned spaces. All of the faith-based organizations engaged through the consultations expressed a desire to have a “seat at the table” and to be acknowledged going forward as partners that should be continually engaged through the rebuild/reimagine phase of the City’s work.

**We have been given an incredible opportunity to build-back better and if we don’t get it right now, we will likely never get another chance. This is our last decade to make the right choices, no matter how difficult.**

Comment from Consultation

### **A partial list of City strategies, advisory bodies and plans addressing inequities.**

#### ***Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee***

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee provides advice to City Council on the elimination of barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples, including barriers related to City bylaws, policies, programs and service delivery. The committee also acts as a liaison with external bodies addressing barriers to the participation of Aboriginal peoples in public life, and advances the achievement of social, cultural, economic and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal peoples in Toronto.

#### ***Aboriginal Education Strategy***

As part of the City’s Commitments to Indigenous Peoples, City Council adopted an Aboriginal Education Strategy, which combines formal and informal learning approaches, and a needs assessment to determine who in the Toronto Public Service should be educated on Aboriginal history, and what information staff need to know about Aboriginal peoples in Toronto.

#### ***Aboriginal Employment Strategy***

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy, part of the City’s Talent Blueprint, focuses on employment practices that ensure opportunities for employment are accessible to Aboriginal people and increase the number of Aboriginal employees at all occupational levels.

#### ***Access to City Services for Undocumented Torontonians***

City Council is committed to ensuring that Torontonians, regardless of immigration status, have access to City services without fear of being asked for proof of status. Access to City Services for Undocumented Torontonians (Access T.O.) aims to improve customer service to this vulnerable population by ensuring that City staff have the necessary and relevant information needed to provide effective service and protect their privacy.

#### ***Community Benefits Framework***

The Community Benefits Framework utilizes City community benefits levers to create targeted hiring and training opportunities, provide economic opportunities, reduce poverty and support community priorities among Indigenous peoples and equity-seeking groups in Toronto when the City buys, builds or provides financial incentives for construction or remediation. The framework aims to bring the City’s community benefits initiatives under a common umbrella to coordinate across initiatives, strengthen community engagement and begin to monitor common data outcomes through a shared tracking system.

#### ***Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan***

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is the result of a collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and Torontonians of African descent. The Action Plan includes 22 recommendations and 80 actions to address five issue areas: children and youth development; health and community services; job and income supports; policing and the justice system; and community engagement and Black leadership.

#### ***Equity Lens and City Service Decision-making***

For new, enhanced or modified initiatives, the City’s Equity Lens Tool and related resources must be applied to help identify and consider inequities so that a full equity impact assessment can be made with considerations for Indigenous, Black and equity-seeking

or vulnerable populations. The Equity Lens Tool supports best practices in the development and evaluation of policies, services and programs, and an Equity Impact Statement is a requirement for all reports to Council on major policies, services and programs.

**I worry most about young people. They are carrying a huge debt load with tuition fees and there will be no jobs for them this summer... the federal and provincial governments must step in to help.**

Comment from Consultation

### ***Equity Responsive Budgeting***

The City of Toronto incorporates equity- and gender-based analysis in the annual budget development process. All City divisions are required to report on the impact that changes in the Operating Budget could have on Indigenous people, Black and equity-seeking groups, with a particular focus on women and people with low incomes. The purpose of equity-responsive budgeting is to inform the budget discussion and decision-making process in order to advance the City's equity goals.

### ***For Public Benefit Framework***

The City of Toronto works with not-for-profit (NFP) organizations and the NFP sector to deliver hundreds of community services to residents, including but not limited to social housing, children's services, employment services and arts and cultural programming. The City also looks to the NFP sector to identify and respond to emerging community issues and to help ensure that local voices are heard by decision-makers. In these diverse ways, Toronto's NFP sector has a profound positive impact on Toronto's communities and on safeguarding local democracy. The "For Public Benefit Framework" guides how the City works with community-based NFP organizations and contains principles, commitments and 13 actions to help City agencies, corporations and divisions interact with Toronto's NFP sector more consistently, with the guidance of a clearly articulated vision.

### ***Gender Equity Strategy***

In October 2019, City Council approved the establishment of a Gender Equity Unit to lead the development of a City of Toronto Gender Equity Strategy addressing intersectional gender equity in key areas such as housing, shelter, governance, transit planning, recreation, urban planning, youth, violence against women and affordable child care, and to further integrate a more fulsome intersectional gender equity analysis within the City's annual Equity-Responsive Budgeting (Gender-Responsive Budgeting) process.

### ***HousingTO: 2020-2030 Action Plan***

The HousingTO 2020 -2030 Action Plan is the City's blueprint for action across the full housing spectrum – from homelessness to rental and ownership housing to long-term care for seniors. This new plan sets out an aggressive housing agenda focused on supporting people over the next 10 years and provides for new strategic City investments directed to enhancing eviction prevention measures; maintaining and sustaining Toronto Community Housing Corporation; establishing a pipeline to support the creation of 40,000 affordable rental and supportive homes through a public/private/non-profit land banking strategy; helping homeowners stay in their homes and purchase their first homes; and supporting in-home care and long-term care options for seniors.

### ***Indigenous Health Strategy***

The Toronto Indigenous Health Advisory Circle (TIHAC) released Toronto's first Indigenous Health Strategy, which informs the ways in which Toronto Public Health and the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network work toward improving Indigenous health outcomes in the city. The goal is to realize a thriving, healthy Indigenous community in Toronto through the respectful harmonizing of practices, policies and resource allocation.

### ***Indigenous-led Poverty Reduction Action Plan***

As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the City of Toronto will work with urban Indigenous leaders in 2020 to develop and fund the implementation of a community-specific poverty reduction action plan. The Indigenous-led Poverty Reduction Action Plan will ensure that the needs and perspectives of the Urban Indigenous community are identified, prioritized and funded, in order to best address the unique circumstances faced by this population.

### ***Indigenous Overdose Strategy***

The Indigenous Overdose Strategy was developed by an Indigenous facilitator and is grounded in the input of Indigenous People who use/used drugs, and service providers that work with Indigenous People who use drugs, as a companion to the Toronto Overdose Action Plan. The recommendations reflect key actions



needed in the areas of prevention, harm reduction and treatment and will be supported by Toronto Public Health in collaboration with Indigenous service providers and community members, including Indigenous People who use/have used substances, and also in collaboration with other City divisions.

### ***LGBTQ2S+ Council Advisory Body***

In December 2019, City Council approved the creation of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) Council Advisory Body. This advisory body will advise on identified priority issues to support the elimination of barriers and inequities experienced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S+) communities in accessing City of Toronto programs and services.

### ***Licensed Child Care Growth Strategy***

Toronto's Child Care Growth Strategy envisions a licensed child-care system that can serve 50 per cent of children from birth to age 4 by 2026. The strategy entails creating approximately 30,000 new licensed spaces and making investments in affordability for all families by supporting equitable access for lower- and middle-income families, both by reducing parent fees and by increasing fee subsidies. The growth strategy provides a vision for developing a child-care system that is affordable and accessible for all families that would like to use licensed child care.

**Women of colour need to be included in more focus groups and on representative boards and community training programs in order to make more meaningful decisions in our own communities.**

Comment from Consultation

### ***Multi-Year Accessibility Plan***

The 2020-2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) outlines outcomes and initiatives that reaffirm the City's commitment to an accessible City and to building an equitable and inclusive society that values the contributions of people with disabilities. The MYAP, in providing a roadmap for the identification, removal and prevention of accessibility barriers, will improve awareness and understanding of requirements and will help embed accessibility into all City operations.

The MYAP is a key component of the City's accessibility framework, which outlines how the City will provide an accessible environment in which people with disabilities can access the City's goods, services and facilities, including all buildings, public spaces, information and communications and employment opportunities, in a way that meets their individual needs. The City is equally committed to supporting City employees through advice, policies, tools, resources and governance structures that promote an inclusive workplace and support employees in providing accessible goods, services and facilities.

### ***Public Art Strategy***

The Toronto Public Art Strategy (2020-2030) sets out a 10-year plan, including 21 actions that will strengthen the core services that the City provides to strengthen its commitment to public art. The strategy presents a vision to advance public art across Toronto and enhance the impact of public art for the benefit of all of Toronto by "empowering creativity and community, everywhere."

The strategy is committed to advancing truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and to championing the work of Indigenous artists and curators as well as to making public art that is accessible to all and that reinforces neighbourhood character, embraces excellence in design and advances the careers of local artists.

### ***Resilience Strategy***

Toronto's Resilience Strategy sets out a vision, goals and actions to help Toronto survive, adapt and thrive in the face of any challenge, particularly climate change and growing inequities. The strategy includes a set of 10 goals and 27 actions to deliver on this vision, organized into three focus areas: people and neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and leadership for a resilient city.

### ***Seniors Strategy***

The Toronto Seniors Strategy upholds the principles of equity, respect, inclusion and quality of life. It commits to ensuring all seniors having equitable access to City services and programs. It also continues to focus on actions that fall within the City's jurisdictional authority to plan, manage and deliver, including bringing together a wide variety of seniors housing and services under one entity and actions with more immediate benefits for seniors in the areas of health, housing, transportation, employment and income, and access to information.

### ***Social Procurement Program***

The City's Social Procurement Program aims to create jobs and drive economic growth in Toronto by including workforce development and/or supply chain diversity requirements in its procurement process. By doing so, the Social Procurement Program will increase the diversity of companies and provide equal opportunity for those businesses that want to bid on City contracts; encourage companies already doing business with the City to work with diverse suppliers and suppliers who provide community benefits; and increase the number of employment, apprenticeship and training opportunities for those living in poverty, including many newcomers, and for youth.

### ***Tenants First***

Tenants First is a City of Toronto-led project that sets out to make improvements to Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and support it to become a more focused landlord. The overall focus of Tenants First is to implement a plan in which Toronto Community Housing can improve tenants' lives through better service delivery, and by providing buildings in good repair and opportunities for tenants to be connected to appropriate services and actively participate in their communities.

### ***Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee***

The Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee provides advice to City Council on the elimination of barriers faced by people with disabilities and acts as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to participation in public life and to the achievement of social, cultural and economic well-being of people with disabilities. The committee also provides advice to City Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of accessibility reports as required by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

### ***Toronto Newcomer Strategy***

The Toronto Newcomer Strategy is designed to improve newcomer settlement through shared leadership, stronger collaboration and a more seamless and well-coordinated service system. There are three components to the Toronto Newcomer Strategy: Newcomer Leadership Table, Local Immigration Partnerships and Strategic Pillars.

### ***Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy***

The Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy is the City of Toronto's long-term strategy to address immediate needs, create pathways to prosperity and drive systemic change for those living in poverty in the city. The strategy includes a 20-year plan that focuses on housing stability, services access, transit equity, food access, the quality of jobs and incomes, and systemic change.

### ***Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods 2020***

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS) 2020 is the City's action plan for ensuring that each of Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods can succeed and thrive. TSNS 2020 supports healthy communities across Toronto by partnering with residents, community agencies and businesses to invest in people, services, programs and facilities in 31 identified Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs). The strategy will strengthen the social, economic and physical conditions and deliver local impact for city-wide change.

### ***Toronto Youth Equity Strategy***

The Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) seeks to support youth (aged 13-29) who are most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime, both by taking steps to better coordinate youth service delivery in Toronto and by identifying specific service enhancements directed at those youth who are most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime. The strategy identifies 28 key issues and offers corresponding recommendations. The strategy proposes 110 specific actions that can be taken by City divisions, agencies and corporations to build resiliency in Toronto's youth and to create the supportive systems to help young people resist the frustration and disillusionment that can lead to involvement in violence and crime.



### ***Tower Renewal Program***

The City's Tower Renewal Program leads and supports initiatives that encourage community engagement, support local capacity building, spur community investment and help to foster more resilient, thriving apartment communities. From social learning opportunities supporting employment skills to community gardens, and reinvestment and leadership opportunities through local networks, these initiatives drive change and improvement in local communities.

### ***TransformTO***

TransformTO is Toronto's climate action strategy that lays out a set of long-term, low-carbon goals and strategies to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions and improve health, grow the economy and improve social equity. To reduce the worst impacts of climate change, TransformTO aims to have:

- all new buildings built to produce near-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, and
- all existing buildings retrofitted to achieve net zero emissions; 100 per cent of energy come from renewable or low-carbon sources; 100 per cent of vehicles in Toronto use low-carbon energy; 75 per cent of trips under five km be walked or cycled; advanced toward a zero-waste circular economy by 2050.



# 10 | Theme: Government and Financial Renewal

## The Critical Role of Cities in Recovery

Municipalities will be crucial in COVID-19 recovery and rebuild. Ontario municipalities are at the frontlines of delivering essential services, providing services that drive economic success and working to address the social determinants of health, including transit and transportation, affordable housing, shelter, business and community supports, and in Ontario, delivering social services programs on behalf of the province.

Toronto, like Canada's other major cities, is an important driver of economic prosperity and contributes significantly to the broader economy and job creation. For example:

- Canada's six largest cities represent over half of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) and lead the rest of the country in GDP growth.<sup>133</sup>
- Urban economies are where people live, where jobs are created and where most goods and services are produced and consumed. Toronto is the fastest growing city, and part of the fastest growing region, in North America. It is estimated to grow by more than a million residents in the next 20 years.<sup>134</sup> Toronto's population growth is driven by international migration - without immigration the Toronto region's population would have decreased by about 16,000 residents in 2018/2019.<sup>135</sup>
- With two airports serving 200 global destinations, and as home to 38 per cent of Canada's business headquarters, Toronto ranks among the most important cities in the world.<sup>136</sup>
- Toronto is North America's second largest financial centre and continues to grow, having a significant impact on the local, provincial and national economies.
- Cities play a central role in innovation by creating geographic proximity across entrepreneurs, businesses, academics and researchers. Cities have always been home to new ideas. Toronto is no different - for example, it had the highest growth rate globally for "fintech" investment from 2010 to 2018.<sup>137</sup>

**The provincial and federal governments must fund important and essential city services: social housing, transit, child care, etc. Our clients depend on these services and have always been underserved in this regard even before COVID-19.**

Comment from Consultation

- The Toronto region plays an important role in Canada, producing 20 per cent of national GDP, roughly equivalent to the respective GDPs of Alberta and Quebec.
- Toronto has more construction cranes than any other city in North America, with 27 per cent of all cranes. This growth creates opportunities and economic prosperity for Toronto and Canada.
- Prior to the pandemic, 27.5 million people visited Toronto each year, spending money on hotels, restaurants, attractions and transportation. In 2018, Tourism Economics estimated that visitors to Toronto spent \$6.5 billion, which in turn supported \$10.3 billion in total business sales, \$4.5 billion in total GDP, \$3.1 billion in income and almost 70,000 jobs. In addition, Toronto's tourism generates \$1.8 billion in taxes annually, mostly in the form of provincial and federal taxes.<sup>138</sup> In addition to spending within Toronto, visitors to the city often travel to other areas in the province, generating economic benefits for the entire region.

Toronto's success, however, is paired with significant challenges. Toronto is grappling with complex issues that include transit and transportation congestion, housing affordability, an overburdened shelter system, the need to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather and climate change, discrimination and anti-Black racism, Indigenous reconciliation, the opioid crisis and now, responding to, recovering from and rebuilding during (and after) a global pandemic.

Cities like Toronto will be crucial to the recovery of the region, the province and the country. That was the case in recovering from the 2008 recession, where the GTA led job growth in Ontario with aggregate employment growth from 2008-2018 of 17.3 per cent, compared to the provincial average of 9.6 per cent. In total, 91 per cent of all net job creation in Ontario during that period occurred in the Greater Toronto Area or Ottawa.<sup>139</sup> Unlike in previous recessions however, Toronto's economy has been hit harder than other areas of the country. As a large city, Toronto's employment mix includes relatively more industries reliant on large numbers of people coming together (e.g. conventions, entertainment, hospitality, corporate head offices) and these sectors have been (and will continue to be) most affected by the lockdowns and social distancing necessary to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent federal figures indicate that as of July 2020, the three-month rolling average unemployment rate in the Toronto CMA was 14.7 per cent, making it the worst-hit CMA in Ontario.<sup>140</sup>

### Government and financial renewal will be key for recovery

To effectively recover and rebuild from COVID-19, it is critical to recognize the financial challenges facing Toronto and consider how municipal government and finance can continue to create the conditions for success, and how they can help to provide continued prosperity for Toronto's residents and businesses.

The City government has taken unprecedented action to respond to COVID-19, and has transformed services, regulations and policies at impressive speed. Details on government transformation and renewal are provided throughout this report. Financial renewal is the focus of the remainder of this section.

COVID-19 has dramatically reduced City revenues while placing increased demand on key City services such as shelters. That revenue loss has exacerbated financial pressure on the City's operating budget, with an anticipated shortfall on the tax-supported operating budget of \$1.9 billion in 2020 – which is estimated to be reduced to \$1.35 billion through cost mitigation measures. There will be substantial budget pressures for 2021 and beyond. These pressures put at risk the City's services and

infrastructure programs, while highlighting structural gaps in the municipal funding model.

The combination of the City's responsibilities as a provider of provincially mandated services, City Council's proactive strategies to address Toronto's challenges and a lack of adequate funding to meet these needs, has created a structural funding gap. COVID-19 has added significant new depth and urgency to existing challenges. The funding of cities must be addressed to support COVID-19 recovery and long-term prosperity in cities across Canada.



### Property tax: Context and Challenges

Property tax is the primary source of revenue for municipalities in Canada, including Toronto. It is a fundamental component of municipal finance. The Municipal Act of 1849, also known as the Baldwin Act, granted municipalities taxation powers, including the ability to tax property. Following that legislation, the Assessment Act was reformed and introduced the definition of taxable properties, exemptions and other policies that still exist today.

While there have been changes to property taxation over time, including the addition (in 1866) and removal (in 1904) of an income component, the rationale for property tax has remained essentially the same. Property tax is founded on the principle that those receiving the benefit of property-related services (property owners) should pay for them. The services that municipalities initially provided (roads, water, wastewater, fire, police and sidewalks) accrued to properties and property owners and were therefore to be funded by property taxes.

Property taxes make up nearly 40 per cent of the City's revenues and nearly all of the City's discretionary funding sources (that is,

those not tied directly to a service or a pass-through program). With the transfer of transit and housing costs to the municipality and recent emergent challenges facing residents and businesses, the City of Toronto has relied on property taxes to fund a much broader base of services, including health, environment and income redistributive services that go beyond benefits directly linked to property owners.

Property taxes do not grow proportionately with the economy. Although Toronto has experienced a rising real estate market, increased property values have not led to revenue windfalls. Property taxes are designed to be revenue neutral to property value re-assessment increases by proportionately lowering property tax rates each year.

While property tax is economically efficient, it is highly visible and often regressive in nature; it is politically challenging to reform or increase rates. Historically, property taxes in Toronto have grown less than the rate of inflation and, as a result, the average household tax burden has been declining.

### Toronto's 2020 Tax-Supported Operating Budget

Revenue Source	% of 2020 Tax-Supported Operating Budget
Property Tax	38.2%
Municipal Land Transfer Tax	6.9%
User Fees & Fines	7.5%
Provincial and Federal Transfers	21.3%
Reserve Funds	4.4%
TTC Fares	11.6%
Other	10.2% [includes 5.6% other; 2.3% investment income; 2.3% transfers from capital]

Local property tax revenues have not kept up with the demands for services and infrastructure in Toronto. Over successive City Council terms, the City's finances have been heavily relied upon to meet increasing regional demand for services such as public housing, transit and transportation and shelters. The City faces those demands without contributions toward operating expenses from a regional tax or rate base. That creates significant pressures on the City to manage.

## Underfunded Municipalities

In 1998, the Province of Ontario shifted financial responsibility between the provincial and municipal tax bases for several program areas and introduced the pooling of social welfare and housing costs among GTA municipalities as part of the Local Services Realignment (LSR) reforms.

Responsibilities for funding transit, social and supportive housing and the administration of some social services were "downloaded" to municipalities. In 2004, through the Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, many of these previously downloaded services were "uploaded" back to the province. The upload did not include transit or social and supportive housing – programs that provide benefits to the region but are now funded in large part by Toronto taxpayers. The province created transfer payment programs designed to help Toronto with its disproportionate share of housing and other social service costs, such as the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), GTA Equalization Payments and Toronto Pooling Compensation. The last of those programs was phased out in 2016.

The City has taken on additional responsibilities that reach beyond property-related services, and these services are still primarily funded by property taxes. Cities do not have revenue tools that grow with the economy to address these needs. This misalignment between responsibilities and revenue sources has limited the ability of Toronto to respond to challenges. In Toronto, it has resulted in strategies that are approved by City Council but do not receive adequate funding, as well as large capital backlogs for critical transit and housing infrastructure.

All three orders of government have taken actions to invest in Toronto's infrastructure needs in recent years, however, Toronto services and infrastructure remain structurally underfunded. City



Council recently took a proactive step to address this underfunding by increasing the City Building Levy to generate an additional \$6.6 billion over the next six years, dedicated to transit and housing. Despite the substantial investment, the City's state-of-good-repair backlog will grow to approximately \$18 billion by 2029. Most state-of-good-repair needs pertain to the City's transit and housing infrastructure.

This underinvestment is compounded by the fact that while municipalities own and maintain the majority of Canada's public infrastructure – 59.8 per cent of all public infrastructure in Canada<sup>141</sup> — they see limited return on investment generated by infrastructure investments (in terms of direct impact on municipal balance sheets). By some estimates, up to 44 per cent of infrastructure investments are recovered by the federal and provincial governments through GDP gains that lead to higher personal, corporate and indirect taxes. Meanwhile, municipal governments see just 0.001 per cent of the benefits of these investments due to a lack of access to revenue tools linked directly to economic growth and activity.<sup>142</sup>

## Toronto's Revenue Options

As Canada's seventh largest government by expenditure, the City of Toronto requires a broad, permissive legislative framework to achieve "made-for-Toronto" policies that are commensurate with its size, responsibilities, diversity, and economic and cultural significance. To facilitate it, in 2006, the City of Toronto Act (COTA) came into effect, granting Toronto new authorities for taxation. COTA introduces relatively broad authority for Toronto to levy some taxes, while prohibiting Toronto from implementing certain taxes such as income, sales, parking and gas taxes.

After the adoption of COTA, one of the revenue tools that the City of Toronto introduced was the Municipal Land Transfer Tax. Introduced in 2008, the Municipal Land Transfer Tax has grown to be a significant source of revenue for the city, representing 7.5 per cent of the tax-supported operating budget. The City has relied on unexpected increases to Municipal Land Transfer Tax revenue to help fund the operating budget in recent years. Other than the Municipal Land Transfer Tax, other COTA taxing powers generate very marginal revenues. For example, combined, the Third-Party Sign (Billboard) Tax and the Municipal Accommodation Tax account for less than 0.8 percent of all revenues budgeted by the City. The City also implemented a Vehicle Registration Tax in 2009, and later repealed it in 2010, but it too represented a small portion of budgeted revenues.

**More public and community space, community building, open more public spaces safely, create subsidies for local businesses and community groups, support for people of all income levels living together in neighbourhoods.**

Comment from Consultation

City Council has considered implementing new revenue options on several occasions, most recently in December 2016. Revenue options available to the City under COTA tend to be rather narrow in application, and correspondingly limited in terms of revenue capacity. Some of these options face additional challenges, such as potential negative economic and equity impacts, or would be complex and expensive to administer. Others require provincial approval, such as road tolling. In 2016, Council decided to pursue road tolling on the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway, but it was not approved by the province. Pre-COVID-19, City Council directed staff to study the possibility of implementing a vacant homes tax, a parking tax and a vacant storefront tax.

Recent trends, including the continued rise of e-commerce and mobile work options, and the corresponding decline in demand for office space, may further strain municipal revenues, which are predominantly reliant on land-based approaches. In a digital era, land-based assets may become less important.

The City's current mix of revenue tools does not adequately support the City's service responsibilities, most notably regional and income redistribution services that are funded primarily through local property tax but provide benefits across the region. This situation has created substantial risks to the City's long-term financial sustainability.

## Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is one of the City's top priorities. Toronto is committed to working and seeking partnerships to ensure value and affordability for taxpayers, adequately fund municipal services and infrastructure, make needed investments in the city and improve its financial health. Toronto is committed to making informed financial decisions and effectively managing resources for Toronto's future. The City is modernizing its budget, financial systems, capital planning and delivery and fostering innovation throughout the organization.

The City prioritizes financial sustainability across all services, programs, divisions, agencies and corporations. The City's Budget, Corporate Strategic Plan, Long-Term Financial Plan and initiatives such as the Value-Based Outcome Review exemplify Toronto's commitment to financial sustainability. All have been created with extensive input from the public, Council and City staff, including public consultation in communities, deputations at Council's committees and discussions with the City's Senior and Corporate Leadership Teams.

While City Council has established policy directions and service delivery expectations, there are financial barriers to their realization. In December 2019, it was estimated that, over the next three years, the City's average annual cash flow risk would be \$1 billion if sustainable strategies for fiscal management could not be secured.

**It is clear that social infrastructure – including food security, affordable housing, transit, child care, community safety programs and services, public health services, and decent work standards – are critical prerequisites to economic prosperity and resilience.**

Comment from Consultation

## Expenditure Management

City Council has placed a high priority on expenditure control. That approach is reinforced by annual budget targets and strategic plans or reviews, such as the City's Long-Term Financial Plan and the Value-Based Outcomes Review. The City continually reviews and controls expenditures through strategic plans and initiatives, however, finding efficiencies will not resolve the City's long-term financial challenges.

Only a few months before the COVID-19 pandemic, the City completed a Value-Based Outcome Review of the City's finances, funded through a program of the Ontario Government. A key finding of the review, confirming advice from City officials, is that Toronto's financial risk is driven by the fact that the City funds key services that provide a regional benefit – such as transit and housing – without contributions toward operating expenses from a regional tax- or rate-base. It identified that over the course of four years (2015–2018), the compounded annual growth rate for expenditures was 0.6 per cent for core City operations and 0.2 per cent for agency operations, in real terms. Over that same period, population grew by 2.1 per cent and real per-capita expenditures decreased from \$3,166 in 2015 to \$2,979 in 2018. Those figures indicate that the City is not funding increased demand in services through higher levels of expenditure, but rather, responding to growth through continued focus on generating efficiencies. However, the analysis also demonstrates that these efforts are unsustainable in the long-term without significant investment in modernization initiatives. Even before the financial effects of COVID-19, the City was facing a potential cash flow risk of \$1 billion over the next three years (2020–22).

The unsustainability of the City's fiscal situation was also highlighted in the City's Long-Term Financial Plan, adopted by Council in 2018. Both the Long-Term Financial Plan and the Value-Based Outcomes Review recommended reviewing service delivery to address pressures including optimizing and restructuring the workforce, modernizing how the City does business and adopting new models of procurement to drive greater value. The City of Toronto is a service provider and delivering its services in smart, innovative and streamlined ways has the potential to better meet residents' and businesses' needs. The City has a continued focus on expenditure management, however, savings and efficiencies alone cannot address the capital backlog or the necessary investments in growth.

## Experiencing the Financial Impacts of COVID-19

During the emergency shutdown, the City of Toronto has maintained critical services, ensuring that people are still able to use transit, established temporary food banks in library branches and opened new temporary shelters and respite sites. Since mid-February, the City, consistent with other major Canadian and Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipalities, has experienced significant financial impacts, both in the form of added costs and revenue losses and, in particular, reduced TTC fare revenue. The City has provided support to residents and businesses by implementing deferral programs for property tax and utility bill payments to alleviate financial pressures.

During the early months of COVID-19 the City faced financial pressures of \$65 million a week, and an anticipated tax-supported budget shortfall of \$1.9 billion by the end of 2020. The City has established mitigation strategies including workforce and spending restraints that are expected to reduce the total year-end shortfall to \$1.35 billion.<sup>143</sup>

In addition, the City engaged with its federal and provincial counterparts to obtain funding support for municipalities to offset projected deficits resulting from COVID-19 related financial impacts and longer-term commitment to support Toronto into 2021. The federal and provincial governments have announced programs that are likely to provide relief in 2020, such as the Safe Restart Agreement. Toronto is grateful that the other orders of government are providing this much needed support. However, there is considerable uncertainty as to the extent provincial and federal support will mitigate future budget pressures in 2021 and beyond.

City staff have estimated a preliminary 2021 Operating Budget opening pressure of nearly \$1.5 billion, based on 2021 outlooks. When coupled with the long-standing funding challenges

**Housing is a key driver of social and economic growth. All governments need to direct resources to address the urgent housing and health needs of residents. Intergovernmental collaboration is needed to ensure these needs are met while supporting the key role that municipal governments play in planning and delivering on federal and provincial economic stimulus measures.**

Comment from Consultation

experienced by the City to fund transit, build affordable housing and provide social services, it is apparent that the City will require continued support from the federal and provincial governments into 2021 and future years while cities continue to experience financial impacts during the recovery and rebuilding phases.





## Municipal Financial Sustainability – Looking Forward

As a result of changing demographics, rising income inequality and challenges posed by climate change, municipalities will likely continue to shoulder increased demands for social services. At the same time, intergovernmental transfers for operating expenses have decreased from \$1,100 per capita in 2010 to \$830 per capita in 2020, when adjusted for inflation. That decrease is explained in part by the elimination of previous provincial compensation for Toronto's disproportionate housing and social services costs, as well as reduced social service caseloads and the associated need for provincial funding, due to low unemployment rates in previous years.

A key component of financial sustainability is an efficient balance of authorities and clear responsibilities and funding across all orders of government. As recommended by the University of Toronto, the province and Ontario's municipalities have an opportunity to review the current division of responsibilities for planning, regulating, funding and delivering key services, including how to safeguard accountability, share costs fairly and enhance the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of services.<sup>144</sup> Toronto City Council has taken action to increase the City's autonomy by asking the City Manager to report on options for additional autonomy from senior level of governments, including a City Charter, that provides authority for fiscal matters including the ability to determine revenue sources, set tax rates, borrow funds and allocate monies.

In the immediate term, financial renewal needed to support COVID-19 recovery and rebuild must recognize the financial pressures in Toronto related to transit and housing, among other social service funding challenges.

### **Transit**

The financial impacts of COVID-19 compound long-standing funding challenges for the TTC. Toronto has the least subsidized transit-system in North America, a large capital backlog, significant expansion needs and transit fares that have grown faster than the rate of inflation.<sup>145</sup>

The TTC's backlog of deferred maintenance has grown, putting the safety, accessibility and sustainability at risk despite the need to move more customers more reliably than ever before. As of 2019, the system requires \$33.5 billion of investment over the next 15 years to address this backlog, only a portion of which is currently allocated funding.



Additionally, significant investment is required to support Toronto's growth and expand the transit network, including the Province's four priority subway projects, the SmartTrack Station Program, the Waterfront Transit Network, and the Eglinton East Crosstown Extension. All three orders of government have committed to funding transit expansion, but commitment to fully fund these projects has not yet been confirmed.

Toronto's recovery will rely on transit as people return to work and access health care, child care and schools. The impacts of COVID-19 may result in reduced transit ridership in 2021 and beyond. The Safe Restart Agreement provides up to \$2 billion in support for transit in Ontario, of which \$404 million will go to the TTC in the first phase of funding, helping to bridge the immediate budget gap.

A realignment of transit funding is needed to support not only the COVID-19 recovery, but also to support the long-term growth and livability of the Toronto and the GTHA. As the GTHA grows, it will also be critical to increasingly look at transit on a regional basis.

### **Housing**

Toronto provides 90 per cent of the public housing in the Greater Toronto Area and 37 per cent of the total social housing in the province, representing a disproportionate share of costs borne by the City relative to its share of the provincial population or tax base. Additionally, since 2016, there has been a steady increase in the number of federal refugee and asylum claimants seeking emergency shelter and housing in Toronto. The City continues to maintain shelter capacity for this population.

**Now that we know that certain things can be delivered in ways that accommodate people's specific needs - e.g. certain things can be accessible online that were not initially accessible, deadlines to submit or provide applications were extended, etc.; it would be important for those accommodations to remain even after COVID-19 for accessibility reasons and the like. The general response to accommodate people at this time and the quick turnaround to make the changes necessary all speak to the City and other governments' capacity to be creative and responsive to people's diverse needs even beyond COVID-19.**

Comment from Consultation

As detailed in a recent report from the University of Toronto's Ontario360 initiative, in 2018 the City of Toronto spent \$933 million, or \$315 per resident, on social housing. Of this total, the provincial government contributed just \$333,250, or \$0.11 per resident – a share of just 0.04 percent. In comparison, municipalities in the rest of the province together spent \$1.9 billion on social housing, an average of \$182 per person. In these municipalities, the Province contributed a total \$405 million, or an average of \$38 per person – a 21 percent share of all operating and capital costs.<sup>146</sup>

Municipalities in Ontario currently pay three-quarters of social housing costs. As suggested by the University of Toronto, these costs are borne through municipal property taxes, not income taxes, and are therefore not a progressive way to pay for social housing. Any review of provincial-municipal responsibilities should examine how social housing can be funded more effectively, rather than by property tax revenues.

Due to public health guidelines and requirements around safety and physical distancing, the onset of COVID-19 caused considerable strain on the emergency shelter system. The City has undertaken a number of actions to support the needs of people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic (see Section 7 for details). Many of the City's efforts have been supported by the Province of Ontario, with additional funding provided under the Social Services Relief Fund and direct supports provided through Ontario Health.

Toronto continues to face substantial housing needs across the spectrum of types, tenures and levels of affordability. The City also has funding pressures with City-owned housing stock, shelters and the supportive housing it provides.

It should be recognized that the City of Toronto provides a regional and national service through City-run shelters and supportive housing systems. Given the growing urgent housing and supportive needs, it will be critical for the City to work with all orders of government to examine and develop alternative funding to provide services that respond to emerging needs through a coordinated regional response to housing supports.

## Engagement Overview

TORR undertook extensive engagement with stakeholders and the public. This section includes feedback from the City's public survey on recovery and rebuild, which received more than 12,000 responses, and input from the Mayor's Task Force and a number of stakeholder meetings. See Section 6 for details. Initial feedback largely focused on short-term recovery needs. Input from these engagements should be considered as a snapshot at a point-in-time during an unfolding pandemic.

Outreach was undertaken to invite stakeholders from the development, finance, technology and community sectors to meetings to discuss sector-specific impacts and potential longer-term trends in digital, development, real estate and property taxes. Stakeholders included the City of Toronto Digital Infrastructure Plan Community Advisory Group (CAG), the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB), the Toronto Industry Network (TIN) and various property management firms/REITs.

The Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force, which held meetings with industry and community groups, involving tables chaired by Council members, also provided feedback relevant to government and financial renewal.

Below are key themes that emerged from the engagements. Feedback reported here has not been attributed to individuals or companies within industries and may not be representative of the wider Toronto population or all stakeholders within an industry, or the City of Toronto's position on the issues.

## Input from Stakeholder Meetings

1. COVID-19 is a stressor on pre-existing conditions – it has deepened, accelerated or made them more acute.

- Housing Supply. On the matter of housing supply, stakeholders indicated that:
  - There is pent up demand for housing and a growing tension between intentions to buy versus intentions to sell. This situation could lead to price acceleration.
  - Demand-side policies for housing may only have a relative effect on the market. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has a supply-side concern. There is a need for new supply and a diversity of supply.
  - Investor-owners in the short-term rental market are contemplating either listing short-term properties for sale or bringing them into the rental market, as a result of the City's new Short-term Rental Regulations. Participants suggested that toward the end of the year and into 2021, some re-balancing in the market will occur.
- Manufacturing. It was noted that:
  - Many industrial companies in Toronto are multi-nationals with operations in the United States. Participants highlighted that these companies are sensitive to the cost of doing business where their facilities are located and will be closely monitoring the costs of running their facilities in Toronto.
  - Low vacancy rates indicate that there is still strong demand for manufacturing land.
  - Stakeholders expressed the view that government debt/financial challenges will have a strong impact on consumer confidence, taxes, etc., moving forward.
  - The concern was raised that a significant increase in property taxes would hurt the City's manufacturing community if there is a slowdown in the broader economy.

2. Transit is essential for Toronto's recovery and needs support from other orders of government, including the federal government. For businesses, stakeholders noted that:

- Transit will be critical when office tenants return downtown, and it is important that public transit is perceived to be clean and safe.
- Traffic congestion was a major challenge pre-COVID and there are concerns over the risk of rising congestion; particularly, if individuals choose to drive rather than use public transit.

3. Digitization will have ongoing effects on City revenues, main streets, businesses, residents and use of physical space. A potential shift to e-commerce may have an impact on Toronto's property assessment base. It was noted that:

- Municipal revenues are reliant on land-based approaches to value, which will become less relevant in the digital age.
- Enhanced digital infrastructure is required to ensure digital access for low-income populations.
- The City needs to digitize to keep pace with demands from business and residents and to ensure administrative processes are expedient and effective.
- The accelerated shift to e-commerce and online streaming platforms due to emergency measures has resulted in a significant decline in physically located and experiential-based retail, food and entertainment consumer activity. However, there continues to be confidence in the resumption of experiential-based consumption patterns over the long term.
- There are concerns about the long-term health of the retail market; particularly, in Toronto's downtown PATH network. It is believed that changes to the retail space, as a result of COVID-19, will become a part of "the new normal."
- The City needs to support continued public realm programming to encourage vibrancy in the downtown core.
- Online service delivery will continue to change brick-and-mortar businesses, but it will not completely replace them. For example, it may reduce the overall brick-and-mortar footprint across the city as retailers choose to have fewer or smaller store frontages.
- The City needs to continue supports for local businesses in the transition to online retail and digitization.



- If the zoning "use" of a shopping centre needs to change in the future, more flexible planning/zoning considerations are needed to ensure that these changes can occur as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- The City needs to reinforce the idea that start/end times for offices need to be staggered (for employees to safely return to working from offices, especially those in large towers).
- Governments had a very effective voice in communicating the need to shut down. As it becomes safe to reopen, the City, other governments and public health officials need to have a strong and effective voice to communicate that it's safe to return to transit, jobs, retail shopping, entertainment, etc.

#### 4. The impact of COVID-19 on companies returning to work from offices remains an open question, although stakeholders are optimistic for recovery of office and commercial space use.

Stakeholders indicated that:

- Transactions within the commercial sector typically face longer timelines; therefore, it is still too early to tell what long-term effects may occur within this sector.
- There continues to be confidence in the long-term health of the office sector; however, it is too early to tell how employers will integrate office work and work-from-home scenarios.
- Future management of physical spaces, such as curbsides, may require measures enabling physical distancing and crowd reduction.

### Input from TORR public survey

#### 1. Keep property tax affordable

- Of respondents who commented on the City's finances, some included property tax as one of the most pressing issues to address during recovery and rebuild.
- The majority of these respondents would like the City to reduce property taxes and improve affordability for taxpayers. Reasons cited for reducing property tax include financial hardship faced by families due to COVID-19 and improving affordability for taxpayers. There were some calls for the elimination of commercial property taxes as a way to support local businesses.

- A minority of respondents favour the City increasing property taxes.
- A few respondents would like the City to explore new revenue options, for example, revenues that grow with the economy such as sales tax, as well as road tolls.

#### 2. Improve the efficiency of government operations and how tax dollars are spent.

- Some residents would like to see the City find more efficiencies across its operations and budgets, such as reducing red tape, improving timeliness of services (e.g., building permits).
- Some respondents noted waste in the City budget, with public servants' wages and ineffective programs being a common concern among these respondents.

#### 3. Renegotiate the City's Authorities

- Some respondents would like to see the City of Toronto have more authority over services and revenues. There were a few calls for reviewing cities' place vis-a-vis the provincial and federal governments and reviewing "who does what" across all orders of government.

#### 4. Funding Transit and Housing

- From the online public survey, affordable housing and mobility/transit were the top priorities identified in the survey (43 per cent and 30 per cent of respondents).
- Of those who identified public transit as a top priority, the majority of respondents spoke to issues such as overcrowding on public transit, the need for enhanced services, and concerns about increasing congestion. However, several people noted that to solve these issues, the City requires increased funding, either by re-directing more City funds to transit or by receiving more support from the provincial or federal governments. Some survey respondents also noted that transit benefits the region, so funding should come from all orders of government.
- Similarly, of those who identified affordable housing as a key issue, several noted that the key action is to adequately fund affordable housing initiatives, including re-allocating funding in the City budget.

## Input from Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force

### 1. Streamline, digitize and modernize City government.

- Stakeholders from the Mayor's Task Force emphasized the need to improve the City's processes and service delivery to residents and businesses. Task Force recommendations included:
  - Review the City's technology infrastructure to ensure integrated and streamlined processes, cost effectiveness and customer service.
  - Streamline the City's customer interface to reduce regulatory burden, simplify transactions and improve response times, including creating a unit reporting to the City Manager to provide a one-stop review of major development applications, and create digital portals for all permits, services and licences.
  - Complete a comprehensive bylaw review to ensure simplification, modernization and reduce redundancies.

### 2. Invest in housing.

- The Mayor's Task Force stakeholders recommended the City take several actions related to affordable and social housing, and rental assistance.
- Recommendations included increased provincial and federal support for housing, including
  - Providing emergency funding for cities and community agencies;
  - Providing urgent renter assistance;
  - Expediting and expanding delivery of the Canada Housing Benefit;
  - Accelerating and expanding funding for new affordable homes under the National Housing Strategy;
  - Establishing dedicated funding for a modular rental housing program;
  - Funding acquisitions, renovations and conversion;s
  - Providing operating funding to create supportive housing;
  - Increasing investments in permanent affordable housing; and
  - Increasing the supply of rental housing.

### 3. Explore financial supports for residents, businesses, and community organizations.

- Stakeholders noted that property tax and rate deferrals were very helpful and said further deferrals may be useful again if businesses face closure.
- One of the top "asks" mentioned by business is for the province to reduce, eliminate or defer small business electricity and natural gas costs while emergency measures are in place. In addition, there were calls to explore financial supports for small businesses.
- A theme from the Mayor's Task Force was for the City to use its financial tools to provide support, such as:
  - Vacant commercial property tax relief and commercial and industrial tax relief; and
  - Reforming the commercial tax system to get main street healthy again and address long-standing property tax challenges for small businesses (for example, by creating a capping strategy to manage the impacts of MPAC tax assessments and creating additional tax bands for commercial properties).



# 11 | Theme: Business

Toronto's economy entered this crisis on a strong foundation that will likely improve the city's ability to recover from the effects of the pandemic. The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) has experienced 10 consecutive years of growth, with real gross domestic product (GDP) expanding at an average annual rate of 2.8 per cent from 2010 through 2019. Toronto has a highly diverse economy with a growing and skilled workforce. Immigration has fuelled strong population growth and linguistic and cultural diversity. Toronto is the fastest growing city, and the Toronto CMA is the fastest growing metropolitan area, in all of Canada and the United States in terms of population growth.

The construction sector, a key indicator of economic vitality, was booming. The city has also benefited from a surge of investment in public infrastructure and transit to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding region. Compared to other North American cities, Toronto has one of the lowest central office vacancy rates, and places first or second in high-rise construction is the second largest financial sector in North America, and the third largest tech sector. It is home to the largest share of head offices in the country.

## Sectors Engaged

As part of the City response to the COVID-19 emergency, a wide range of consultations have been held with key economic and business stakeholders. The Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Taskforce started consultations in March 2020, with more than 200 stakeholders from a variety of business and community groups. City councillors also held roundtable discussions with key sectors and City staff conducted surveys and check-ins with business stakeholders.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade (TRBoT) partnered with the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild to convene sectoral consultation tables. City staff also established opportunities for sectors and stakeholders to provide input on how the pandemic has impacted them, their thoughts on the role of each order of government in meeting identified challenges, and suggestions for actions in recovery and rebuild.

The TRBoT roundtable discussions focused on key sectors of Toronto's economy and employment including film, music and live events, travel and tourism, energy, innovation and technology, main street business, large retail, grocery and e-commerce, finance, manufacturing, infrastructure, health, and post-secondary institutions. Some sectors have experienced a dramatic downturn in employment and revenue since the emergence of COVID-19 in Toronto (tourism, hospitality, film, music, events, retail) while others have not been as dramatically affected (finance, technology, grocery).





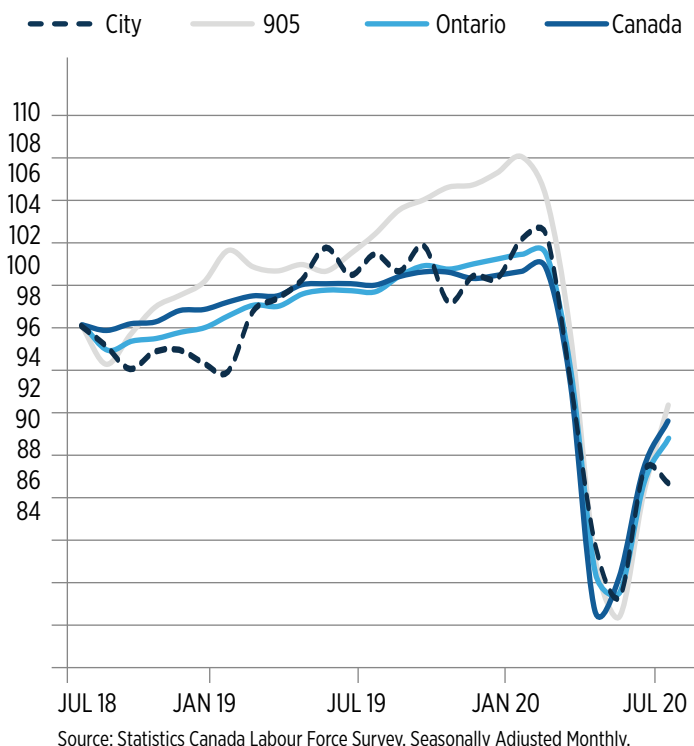
## Toronto Economic Update - COVID-19

Toronto is facing an unprecedented economic shock amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. Between February 2020 and May 2020, total employment across Toronto declined by 255,400. The unemployment rate more than doubled, from 6.2 per cent to 14.2 per cent over the period. The increase would be higher if laid-off workers not currently looking for work were counted as unemployed. Additionally, many employed Toronto residents are working reduced hours. Among the most impacted have been workers in accommodation and food services, and in the information, culture and recreation sectors.

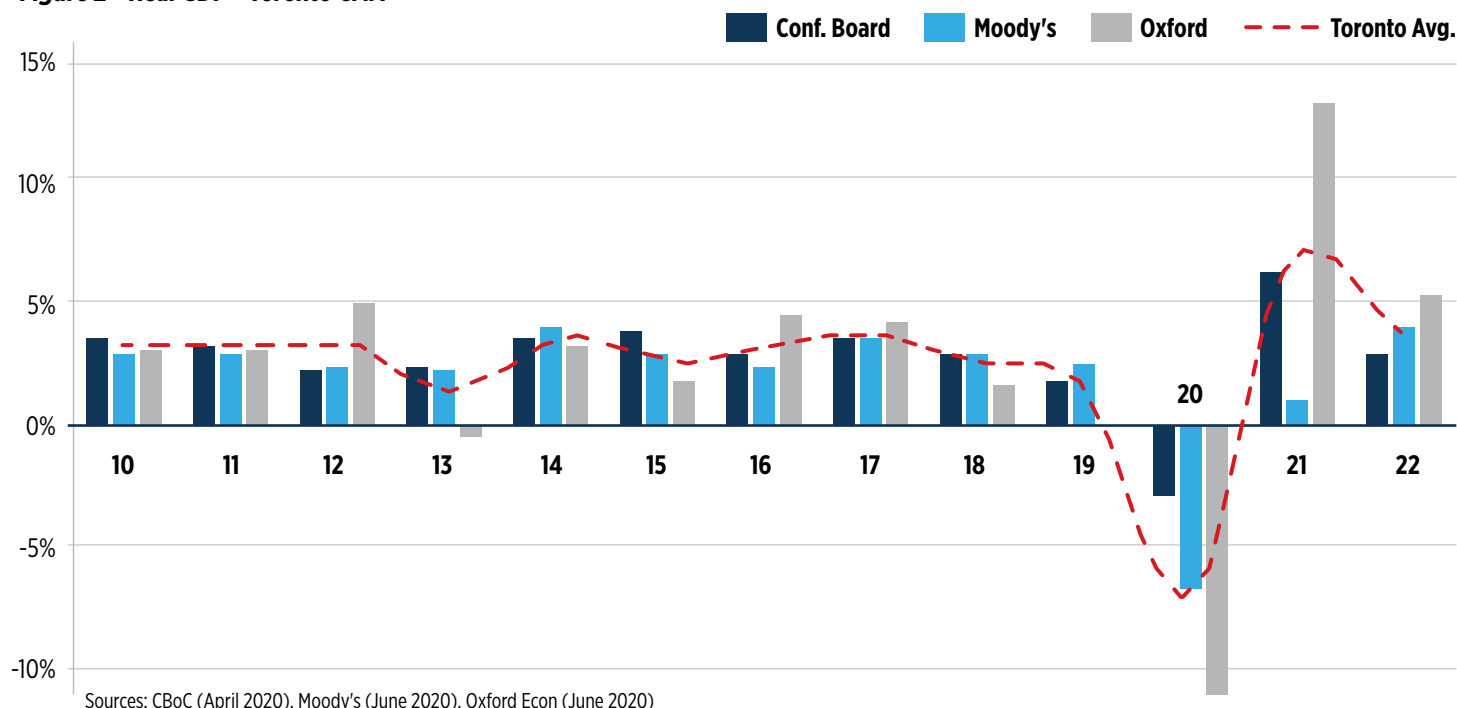
Many other economic indicators have also shown a steep contraction. For example, manufacturing shipments across the Toronto CMA tumbled 40 per cent month-over-month in April as many plants shuttered. Retail sales fell 33 per cent month-over-month in April.

A survey of three prominent forecasters – the Conference Board of Canada, Oxford Economics and Moody's Analytics – predict that real GDP for the Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) will contract by 6.9 per cent in 2020 before rebounding by 6.7 per cent in 2021. These forecasts align with estimates for the broader Canadian economy, including recent projections from the Bank of Canada.

**Figure 1 – Indexed Employed, July 2018=100**



**Figure 2 – Real GDP - Toronto CMA**



Recovery is getting underway as restrictions gradually ease and more businesses reopen. Total employment for Toronto increased by 89,200 in June, though payrolls contracted again in July by a modest 9,400. The July level of employment has recouped roughly 30 per cent of the jobs lost in the period from February through May. Toronto manufacturing shipments returned 20 per cent month-over-month in May, reversing half of the prior month's decline. Retail sales increased eight per cent month-over-month. According to the CFIB's weekly survey of members, sentiment among Ontario small businesses is becoming more positive. Some areas are expected to return more quickly, including retail and manufacturing, while other sectors, notably tourism and culture, could face a prolonged adjustment phase. Output in the finance, insurance and real estate sector – Toronto's largest industry – is expected to emerge relatively unscathed. Resale housing activity as of July was back to pre-pandemic levels.

Toronto's economy may continue to look different, as physical distancing becomes the new normal. The shift toward e-commerce is showing signs of becoming more entrenched, challenging traditional brick-and-mortar retailers. Telework is likely to become more prominent for many workers, forcing changes to traditional office and commuting dynamics. This could also lead to lasting impacts on businesses that rely on commuter traffic for a significant portion of their customer base (e.g. food courts, bars and restaurants in the downtown core).

For example, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that pre-pandemic, nine in ten organizations had less than 20 per cent of their workforces working remotely. As of June, nearly two-thirds of organizations reported at least 60 per cent working remotely. Over the medium-term, 55 per cent of employers will be keeping at least half their workforce remote. Longer-term, the survey suggests many employees can expect to be called back to the workplace.

Statistics Canada estimates that about 40 per cent of Canadian workers are in jobs that can be performed from home. Close to that proportion were teleworking during the last week of March, compared with about 13 per cent pre-COVID, suggesting the economy was operating at maximum "telework capacity". The number of Canadians working from home declined in June and July as more workplaces reopened, but the number remains significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. Industries with a high telework capacity include finance, education, professional services, information and public administration.

The extent to which trends such as remote work, increased digitization of certain sectors and the growth of precarious work continue and/or accelerate could significantly reshape the nature of the Canadian and Toronto economies. These trends also have

significant potential downstream effects for municipal finances and the delivery of key services such as public transit and for tourism, culture and recreation. They also raise questions about which groups and individuals will bear disproportionate economic and social burdens arising from the pandemic and how best to mitigate those burdens.

















## Equity and Distributional Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic has had unequal impacts on different parts of the city and different segments of the labour force. The highest rates of COVID-19 cases have been reported in areas outside the core, particularly in several neighbourhoods in the city's northwest corner. Toronto Public Health released data findings that show that the neighbourhoods with the highest rates of infection have larger numbers of Black and other racialized residents, along with higher incidence of low income.

From an economic equity perspective, work across different industries and occupations has been affected in different ways. Certain job categories were much less able to shift from retail locations and other communal places of work to enable employees to work from home. This likely meant either significant job losses or employees continuing to commute, often by public transit, to work in locations where distancing might be difficult. As is described below, these job categories, and more vulnerable work in general, are more likely to be done by Toronto residents facing other systemic barriers. Job losses since the pandemic onset reflect that pattern.

Figure 3 shows the magnitude of job losses, in terms of total employment and percentage change, between February and May of 2020 in each of broadest industry categories for the Toronto CMA. The source of this data is Statistics Canada's monthly Labour Force Survey, which relies on a relatively small sample size for cities and can therefore show some statistical variation from month to month. However, some overall trends are apparent. Not surprisingly, the largest employment changes on a percentage basis are in industries affected by social distancing rules, including accommodation and food services, arts and entertainment, and retail. While nearly all industries contracted over the three-month period, public administration employment grew slightly. Within smaller sub-sectors not shown in the table, couriers and messengers registered the largest gain in employment, with smaller increases in telecommunications, design services, building services, insurance brokers and nursing.

**Figure 3 - Recent employment change among Toronto CMA residents by industry**

	Employment Feb 2020	Employment May 2020	Change (000's) Feb-May 2020	% Change Feb-May 2020	% Part-Time Feb 2020	Median Wage/Hr Feb 2020
 Accommodation and food services	182.13	90.51	-91.62	-50.30%	46.70%	\$15.00
 Arts, entertainment and recreation	65.57	43.71	-21.86	-33.30%	53.00%	\$17.44
 Retail trade	393.82	286.72	-107.1	-27.20%	35.10%	\$15.85
 Educational services	241.09	181.77	-59.32	-24.60%	33.50%	\$32.97
 Construction	224.65	170.51	-54.14	-24.10%	11.50%	\$27.50
 Other services	134.45	102.15	-32.3	-24.00%	16.60%	\$22.12
 Utilities	19.1	14.86	-4.24	-22.20%	6.40%	\$46.15
 Health care and social assistance	385.8	310.58	-75.22	-19.50%	18.20%	\$25.00
 Wholesale trade	136.1	113.75	-22.35	-16.40%	7.80%	\$23.08
 Administrative and support	161.15	138.48	-22.67	-14.10%	20.40%	\$18.45
 Manufacturing	328.29	285.1	-43.19	-13.20%	2.60%	\$22.31
 Transportation and warehousing	217.6	203.89	-13.71	-6.30%	8.60%	\$24.00
 Professional, scientific and technical services	418.07	396.22	-21.85	-5.20%	8.70%	\$33.65
 Information and cultural industries	90.04	87.55	-2.49	-2.80%	14.20%	\$28.85
 Finance, insurance, real estate and leasing	414.06	411.65	-2.41	-0.60%	7.00%	\$34.19
 Public administration	106.17	112.4	6.23	5.90%	5.70%	\$40.87

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey



Figure 3 shows that the industries with the largest relative job losses were also generally more likely to have a higher percentage of part-time and lower wage employees. While the median hourly wage column refers only to wages and not total compensation, the table overall strongly suggests that those in already somewhat precarious and lower paid jobs were more likely to lose employment as a result of COVID-19.

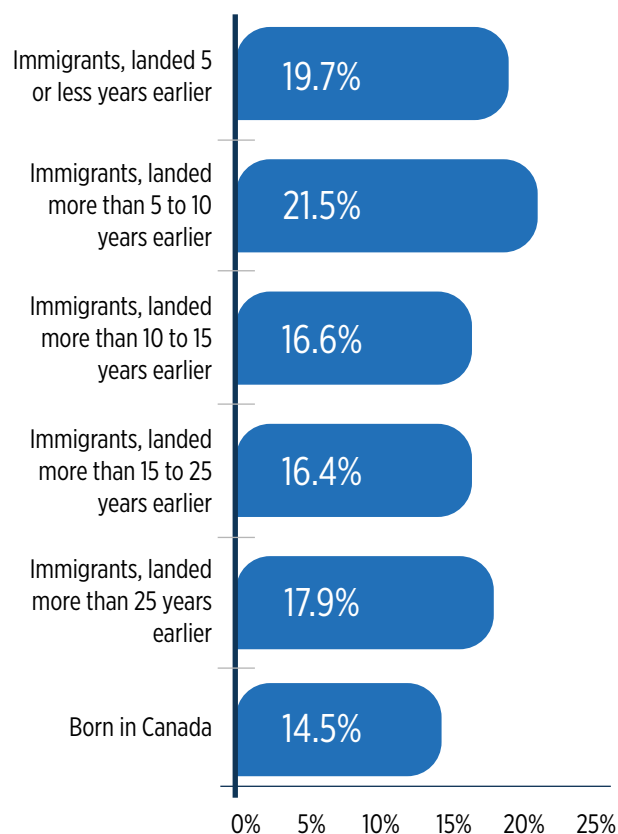
That helps explain why, as with rates of infection, there has been a disproportionate economic impact of COVID-19 on various Toronto communities. Research on precarious work in Ontario, defined in part by lower wages and fewer or less predictable hours, has shown a clear over-representation of recent immigrants, women and visible minorities.

With the August Labour Force Survey release (July 2020 data), Statistics Canada began collecting race-based employment data for the first time. This provides the opportunity to measure the current and future labour market conditions of diverse groups but does not provide historical information to determine the possible impacts of COVID-19 prior to July. Using available data from earlier this year, Figure 4 shows that between February and May, immigrants were more likely to lose their job than non-immigrants. Within the Toronto CMA, total loss of employment has been largest on a relative basis among those who immigrated to Canada within the last 10 years, and all categories of immigrants have fared worse than Toronto CMA residents born in Canada.

Further, between February and May 2020, the Labour Force Survey shows that the number of employed women within the Toronto CMA declined by 17.7 per cent while the number of employed men declined by 14.8 per cent. It is also likely that more women have taken leave from work to provide care for children and other family members but may still be counted as employed in labour force data.

The pandemic has also impacted different businesses and entrepreneurs unequally. Roundtable discussions hosted by the Toronto Region Board of Trade (TRBoT) highlighted the challenges facing various businesses. In the main street/retail sector, for example, participants noted independent small businesses were likely to have immediate cash liquidity challenges including difficulty covering rent and making capital upgrades to meet safety requirements. In other industries such as travel and tourism, business of all sizes reported facing liquidity challenges, but more established and larger companies are generally able to withstand revenue losses for a longer period.

**Figure 4 - Per cent Total Employment Loss for Toronto CMA Residents between February-May 2020**



While publicly listed companies have been quite volatile, as of early July, North American stock markets have returned to near pre-pandemic levels indicating confidence in the ongoing profitability of larger enterprises. And as unequal employment changes across industries have had disproportionate impacts based on demographics, small businesses have faced the greatest challenges and are also more likely to be diversely owned and operated.

Newcomer entrepreneurs, for example, are much more likely to run small businesses as a function of having only been established relatively recently.

Some of the Toronto Region Board of Trade (TRBoT) roundtables included discussions on how to rebuild the relevant sector in a way that is more equitable. For example, the Innovation and Technology sector table discussed anti-Black racism and the importance of

connecting it to the concept of “building back better” after the pandemic. In response to questions about how the sector can provide support, resources were shared by the Black Professionals in Tech Network outlining ways that companies can put anti-Black racism messages into action. More effective approaches discussed included being visible in the community as an employer of choice; offering mentorship and sponsorship for Black employees; and seeking advice externally and from colleagues.

A roundtable to engage Indigenous businesses was also organized by the City. Participants provided feedback on the fallout created by COVID-19 and how it can be meaningfully addressed. Indigenous businesses reported experiencing similar impacts to non-Indigenous businesses in terms of reduced cash flow and liquidity challenges, difficulty in paying rent, and the need to pivot business models to adapt to public health restrictions. They also noted that Indigenous businesses and organizations generally still do not feel like they are meaningful players in how Toronto operates.

Among suggestions provided to the City, participants noted enhanced procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses; the development of Indigenous-led solutions at the municipal level on food security, climate change, Indigenous cultural awareness, and safety; and the need to think about recovery using a full systems approach by, for example, combatting social inequities and improving access to child care in order to boost the economy.

## Recent City engagement, strategies, plans or City Council decisions related to business and the economy (pre-COVID-19 directives)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City had approved and implemented a variety of plans to support Toronto’s economy and culture scene. At the highest level, City Council approved Creative Capital Gains and Collaborating for Competitiveness, respectively, as its economic development and culture strategies.

More recently, the City of Toronto’s Economic Development and Culture division conducted extensive consultation with stakeholders to develop a five-year strategy that included the four focus areas of Equity and Inclusion; Talent and Innovation; Space and Access; and Operational Excellence. These have been supplemented by action plans for individual sectors including A Strategic Action Plan for the Film, Television and Digital Media Industry and a 2020 report to City Council titled Enhancing Pathways to Innovation and Growth in Toronto’s Food and Beverage Manufacturing Sector.

Similarly, a variety of initiatives have been developed and approved to advance sub-sectors of Toronto’s arts and culture. They include strategies to preserve and assist live music venues; the creation of a property tax subclass for creative co-location facilities; a Public Art Strategy and a strategy to strengthen Toronto’s night-time economy. Before the pandemic required the widespread closure of Toronto’s bars and restaurants, the City’s support for the hospitality sector involved the development and ongoing coordination and marketing of the Winter and Summerlicious programs.

The City’s support for the local economy is also embedded in its planning process and legislation. Through zoning requirements, many areas of the city only permit employment uses. The City’s Imagination, Manufacturing, Innovation and Technology (IMIT) program offers a property tax credit for new buildings or significant renovations that lead to more jobs in various sectors.

More direct City support for businesses is available in the form of start-up information and mentoring provided by Enterprise Toronto. Several business missions have promoted Toronto as a place to do business and to find suppliers. The City continues to support the formation, maintenance and programming of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) that began as a concept many years ago in Toronto.

Finally, as it has become clear that the overall prosperity of Toronto’s economy has not been equitably shared or available to all, several City Council directives have focused on advancing economic inclusion and more local economic development. They include a variety of economic actions in the City’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, support for the formation of BIAs within Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, mitigation of the impacts of transit construction on nearby retail businesses, and the upcoming launch of the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Enterprise.

These initiatives and plans were developed during a different time. Some may, in whole or in part, still be relevant to the challenges and opportunities facing the city. Others, however, may need to be re-considered in light of the impacts of COVID-19, and either ramped up, scaled back or otherwise adjusted to take account of a new operating reality for the City, business and cultural organizations, and Toronto residents.



## Interjurisdictional Scan

More than half of the world lives in cities, a number expected to rise to about 70 per cent by 2050. Consequently, the actions of local governments, including working with other orders of government, will be critical to the world's economic recovery and rebuild. Out of necessity, cities rapidly responded to the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on their communities and economy, with local governments carrying out essential work and developing policy responses in real time. As many cities transition to the recovery phase, local governments are now considering ways to innovate, rethink long-standing approaches, and pursue a rebuild that confronts historic inequities.

City of Toronto staff undertook a jurisdictional review of short- and medium-term economic support and recovery programs and policies put in place by cities around the world that might be relevant to the Toronto context.

### ***The Canadian Context***

Most municipalities in Canada have adopted similar economic and business supports during the pandemic, with almost all Ontario municipalities offering immediate relief in the form of deferred tax, utility and other service payments. Many established some form of an economic task force, comprising elected officials, City staff and industry partners, to make recommendations on economic support and recovery. Several municipalities continue to survey their business community to determine the impact of COVID-19 and identify areas of concern, and possible actions for longer term recovery planning. Many municipalities, including Toronto, have focused their support on expanded digital tools for business, and expanded outdoor dining options.

While some international municipalities have the authority to provide direct grants to support businesses, Ontario municipalities do not. They must operate in a different legislative and regulatory landscape than many global cities.

### ***Key Themes***

Much like Canadian cities, most international cities have implemented business supports - typically low-interest loans and/or grants, consulting services for small - and medium-sized enterprises, expanded access to patio and retail space, tax breaks, and waiving or reducing municipal fees or requirements. Businesses will continue to incur expenses that may exceed revenues if clients or customers are slow to return, making the continuation of many of these support programs important.

Beyond business support and relief programs, reshaping public space and enhancing local mobility emerged most consistently as central tenets of local plans for economic recovery and rebuild. Most cities have also introduced some form of business support that allows business to convert parking lots, operate on sidewalks, expand patio space, or convert public space for retail uses. Outside of North America, the pace and scope of change is immense. Dozens of cities from Bogotá to Paris to Auckland have rapidly expanded cycling and pedestrian infrastructure to reduce crowding, promote local mobility and retail, and ensure that recoveries leave cities greener than before the pandemic. Paris created 650 kilometres of “cycleways” and is in the midst of re-imagining its streets to support people and the economy.

Some cities, including Portland and Washington DC, have made efforts to link enhanced street design with business support and social inequity. Many cities are investing in cycling infrastructure in an effort to expand transportation choices for those who have limited options or must use transit, predominantly lower income residents, those without access to a car, and those in jobs that do not support working from home. Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Kitchener, Waterloo, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Moncton have extended their cycling networks or established “slow streets”. While not a direct business support, improved local mobility and access to local retail have a direct relationship with economic potential. In many cities, these changes were made as emergency measures but have since become longer-term fixtures of the recovery phase.



## Engagement Overview

As part of the response to the COVID-19 emergency, the City of Toronto held a wide range of consultations with key economic and business stakeholders in the spring and summer of 2020.

- **Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force**

The Task Force convened 20 virtual roundtable discussions with more than 200 stakeholders from a wide variety of business and community groups. Participants were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses, and were asked to consider short - and medium-term interventions to support Toronto's economy.

Several City councillors led stakeholder engagement sessions on focused themes, including small business, social services and housing, workers and labour, climate action, cultural communities, and children and youth. In addition, City staff received more than 3,000 responses to a survey of Toronto businesses on the impact of COVID-19 and their needs for relief and recovery.

- **Toronto Region Board of Trade Sector Roundtables**

The Toronto Region Board of Trade (TRBoT) partnered with the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild to convene sectoral consultation tables in May, June and July 2020. The TRBoT roundtables took a forward-looking approach to consider long-term opportunities for economic recovery and rebuild. Meetings were held with industry leaders in energy, finance, film, music and live events,<sup>147</sup> health, infrastructure, innovation and technology, large retail, grocery and e-commerce, main street business, manufacturing, postsecondary education, and travel and tourism.

- **Black and Indigenous Business Roundtables**

In July 2020, City staff convened additional roundtable discussions with Indigenous and Black business leaders, for a focused conversation on combatting economic inequalities and empowering Black - and Indigenous - led businesses in the recovery period.

## Data Sets Considered

Findings from each of the above engagement methods were analyzed by City staff to inform the content of this report. Since most of the work of the Mayor's Task Force focused on identifying immediate and short-to-medium-term relief efforts, a majority of the longer term issues and opportunities included in this report are based on information gathered through the TRBoT's sector roundtables and the Black and Indigenous business roundtables. Recommendations developed as part of this report are supplemented by further research by City staff, including a jurisdictional review of best practices related to COVID-19 economic relief and recovery.

### Common Issues across Business Sectors

- Businesses across all sectors reported experiencing significant disruption related to COVID-19.
  - While the severity of the impact varied from sector to sector, many businesses were confronted with cash flow and liquidity challenges. Revenue impacts were particularly damaging for smaller businesses, and sectors such as travel and tourism that had to cease operations due to public health restrictions. Many raised concerns about the ability of businesses to pay fixed costs throughout the pandemic and recovery period, particularly rental payments.
  - Businesses described the need to rapidly pivot their operating model to respond to the pandemic. Many had to act quickly to enable a fully remote workforce, activate digital platforms and service delivery, introduce new or adapt existing product lines, and make changes to the layouts of stores and factories. Other businesses, in sectors like healthcare and grocery, had to scale up their operations to meet a sudden spike in demand.
  - The rapid operational changes necessary to respond to the pandemic have had significant implications on the health, safety and well-being of workers. Businesses described concerns about the mental health of employees and the challenges that many faced trying to juggle work and home responsibilities when working remotely. Businesses also expressed concerns with keeping workers safe on the job, including ongoing and reliable access to PPE.



- Many businesses were affected by supply-chain disruptions. Travel restrictions as well as business shutdowns in other countries interrupted access to goods and services needed for manufacturing and other business activities – and only some of those needs could be met by local suppliers. Similarly, the restrictions have negatively impacted recruitment for businesses that rely on access to international talent to meet their needs.
- Many of those consulted were critical of a lack of clear, consistent and timely communication from government related to reopening and operating requirements.
  - Throughout the pandemic, businesses looked to the government for direction on how to prepare their offices, stores and factories to return to operations, and how to secure appropriate PPE for workers.
  - Many found that information coming from the various orders of government was at times confusing, conflicting and released with little time to react. Businesses want all orders of government to work together to promote a “shared standard of safety” to allow for consistent practices across Ontario’s public health units and establish clear expectations among consumers and workers.
  - While more information on reopening has been made available to businesses in recent weeks, the importance of improving communications and guidance for business must be kept in mind when planning for a potential resurgence of COVID-19.
- Concerted effort is needed to rebuild public confidence in the economy. Reduced levels of consumer and investor confidence remain a major obstacle to economic recovery.
  - Businesses recognized that a strong public health response is the best way to restore public confidence. Until a vaccine is available, the roundtable participants believed it is imperative that Toronto stays ahead of the pandemic by adopting world-leading standards for testing and contact tracing, as well as implementing and enforcing necessary safety measures (e.g. disinfecting protocols and physical distancing on public transit).
  - Those consulted emphasized the need for affordable and reliable access to PPE as a necessary means for restoring confidence of employees returning to work, as well as consumers as the economy reopens. Many businesses – particularly small businesses – may have difficulty sourcing the amount of PPE necessary to resume safe operations. It was suggested that the City could play a role in supporting businesses by providing support or facilitation of purchasing, or perhaps use its purchasing power to pursue bulk orders and distribute to businesses at lower prices.
- Rebuilding confidence is also dependent on proactive, positive communication from all orders of government, including transparency in data reporting. Businesses, workers and consumers need unified messaging to feel safe in the city once again. A robust multilingual communications strategy will also be critical to strengthen relationships with Toronto’s cultural communities and ethnic-based businesses.

## Opportunities across Business Sectors

- Businesses across all sectors are committed to building back better. They expressed a desire to seize this moment to address longstanding issues that have confronted the City’s social, economic and environmental health.
  - There was agreement across the roundtables that the recovery period is an opportunity for innovation on multiple levels, including experimenting with new business models, collaborating with communities to advance social innovation, and leveraging Toronto’s tech talent to develop innovative technologies in impactful areas such as renewable energy and green infrastructure to lead economic recovery.
- Many see an opportunity to champion local capabilities and innovation through the pandemic and recovery period.
  - While supply chain disruptions and border closures have been challenging, businesses across sectors feel that this presents an opportunity to strengthen regional supply chains and expand domestic capacity. For example, enhancing manufacturing capacity for critical products such as pharmaceuticals and PPE will help protect residents in the event of a resurgence of COVID-19, and will build resilience for potential public health crises in the future.
  - There is also an opportunity for the local innovation ecosystem to lead in emerging technologies that will thrive in the post-pandemic market, such as developments in AI (artificial intelligence), data analytics, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and sensor technologies.
  - Many who commented believe that the pandemic has created an opportunity to shine the spotlight on main street businesses across Toronto. They encourage businesses to take advantage of the strong consumer interest in supporting main streets and trends toward hyper-local shopping that are expected to continue beyond the pandemic.

- Each of the business roundtables spoke to the importance of confronting social and economic inequality in Toronto. There was widespread agreement that for too long, systemic racism and institutional barriers have trapped racialized Torontonians and other equity-seeking groups in a cycle of poverty.
  - The roundtable participants agreed that now is the time to confront these inequities and make meaningful changes to create economic opportunities for equity-seeking communities, with particular action needed urgently to confront anti-Black racism and support Indigenous communities.
  - While there was broad consensus that action is needed to address longstanding issues related to inequality, most roundtables did not explicitly discuss how this change can be achieved, with some calling on the City to undertake more focused research and engagement on this topic.
  - Suggested actions from the Black and Indigenous business roundtables included pursuing a more inclusive procurement process for small businesses; encouraging more equitable hiring practices in the public and private sectors; creating more skills training opportunities; and collecting race-based data for decision-making.
- Many are seeing this period as a transformational moment for the future of work – though what the future of work will be remains an open question.
  - Changes that are being implemented related to remote work and digital collaboration may become permanent. The concept of “work from home” is shifting to become “work from anywhere”. How does this change how employers attract and retain talent? And what does this mean for the mobility of Toronto’s talent?
  - Some suggested that they will be less likely to renew leases for office space, and instead expect to invest more funds in talent and product development. That could stimulate further innovation by Toronto companies – but it may have an impact on the city’s commercial real estate market and vacancy rates.
  - There are also equity considerations related to changing work. Investment in digital infrastructure is needed to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, reliable high-speed broadband to participate in remote work environments.
- Roundtable participants called for the City to work with businesses on enhanced workforce development and skills training programs.
  - Many noted the need for skills training programs to be a cornerstone of economic recovery, including programs for youth, underrepresented communities and people who have been laid off due to the pandemic.
  - Roundtable participants encouraged collaboration between businesses, postsecondary institutions and the City on program development, along with leveraging community benefits agreements to implement and deliver job training and create pathways to employment.
- Recognizing the likelihood of a slow, uneven economic recovery, businesses called for the City to advocate for maintaining federal business subsidies and benefits during the recovery period.
  - Despite some gaps in eligibility, participants considered programs like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), and Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) to be successful in supporting workers and employers.
    - Many suggested a gradual phase-out of these programs as the economy recovers to help mitigate risk and support employers as business levels slowly return to normal. Some also advocated for a sector-by-sector approach to maintaining benefits, prioritizing support for industries and workers that will have a slower recovery period (such as live events and tourism).
    - Those consulted also identified an opportunity to apply learnings from these temporary emergency support programs to improve existing government supports over the longer term – such as understanding the impact of the CERB to make positive changes to the Employment Insurance (EI) system.
  - Not all programs were perceived as successful. Many who commented were critical of the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance Program (OCECRA), which they felt was implemented too late, had low uptake and ultimately did not achieve its objectives. Across all sectors, many advocated for a rent-relief program that works for tenants, and for an enhanced program to remain in place for an extended period to mitigate the risk of business failure during the recovery period.



## Intersectional Recovery and Rebuild Issues

In addition to the issues and opportunities noted above, the business roundtables raised several cross-cutting points that directly relate to the other consultation themes.

- Many businesses agree that a robust public health response is the single most effective way to facilitate Toronto's economic recovery.
  - There were many who feared that the city's economy will remain at risk of further disruption until a vaccine is made widely available. Until that time, businesses across all sectors emphasized the need for all orders of government to adopt globally leading practices in testing, contact tracing and data sharing.
  - There is also a significant opportunity to leverage the expertise of Toronto's innovation ecosystem to develop technology solutions to improve the City's public health response, and address other social challenges facing the city during the pandemic and recovery period.
- Economic recovery and rebuild is dependent on restoring and improving City services that Toronto workers rely on.
  - Many participants emphasized the economic importance of improving access to affordable childcare for working parents and reopening the public school system. Working parents are struggling to balance childcare and home schooling with the demands of their jobs, and a considerable amount of that burden is falling to women. Even as child-care services resume, returning to the status quo is not enough – daycare fees are too high for many parents, and the waiting lists for subsidized childcare are long.
  - The need for improved transit was also raised at many of the sector roundtables. The pandemic has shaken the public's confidence in using mass transit systems – a situation that must be addressed with a robust public health response and concrete measures to relieve overcrowding on buses, streetcars and subways. Some people said that a return to work could worsen the Greater Toronto Area's congestion problems if many workers switch from using transit to personal vehicles.
- Businesses across sectors highlighted the importance of digital government and modernization of City services for Toronto's economic recovery.
  - Many who commented emphasized the need to reduce red tape through regulatory and legislative changes across municipal, provincial and federal governments, and to enhance the ability of businesses to engage governments through digital processes.
- Given the strong customer focus in the City of Toronto's service delivery, there is an opportunity to undertake a review of IT infrastructure and streamline Toronto's customer interface to ensure simple, integrated and streamlined processes, reduce regulatory burden for businesses, and improve response times.
  - Those consulted offered specific recommendations to improve and modernize City services, such as appointing registered professionals to assist with approval delays (e.g. in planning, building and permitting); collaborating with the private sector for contact tracing efforts; and better integrating service delivery across service lines and in conjunction with community organizations.
- Businesses across sectors also stressed the need to modernize the City's procurement system, and experiment with innovative new delivery models to reduce red tape and accelerate project completion. Many suggested the City explore new programs and incentives to procure solutions from Toronto-based companies and enhance social procurement to drive goals related to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- While digitization of government services and business operations can improve access (e.g. for those in remote communities), it will be important that this undertaking is paired with broader efforts in ensuring digital literacy and improving connectivity, given the emerging reliance on internet access to receive government, financial, educational and health services.

**The government can create more jobs and support small businesses by opening up more avenues for entrepreneurs to have an opportunity to open up businesses in their own community.**

Comment from Consultation

## Priority Issues and Opportunities by Business Sector

This section provides an overview of priority issues and opportunities identified by roundtable participants related to COVID-19 recovery and rebuild in the following sectors, convened in conjunction with the Toronto Region Board of Trade from May to July 2020:

- Energy
- Finance
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Innovation and Technology
- Large Retail, Grocery and E-Commerce
- Main Street Business
- Manufacturing
- Postsecondary Education
- Travel and Tourism



### Energy

The energy sector reported experiencing unique challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the sector has played a key role in supporting businesses and individuals (e.g., in enabling a transition to remote work arrangements), the resulting changes in energy demand have raised challenges. With many Toronto residents staying home through the pandemic, residential energy consumption has slightly increased – although there has been a significant decrease in energy consumption overall, largely from the loss of commercial energy consumers. Given the structure of Ontario’s energy system, this drop in “load” (i.e. demand) means that excess electricity on the grid makes consumption more expensive through Global Adjustment charges – which is particularly harmful to industrial consumers.

This reduction in energy demand is exacerbating overall financial instability across the sector. Reductions in transmission, cash flow and capital spending, alongside a dramatic increase in uncollectible accounts, have contributed to significant financial concerns. The sector has needed to prioritize credit-challenged customers and proactively reach out with tailored programs to minimize bad debt exposure. The sector has also become very aware of its dependence on global suppliers, particularly in China and the United States – relationships have been strained throughout the pandemic.

Workforce management concerns are also top of mind, as the sector is actively working to reconfigure work spaces such as operating rooms and call centres to enable social distancing. There is also some concern for potential cybersecurity threats for those working remotely, as reliance on home Wi-Fi, VPN connections and cloud-based storage can put sensitive data at risk (e.g., personal information of customers).

#### *Desired Outcomes*

Given these concerns, the energy sector is requesting support from governments to ensure its financial stability, such as regulatory protections and predictable energy rates. Perhaps most importantly, the sector is requesting that an economic development-focused load growth strategy be considered as a key component of the provincial government’s recovery plans. Governments should also consider improving sponsorship for conferences (e.g., virtual conferences) to support trade associations that have lost revenues due to cancellations and provide learning and skills development opportunities for the sector.

Those consulted recognized that governments will face fiscal constraints through the recovery period and identified low-cost areas where governments can reduce burden and support the industry. For example, the City of Toronto could leverage its assets to provide lab spaces, streamline permit processes, and utilize transit and building infrastructure to promote best practices in energy efficiency. Governments could also make simple changes to reduce burden on the sector during this time – for example, while time-of-use rate changes have been beneficial for individual cash flow issues, the province requires a mandatory disclosure outlining savings on bills. Providing relief from such requirements would prevent the sector from having to undertake system modifications.

As the health and safety of employees is a top concern, clear and consistent messaging from all orders of government is critical. The sector has received conflicting information on protocols for the return to work from various orders of government and even different provincial ministries. Clear guidance on reopening, as well as safe and effective field and facility operations with

reduced resource availability, is needed. Adequate contact tracing – involving employees as well as members of the supply chain – will also be critical for staff to feel comfortable returning to work through the recovery period.

### Opportunities

While the energy sector is anticipating a decline in investment in the near-term and slower business than usual in the coming years, the sector sees significant opportunity to use this moment to address long-standing issues in energy. For example, a rate structure review was highlighted among those consulted as an opportunity to explore broader sector renewal.

The sector sees long-term opportunities to solve problems using local innovation. While de-globalization and protectionist measures have been challenging, the current period presents an opportunity to strengthen regional supply chains and champion local capabilities – such as Toronto's expertise in clean technology and community electrical power, and Ontario's growing energy-storage industry. Local companies can leverage anticipated infrastructure stimulus initiatives to lead in new and emerging technologies such as small modular reactors.

Those consulted emphasized the need to connect recovery efforts with other policy goals related to climate change, energy affordability and social equity. For example, mass building retrofits can be used to create jobs, stimulate the economy and reduce carbon footprints. Energy affordability issues, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, should be tied to decarbonization goals and electrification efforts. Diversity and inclusion requirements in procurement, such as those used in the U.S., are a significant opportunity to change behaviour and support diverse entrepreneurs. All orders of government should make these requirements more commonplace, and pair with training and capacity-building initiatives.

## Finance

The finance sector has been impacted by the overall global economic and market conditions that have resulted from both the pandemic and the collapse of oil prices this year. High unemployment rates and business insolvencies have raised concerns about the ability of financial institutions to find new business and maintain cash flow. While government support programs have been beneficial for individuals and businesses, they have had unintended consequences, such as displacing the sector in getting credit to businesses directly. There is also uncertainty around the longer-term implications of these programs (e.g. mortgage deferrals and the termination, withdrawal and/or claw-back of CERB funds). The impact on investment dealers has resulted in the shelving of many large-scale capital projects, and there is concern about the health of portfolio companies and the capacity to maintain and fortify the innovation ecosystem.

The sector has largely transitioned to digital transactions, although some still require in-person contact and paper certificates, which can put staff and clients at risk. While this digital shift is positive for efficiency and access (e.g. in remote communities), there are equity concerns to consider. Some customers may be unable to easily access financial services online (e.g. seniors, individuals with disabilities) and the sector is having difficulty reaching those groups. Furthermore, increased online presence may reduce the physical presence of financial service branches and create “banking deserts” across the city.

While the sector has smoothly transitioned to digital mechanisms, there are still concerns around remote work and returning to an office environment. Some are struggling with obtaining the technology required to support workers remotely (e.g. laptops, cloud-based solutions) and effective change management practices. The sector has acknowledged that the return to work for its employees depends entirely on the safe and reliable availability of childcare, and safe public transit options within the city and connecting to other regions.

Those consulted also expressed more specific concerns for their respective subsectors. For example, the insurance subsector – particularly property and casualty insurance – has raised concerns regarding potential lawsuits and liability claims, and the need to protect employers against frivolous lawsuits (e.g., those providing goods and services through the pandemic and those returning to work as the economy reopens). The financial technology (fintech) sector, which has an important presence in the Toronto region, has been left out of federal support mechanisms (e.g., as a distributor of funds) despite ongoing requests. Fintech has also experienced high levels of engagement on its platforms, although that trend has resulted in funds shifting away from innovation and toward ensuring platform stability.





### ***Desired Outcomes***

The sector is requesting support from governments to enable their continued digital transition – namely the legislative and regulatory changes required to eliminate the need for branch visits. The provincial changes to permit electronic beneficiaries was positive, although this must remain a permanent change and more needs to be done (e.g., unlike consumer cheques, business cheques cannot be deposited remotely). It will be important for this widespread digital transition to be accompanied by support from both the sector and governments to ensure digital financial literacy and access.

The sector is also requesting that financial support programs for individuals (e.g., CERB) and businesses (e.g., CEBA, CEWS) should be extended throughout the recovery period to avoid job losses and withdrawals. Support programs may be best extended through sliding scale or phased approaches but must be simple for businesses to access and understand. The federal government should include fintech firms in the distribution of funds and consider small business support as a longer-term solution, as repayment will be difficult if these programs are halted too quickly.

Measures that improve confidence in the return to work should be prioritized – including health and safety protocols on public transit, as well as streamlined and simplified access to PPE. Those consulted suggested that the City of Toronto assist businesses with sourcing masks for potentially hundreds of employees as the economy reopens.

Governments should pursue measures that improve overall confidence in the economy, such as tax measures to restore investor confidence and encourage participation in capital markets, as well as measures to induce demand. Jurisdictions that have largely recovered from the pandemic are still seeing depressed demand as consumers hesitate to spend their savings given the possibility of a resurgence of COVID-19.

### ***Opportunities***

The pressure resulting from the pandemic, and the rapid implementation of exemptions from industry regulators and policymakers, has contributed to the modernization of the sector and improved operational efficiency. There is an opportunity to continue this momentum of red tape reduction efforts towards positive change and innovation in the sector. For example, the roundtable suggested that there has historically been over-regulation that prevents the modern utilization of fraud-fighting tools, particularly in the privacy realm. The pandemic and tech-enabled solutions developed in response (e.g., for contact tracing) offer an opportunity to show how big data can be helpful while still maintaining privacy.

The shift to digital financial transactions can improve access to financial services, particularly for those living in remote and Indigenous communities. There may be opportunities to work with other sectors (e.g., telecommunications) and governments to invest in better digital connectivity moving forward, given that access to internet is becoming necessary to access financial, health and education services.

The ability for digital remote work will continue to benefit the sector by connecting and opening up dialogue with governments, eliminating the need for significant travel budgets for meetings, enabling a broader network of employees, and reducing the footprint required for office space.

## **Health**

Given its role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the health sector has experienced significant system pressures and rapid, widespread digital transformation. The sector has faced increased demand for care within a constrained resource environment, while needing to maintain the quality of care, service and experience for patients. In order to continue providing services while protecting the health of the public, hundreds of physicians have shifted to virtual care platforms since March 2020 – a process that would have previously taken decades happened in only a few months.

The health, safety and quality of life of workers was cited as a top concern of the sector, as many employees in health and social care are feeling frightened, burned out and sometimes demoralized. Healthcare professionals described having to work physically and virtually and having to conduct proactive outreach to marginalized patients who are unable to connect digitally or reach a hospital. Access to PPE for workers has been, and may continue to be, an ongoing issue, as shortages have led to the rationing of supplies, which puts workers at further risk.

The rapid shift to digital care has also resulted in virtual services being provided by workers receiving a fraction of their usual pay. The sector emphasized precarity in the sector that has been exposed through the pandemic, the need for more stable jobs, and the risk of rapid innovation occurring at the expense of workers. Those consulted highlighted the dichotomy between those who can safely work from home and frontline workers at risk – highlighting equity issues among marginalized workers and explicitly calling out the role of women's work in the sector.

Equity concerns were also expressed with respect to patients. The sector has experienced considerable frustration with the lack of transparency in data reporting and insufficient public information on outbreaks, such as those in congregate settings of vulnerable individuals. Those consulted urged governments to consider all



recovery planning through the lenses of health equity, anti-poverty and anti-racism.

The sector has also experienced frustration resulting from the fragmentation and lack of coordination among public health, acute care, long-term care and other areas of care, as well as lack of coordination across different orders of government.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

The sector is prioritizing the need for holistic system redesign that focuses on responsiveness, flexibility and equity. The learnings of the recent shift to virtual health care should be extended and integrated across other forms of care and service delivery. Those consulted highlighted the need for governments and organizations to work together to develop “social prescribing” initiatives (i.e., proactively using healthcare visits and rosters, including COVID-19 screening, to screen for and make connections to meet social needs such as housing, food and social isolation).

Innovation in health sciences is capital intensive, and there is a risk of capital starvation in a prolonged economic recovery. The sector is requesting financial and political commitment from governments to strengthen the sector as it recovers from the pandemic. The City should advocate to the provincial and federal governments on improvements, including:

- Addressing regulatory issues that negatively impact pharmaceutical investment, research and development, clinical trials, manufacturing, new drug launches and jobs (e.g. proposed changes to the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board);
- Providing financial support such as investment incentives, targeted funding and tax credits; and,
- Ensuring sustained access to capital, global and domestic markets and talent.

The sector is also requesting stronger alignment and collaboration among avenues of care, orders of government and public and private sectors. Those consulted highlighted this lack of coordination as a significant barrier to innovation moving forward – Canada has a large health system that spans from early ideation to discovery and implementation, but insufficient efforts for coordination, collaboration and prioritization. There is also a trust gap between public and private sectors that must be bridged to enable developments in health policy and innovation.

### ***Opportunities***

The sector sees significant opportunities in maintaining the momentum of rapid innovation and digitization to improve care and explore options for virtual as well as blended models of coordinated, patient-centric care. There is also an opportunity to improve the arcane and inaccessible data systems that are currently used and build new data tracking and feedback analytics for future decision-making.

The COVID-19 pandemic has initiated a renewed interest in science, innovation, and commercialization from governments as well as the public. This trend can drive investment, attract companies to stay and grow domestically, and attract talent as highly skilled workers see new career opportunities in health sciences. There is also an opportunity to expand local manufacturing capacity of pharmaceuticals and PPE to address critical needs domestically.

Those consulted also emphasized the policy window that has been opened by recent social movements and institutional responsiveness to injustice. There is an opportunity to reflect on power relationships and to take action on health equity – particularly in addressing racism, housing, occupational discrimination and poverty as social determinants of health.

## Innovation and Technology

The innovation and technology sector has been impacted by the overall market volatility and economic uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sector is concerned about prospects for short-term cash flow given reduced funding and financing opportunities, maintaining angel and venture capital investor interest, and whether there will be revenue for work in the coming months as funders are pivoting away from existing strategic investments to respond to the pandemic. Travel restrictions and border closures have also been difficult given the reduced access to global markets and international talent.

The sector is focused on adapting priorities and pivoting models in response to the pandemic, including finding ways to support customers while ensuring physical distancing, and supporting the health and well-being of employees (e.g., managing “Zoom fatigue”). Altering the physical work place has been a challenge, as the structural implications of physical distancing requirements have led to a rethinking of space, especially space for convening, collaborating and co-working. While the sector is tech-savvy and flexible, it also relies heavily on face-to-face interactions for designing, networking, negotiating and deal-making. While some companies have permanently shifted to digital work and service delivery, others are rejecting this notion and will be bringing staff back into the office when possible with the necessary precautions.

The sector emphasized the destabilizing impacts of mass unemployment, weakness in supply of food and PPE and the

disproportionate impact on marginalized individuals during this time who face systemic challenges. Those consulted also drew attention to social injustice – particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism in Toronto and across Canada – and highlighted the need for innovative solutions to include not just technology but also social innovation.

Concerns regarding the role of government have been raised, including their financial prudence, uncertainty about timing for support programs, and overall lack of consistency in their approaches and communications.

### *Desired Outcomes*

The sector is prioritizing the need to “build back better” and utilize technology, business models and social innovation to drive a clean and inclusive recovery rather than snapping back to business as usual. The sector has substantial knowledge and tools at its disposal to support governments as well as businesses across sectors in their recovery planning. The sector is requesting that governments strategically partner with technology and innovation companies and share stories and case studies of those harnessing innovation in the context of crisis and recovery to inspire others.

In order to address financial stability concerns, the innovation and technology sector is requesting that governments provide investment and support, such as:

- Investment in innovation infrastructure, including strategic data assets, futures/scenario planning, prototyping spaces and support, as well as establishment and support for hubs, incubators and accelerators;
- Local procurement efforts from both governments and industry, red tape reduction and accelerated adoption of innovation; and
- Supports to stabilize employment and unlock investment, funding and financing for Canadian start-ups.

The sector highlighted the specific role that the City of Toronto can play in encouraging pilots and trials, as well as in facilitating the use of trusted space to encourage participation for various technology and innovation events, meetings and trade shows. Sector leaders suggested that having events hosted in City-owned spaces, when possible, would add an element of trust around health and safety protocols. In collaboration with the federal and provincial governments, the City should also focus on talent development and transition training.

**Help small business pivot quickly to new opportunities. Many small businesses like restaurants will need help to change their way of doing business - not just short term financial support. The city must cut back on regulations that don't let businesses try new approaches.**

Comment from Consultation



The sector is also requesting that all orders of government prioritize the safety of the public in recovery plans, provide greater clarity and consistency in communications, as well as practical guidelines and clear priorities for reopening requirements, responsive timelines and sustainable resourcing.

### **Opportunities**

The sector sees significant opportunity to leverage its knowledge and expertise to support other sectors through this time of transition. For example:

- Improving the user experience and productivity for businesses shifting to remote work arrangements (e.g. software, applications) and providing free trials of technology to small and medium-sized businesses to begin integration into their business models;
- Connecting young innovative companies with local businesses in need of support through matchmaking programs;
- Sharing innovative tools such as strategic foresight planning and design; and
- Developing technology that enables seamless and touchless interactions necessary for reopening the economy before a vaccine is available (e.g., touchless hotel check-in).

The sector also sees positive benefits as remote work arrangements can provide new job opportunities for residents and help businesses attract international talent (e.g., someone can live in Toronto but work in Silicon Valley and vice versa). Furthermore, while many businesses had to lay off employees and halt recruitment during the pandemic, this period also presents an opportunity for senior leaders to rethink the makeup of their workforce and recruitment processes, which can result in positive changes for equity, diversity and inclusion.

Finally, the sector sees long-term opportunities to build back better and imagines that businesses that thrive in the future will be those that solve meaningful problems. Just as financial technology emerged in response to the 2008 financial crisis, innovations in health technology and education technology are likely to emerge in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, cleantech could experience further growth in response to the combination of the pandemic and the oil and gas crisis.

## **Infrastructure**

While the infrastructure sector has experienced some disruption arising from COVID-19, it is expected to recover quickly, particularly in comparison to other industries surveyed. Some of those consulted felt that construction activity had already return to pre-crisis levels. The sector's ability to rebound quickly is particularly important given the high likelihood of the federal and/or provincial governments introducing an infrastructure-based stimulus program. As a key vehicle for stimulus, the infrastructure sector will be engaged to deliver projects that support Toronto City Council's policy priorities, including transit, affordable housing, long-term care and green projects, among others.

When asked to consider pressing challenges and issues facing the sector, many roundtable participants looked ahead to the sector's ability to deliver major projects in the coming years. Ontario already has an ambitious schedule of large infrastructure projects to deliver over the next decade, and there is some question as to whether there is enough market capacity in the skilled trades to meet these aggressive timelines. If even more projects are introduced through a new stimulus program, it is not clear if there is enough skilled labour available to meet demand. The sector is also still processing the impact of new public health protocols on construction sites, such as potential project delays arising from the need for smaller crews, and productivity implications related to remote work and travel/border restrictions.

Roundtable participants were strongly in agreement that governments must continue to invest in infrastructure, and not to repeat mistakes of past decades by cutting back on infrastructure spending in the name of fiscal restraint. Pointing to Toronto's already significant infrastructure deficit, they argued that further cuts to infrastructure will have an impact on achieving city-building goals. They were concerned about the City's ability to bring new projects to market in light of COVID-related financial pressures.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

In the immediate term, the group called for the City to reinstate capacity for planning, building and permitting functions. Companies are reporting delays in receiving permits for new builds – an issue particularly impacting small firms. Looking ahead, there is a need to further expand capacity in these services to allow for streamlined approvals and to ensure efficient delivery of stimulus and other projects.

In considering how to work more effectively in partnership with the City, the roundtable identified the need for the City to adopt modernized and innovative procurement strategies to accelerate projects and reduce red tape. Examples of such strategies include:

- Considering use of integrated project delivery or alliance models to allow complicated projects to proceed as quickly as possible;
- Advancing use of retainers and vendors of record for more and larger projects;
- Leveraging progressive design-build methods to accelerate work in design process; and
- Exploring a potential program to give priority consideration to local companies to stimulate Toronto's economic recovery.

The group also identified the use of “Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Maintain” (DBFOM) models for infrastructure planning as a desired outcome. The use of DBFOM models moves beyond just construction to encompass a full life-cycle perspective on funding and asset management. Long-term DBFOM contracts can be used to lock in maintenance funding and protect infrastructure against changes in political priorities.

### ***Opportunities***

To meet the growing demand for skilled labour, the roundtable called for the City to help engage under-represented communities in the construction industry. The City has an opportunity to leverage future community benefits agreements for stimulus projects to recruit new workers from equity-seeking groups and enhance or create new skills development programs to improve representation in the sector. Participants noted that the skilled trades are well-suited to deliver new and expanded training programs, based on a track record of engaging youth and local communities in projects.

Participants were also in agreement that governments must give serious consideration to new strategies for raising funds for infrastructure and rebalance the roles of government and users/consumers of infrastructure. Many who commented felt that governments must look at user fees as legitimate and important



tools to invest in the infrastructure needed for future generations. Recognizing the political sensitivities related to user fees, the group discussed how to communicate the importance of new revenue tools to the public and talked about how to frame them as an option for building more and better infrastructure rather than a fee for paying for the use of infrastructure.

In addition, the group agreed that investing in digital infrastructure represents an important opportunity to improve Toronto's competitiveness in the digital economy. Digital infrastructure can advance issues that challenged the region during the pandemic, such as better data sharing. It can enable new ways to live and work, and it can improve equity by providing greater access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet access to enable workforce participation. Questions remain for the group about what the next phase of digital infrastructure will look like (e.g., fibre optics, 5G, or other new technologies), what Toronto's industries need in terms of bandwidth and speed, and whether the public or private sector would take the lead in building digital infrastructure.

## Large Retail, Grocery and E-Commerce

Large retailers, grocers and e-commerce providers are among those businesses that remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering in-demand products and essential services to the public. These businesses were some of the first to implement new public health protocols and adapt their business models to serve customers in new ways.

However, the roundtable participants found it very challenging to interpret and deliver the advice received from the various orders of government and Ontario's 35 different public health units. Many participants pointed to confusing, conflicting information, and a lack of clear guidelines for how to continue business safely. The use of masks was one such example – with no direction from the government to wear masks in public (prior to July), some retailers did not feel they had enough authority to make masks/face coverings a requirement for customers, even if they wanted to do so for the safety of staff and patrons. While more information became available to businesses as the pandemic continued, there remains a need for consistent, timely communication, and coordination of messaging across governments and public health units.

Large retailers also faced the challenge of pivoting their business models to adapt to public health restrictions. Changes were made to store layouts to enforce physical distancing, and capacity limits were enforced through lineups and appointment-based shopping. New ways of servicing customers were introduced, such as curbside pickup and dedicated shopping hours for older or vulnerable customers. Many retailers were also enabled by e-commerce platforms to expand their home-delivery options.

At the same time, large retailers, particularly grocers, struggled to meet high demand for products. Roundtable participants described how suppliers were stretched to deliver enough products, particularly those experiencing huge year-over-year growth in demand, such as for pasta, dry goods and toilet paper. Some grocers reduced their hours of operation to give staff enough time to re-stock shelves. While some larger retailers noted cash-flow challenges, the group agreed that liquidity issues were not as great a concern as for smaller businesses.



### *Desired Outcomes*

As the state of emergency continues, and in preparation for a possible resurgence of COVID-19, there is a need for consistent, coordinated and well-communicated standards for retail operations. A clear plan for retailers, developed and led by government, needs to be supported by wide-reaching public communications to help to develop a shared understanding of safety standards. Standards should also be reinforced through widespread access to PPE, testing and contact tracing.

The group also emphasized the importance of restoring consumer and investor confidence in retail. Participants said business leaders and governments alike have an important role to play in reassuring the public that shopping is safe, and for helping retailers provide a range of options for customers to access products, including curbside pickup, home delivery or in-store shopping.

### *Opportunities*

The roundtable was in agreement that the pandemic has accelerated consumer trends in retail and has created significant opportunity for growth and innovation in e-commerce and the retail experience. While it is not yet clear what form this innovation will take, some potential opportunities could include:

- Diversification of retail offerings to include services (e.g. furniture store diversifying to offer interior design advice): More retailers could expand into offering workshops, DIY sessions and other value-added experiences and partnerships to attract customers.
- Continued growth of e-commerce: Many observers anticipate that retailers of all sizes will continue to invest in new digital shopping platforms, which the roundtable group largely saw as being complementary to the in-store experience.
- New store formats: Many retailers are expected to adapt store formats to match consumer behaviour in the new normal, whatever that may be. Some retailers may refocus their in-person locations to be more convenience-focused, with “grab-and-go” style services. The group also considered how growth in e-commerce could impact store format, with some suggesting that large retailers may consider smaller spaces in the future.
- Retailers as social innovators: Temporary changes undertaken by large retailers, including dedicated shopping hours for vulnerable populations and pay increases for front-line workers, have been impactful for businesses and consumers, and would have a positive equity impact if made permanent.



Roundtable participants also called for increased protection of workers during the recovery period and in the post-pandemic economy. Retail employees have been considered front line workers during the pandemic. As the economy reopens, the group called for governments to take concrete action to protect the health and economic security of workers. They also recognized the risk of an expansion of precarious work and cautioned against the potential of technological innovations and automation exacerbating issues of inequality in Toronto. Some argued for City Council to demonstrate leadership by enacting a living wage bylaw in recognition of the high cost of living in Toronto and to help address low wages in the retail sector.

## Main Street Business

Small businesses located on Toronto's main streets are faced with a set of challenges and opportunities that differ from those of larger retailers. Smaller main street businesses are facing considerable liquidity challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Many have a significantly reduced cash flow and shrinking profit margin, and are unable to pay rent costs. Few have the capital needed to make required upgrades to meet new public health standards, such as store retrofits. Main street businesses are also struggling with competing demands. Some roundtable participants commented

that certain businesses have been slow to pivot and adapt to changing circumstances during the crisis. Others have noted that it is difficult for owners of small businesses to apply for government supports while at the same time trying to run or restart regular operations.

One challenge shared with larger retailers is adapting to safety requirements. Many participants noted a lack of consistent guidance related to reopening requirements, and they looked for greater clarity on timelines and for specific information on changes that need to be made for reopening. The ability to bring staff and customers back to main streets safely is top-of-mind for many small businesses. Main street businesses are looking to acquire PPE and make changes to their store layouts such as providing new queuing space – all of which comes at a cost.

At the same time, roundtable participants expressed confidence in the future of Toronto's main streets. While they agreed that some small businesses will inevitably not survive this crisis, they believed that new entrepreneurs will emerge to fill the city with new ideas and energy. The group also believes that renewed public interest in shopping locally will persist in the future, creating new opportunities for business growth and vibrancy in neighbourhoods across Toronto.



### ***Desired Outcomes***

The roundtable agreed on one clear, immediate need: main street businesses need a commercial rent relief program that works for tenants. They noted that the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (OCECRA) program has had a low uptake and is not benefiting main street businesses in the way it was intended. Rent is expected to remain a challenge for small business during the recovery period as reduced cash flows continue.

Roundtable participants were encouraged by the City's quick and innovative efforts to support small business during the pandemic and hope to continue to work collaboratively with the City as a strategic partner. Examples of further City support requested by the group include:

- Review City processes with a “small business first” lens to reduce barriers for local entrepreneurs, non-profits and social entrepreneurs (e.g. using online portals and new tools such as pop-up business licences and BIA business training programs).
- Reduce regulatory requirements and licence fees as a key element of this initiative. There was a particular interest in the rapid rollout of a patio extension program to take advantage of the summer season.
- Make public realm improvements to support main street businesses.
- Improve interdivisional collaboration within City government to coordinate and deliver new support programs.
- Coordinate construction schedules to avoid conflicting with recovery programs such as CurbTO and CaféTO.
- Provide support for collective marketing of main streets to encourage local shopping
- Maintain and enhance the City's advisory support for main street businesses by taking an active role in filling gaps in expertise and services.

Those consulted also suggested that reforming the commercial property tax system could help main street businesses. Examples of reforms include creating a comprehensive, long-term rate-capping strategy and establishing additional municipal tax bands for commercial properties.

### ***Opportunities***

Despite the significant challenges facing small business owners, the roundtable saw the growing spotlight on main street businesses as a pivotal opportunity coming out of the crisis. They said businesses should take advantage of the strong consumer interest in supporting main streets, and the expected trend of hyper-local shopping to continue beyond the pandemic. This evolution will be further supported by the shifting nature of work – with more workers operating remotely from their homes, there will be new economic opportunities for local main streets, with workers patronizing community businesses more frequently and at different times. This is also an opportunity for main streets to be recognized for their personalized service. Main streets can revive with “personal connection” as a competitive advantage.

Building on the success of the expanded Digital Main Street program, the group noted an opportunity for greater focus on digital capacity building/online platforms for main street entrepreneurs. The group did not see e-commerce as being a major threat to bricks-and-mortar main street businesses – rather, like the large retail group, they considered it to be complementary to the in-store experience. Digital business is becoming an opportunity for entrepreneurs to test ideas before investing in physical space. They also emphasized the importance of main street businesses adopting technology that is on par with large franchises (e.g. digital platforms, bookings, touchless technology, etc.).

Many participants said there is a need to work to achieve a convergence of interest between tenants and property owners on the health of main street business, with governments and business leaders encouraging and incentivizing greater cooperation between landlords and tenants. The current recovery period presents an opportunity to redesign leases that better reflect the role/service of business, such as having rents expressed as a percentage of sales, or based on the capacity of what can be earned. Any softening of rents, which currently stand as one of the sector's top expenses, will support the long-term sustainability of small business.

The group also said it approaches the recovery period as an opportunity to rethink the sustainability of small business models. Some called for action to address issues of low wages and equity for workers. Others advocated exploring new financing methods for small businesses, including cooperative models and credit unions.





## Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector in Toronto has experienced variable impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some facilities were required to close and are preparing to reopen alongside other sectors of the economy. Others have maintained or ramped up their operations as essential service providers since March 2020 – as many manufacturers rapidly retooled their facilities to produce PPE. Given high rates of unemployment and overall economic uncertainty, there is a lack of demand for some products and it is particularly difficult to forecast future trends. Declining demand for automotive vehicles, for example, has already hit the market, and there is concern that trend may eventually extend into the demand for other products as government support programs end. As a result, many businesses are reluctant to invest in new equipment or facility expansions.



The sector has become acutely aware of its reliance on global supply chains – particularly suppliers in China and in the United States, where there is significant cross-border work. Canada-U.S. border closures and travel restrictions have also negatively affected recruitment and professional expertise, as some talent cannot be sourced locally.

Managing staff and adapting workspaces have been significant challenges. Employees who are required to be physically present in the workplace (e.g., to operate equipment) must follow strict

health and safety standards adopted from factories in China that experienced the virus before Canada, a change that has posed challenges for efficiency and productivity. Those who are not required to be physically present in the workplace (e.g. purchasers, engineers) have shifted to remote work, and while that was initially positive, some businesses are beginning to see declining performance.

Access to PPE for workers is an ongoing issue. Many workers in the sector used PPE for their daily tasks prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. While most are currently comfortable with their stock of PPE, the sector has experienced some price gouging (particularly for gloves and masks) and is concerned about the impact of a second wave of COVID-19.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

The manufacturing sector is currently prioritizing efforts to reorganize and localize supply chains, including the acceleration of digitization and use of data analytics to synchronize tiers across supply chains. The sector has requested that governments support the connection of Canadian supply chains by better connecting businesses and increasing awareness of, and cataloguing, what others are doing across the country. Those consulted provided examples of companies sending products overseas (e.g., for processing, treatment) as they were unaware of local examples/capabilities.

The sector is interested in seeing an overall reopening of the economy (and borders), and has urged governments to resume pre-pandemic operations and staffing levels. For example, those consulted in Toronto have experienced delays with the City of Toronto's permitting and application processes that have held up projects. To assist with this challenge, the sector has suggested that the City explore appointing registered professionals with sign-off authority to keep projects moving, similar to the approach taken by the City of Vancouver.

Those consulted noted that it has been a long time since any level of government has developed a manufacturing strategy. The sector identified the role that the City of Toronto can play in bringing attention to the need for manufacturing as a driver of economic growth, the ongoing lack of skilled trade workers and existing, burdensome regulations that have exacerbated challenges throughout the pandemic. Examples involving the public sector include rethinking regulations that tend to hinder competitiveness and increase the costs of doing business (e.g., global adjustment charges, tax measures, federal plans for carbon pricing and declaring plastics toxic). Participants said affordable energy for industrial users will be critical for the sector's recovery.



## Opportunities

The sector sees opportunity in addressing existing issues in manufacturing as part of recovery planning efforts. While there is recognition that some production cannot occur locally, there are significant long-term benefits of “re-shoring” and “multi-shoring” the supply chain. Bringing manufacturing back to Canada can create new job opportunities and ensure adequate local supply of PPE and other necessary materials. There is also opportunity for local companies to lead in the development of new technologies that will thrive in post-pandemic markets.

There is a significant opportunity to get youth interested in the trades again, addressing critical long-standing labour shortages in the sector. Governments, academia and the manufacturing sector can work together and use this opportunity to provide exposure and hands-on, practical experience to youth (e.g., bring back shop classes in secondary education and make manufacturing courses part of engineering degree programs); showcase advanced high-tech manufacturing and robotics (e.g., through career expos); improve apprenticeship programs to ensure they are an accessible and reliable option for students to pursue; and bring back technical institutes over the long term.



## Post-Secondary Education

Financial stability is a top concern for the post-secondary education (PSE) sector as institutions are experiencing revenue losses from declining student enrollment – particularly from international students as a result of border closures and travel restrictions as well as from deferrals (i.e., not returning to school until 2021-2022), and lower course volumes (i.e., students taking fewer courses each semester). Institutions are also facing increased costs, such as those resulting from the accelerated investment in virtual learning, and future costs associated with providing quarantine support for students when campus reopens. As a result, institutions have had to consider layoffs and non-renewal of contracts as faculty salaries make up a large part (as much as 80 per cent) of expenditures.

Broader economic impacts in Canada are exacerbating financial concerns for PSE institutions as well as students. Fundraising is difficult as investors are seeing their portfolios take a hit, and some are shifting donations elsewhere (e.g., to hospitals). Similarly, availability of funding for applied research and commercialization resources are vulnerable as industry funders are under strain. Availability of work-integrated learning opportunities will also be impacted by business closures in other sectors (e.g., the hospitality industry), which will limit opportunities for deeper learning and the ability for students to transition to full-time employment.

Financial support for students is a major challenge. Student financial hardship will be exacerbated by the lack of part-time and summer job opportunities. Institutions are looking internally at their budgets to find options for student support and are seeking industry donors, with an emphasis on student bursaries, given the uncertain environment.

The transition to online learning has posed challenges, such as the rapid response that was required, concerns about quality, support for students and faculty, and questions around assessments and examinations. In some cases, PSE institutions have needed to recruit from overseas because Canada does not have the necessary skills in education technology. Furthermore, some fields (e.g., engineering and science) are particularly difficult to move online. As a result, “stranded students” are unable to graduate due to laboratory work and other course requirements that cannot be completed – some of which are in critical areas of need, such as healthcare. There is also a lack of clarity around the return to campus, and limited information on what will be required of institutions (e.g., operating standards in laboratories).

### ***Desired Outcomes***

The PSE sector is requesting support from governments to directly address institutions' financial concerns. For example, suspending the provincial International Student Recovery Fee – either temporarily or permanently – could help offset increased costs. Decoupling funding from Strategic Mandate Agreements with the Province of Ontario or eliminating metrics, which would be significantly impacted by challenges in the labour market (e.g., graduation rates), would also contribute to the financial health of institutions. Those consulted highlighted that the challenges they are currently facing will have longer-term impacts over the next four or five years regardless of the status of the pandemic and recovery.



The sector is also requesting that governments prioritize support for students in the following ways:

- Provide additional financial aid for students (e.g., OSAP enhancement, extension of the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit).
- Ensure flexibility and remove barriers for international students (e.g., make federal changes to ease border restrictions, allow students to begin courses online and count time towards a work-study permit, and collect biometric information at entry as it is difficult to obtain in some countries, such as India and Brazil).
- Support industries hardest hit by the pandemic that are key employers for new graduates; and provide work-integrated learning opportunities for students (e.g., financial incentives for businesses to undertake work-integrated learning, including offering new incentives as well as enhancements to existing programs such as Ontario's Career Ready Fund).

This sector also needs support from governments to assist it with the shift to digital learning and new campus experiences, such as investment, tools and resources for course virtualization and development of blended/hybrid experiential learning, as well as ways to holistically support and engage students – particularly given loss of gathering places, clubs, teams and extracurricular activities. Those consulted also highlighted the need for clarity around return to campus and reconsideration from governments on whether social distancing measures are necessary in research facilities that already operate with significant regulations and PPE requirements.

### ***Opportunities***

The PSE sector sees an opportunity to rethink and transform the education system. Institutions have an opportunity to deconstruct the transcript, rethink the three-hour credit rule, develop new approaches to competency testing, work with industry to co-design curriculum for labour and research needs, and shift toward blended learning options that focus on education as well as skills development.

Rapid adoption of technology and new feedback loops offer an opportunity to continuously improve the quality of online teaching and learning. The ability to operate in a remote environment also offers an opportunity to rethink what is most important on campus (e.g., support service delivery). Institutions are redefining student engagement and paying greater attention to equity, diversity and inclusion.

There are opportunities for the PSE to collaborate with other sectors, such as the hotel industry, to provide quarantine space for international students and add spaces to enable social distancing in campus residences. Changes in the labour market resulting from the pandemic will also create demand for new learning opportunities from businesses looking to retrain and “upskill” their employees.

There is an opportunity to brand Toronto's PSE institutions as premier destinations for domestic and international students to get a high-quality education while remaining safe during the pandemic and recovery period (it was noted that Ontario provides health care for students). Institutions and governments should consider creating information packages and pursuing communications efforts to this end.

## Travel and Tourism

The travel and tourism sector, one of the hardest hit segments of Toronto's economy, faces a long, uncertain path to recovery.

Cash flow and liquidity is a pressing challenge across the sector. Many businesses in the sector have an immediate need for working capital and have relied on emergency government subsidies to avoid closures during the crisis. Even as businesses are permitted to reopen, most will operate at a reduced capacity, making it difficult to cover expenses.

As the sector begins to look to a recovery period, there is a growing realization that some travel and tourism businesses will not survive beyond this crisis. While roundtable participants were confident that travel and tourism will eventually rebound to pre-COVID levels, exactly when, how and in what form recovery will take place remains uncertain.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

Recognizing these challenges, roundtable participants have called for enhanced financial support from all orders of government to sustain the travel and tourism industry and to position it for recovery. That includes:

- Improvements to commercial rent relief, such as stronger incentives for landlords to apply and/or allowing tenants to apply, an extension of existing supports, and continued support after the provincial moratorium on commercial evictions is lifted;
- Extension of successful programs such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to support tourism and hospitality workers and businesses through a gradual recovery; and
- Dedicated financial support for tourism marketing, and a focus on domestic tourism growth in the near term, including Toronto-based promotions.

In addition to extended financial incentives, governments should take a leadership role in facilitating the reopening of the sector through clear operating protocols and accelerated approvals for recovery initiatives such as patio extensions. Many of those consulted cited the need for ongoing communications with business and the public on reopening guidelines and protocols. As the recovery period continues, businesses need to receive timely, clear direction on new operating expectations. Businesses consulted also emphasized the importance of harmonizing Toronto's reopening guidelines with those of Ontario's 34 other local public health authorities to avoid inefficiencies and confusion.

Above all, roundtable participants emphasized that the most desirable outcome for recovery is a lifting of restrictions on travel and mass gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so. Businesses in the travel and tourism sector cannot return to their full operating capacity until restrictions have been fully lifted, and consumer confidence will remain low until governments signal that travel is once again safe.

### ***Opportunities***

Looking ahead, tourism leaders are considering how to innovate and adapt the visitor experience at attractions and events. In the coming years, roundtable participants anticipate that the industry will shift to deliver blended events and experiences both in-person and digitally. The use of online platforms and technologies such as augmented reality (AR) or virtual reality (VR) have the potential to engage new audiences and allow for tiered participation at different price points. Exploring new digital event experiences takes on a heightened importance as the in-person experience is expected to be slow to recover, even as capacity restrictions are gradually lifted. Questions remain about how to engage audiences virtually for what is traditionally an in-person experience; how to work with sponsors to build meaningful marketing activations in the digital sphere; and how to adapt the business model for events and attractions to be sustainable in a digital world. Some of those consulted also questioned the affordability of new technological innovations, particularly as the sector continues to face cash flow and liquidity challenges arising from the COVID-19 crisis.

The recovery period presents an opportunity to revitalize public spaces across the city. The roundtable called for public spaces to be reframed as community hubs that can be used to showcase and highlight festivals, events, artisans and public art. Revitalized, people-focused spaces can foster a sense of pride and place among Torontonians and encourage them to travel and discover neighbourhoods across their city.

Rebuilding the travel and tourism sector can also include a focus on becoming more inclusive of Toronto's cultural diversity. Roundtable participants expressed the view that today is a unique time to support businesses in the sector led by equity-seeking communities, such as Indigenous-led tourism experiences. The group also pointed to the creation of a new, dedicated cultural diversity coordinator position as part of the Culinary Tourism Alliance working to engage and empower diverse businesses.



## Black Professionals and Business Owners

While Toronto's Black professionals and business owners expressed many of the concerns that are common across industries, they are also experiencing unique challenges. Those consulted highlighted issues with government restrictions placed on businesses, reduced capacity for government services, and a lack of revenue from products, programs and services, which has resulted in financial concerns. Businesses are focused on supporting their staff and transitioning to remote work arrangements, which can involve significant capital costs. The digital shift has made it challenging to promote business and network virtually, as well as provide community outreach and support, as the internet access required to participate is not always readily available to community members.

Black professionals and business owners also face systemic barriers and are experiencing an exacerbation of historic inequities as a result of the pandemic. Those consulted highlighted the lack of access to economic opportunities, including financial support and access to capital, major supply chains and procurement opportunities. Financial institutions that compare the credit score of a Black business owner to a white businesses owner benefiting from generational wealth is problematic, and difficulties accessing loan programs (e.g., BDC) can result in borrowing from higher risk institutions. The pandemic has also exacerbated community concerns related to food security, family and child welfare, and access to safe and equitable emergency services (the latter specifically in the context of law enforcement).

Black professionals and business owners are requesting that governments provide financial support and capacity-building opportunities that are truly accessible and explore options such as Black credit unions, rent-to-own properties and adjusted credit scores to address inequities. Broader access to, and awareness of, tendering opportunities, as well as greater transparency in procurement, should be prioritized. The City of Toronto specifically should look at its procurement process to identify barriers and ensure that its sponsorships and programs are applying equity and inclusion lenses. Those consulted also emphasized the importance of language considerations and communications through the recovery period, correcting inaccurate narratives about Black businesses and ensuring that all businesses are communicated with as equal players.

The exacerbation of inequities caused by the pandemic has resulted in a renewed awareness of anti-Black racism, race-based violence and discrimination. Those consulted highlighted the long-term opportunities that this awareness presents, such as greater inclusion of Black constituents on City boards, deeper investment in Black neighbourhoods, expanded diversity and inclusion training of service providers, ongoing collection of race-based data to support decision-making, and a rethinking of models of community and social support.





## Indigenous Business Roundtable

Participants in the Indigenous business roundtable reported experiencing many of the same challenges identified by other businesses during the Toronto Region Board of Trade consultations. Indigenous-led small businesses and sole proprietorships, for example, were deeply concerned about meeting cash flow requirements (following an abrupt drop in revenues) and covering fixed costs such as rent. Participants described relying on government benefit programs to avoid closure during the crisis – though some were initially not eligible (such as businesses operated directly by a First Nation, as they were considered a government operation rather than an independent business – a situation that has since been resolved, thanks to community advocacy).

Indigenous-led businesses also demonstrated resilience and innovativeness by rapidly pivoting their business models in response to the developing crisis. For example, one participant who operates a special event staffing agency described how she shifted focus to providing temporary staff for frontline and essential services, while another participant, who provides advisory services for Indigenous entrepreneurs, spoke about how clients quickly launched new product lines during the pandemic. In addition, participants representing technology businesses saw a continued, and in some cases increased, demand for their products – albeit with some challenges linked to the loss of in-person sales and networking.

Participants shared the view that the City and other governments can better support Indigenous businesses during the recovery period by making procurement opportunities more accessible. They noted that Indigenous businesses can “get lost” in social procurement programs and should be approached distinctly from businesses operated by equity-seeking groups. There was strong interest in breaking down barriers to securing government contracts by reducing red tape in the purchasing process and

creating opportunities to build trust with government, as well as to raise awareness of the services and talent offered by Indigenous businesses.

Other requests for support and collaboration included:

- Regular engagement between the City and Indigenous business community;
- Continued and enhanced business funding during the recovery period (e.g., rent relief, wage subsidies, etc.), combined with broader social supports (e.g., continued protection for residential tenants, student loan relief, etc.);
- Recognition of and support for non-Western business models, such as Elders’ services; and
- Creation of opportunities for Indigenous-led businesses to develop solutions to social issues such as food security, climate change and community safety.

## Business Snapshot A: Sectors

### Travel and Tourism

Tourism Toronto reported in 2019 that 27.5 million people visit Toronto and spend more than \$6.5 billion in the city each year, directly generating 50,270 jobs and supporting an additional 69,950 jobs. The travel and tourism workforce is primarily female, young, new immigrants, people of colour and people with lower levels of education.

### Energy

The current health crisis has provided an opportunity to better understand the impact of a partial city shutdown on the energy sector. The clean-energy sector employs about 8,400 people in Toronto. The most recent statistics available indicate that electric power generation, transmission and distribution employed 3,580 people full-time in May 2020 compared to 5,850 in January 2020.

## Innovation and Technology

Toronto is the largest technology hub in Canada and the third largest in North America. More than 400,000 people are employed in the technology sector in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, accounting for 15 per cent of all jobs in the region. The Toronto CMA is home to at least 15,000 technology firms, including major international companies such as Google, Facebook, IBM, Cisco Systems Canada, Symantec, AutoDesk and Microsoft Canada.

## Main Street Business

Independent retail businesses (defined as having one to three locations in Canada) have long been a fixture of Toronto's main streets and a significant driver of economic activity. The independent retail sector includes a broad range of retail businesses, including "traditional" retail such as clothing stores, home furnishing stores, general merchandise stores and grocery stores, along with consumer services stores such as hair salons and dry cleaners. Retail makes up 3.9 per cent of the total GDP for Toronto and close to 650,000 or 42 per cent of total jobs in Toronto (full-time and part-time) are provided by independent retail and consumer services businesses.

## Large Retail, Grocery and E-Commerce

As stated above, retail makes up 3.9 per cent of the total GDP for Toronto, with about 9,800 establishments (as of December 2019, Canadian Business Counts survey, Statistics Canada). Of these establishments, 441 had between 50 and 99 employees, 186 had between 100 and 199 employees and six had 500 or more employees. Retail establishments with large employee counts (50+) tend to fall into the following categories: furniture, grocery, clothing and department stores. According to the same survey, there were 568 grocery stores and 270 electronic and mail-order houses in Toronto as of December 2019. Food and beverage stores (any size) employed nearly 28,000 people in June 2020 compared to more than 32,000 people in January 2020 (LFS, Statistics Canada).

## Financial Services

Over the last 10 years, employment in Toronto's financial services sector grew at the fifth-highest rate in the world. As of June 2019, Toronto had 24,525 businesses in the finance and insurance sector, the majority (82 per cent) in securities, commodity contracts and other financial investment and related activities. The financial services sector is the third-largest private sector employer in Toronto. In 2018, the sector employed 114,950 people (294,500 across the GTA), accounting for approximately nine per cent of the city's total employment.

## Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector plays a vital role in making Toronto the economic engine of Canada. Ontario accounts for almost half of Canada's manufacturing output, with many large, medium and small facilities located in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. In 2018, manufacturing employed 120,540 Toronto residents (341,220 across the GTA). Manufacturing typically employs ethnically diverse, equity-seeking groups including recent immigrants to Canada. Manufacturing in Toronto is concentrated in Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough, in the vicinity of a significant number of City-designated Priority Neighbourhoods.

## Infrastructure

Employment in Toronto's infrastructure sector is broken into the following two components for the purpose of this report: utilities and construction. Employment in utilities grew from almost 6,000 jobs in January 2020 to more than 7,000 in June 2020. That growth could be attributed to the survey sample used in June, when an increase in employment was observed in "water, sewage and other systems". Employment in construction contracted from about 97,000 jobs in January 2020 to just over 72,000 in June 2020. That decrease was likely driven by a slowdown in work done by specialty trade contractors (48,000 in January to 23,000 in June 2020) (LFS, Statistics Canada).

## Health/Life Sciences

Toronto is one of the top cities in North America for the human health sciences, combining research, clinical and business expertise to deliver new diagnostics and therapies. There are more than 6,000 companies employing a total of more than 90,000 individuals in Toronto and supporting over 100,000 jobs indirectly. The sector represents more than \$56 billion in annual revenues, with \$27 billion in direct GDP contributions and about \$30 billion in indirect contributions.

## Post-Secondary Institutions

The education sector is one of the city's largest employers, with 1,400 educational establishments and related businesses, and more than 100,000 employees. Toronto is home to four publicly funded universities, one private university and four publicly funded colleges.



## Business Snapshot B – Jurisdictional Examples

## CANADIAN CITIES

Area(s)	Initiative
<b>Business supports, climate change</b>	The City of Edmonton is launching several environmental rebates and tools focusing on environmental upgrades over the summer (2020) to stimulate the economy, including the Building Retrofit Accelerator rebate program that facilitates renovations to improve energy efficiency in commercial and institutional buildings.
<b>Business supports</b>	The City of Montreal is providing grants to non-profit organizations that can assist local business with issues pertaining to supply, administrative support, people management, sales systems or other areas.
<b>Business support, street design</b>	The Cities of Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Kitchener, Waterloo, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, and Moncton, among other cities, have all recently extended their cycling networks or established "slow streets". Many cities are also working with businesses to expand patio space, convert parking lots and create curbside retail opportunities.
<b>Business supports</b>	As part of its Economic Resiliency Action Plan, the Town of Newmarket launched an innovative Mentorship Access Program to help businesses adapt during and after COVID-19.
<b>Business supports</b>	Quebec City introduced pre-paid \$20, \$50 or \$100 packages to spend at local stores. One hundred packages at \$100 were available, 500 packages at \$50 and 4,000 packages at \$20. The packages are worth more in-store than the face value amount.
<b>Job creation, housing</b>	The City of Vancouver is seeking to fast track housing projects in light of the impact of COVID-19. Changes to the review and approval process for affordable and rental residential development applications would prioritize the recovery of the housing market and create jobs through new construction. The first stage of the plan focuses largely on homelessness prevention and the second stage, lasting until December 2020, aims to fast-track affordable housing applications already received by the City.
<b>Business supports, community supports</b>	The City of Victoria increased funding for the Strategic Plan Grants Program to encourage the community to bring forward creative project proposals with a specific focus on recovery.
<b>Business supports, community supports</b>	The City of Victoria's parks staff are temporarily using the Beacon Hill Park nursery to grow vegetable and herb seedlings in communities (opportunities exist for business integration).
<b>Business supports</b>	The City of Victoria created an online toolkit with signage and floor markers for businesses.

## Business Snapshot B – Jurisdictional Examples

## INTERNATIONAL CITIES

Area(s)	Initiative
<b>Business supports</b>	The London Growth Hub has launched a new portal to support London-based businesses and employers manage amidst recovery efforts. One-hour phone or video calls can be arranged with an advisor to discuss impact on business.
<b>Business supports</b>	The City of Los Angeles temporarily capped the fees charged by delivery app companies to no more than 15 per cent of the cost of the order. This does not address the fees food delivery apps charge consumers. It only affects the fees these apps charge restaurants on the backend. Several other U.S. cities including San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Washington D.C. and Jersey City have passed similar orders.
<b>Business supports</b>	In an effort to provide Seattle restaurants, cafés and breweries with a way to communicate to residents, that city's information technology department launched a mapping application built with geographic information system (GIS) technology. Business owners can use a simple survey form to populate the interactive online map with their information.
<b>Business supports, economic recovery</b>	Bristol has released a document on the impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic-owned businesses in the city.
<b>Business supports, economic strategy</b>	The City of Amsterdam became the first municipality in the world to publish a City Doughnut, with a vision to transition Amsterdam into a circular city.
<b>Business supports, entrepreneur supports</b>	The City of Amsterdam launched its own governmental accelerator: Startup in Residence. As part of the Technology Office, program start-ups will devise creative and viable solutions to confront urban and social challenges.
<b>Business supports, mobility</b>	The City of Tel Aviv converted 11 popular streets into pedestrian zones to encourage local economic activity and increase local mobility.
<b>Business supports, public health</b>	Kigali banks, shops, restaurants and bars have all been equipped with portable wash sinks and customers seem keen to use them (could be especially applicable to outdoor sites and multi-use areas)
<b>Data, digital safety</b>	The City of Amsterdam established a "Technology Office" to protect digital rights, monitor the stability and resilience of internet throughout the city, map risks in the city's supply chain, and monitor the impact of cyber/digital safety.
<b>Economic Recovery</b>	Salt Lake City falls under Utah's colour-coded recovery plan and currently remains at orange. The simple graphic and colour system makes progress easy for people and businesses to understand at a glance.

continued

chart continued: International Cities

Area(s)	Initiative
<b>Labour, business supports</b>	The City of Los Angeles Regional COVID-19 Recovery Fund started accepting applications for \$5,000 and \$15,000 grants from eligible small businesses, non-profits and micro-entrepreneurs that operate in Los Angeles County and meet the eligibility criteria. Funding of \$3 million is available in grants. The fund will also deploy flexible loans and micro-loans to micro-entrepreneurs, small businesses and non-profits.
<b>Labour, public health</b>	The City of Amsterdam public transit employees have been redeployed to take phone calls from members of the public who are experiencing loneliness.
<b>Labour, public health</b>	The City of Amsterdam provides free parking spaces for healthcare workers, with the risk of infection less in a car than on public transit. Almost 4,700 parking licences have been granted so far.
<b>Mobility, business supports</b>	The City of Bogota quickly created 76 km of temporary "emergency" bike lanes on main streets in place of car lanes, adding to the approximately 550 km of existing permanent lanes. Those new bike lanes have since been made permanent.
<b>Mobility, public health</b>	The City of Boston's MBTA transit riders can find real-time crowding information for Routes 1, 15, 16, 22, 23, 31, 32, 109, and 110.
<b>Mobility, public health</b>	The Société de transport de Laval (STL) has launched an online tool to help commuters get an idea how crowded their buses will be. The tool will provide real-time updates throughout the ride.
<b>Public health, business supports, community supports</b>	The City of Milan has released an Adaptation Strategy for "Phase 2" of that city's reopening, which includes the consideration that there may be future phases of containment or lockdown. The actions outlined in the strategy can be used for any "post-lockdown" and "new normal" containment phases moving forward.
<b>Public health, labour</b>	The City of Barcelona's municipal offices prioritized the delivery of personal protective equipment. Barcelona has invested in protective materials for employees working at the service desks and bought 600,000 face masks, 5,000 overalls, 12,000 glasses and 9,600 items for protecting eyes and mouth.
<b>Public space, business support</b>	The City of Glasgow's Spaces for People program provides additional space for physical distancing in public. It will help to ensure there is sufficient space for businesses and their customers, and will facilitate commuting options for workers.
<b>Public space, mobility, business supports</b>	The City of San Francisco announced the Shared Spaces Program designed to support neighborhoods by providing additional public space to support local business activities.
<b>Public transit, mobility, labour, economic recovery</b>	The City of Seattle's Mayor Jenny Durkan put forward legislation for a Seattle Transportation Benefit District that would maintain a 0.1 per cent sales tax to fund essential transit services, capital projects and transit access programs. The SBBDD fund has five goals, including safe and efficient transit for all.
<b>Public transit, public health, mobility</b>	Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona is piloting the "RESPIRA" ventilation system on Barcelona's metro network. The AI platform reads the temperature, humidity, air quality and electricity consumption in real time and adjusts to regulate temperature and energy consumption in stations.

continued



*chart continued: International Cities*

Area(s)	Initiative
<b>Social supports, business supports</b>	The City of Amsterdam's initiative "Everybody connected" distributes refurbished laptops and provides internet connectivity to the elderly and others who lack access.
<b>Social supports, business supports</b>	Approximately 40,000 volunteers have signed up for the Buenos Aires "Mayores Cuidados" program, which provides care and assistance for older people living alone, including food, retail and medicine purchases.
<b>Social supports, business supports</b>	The City of Cambridge partnered with local businesses to feed the homeless. With many shelters short staffed, the city has contracted local restaurants to provide bagged or boxed meals for lunch and dinner for shelters and programs that need meals.
<b>Street design, business supports, community supports</b>	The City of Oakland introduced a "slow streets" approach, but uniquely targeted "Essential Places", where temporary traffic safety improvements will be installed to enable safer access to local essential services such as grocery stores, social services and COVID-19 test sites. The city has identified a High Injury Network, given that just six per cent of city streets account for more than 60 per cent of severe and fatal traffic crashes.
<b>Street design, mobility, business supports</b>	Bristol City Council has plans to turn portions of the Old City, which includes independent shops, restaurants and cafes, into a traffic-free zone. The plans for the Old City include "pedestrianizing" historic streets and improving mobility as part of a greener, more equitable recovery.
<b>Street design, mobility, business supports</b>	Approximately 100 Buenos Aires streets are now "pedestrianized" to limit crowding and encourage local commercial interactions.

# 12 | Theme: Culture

Toronto's cultural industries are a major economic driver and foster healthy, vibrant communities across the city. Based on data from the Department of Canadian Heritage (2016), the sector contributes approximately \$11 billion to Toronto's gross domestic product and supports more than 111,000 jobs. Toronto has the largest number of artists (27,000 people) in the country and is home to about one in six Canadian artists (17 per cent), according to a study by Hill Strategies Research Inc. Toronto's dynamic cultural ecosystem also encourages and supports participation in amateur arts and arts education for all ages.

Torontonians love culture, whether they are making it or taking part. The World Cities Culture Forum reports that 41 per cent of working-age Toronto residents attend a museum or gallery at least once a year. Toronto's theatres enjoy almost 2.5 million in ticket sales annually, with a value of \$151 million, and the city enjoys almost 15,000 music performances annually. Toronto's musical talent is recognized worldwide, showcasing the diversity of the city's culture. About 80 per cent of recording industry expenditure in Canada is in the Toronto region. Toronto's film industry is also a juggernaut, with Toronto in the top five North American cities for film production. The industry injects over \$2 billion into Toronto's economy yearly and employs more than 30,000 Torontonians in skilled, creative jobs. Additionally, Toronto is the proud home of the Toronto International Film Festival, one of the world's most prestigious film festivals.

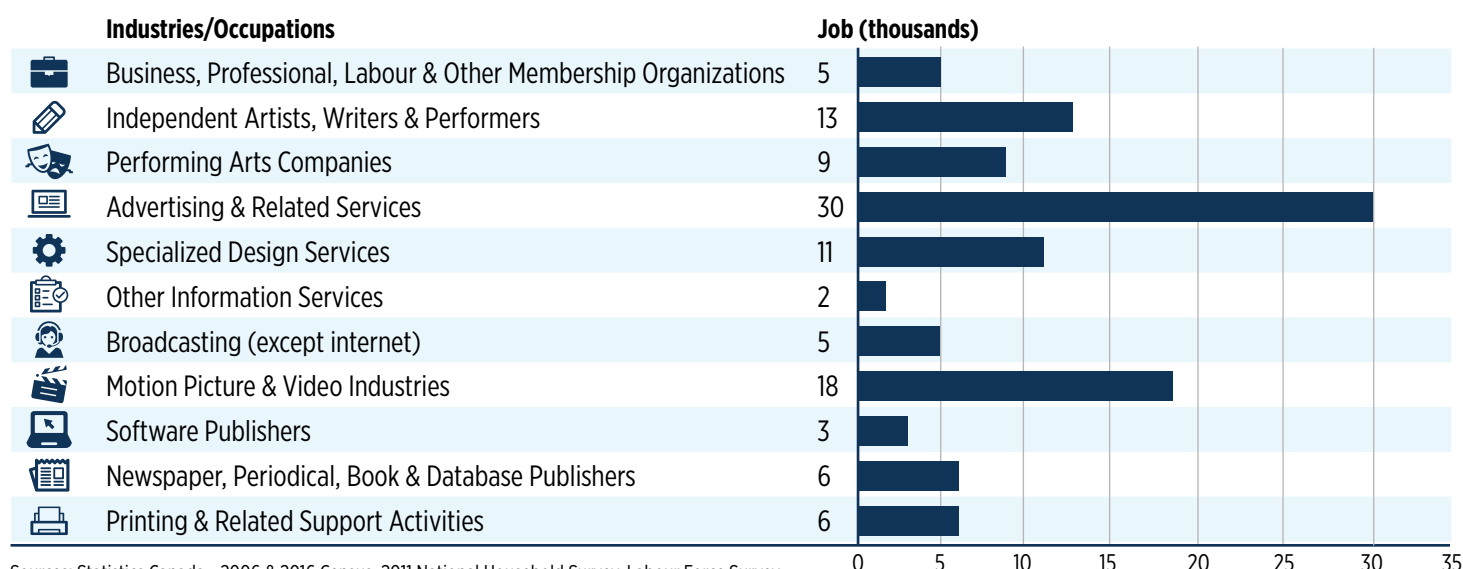
Toronto's exceptional artists, institutions and industries are critical factors in Toronto's livability, vitality and prosperity. Culture underpins Toronto's diversity, giving expression to the many cultural communities that have built Toronto and the neighbourhoods they call home. Culture is a primary motivator to travel here, drawing more than 2 million international travelers a year. But above all, with the contribution it makes to Torontonians' sense of place, sense of shared experience and pride, culture is a reason to live here.

## Culture – What's included?

The culture sector includes for-profit and not-for-profit businesses and organizations in screen-based media production, interactive digital media, music, publishing, theatre, dance, museums and art galleries, heritage sites and collections, and special events. Occupations in the culture sector are connected to the region's other key sectors such as tourism, digital technology, design, light manufacturing and professional services in accounting and law. The sector also stimulates spin-off activity in other sectors, including hospitality and retail. According to the Toronto Arts Foundation's publication, Toronto Arts Stats 2018, 73 per cent of patrons of arts and culture events usually end up doing something else, like going to a restaurant, bar, or coffee shop, before and/or after an event.



Figure 1 illustrates employment in selected cultural industries in 2019. Note: Arts and culture may be found in parts of other North American Industry Classification Systems (NAICS) codes, so the chart below may not provide a complete picture of all jobs attributed to arts and culture.

**Figure 1 - Employment in Selected Cultural Industries, 2019**

Sources: Statistics Canada - 2006 & 2016 Census, 2011 National Household Survey, Labour Force Survey, Canadian Business Counts. Jobs by industry (NAICS) were projected by City of Toronto, Economic Development and Culture research staff.

## Impact of COVID-19 on Cultural Industries

While many industries have experienced negative impacts from COVID-19, arts, entertainment, and recreation, along with the closely aligned industries of accommodation and food services, are the hardest hit, and may experience the longest lasting impact because they are dependent on public gatherings in their business models.

To combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto's \$9-billion culture sector has complied with emergency orders to close non-essential businesses and practise physical distancing. This response has disrupted Toronto's creative economy at an unprecedented level, leading to an almost total shutdown across the various industries that make up the cultural sector. Some of these impacts include:

- Toronto's \$2-billion film production industry has come to a virtual standstill. While local projections are not yet available, the Canadian Media Producers Association estimates that \$2.5 billion in production investment is at risk nationally.
- The city's 200+ spaces that regularly book music performances, including live music venues, pubs, restaurants and event facilities have shut their doors – with NOW magazine estimating more than 400 live music shows were cancelled in the first month of the crisis alone.

- Special events that typically attract hundreds of thousands of tourists to the city and generate millions in visitor spending and economic impact, such as Pride Toronto and the Toronto Caribbean Carnival, as well as local neighbourhood festivals, have all been cancelled and/or reimaged.
- A stakeholder in museums said revenue typically consists of 33 per cent government funding, but next year it is anticipated to be 60 per cent government funding as ticket and merchandise revenues contract. There is no certainty regarding when revenue may return.

Some data was released in the report *StatsCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada: Expected changes in spending habits during the recovery period* on July 22, 2020. The report examined the expected changes in spending habits after stores and businesses start reopening and how these changes are associated with various demographic characteristics. It used data from the third iteration (June 15 to 21, 2020) of Statistics Canada's new Canadian Perspectives Survey Series (CPSS).

More than 4,000 Canadians from the 10 provinces responded to the survey. Respondents were asked whether they expected to spend more, less or about the same on selected items, compared with the time before the pandemic. Perhaps not surprisingly, Canadians indicated that they expect to be spending more on



items that are considered essential, such as groceries, education and utilities. Canadians indicated that they plan to spend less on discretionary items such as eating in restaurants, entertainment and recreation. The fact that many Canadians expect to spend less on many items is likely a reflection of the fact that many people experienced job losses or reduced hours of work as a result of the pandemic or saw a reduction in earnings. Residents of Ontario were more likely to say that they expected to spend less on most discretionary items, including entertainment and eating at a restaurant. The culture sector will likely see a direct correlation to the findings of the report as aspects of the sector fall under entertainment, and eating in restaurants is often a side activity when people are participating in culture.

## Pre-Existing Challenges

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, Toronto's culture sector was responding to significant infrastructure constraints that were negatively affecting the sector's overall ability to thrive. The need for space, including affordable housing, issues with precarious employment, and equity and inclusion have challenged the culture sector for years. These challenges have been amplified with the COVID-19 pandemic.



## The Need for Space

Access to affordable, sustainable space for culture and creative work has been a longstanding issue for the sector. The demand for office space and residential buildings downtown led to closures of some of the city's retail and music venues, LGBTQ2S+ nightclubs, and small performing arts theatres. DIY (do-it-yourself) event organizers were finding it increasingly difficult to find and retrofit event spaces and there continues to be a shortage of available film studio space in Toronto, constraining the growth of this \$2-billion industry.

Critical challenges have included the need to preserve employment lands for job-rich uses such as film studios, given the demands from other industries or from residential developers. Additionally, the need to streamline permitting processes and to remove red tape related to City Planning and Toronto Building, approvals for DIY pop-up spaces and permitting processes for alternative use of public realm such as parks and streets, are also paramount.

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing has long been an issue for many people in Toronto, and the city faces a potential exodus of artists and creative professionals to more affordable neighbouring regions. The Toronto Arts Foundation's survey, Toronto Arts Stats 2019, asked artists why they want to leave Toronto. Seventy-six per cent of respondents indicated the overall cost of living was too high and 73 per cent indicated that housing was too expensive. Without artists and creators living and working in Toronto, all others who rely on their intellectual capital and talent cannot thrive.

## Precarious Employment

Employment in the culture sector is often precarious. Precarious employment is usually associated with work uncertainty, low income and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, as outlined in the Province of Ontario's study, The Changing Workplaces Review – Final Report (2017). In late 2019, Statistics Canada released a study, Measuring the Gig Economy in Canada Using Administrative Data, based on various tax forms and the 2016 Census data. The study concluded that "workers whose main occupations are in arts, entertainment and recreation were about four times more likely to be gig workers than workers whose main occupations are in management of companies and enterprises". As well, people in equity-seeking groups (i.e. Black, Indigenous, women, LGBTQ2S+, newcomers, racialized communities, vulnerable youth, etc.) are represented to a disproportionate extent in this economically fragile sector, increasing their vulnerability to sudden shocks such as COVID-19.

**If the artists are fine, we're fine. If the artists are not fine, we're not fine.**

Comment from Consultation

## Equity and Inclusion

Growing inequalities have resulted in barriers to access for funding, employment and leadership roles for artists from equity-seeking groups. Additionally, city-wide cultural access and participation in cultural events is not yet equitable for citizens. The cultural sector has historically been concentrated in the downtown core, and while some progress has been made in recent years, more sustained effort is needed to ensure that all Torontonians have opportunities to participate in local, relevant cultural activities, no matter where they live in the city.

Artists and cultural organizations are also at the forefront of efforts to combat inequality and systemic racism in Toronto and across Canada. Indigenous artists have fought to raise awareness of the erasure of Indigenous cultural presence in Toronto, the culture sector is acknowledging the historical exclusion of Black artists and talent, and some sectors are taking concrete steps to prioritize youth from equity-seeking groups in workforce development.

## City of Toronto COVID-19 Recovery Initiatives for Culture

The City of Toronto has undertaken several new and enhanced initiatives to support the culture sector. These initiatives include the following:

- **TOArtist COVID-19 Emergency Response** – Created an artists' relief fund in collaboration with the Toronto Arts Council and disbursed nearly \$837,000 in emergency funds to 982 Toronto Artists at the outset of the pandemic.
- **Live Music Venue Creative Co-Location Property Tax Subclass** – The property tax subclass was expanded to include music venues offering a 50 per cent property tax relief, with 45 venues declared eligible and a total tax savings of \$1.7 million.
- **Mitigation** – Consulted with 14 City divisions and 40 municipalities and 40 major third-party producers to mitigate losses due to COVID-19 related event cancellations.
- **Cultural Festivals Recovery Fund** – Created a new fund intended to assist festivals in their reopening efforts. To date, demand has greatly exceeded the available funding and, when the program closed at the end of July, close to 30 organizations benefited from \$500,000 in funding. This program also includes partnerships with third party producers Forrec and BaAM to provide webinars on health and safety planning for festivals and event producers.
- **Transformed Programs** – Pivoted the Canada Day event to a virtual platform featuring 56 artists and performing groups to an online audience of 120,000. Reimagined and announced the move of Nuit Blanche 2020 to a digital platform. The City led the development of the Arts@Home platform, launched in May, to move arts education materials online to assist parents with the shift to home learning.
- **ShopHERE Webinars** – In partnership with the City of Toronto's shopHERE program and Canada Council for the Arts' Digital Strategy Fund grant program, two webinars were held for a total of 465 attendees. To date, 609 businesses from the Creative/Cultural sector have registered for the shopHERE program. Outreach focused on enhancing diversity and inclusion.
- **Indigenous Arts and Culture Partnerships Fund** – The fund supports partnerships and collaborations that create new opportunities for Indigenous-led arts and culture. Providing a maximum of \$10,000 per project, incubation funding will support the development of new partnerships and first-time initiatives. Activation funding, a maximum of \$30,000 per project, will support projects and initiatives that have the potential for lasting impact.
- **Farmers' Markets** – Working in collaboration with 14 permitting divisions, safely restarted 21 farmers' markets across the city.
- **The pop-up DriveInTO** – Working in partnership with Toronto Public Health and four major external venues, created guidelines enabling the start-up of operations of pop-up drive-in movie activities. The program will also assist equity seeking producers and film festivals to create an estimated 10 additional nights of programming over the summer.
- **Ensuring Safe Cultural Gatherings** – Working in partnership with Toronto Public Health, provided guidance to stakeholders to apply Public Health guidelines. Further, created the #lightson partnership with Ryerson University researching the safe reopenings of live events and venues. Also produced a series of Reopening Webinars in coordination with the Toronto Arts Council and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts.

# Supporting Culture

The City of Toronto has undertaken several new and enhanced initiatives to support the culture sector. These initiatives include:

## TOArtist COVID-19 Emergency Response

Created an **artists' relief fund** in collaboration with the Toronto Arts Council and disbursed nearly **\$837,000** in emergency funds to **982 Toronto Artists** at the outset of the pandemic.



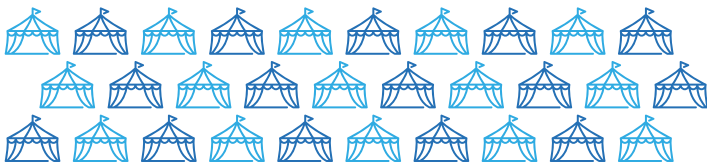
## ShopHERE Webinars

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## Cultural Festivals Recovery Fund

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## Transformed Programs

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## Farmers' Markets

Working in collaboration with 14 permitting divisions, safely restarted **21 farmers' markets** across the city.



## DriveInTO

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## Recent City Strategies, Engagements and Council Decisions

Toronto City Council has a strong commitment to investing in the culture sector. In the last five years, the City of Toronto has adopted four creative industry strategies. They are the: [Toronto Music Strategy: Supporting and Growing the City's Music Sector \(2016\)](#); [Spotlight on Toronto: A Strategic Action Plan for the Film, Television and Digital Media Industry \(2017\)](#); [Toronto Nightlife Action Plan \(2019\)](#) and a 10-year [Toronto Public Art Strategy \(2019\)](#). These reports led to the formation of the Toronto Music Advisory Council, an "agent of change" policy to protect existing music venues from new residential buildings, a 50 per cent reduction of property taxes for creative co-location facilities and

music venues, the Mayor-appointment of a "Night Economy Ambassador" and a commitment to celebrate a Year of Public Art in 2021. While the continued implementation of these strategies is important, staff will review strategic actions with recommendations from the TORR report and Council direction, if applicable.

In fall 2019, City Council adopted three [new strategic priorities for cultural investment over the next five years \(2020-2024\)](#), including:

- 1. Culture for all**, to increase opportunities for all Torontonians, no matter where they live in the city, to participate in local, relevant cultural activities throughout the year that reflect Toronto's diversity and creativity;
- 2. Space for culture**, to maintain and create new accessible, sustainable spaces for Toronto's creative sector in a growing city; and
- 3. Developing creative talent**, to strengthen Toronto's cultural workforce and increase diversity and representation within the sector.

These priorities were developed based on input from a robust, inclusive city-wide community consultation process undertaken to build the [Economic Development and Culture \(EDC\) Divisional Strategy \(2018-22\)](#); ongoing discussions with stakeholders and partners in the culture sector; and policy directions from City Council.

## Engagement Overview

As part of the response to the COVID-19 emergency, the City held a wide range of consultations with key stakeholders from cultural and creative industries.

### **Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force**

- Mayor Tory announced the creation of the Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force on March 16, 2020. The Task Force subsequently convened 20 virtual roundtable discussions with more than 200 stakeholders from a wide variety of business and community groups. Participants were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses, and to consider short- and medium-term interventions to support Toronto's economy.



- Alongside the work of the Mayor's Task Force, other City councillors led stakeholder engagement sessions on focused themes including small business, social services and housing, workers and labour, climate action, cultural communities, and children and youth. In addition, City staff received 3,366 responses to a survey of Toronto businesses on the impact of COVID-19 and addressing their needs for relief and recovery.

#### ***Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild Consultations: Culture***

- The Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild reviewed consultations undertaken to date and conducted an additional 12 virtual roundtable consultations with the cultural industries in June and July 2020. These consultations examined immediate needs for recovery and also took a forward-looking approach to consider long-term opportunities for rebuilding. Meetings were held with industry leaders in heritage, literary/publishing, interactive digital media, music and film. Additionally, consultations were held with leaders in creative communities including people living with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, Francophone, LGBTQ2S+, people of colour and youth under 30.

## **Data Sets Considered**

Findings from each of the above engagement methods were analyzed by City staff to inform the content of this report. Additionally, a staff research study, COVID-19 Toronto: Interim Report on Culture, and the report, COVID-19: Rebuilding Toronto's Creative Future – Report from Cultural Roundtables for the Mayor's Task Force on Economic Support and Recovery also contribute to the findings of this report. Because most of the work of the Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force focused on identifying relief efforts related to immediate response, restart and early-stage recovery, a majority of the longer term issues and opportunities included in this report are based on information gathered through the Toronto Office of Rebuild and Recovery culture sector roundtables. Recommendations developed as part of this report are supplemented by further research by City staff, including a jurisdictional review of best practices related to arts and culture relief and recovery.

## **Common Issues across Culture Sectors**

While each of the cultural industries and communities consulted faces unique challenges in recovering from the impact of COVID-19, many stakeholders highlighted similar issues.

### ***Equity and Inclusion***

- Equity-seeking group members expressed concerns about backsliding on recent gains while leaders of mainstream institutions noted that equity needed to be accelerated, citing both business and ethical imperatives. On balance, there was a consensus that the time had come to address gaps in representation and participation in Toronto's cultural sector.
- Regarding City-led engagements, stakeholders from equity-seeking communities within cultural industries said they lacked a seat at the table. That view applied across all consultative and decision-making bodies, such as juries, advisory groups and agency boards.
- For people living with disabilities, equity and accessibility are inseparable, and as approaches to rebuilding physical and digital infrastructure are considered, accessibility should be a fundamental, non-negotiable principle within an equity strategy.

### ***Financial Impacts***

- Every sector is experiencing negative financial impacts from COVID-19. Extended closures have harmed film production and performance venues, many cultural products have not gone to market as scheduled, and artists have lost gigs as unemployment became almost total. The pivot to digital platforms has not offset these losses.

### ***The Need for Space***

- Stakeholders emphasized the importance of affordable housing, as COVID-19 has exacerbated the difficulty artists have meeting the expenses of living in Toronto. Many cultural workers are leaving the city or are facing precarious living situations. If creators do not live here, Toronto's cultural life will be imported. Also, the benefits Toronto has realized from being a creative hub will diminish as the community disperses.
- Venue owners and operators expressed concerns related to the financial impact of lingering hesitancy on the part of the public to gather when they reopen. In addition, the health protocols required for performance venues will be costly, and physical distancing is likely to suppress ticket and other revenues. These financial pressures create a formidable challenge for venues and performance spaces, and financial supports from government will be necessary for Toronto to retain private sector cultural infrastructure

### **Digital Adaptation**

- The pivot to digital platforms was immediate and unplanned. For many, working digitally will be part of the 'new normal', yet the expertise and technology needed to succeed may be out of reach.
- COVID-19 has extended the digital divide and this could aggravate social and economic equity issues, particularly for low income communities and people with disabilities, unless this outcome is addressed.

### **Health Protocols and Communication**

- Leaders across sectors highlighted the need for clarity of communication regarding the requirements to reopen their businesses, and to protect workers and the public. Support may also be needed for costs related to compliance.
- Public-facing sectors such as those in culture that depend on large public gatherings need support from government to encourage the public to return to theatres, music venues and all performance spaces. Both consumer confidence and worker confidence were seen as pre-conditions of business recovery.

### **Barrier to Business: Insurance**

- Stakeholders called attention to an urgent crisis regarding insurance, which has the potential to impact cultural sectors. Insurers are currently unwilling to insure against pandemics or further outbreaks of COVID-19 associated with the worksite. This causes an untenable risk for producers, venue owners, employers and others, and could threaten any gains made to access to space and employment. The City should advocate with other orders of government to alleviate this structural issue that could paralyze cultural industries.

## **Opportunities across Culture Sectors**

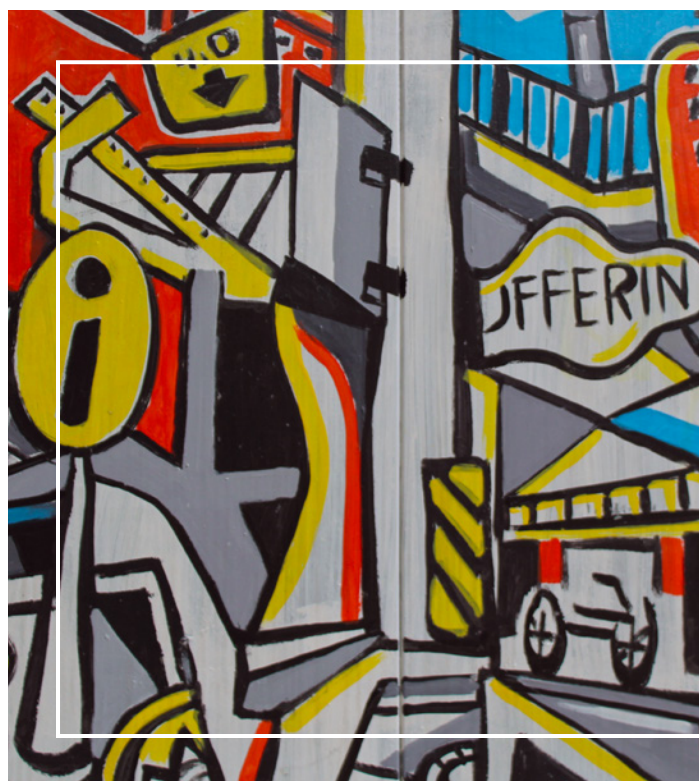
Across sectors, there was a shared vision of how the City can 'build back better'. Equity and inclusion are at the heart of this vision, and a collective desire was expressed to drive a shift in the balance of access, inclusion and decision-making that prioritizes equity-seeking groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+, and people living with disabilities. Further, new approaches to capitalizing cultural companies and organizations can drive change, build creative infrastructure and reward performance. Across sectors, cultural leaders asserted that access to space is critical for the cultural industries to help shape Toronto's landscape in a way that animates the whole city, and they presented ideas to support this outcome. And digital adaptation offers a virtual platform for Toronto's creators to engage people and build audiences locally and globally, if they have the tools to adapt and take advantage of this sudden acceleration. Culture

sector leaders cited the high level of solidarity and collaboration across cultural institutions of all types during the crisis and underlined the need for collaboration to become the norm and not the exception in the future.

## **Equity and Inclusion**

Stakeholders strongly expressed that the opportunity to consider how these sectors will be rebuilt is an opportunity to resist going back to normal and to insist on something better, more inclusive, that elevates these industries and the city.

- **Leadership:** While access to employment and support for emerging artists and organizations from under-represented groups are critical, these things are facilitated by having leaders from these communities in decision-making roles, whether on juries or as senior executives in institutions. Succession planning for leadership roles should be prioritized, along with mentorship, and funding structures could be used to create accountability for recipient organizations for advancing equity in board positions and executive roles (discussed below in 'Funding and Other Supports'). A critical mass of diverse leaders within organizations will be required to create a truly inclusive cultural sector, which is something that will remain unattainable if representation remains at a minimal level.





- **Benefit Where It's Due:** Achieving more balance in leadership could help advance an additional goal: that creative work from all communities should be able to thrive without being evaluated against a mainstream perspective. Stakeholders extended this idea to include seeking to ensure that communities benefit from their own content. This will support a broader intention to advance sovereignty over culturally specific content. The sentiment of "Nothing about us without us" was expressed, noting that Toronto's cultural sector has long benefitted from the labour of diverse creatives without enabling their access to power.
- **Funding as a Tool to Advance Equity:** Stakeholders also encouraged the City to take even more concrete, demonstrable and measurable steps to prioritize equity and inclusion in all engagements, programs, funding, procurement and hiring. Regarding City funding for cultural industries, investment decisions were questioned for their lack of transparency and limited support for equity-seeking groups and creatives. As such, a re-balancing could be considered, which is discussed in greater depth below in 'Funding and Other Supports'.
- **Cultural Industries and Policing:** Leaders in equity-seeking groups expressed that the requirement for armed Paid Duty Officers to attend cultural events surpasses reasonable security needs, and that alternate means of securing events need to be found. Some expressed that police presence can be highly problematic, as the history of the community's relationship with the police determines how their presence is experienced at events.

For other cultural industries such as film, where Paid Duty Officers are currently required for production-related traffic closures or special effects, it's possible that an alternate authorized body could be made available for these services, alleviating occasional shortages.

- **The City's Convening Ability:** The disparate groups that were brought together for the consultation often remarked on the value of meeting and talking with one another, coming together to focus on common challenges and bringing their perspectives together to increase their knowledge and their influence. They called on the City to use its convening ability to continue bringing groups together. Additionally, the City was asked to function as an aggregator of resources and a connector to vital assets like venues and other cultural infrastructure.

The cultural sector was seen as a gateway onto sustainable employment for equity-seeking group members, a key means of confronting under-representation and racism through mass media, and a bridge to civic engagement for diverse communities. Much promising practice was also recognized in the sector. Many museums are already highly involved in initiatives related to decolonization, and are reimagining what museums and cultural institutions can be in order to elevate perspectives from outside the institutions. Other sectors, such as Interactive Digital Media, will continue to seek diversity in their hiring processes, as they find this positively affects exports. The film industry is expanding an already successful partnership with the City, which has advanced career growth for under-represented groups, including a Black-only on-set program.



## Funding and other Supports

The City plays a critical role in the cultural industries as a funder, convenor, promoter and enabler, and can advance the rebuilding of the cultural industries in each of these capacities. Additionally, many City programs that are not directly targeting the cultural industries also have a significant impact on them and can contribute to their future success. Policy to preserve employment lands is vital to the growth of film production, as one example, and taxation has a particular impact on performance venues.

- **Funding as an Agent of Change:** The disruption caused by COVID-19 presents an opportunity to establish new objectives for how funding is allocated. To build capacity for equity-seeking groups, more funding will need to be allocated toward them, and to artists from these communities. This will require either more funding or a recalibration of the balance of current funding to established incumbents versus to equity-seeking groups. Funding structures can be used to create accountability for recipients with respect to representation in senior positions and actionable succession plans that constitute a commitment to inclusive leadership now and in the future. An Equity Index, ideally developed with other cultural funders, is highly encouraged as a measurement tool to ensure funded organizations demonstrate equity in leadership, employment and opportunities. Data on investments and outcomes for equity-seeking groups should be collected and made public.
- **Decision-making:** As decision-making bodies are not representative of the larger community, decisions that affect funding, access to space, or other critical supports such as affordable housing, were seen by those consulted as perpetuating social and economic exclusion. This would be alleviated by ensuring juries and other decision-making bodies are more representative and are constituted to ensure that decisions made regarding support for projects emerging from a particular community are made by members of that community.
- **Longer-term structural supports:** As the city aspires to build back better, it needs to think big, and this requires that infrastructure funding for cultural industries be included in the planning stages to ensure that it is not an afterthought. Accessible and representative culture was viewed as a critical component of healthy and liveable communities. This includes consideration for funding of shovel-worthy cultural infrastructure, and preservation of employment lands for production. In addition to infrastructure, as stakeholders struggle to recover, they reflected that multi-year and

operational grants need to be part of the mix of supports offered by the City and other orders of government. Further, live performance industries, hit hard by the pandemic, require supports for recovery that enable employment, and advocated for a labour-based tax credit, modeled on those in other cultural industries, such as film and television production.

- **Financial Sustainability:** The COVID-19 crisis is a liquidity crisis, and across all sectors access to capital is a key concern. Federal supports like CERB have been critical, and the cultural sector needs these supports to continue, sunsetting them on a timeline aligned with industries approaching resumption of customary capacity. These benefits have operated like a pilot of a Universal Basic Wage program, and they offered many benefits to the cultural sector and to equity-seeking groups, in particular. As these supports ease off, stakeholders support piloting mechanisms that could function as a universal basic wage.
- **Promotional support:** The City's ability to work as a promoter for cultural industries was frequently cited, and stakeholders across industries requested the City allocate more resources to promoting the creative work of Torontonians, both locally and internationally.

## The Need for Space

The cost of space is a major challenge for the cultural industries, and the extent to which this constitutes a threat has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Stakeholders called for an integrated approach to access to safe, affordable and accessible space, noting three interrelated issues: living space, performance space and working space. Without affordable space to live, work and perform, Toronto will lose the creators, venues and workplaces that create economic opportunity and make it one of the most liveable cities in the world.

- **Streamlining City Processes for Infrastructure:** Stakeholders called for the City to permanently adopt the nimbleness it exercised in responding to the crisis. Regulation designed to eliminate risk have been rolled back without negative outcomes. They made particular note that the City's permitting processes are a barrier to accessing much needed space. This affects the film industry, as new studio space is desperately needed, and stakeholders have found processes related to planning and building permit approvals has slowed progress.

- **Streamlining City Processes for Alternative Uses:** As traditional performance venues are threatened, DIY Pop-up spaces will be an important part of the infrastructure, and there are barriers to this that should be explored in a way that facilitates both safety and speed to market. Streamlining processes for permits to use Park space for unconventional uses would also help alleviate space shortages and animate the entire City. The flexibility in regulation, permits and enforcement shown by the City during COVID-19 could be extended as one step that could contribute to a broader streamlining of processes much desired by stakeholders.

## Digital Adaptation

One of the hallmarks of the COVID-19 pandemic is the rapidity of the shift to digital technologies undertaken by businesses, institutions and individuals. Many stakeholders indicated that the shift to digital is part of their 'new normal', and a return to the pre-COVID-19 status quo is not anticipated. The shift was sudden, and financing, skills, infrastructure and innovation are needed in order for stakeholders to thrive in this new model.

- **Up-skilling:** Stakeholders are progressively more dependent on digital-only ways of working for managing remote staff, making sales or maintaining a relationship with their audience. Each of these practices is completely different in a digital space and requires specific expertise and strategies and are unfamiliar to many. The digital market is a global market, so it brings with it heightened competition. Ensuring Toronto's cultural entrepreneurs have the knowledge they need to succeed in this instantly international market is a critical first step to enabling success in the new-normal, at home and abroad. This need is exacerbated by the systemic exclusion faced by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) professionals seeking managerial and executive roles in the cultural sector; a challenge requiring specific, targeted interventions.
- **New Tools Needed:** In addition to massive, large-scale digital infrastructure investments, parallel investments in new equipment are needed. For digital-intensive sectors like Visual FX and post-production, infrastructure providing enhanced speed and encryption could enable Toronto to compete at a new level, attracting jobs and inward investment. Some cultural industries plan to innovate hybrid digital/physical experiences, or use financial or creator software to transact and create products. New ways of working requires investment in new tools, yet these industries have been depleted by the COVID-19 crisis, and the digital business model is still evolving. Support from government sources may be necessary.
- **Digital Access and Equity:** Digital infrastructure must be considered critical infrastructure. The 'digital divide' has never been more critical or more predictive. The City must prioritize closing the digital divide, especially as faced by BIPOC youth facing elevated unemployment rates, compounded by poor digital access in social housing. Building up the infrastructure and accessibility for elders, those living with disabilities, priority neighbourhoods and others is critical for equitable participation in society. It will also further enable people to work and learn from home, which creates opportunities, supports COVID-19 recovery, and has positive environmental impacts.
- **Financial Sustainability for Creators:** International digital platforms have always presented an opportunity, but their dominance has grown as they have been the sole conduit to audiences during restrictions on gatherings. The revenue that is earned on these platforms is dramatically less than can be earned through other means, in part because the federal Copyright Act has not been updated to reflect the impact and use of new technologies, and to ensure creators receive adequate remuneration for their work. Stakeholders would support advocacy for amendments to the Act that will help to keep creators employed and creative industries afloat.

Although the cultural industries are among the hardest hit by COVID-19, if they are supported to take advantage of the opportunities that lay ahead, they can be drivers of Toronto's efforts to rebuild, ensuring a creative, bold, inclusive future for the city and all who live here.



## Priority Issues and Opportunities by Culture Sector

This section provides an overview of priority issues and opportunities identified by roundtable participants related to COVID-19 recovery and rebuild in the following cultural sectors and communities consulted:

- Music and Live Events
- Heritage
- Literary/Publishing
- Film
- Interactive Digital Media
- Indigenous
- Arts and Accessibility
- LGBTQ2S+
- Black Cultural Leaders
- Youth Under 30
- People of Colour
- Francophone

### Music and Live Events

Live music venues are critical to the industry and audiences alike, and many are closing or are at risk of closure. Operators or owners are struggling to pay fixed costs and are anticipating additional costs for health measures they will need to take to ensure audiences feel safe to come back once operations continue.

There was agreement that, beyond financial sustainability, challenges for the music and event sector include access to space, equitable access to funding and resources, consumer confidence and digital transformation.

#### *Desired Outcomes*

The live event industries are requesting assistance with fixed costs such as rent, property tax and utilities that must be paid despite having had no revenue for an extended period. Costs related to PPE and new venue infrastructure for accommodating performers, staff, and audiences will also be considerable, and this is particularly challenging, as revenue may be sluggish if the public is reluctant to return to venues. Government has a role to play in ensuring audiences and musicians see venues as safe.

It was also noted that insurance issues could paralyze the industry, as insurers are declining to insure against pandemics, resulting in an untenable risk for venue owners and operators that could prevent them from reopening.



Also, as artists have lost gigs and related income, it was noted that CERB needs to be continued until venues reopen. Requiring landlords to participate in OCECRA and unequivocally prohibiting commercial evictions is essential for venue survival. Additionally, a labour-based tax credit for live event producers, such as that in television or film production, could help capitalize venues and stimulate employment.

The need to innovate has never been clearer. Access to digital technology and up-skilling will be key to thriving in the global online marketplace. Revenue in the digital world is a fraction of what musicians would earn in a live setting in part because the federal Copyright Act favours distribution platforms. The City could advocate for changes to digital revenue models through amendments to the federal Copyright Act that could help artists and the industry remain viable.

#### *Opportunities*

Participants noted that there may be more vacant commercial real estate in the city given that many corporations may move to extended or make permanent their work-from-home models. There may be opportunities to animate new spaces. The sector has been working with the City to unlock City-owned spaces and to advance Do-It-Yourself spaces, capitalizing on the will to continue to streamline the permitting processes at the City.

Those consulted recognize that digital tools offer the opportunity to innovate, but this needs to occur both creatively, in terms of innovating the experience, and financially in terms of designing viable business models. For both the music and live events sectors, digital adaption offers opportunities to explore and reach new audiences, increase accessibility and build bridges between communities online. However, financial support for access to digital tools to maximize exposure is needed for emerging artists, venues and events. Providing education, upskilling and support specifically to artists in the music industry to build careers in the digital space would create opportunities for advancement. Hiring youth and investing in emerging artists will keep the pipeline of new talent development active.



As with other sectors consulted, participants saw the need for a commitment to equity, diversity and gender balance. Changes to granting practices could help ensure Toronto's diversity is reflected. Impact studies could be used to measure the efficacy of funding. As the industry is experiencing an increased scarcity in resources due to COVID-19, grant funding becomes even more critical as a determinant of the future viability of artists and of the industry as a whole. A clearer and more cohesive pipeline is needed to grow BIPOC representation and advancement in mainstream industry positions.

Participants also commented on safety concerns at music venues and live events. Paid Duty Officers are not perceived as allies by LGBTQ2S+ or BIPOC stakeholders, and their audience members accordingly feel unsafe. Current restrictions in gatherings provide an opportunity to reconsider the use of Paid Duty Officers for events, and to explore alternatives including night safety organizations such as Safe Night Out (Queensland, Australia) or the Dandelion Initiative (Toronto).

## Heritage

The heritage sector shut down in March to comply with emergency orders and faced related revenue losses from admissions and merchandising. During the closure, the sector immediately focused on a transition to digital platforms, finding this to be critical to retaining engagement with local and international communities. Because substantial funding and expertise are required to successfully make this transition, this became a barrier to many institutions.

Many museums are engaged in the work of decolonizing and bringing new voices and new perspectives into seemingly traditional places. Stakeholders identified the need to support social movements around racial justice and decolonization through the work they do in their institutions. Digital tools and platforms may be more than a stopgap measure during closure. With support, they could be tools that explore these themes in new ways with new audiences.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

Heritage institutions voiced a need for support for digital adaptation. There will be a need to access funding and expertise to reskill staff and build new platforms and experiences with an emphasis on accessibility, collaboration and inclusion.

Support for museums is required to address the challenge of sharply reduced revenue and increased costs related to increased personal protection equipment, sanitization supplies and retrofitting of spaces for social distancing measures. Similarly, support for creators of content focused on the importance of inclusion, anti-racism and decolonization.

Operators stressed the need for the government to strengthen public confidence, when it is safe to do so, to encourage the citizens to come back to their museums.

### ***Opportunities***

Many in the sector are taking advantage of the situation to reimagine what museums and heritage sites can be in the future. Institutions could reposition themselves as brokers of space and ideas, versus curators and creators. Voices and experiences from outside of institutions can be elevated, thereby making museums more essential to their community and representative of the community where possible.





There is an opportunity for heritage institutions to play a vital role in stimulating the economy through investment in cultural infrastructure. Institutions can participate in recovery projects to create jobs, build resilience and transform physical cultural infrastructure.

Stakeholders are exploring innovations in hybrid digital/physical experiences that increase accessibility, enhance e-learning and offer a deeper participant experience. The shift to digital engagement can increase participation and help institutions reach new audiences.

A powerful social change movement has emerged from COVID-19 and protests against racism have heightened the focus on equity and inclusion. Institutions are exploring how they can engage in this moment to rethink who they are and how they will be different in three to six years from now. Arts and culture can play a key role and can be at the heart of recovery in the city.

## Literary/Publishing

With the closure of non-essential businesses, the option for writers to promote their writing in physical places (e.g. pubs and cafes) was eliminated. At the same time, publishers have faced challenges taking books to market for an extended period, and most consumers moved to online purchases. Four hundred new titles were published between March and June that should be in bookstores this summer but have not yet made it to market.

The industry pivoted to a predominantly digital business model, however revenue from these platforms is much less than revenue from bookstores and other physical points of sale. In the digital economy, a high percentage of sales revenue goes to the distribution platform, substantially reducing the income writers and publishers receive for their work.

Once the city fully reopens, bookstores and publishers will continue to be challenged by high commercial rents and property taxes. Creators in this sector are moving outside of Toronto to take advantage of lower property values and rents. Toronto's status as a literary hub is at risk due to the high cost of space.





### ***Desired Outcomes***

The sector would like to see more support for physical bookstores to ensure they continue to be community spaces, especially for culturally specific groups. A mechanism to support rent payments would help maintain Toronto's status as a worldwide literary powerhouse. New models of support could be considered with industry for non-profit and for-profit organizations.

Stakeholders indicated that the City could be a resource to help expand the industry's reach to international markets through Toronto Global, and other partners. While at the same time, the City can help amplify the promotion of local authors to local readers through the Toronto District School Board, Toronto Public Library and festivals like Word on the Street. Both international and local promotion could be achieved by making Canadian content more accessible online by working with other cultural industries and orders of government to encourage major international platforms to promote Canadian work.

### ***Opportunities***

Finding ways to work with new partners and in non-literary spaces may be one way to address issues associated with space like high rent and property tax. Becoming hyper-local in promotion has the potential to lessen COVID-19 impacts in the near- to medium-term. The City, in conjunction with industry partners, can play a proactive role to help residents discover authors and bookstores in their neighbourhoods while also promoting community life and cultural hubs close to home.

Digital innovation also offers opportunities for creators and publishers, although both the expense and the need for expertise remain challenges. Nonetheless, the industry is striving to innovate new platforms and new experiences as they try to find a balance between digital and in-person engagement, which could create new opportunities for revenue generation and exposure to new audiences at home and abroad.

## **Film**

COVID-19 brought Toronto's film industry to a virtual standstill. Emergency orders to close non-essential businesses and restrict the size of mass gatherings resulted in an abrupt halt to filming, leading to almost 100 per cent unemployment and financial losses from interrupted or delayed projects. This will have spin-off impacts for distribution platforms, broadcasters, and cinemas which could disrupt the value chain for years to come. Programs designed to help BIPOC youth enter the industry were paused as employment rates tumbled. Certain segments of the industry, such as visual effects and post-production, have been able to work from home, though productivity was curtailed, especially initially, due to the challenges involved in professional grade work being performed using residential grade infrastructure.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

Participants highlighted an urgent issue with insurance that could paralyze production. Insurance providers are declining to insure for COVID-19 or other pandemics, making production financing virtually impossible, and creating intolerable financial risks for production companies.

Additionally, the sector will be challenged to pay for new on-set health protocols within tight production budgets. Participants estimated that new health and safety measures could add anywhere from 5 per cent to 25 per cent to a production's budget. This is difficult to finance and could take resources away from casting and the production values that make shows competitive.

In the near term, consultation participants identified the need to enhance worker and consumer confidence to enable the sector's recovery. They called for clear, timely health and safety guidance and training to help workers feel secure on set, along with promotional campaigns to build confidence in workplaces and support a safe return of audiences to festivals and cinemas.

Industry stakeholders were united on the importance of building physical and digital infrastructure to enable film production. Every year the city turns away work, as there is not sufficient capacity. The City can help by streamlining approval processes to expedite studio builds and expansions. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for enhanced digital infrastructure to enable remote work and accommodate more bandwidth-intensive projects. The City could provide support by working with internet service providers and industry experts to improve digital infrastructure.

In addition, participants strongly agreed on the need for a more equitable film industry, highlighting the need to immediately restart programs and initiatives to ensure representation of marginalized voices both in front of and behind the camera.



### Opportunities

Enhancing sector workforce development programs, with a focus on BIPOC advancement, can help to address gaps in representation in Toronto's film sector. This could involve allocating additional resources to successful programs that create career paths for individuals from diverse backgrounds. Other strategies include supporting internships, job shadowing and mentorships, and exploring succession planning for leadership positions.

Many also see the recovery period as an opportunity to make productions greener. Participants called for a reconsideration of production practices to reduce the environmental footprint of the industry – especially in light of the added waste anticipated due to use of on-set PPE. A movement toward more sustainable productions can be a catalyst to create new programs to decrease waste, and even extend to clean energy adoption via power drops on City properties such as parks.



### Interactive Digital Media

Like many other creative businesses, companies in the interactive digital media (IDM) sector are experiencing significant disruptions due to COVID-19:

- Value chain disruption, client cancellations, and the loss of market opportunities have resulted in sharp drops in revenue in the sector, with smaller companies and freelancers being the hardest hit.
- In addition, many felt that physical distancing requirements were negatively impacting new business and product development. Participants indicated that IDM is an exceptionally collaborative and interdisciplinary industry, and that face-to-face interaction is important for creativity and innovation. Many small companies rely on networking and community-building to sell their products, which is more challenging in a virtual market.
- Many believed that without improved public confidence in the workplace and services such as transit, it will be difficult to restore normalcy and predictability to business.

### Desired Outcomes

Despite the considerable uncertainty impacting the sector, the group was in agreement that IDM can be a major part of Toronto's economic recovery. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, IDM was experiencing strong global growth. Many believed that the move toward enhancing digital services across all sectors will lead to new job opportunities within IDM. As an example, participants forecast that there will be many new job opportunities in e-learning, arising from increased demand for reskilling and retraining.

Participants also hoped to see Toronto positioned as a global creative hub of the future. Toronto has an opportunity to compete on talent, with the city's diversity being a major advantage. People from all over the world work in Toronto's offices, bringing a wide range of creative perspectives to produce high-quality content.

An important component of building back better in the IDM sector is providing greater supports for workers. Participants cited concerns related to employee mental health and lack of access to child care as being barriers preventing the sector from returning to its full operating capacity.

### Opportunities

To improve sector competitiveness, participants called on both the City and provincial governments to enhance incentives and other supports for interactive digital media companies. Other jurisdictions, such as Quebec, have tax credits and incentives that are highly favourable and enable the industry to attract more talent, build robust hubs and grow more quickly than Ontario. The group also looked to the City to clarify its role in supporting IDM companies, and improve collaboration with industry partners.

Many saw an opportunity to support continued innovation in the sector to fuel its economic recovery. To foster more collaborative work, participants encouraged the development of innovation / co-working hubs for media and technology to draw people back together. This is also an opportunity to create a space for smaller and emerging developers to take part in more networking and community building to help bring their products and ideas to market.

**Now is the time to embed youth into leadership structures, utilize their skills in creative planning and place making. The City cannot let existing talent pathways collapse... This would be a major loss to Toronto, and sap the energy of Toronto's cultural industries that are known globally for Toronto's diverse young creatives.**

Comment from Consultation

### Indigenous

The Indigenous community stressed the difficulties for Indigenous people in accessing funding, starting businesses and gaining employment because of systemic racism. The pandemic accentuated these barriers, as public health measures to suppress the virus have destabilized the cultural sector. Indigenous creatives often work in precarious jobs that make them vulnerable to the decisions of larger institutions and festivals. Participants at the Indigenous Table stressed that Toronto's cultural sector cannot survive without artists in the city, and that any considerations of culture sector support should include freelancers, administrators, programmers and technicians.

The Indigenous arts organizations have experienced a loss of momentum in new funding due to COVID-19, and they are concerned that recovery efforts will reproduce outdated structures and processes. There was a call for governments to analyze current power structures and ensure that Indigenous leaders are at all decision-making tables. They stated this is also a time for governments to reflect on their role in perpetuating colonial art forms and to advance the work of decolonizing cultural institutions.

Similar to other cultural industries, the Indigenous arts and culture community has pivoted online. However, there is a resistance by some Indigenous performers to move online because it compromises the artistic experience and does not compensate artists fairly. There was also a comment that people who live on reserves and in rural areas do not have the same access to technology as people in cities.

### Desired Outcomes

The Indigenous community would like to see a change in government funding systems. This includes a funding increase for Indigenous cultural production and presentation, new models of administering funds through Indigenous organizations, multi-year funding, a review of service gaps, and programs that proactively support under-funded organizations and people outside funding systems. There was support for governments to revise funding evaluations that over-emphasize quantitative measures, such as attendance, to reflect current operating realities.

There was a desire for governments to support a return to live performances. The Indigenous Table estimated that future in-person performances would be inaccessible to Indigenous performers due to the higher ticket prices that will be needed to cover increase costs for fewer patrons. They called for the City to consider new programs to offset post-COVID-19 economics of live Indigenous performances on stage.





### **Opportunities**

There was an interest in making Indigenous businesses thrive through this time by supporting the creation and promotion of online Indigenous shops. The Indigenous community has a different approach to entrepreneurship that is about communities, not solely profit. Therefore, investing in Indigenous businesses strengthens the broader Indigenous community. The Indigenous Table also recommended governments invest in Indigenous cultural production now, so that when the sector reopens, Indigenous content will be readily available.

There is an opportunity for Toronto to demonstrate global best practices in creating equity-focused spaces and arts institutions. The culture sector should reflect the city's diversity through progressive hiring and content presentation. This will lead to greater innovation in the sector. The City of Toronto can support advocacy for independent contractors and those working in the gig economy by collaborating with professional associations that link individuals. It is also important to identify where the sector is doing well and create roles that bring people together and generate change.

### **Arts and Accessibility**

COVID-19 has exacerbated inequities for cultural workers with disabilities. Artists are experiencing increased financial instability, physical health issues, isolation and difficulty securing affordable housing.

Cultural workers with disabilities identified a lack of accessible and equitable approaches within public engagement and decision making. There is need for better consultation with the disability community and in ensuring that City communications are AODA compliant. More data is required to understand how vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, are being impacted by COVID-19 and how more supports could be effectively provided.

These challenges are compounded by gaps in the broader COVID-19 public health response for people with disabilities. Participants identified several key areas for improvement: providing at-home tests for people with disabilities, allowing caregivers to visit people with disabilities living in congregate housing and better supports for isolated and at-risk individuals.

### ***Desired Outcomes***

Participants emphasized that solutions for Toronto's rebuild and recovery should be disability-led. The City should ensure ongoing consultation and engagement with people with disabilities. People with disabilities should also be integrated across stakeholder groups and decision-making processes, rather than siloed as a separate group. For better solutions, the City should collect disaggregated data on how COVID-19 is impacting the disability community and other vulnerable populations.

The City should prioritize culture within Toronto's recovery. Culture provides connection during a time of isolation as well as economic opportunity. The City should support the arts sector in acquiring technology that can enhance the accessibility of programming.

Supporting the stability of artists with disabilities requires changes to many areas of life. There is a need for increased affordable housing and enhanced accessibility in transportation. Artists with disabilities need improved financial supports, such as a universal basic wage.



### **Opportunities**

Toronto has an opportunity to be a global leader in promoting accessibility and the arts in the digital age. The City can facilitate innovations in accessibility by playing a convening role between the technology industry and disability organizations, enabling new partnerships and new sources of funding for the disability community. More training and resources for accessibility consultants for arts institutions can make cultural employment and events more accessible. By integrating a disability lens across City consultations and decision-making bodies, the City can fundamentally change how people with disabilities are included in public governance.

### **LGBTQ2S+**

Due to gentrification and high market rent, cherished cultural and community gathering places in the Village and across the city have been closing, and this has been exacerbated by COVID-19. This has resulted in uncertainty and a sense of loss of community space, safe space and cultural space. Participants suggested long term solutions to build back, and to create a more inclusive portfolio of LGBTQ2S+ spaces for gathering and for cultural events, including public and alternative space.

The community's arts organizations need more funding. This is particularly the case for BIPOC community members. Funding is critical at a time when LGBTQ2S+ cultural organizations or businesses are enduring extended closures and lost revenue due to an unexpected dependence on digital business models. Digital adaptation, in particular, requires funding for new capital expenditures on equipment, along with access to expertise or training in order to continue to create, engage audiences and survive.

Participants also discussed their community's experience of policing. It has been defined by a history of incidents such as the Bathhouse Raids, Bruce McArthur, and Black Lives Matter during the Pride parade. Because of this, the requirement to have Paid Duty Officers at community events should change. Concerns of safety intersected with concerns about financial resources. Participants explained that permits and requirements for events, like Paid Duty Officers, are expensive and take funds away from community organizations.

### **Desired Outcomes**

Participants discussed the need to increase the LGBTQ2S+ workforce at the City, particularly BIPOC community members, and to extend this to inclusion on boards and committees. A review of City requirements around permitting, the Paid Duty Officer requirement for festivals and events and streamlining processes is imperative, as well.





The acquisition of equipment and training to build expertise for online platforms would allow organizations to more successfully pivot, so they can continue to engage and serve their community. Additionally, in reopening, health protocols will result in new costs, and given the revenue lost during the period of closure, funding will be needed to support this expense. To stretch limited resources, the City could use its convening ability to facilitate more collaboration between festivals for cost sharing.

### **Opportunities**

Participants discussed opportunities to create safe spaces and supports for the LGBTQ2S+ community. Encouraging the development of new spaces could be achieved by working with developers through Community Benefit agreements to create LGBTQ2S+ spaces in new developments. Other community spaces could be identified by working with the LGBTQ2S+ community to identify City-owned spaces (i.e. parks and indoor spaces) that could be made available. Simplifying approval processes for permits and eliminating red tape will be essential to the community's ability to animate alternative spaces across the city.

In addition, a stronger voice from the community is needed in City consultations, advisories, juries, committees and on staff. Additionally, creating an LGBTQ2S+ board that has regular check-ins with the City (similar to the Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit) is an opportunity to ensure diverse voices are heard.

## **Black Cultural Leaders**

Following a recommendation from the Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) cultural roundtable, staff convened a separate discussion with Black cultural leaders to explore issues related to confronting anti-Black racism in the sector in greater depth. While anti-Black racism has long been an issue in the cultural sector, the need for meaningful action to combat it has taken on an increased urgency during the pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted Black communities, and laid bare the socio-economic disparities facing Black people both in Toronto and globally.

Within the cultural sector, this disparity has taken the form of the under-representation of Black Torontonians in positions of power; challenges in accessing funding, employment, and spaces for cultural gatherings and performances; and feelings of isolation in the workplace, to name but a few. Consultation participants described how many Black artists and cultural workers rely on gig work, making them even more vulnerable to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

The Black Cultural Leaders table stressed the importance of rejecting the status quo and empowering Black communities through the recovery period and beyond. They proposed several opportunities to support Black artists and cultural workers. It is important to note that confronting anti-Black racism was also highlighted as a priority across many of the other cultural and business roundtables, emphasizing its considerable significance for COVID-19 recovery.

### **Desired Outcomes**

One of the key outcomes for a strengthened culture sector identified by the group is greater representation of Black artists and creatives in leadership positions in the sector. Many were discouraged by "token" representation of Black people in the arts. They urged structural change to bring Black voices to the forefront in the cultural community.

Another key outcome is enhanced funding for Black artists and creative workers in the recovery and beyond. In the near term, participants were encouraged by the extension of CERB, but noted the need to supplement this with targeted support to Black artists and gigging creatives who are likely to have fewer employment prospects in the coming months. Looking further ahead, the group called for sustained strategic funding in the long term to support Black artists and cultural organizations.



In addition, the group stressed the importance of the health and well-being of Black artists and cultural workers. They noted that it was already difficult to be an artist in Toronto, even prior to the onset of the pandemic, and were concerned about the mental health impact of reduced employment prospects and the continued stress associated with both COVID-19 and acts of anti-Black racism around the world.

### Opportunities

The Black Cultural Leaders table saw the recovery period as a pivotal time to make a meaningful shift in Toronto's cultural landscape, using strategies related to space, funding and communication.

- **Space:** the group saw an opportunity to create new and increased access to affordable, sustainable and autonomous spaces for Black event producers, artists, and performers. Some of the specific actions encouraged by the group included finding a safety solution other than Paid Duty Officers at cultural events; subsidizing storefront spaces in all parts of the city, but especially downtown, for pop-up events; opening libraries for the Black community for use after hours, with a focus on Black youth activities; and supporting the development of the NIA Centre for the Arts as a hub for Black arts community.
- **Funding:** many considered government funding to be an important tool for structural change. They advocated for making federal emergency support for the culture sector targeted toward the Black community, pointing out that funding announced to date has flowed to existing recipients of public funding, which does not necessarily include Black arts organizations. The group also suggested creating a "scoreboard" to link public funding to organizations with representative leadership.
- **Communication:** the group also called on the City to better promote Black arts and culture and educate the public about issues of anti-Black racism. Suggested actions included encouraging the City to declare a "Blackout Year" (building on the successful "Blackout Tuesday" social media campaign) to celebrate Black arts and culture across the city and advance opportunities for Black artists; supporting education about Black heritage and culture in the public school system and museums; designing a promotional campaign about anti-Black racism; and creating a program to promote Black-owned businesses as vendors for cultural events.



### Youth Under 30

COVID-19 has intensified existing challenges for youth in the cultural sector, and each of the challenges they discussed intersects with equity issues.

The primary concern was stakeholders' diminishing access to employment or to tools to build their own livelihoods. The closure of performance spaces and of businesses where artists are most likely to have a 'day job' has resulted in income loss and increased competition for whatever employment may become available. Anti-Black racism, and racism more broadly, are experienced as barriers to attaining scarce employment. The Digital Divide could exacerbate this challenge because, as more opportunities migrate online, those with insufficient connectivity, equipment or training will be left behind.

Space is also an ongoing challenge that, as in other sectors, has worsened as the impacts of COVID have played out. Due to redevelopment, there is less performance space available, and COVID has affected the viability of spaces where youth work and collaborate such as co-working spaces. Additionally, the cost of housing is going up, while minimum wage is not, making the City unaffordable for youth.

Youth see addressing equity and inclusion as fundamental to Toronto's recovery and rebuild, and as momentum builds around this issue, youth want to ensure their voices are not drowned out by non-racialized allies. They also want to know they can build careers toward leadership positions and that the non-Eurocentric perspective they bring will be valued and supported.

## Funding in Toronto has become elitist ... there needs to be more grass roots outreach to audiences as well as artists.

Comment from Consultation

### *Desired Outcomes*

Youth desire opportunity, access and equity, and there is much the City should do to facilitate this, such as hire and procure with equity as a priority. Additionally, the arts funding disbursed by the City and related agencies needs to support equity goals, including data and outcome measurement, and the City should hold cultural institutions accountable for lack of representation and inequitable hiring practices. And funding should be used to incent the development of mentorship, succession plans and leadership positions for BIPOC people. Critically, additional financial and skills development support is also needed to ensure the move to digital models does not aggravate inequity. Lastly, as a measure the City can undertake to advance access and equity, affordable housing is essential to this community. And further creative infrastructure is needed across the city, with a priority being placed on spaces north of Bloor.

Mental health has been a challenge throughout the pandemic, and racialized individuals need access to racialized mental health professionals who have similar lived experience. Under-represented individuals should be able to receive community services in a setting that feels welcoming and diminishes stigma.

### *Opportunities*

The City should put a youth lens on the programs it offers to maximize benefit to the next generation. Addressing the Digital Divide will increase access to arts and culture and promote equity in Toronto's rebuild and recovery. New approaches to funding will ensure organizations are accountable for equitable hiring and diverse leadership. New investments in youth programming will support priority areas such as arts education, digital, and entrepreneurship skills. And it will be an important step to ensure youth can access these opportunities by engaging in outreach and supporting grant-writing workshops, etc.

Youth participants also see an opportunity to reallocate police budgets to community building initiatives such as the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy or programs that promote interactions across generations. Increased mental health supports that are culturally responsive will help address youth mental health needs that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

The City should leverage its promotional platforms to create opportunities for youth and BIPOC creators, and as their work grows in value, they need to benefit. If people other than the creator benefit disproportionately, then they are benefitting from a system of inequality.



**The City could be a global leader in terms of accessibility and the arts in the digital age. Suggestion that there be more training and resources dedicated to accessibility consultants for the arts, in institutions, organizations (large and small), in arts councils and governments.**

Comment from Consultation

## People of Colour

Access, funding and space are the primary challenges that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) creatives and cultural organizations face according to stakeholders that participated in the People of Colour consultation.

The People of Colour culture leaders said the pandemic has created a time for reimagining the city's diversity and history as assets to build on. Stakeholders felt that to do this work effectively, the City needs to collaborate with BIPOC people, with an intersectional perspective, to abolish structural discrimination that pre-dated the pandemic.

There is a concern about long-term investment in Toronto's BIPOC cultural sector and funding for artists. Stakeholders indicated that organizations have not had time to fundraise for next year, and multi-year sponsorship arrangements are weak. Performing artists are out of work, especially in music and dance. Many BIPOC artists, both emerging and established, are considering career changes due to financial concerns, potentially further damaging Toronto's diverse culture labour force.

Stakeholders had concerns with both physical and virtual space. Some found that the need to pivot to digital delivery left some creators out because of lack of adequate technology.

## Desired Outcomes

Participants indicated that the current government funding to established arts and culture organizations should be reviewed. It was suggested that the City of Toronto develop an equitable funding program to support the next generation of BIPOC creatives, especially outside of the downtown core. This funding approach could advance equity in the culture sector through programs that strengthen accountability and access. Funding should be provided for BIPOC professional training at all stages of career advancement.

The participants said the community feels like it operates in a silo because of the lack of BIPOC physical spaces in the city. Of these spaces available, participants discussed how the City might help cultural organizations with reopening safely, while not eliminating specific art forms such as singing. BIPOC arts presenters are worried about audience and community members feeling comfortable returning to venues. Many participants called on the City to share best practices for testing, use of PPE, creating trust in public transit and supporting staff with mental health.

Participants also suggested the culture sector should maintain digital and virtual ways of gathering, when live performances return. There was a call on the City to continue citywide capacity building for digital services, such as access to laptops and internet access, to ensure equitable access to the digital realm. Virtual performance spaces help to eliminate many barriers that exist in physical performances spaces.

## Opportunities

Stakeholders indicated that Toronto has the potential to be a cultural superpower if it taps into BIPOC talent and expertise. The participants said that BIPOC arts organizations could be part of the City's front-line resources of recovery because cultural life is an important part of civic life. The City could act as a convenor across communities about BIPOC activities and change.

The City could support the BIPOC cultural sector in breaking down silos and collaborating on citywide projects. For example, this could include the Year of Public Art, the Cultural Hotspots program, and a forthcoming Community Arts Strategy. Another suggestion was that Toronto could host the first "Global Majority Summit for Arts and Culture" to celebrate and recognize BIPOC arts. Such an event could launch a creative think tank in the city to continue this work, advance best practices in collecting race-based data, and foster collaborations for the BIPOC culture sector.



## Francophone Community Impact

Staff sought input from the Toronto Francophone Affairs Advisory Committee about the impact of COVID-19 on the city's Francophone community, and opportunities to support and empower French-speaking residents during the recovery period. Committee members included representatives of Francophone cultural organizations, businesses and community leaders.



### ***Desired Outcomes***

Committee members called for greater engagement by the City with the Francophone community. They felt that Francophone voices have been "missing" from City strategies, and there was a strong interest among the group for the City to enhance outreach to French-speaking communities.

The group expressed considerable interest in emphasizing the social determinants of health as part of Toronto's recovery from COVID-19. They cited issues related to confronting anti-Black racism, empowering businesses and cultural organizations led by women, and supporting newcomer settlement and integration services as all being central to the community's recovery.

They also advocated for engaging and empowering a generation of diverse young new leaders to help Toronto build back better. The Committee encouraged the City to plan not just for the next one to two years of recovery, but to consider how to strengthen Toronto over the next one to two decades. They saw the engagement of youth leaders as a key strategy for doing so.

In addition, the Committee noted that Toronto's Francophone community is not concentrated in any one geographic area or neighbourhood, and often relies on special events to gather and connect. The group encouraged enhanced, ongoing support for community festivals and events to cover increased costs related to public health protocols, and to support innovative programming, including digital offerings and alternative forms of public engagement.

### ***Opportunities***

The Committee encouraged the City to build a stronger partnership with Toronto's Francophone community during the recovery period, citing a number of potential opportunities to do so:

- Establish a permanent Francophone Affairs Office within the City of Toronto to ensure appropriate representation of the community in City policy.
- Provide funding to Francophone community organizations to deliver new leadership and skills development programs to foster the next generation of talent.
- Reduce barriers to entry to the labour market for French-speaking and other newcomers by advocating for more licensing and regulatory bodies to accept foreign credentials, and discouraging requirements for "Canadian experience" in job applications.
- Leverage French presence in Toronto's business and cultural communities to promote investment in/from French-speaking markets such as Quebec, France and Africa.
- Promote Toronto to French-speaking domestic tourist markets in Quebec, and develop targeted packages with other regions such as Niagara.

## Culture Snapshot Interjurisdictional Review

There are limited examples of COVID-19 related arts recovery programs beyond emergency grants in other jurisdictions.

- Montreal is providing grants to non-profit organizations that can assist local business with issues pertaining to supply, administrative support, people management, sales systems or other areas.
- The City of Vancouver is encouraging local arts organizations to provide information to Naheyawin, an Indigenous consultancy, who are working to compile national data to help policymakers make informed decisions about how to support Indigenous artists and cultural practitioners in the wake of COVID-19.
- Moving beyond emergency relief to content creation, the City of Sydney, Australia, has launched the Creative Fellowships Fund to provide grants to artists and arts organizations to produce new artistic works that can be presented during or after the pandemic.

### Canadian Cities

#### ***Vancouver, BC***

- On April 3, Vancouver City Council approved its 2020 Cultural Grants. Vancouver stated that funding for operating or annual assistance grants will not be affected if events or activities are cancelled or postponed, and increased flexibility for recipients' use of project-based grants.
- Vancouver is encouraging the cultural sector to respond to business impact surveys, such as the Vancouver Economic Commission's general business survey and several culture sector-specific surveys led by the province, the culture industry, and an Indigenous consultancy as mentioned above.

#### ***Montreal, QC***

- Montreal's COVID-19 recovery plan, released in June, includes several cultural sector-specific measures:
  - \$500,000 subsidy program to support performance halls' and cinemas' fixed costs over the July-September 2020 period;
  - Continued implementation of a financial assistance program for artists' workshops, with funding from the provincial government;
  - Calls for proposals for digital creations, artwork, and art installations to enliven Montreal's new "safe active transportation circuits" for pedestrians and cyclists;

- Other general business recovery measures also apply to the cultural sector;
- Access to new grants and loans for businesses through PME MTL (PME is the French acronym for small- and medium-sized businesses);
- Workshops, training, and personalized support to help indebted business recover (cultural sector will be a targeted sector);
- Supports for Montreal businesses in attracting foreign direct investment, such as networking events and initiatives to help businesses publicize themselves to international companies; and
- Development of a nightlife economic policy.

#### ***Calgary, AB***

- \$2 million in funding from the Community Economic Resiliency Fund (established in 2015) directed to arts and cultural organizations through the Calgary Arts Development Authority's (CAD) grant programs.
- Additional \$8 million allocated to support Calgary non-profits which may include arts organizations.
- In April, Calgary Arts Development (CAD) (arms-length municipal funding for the arts) funded 133 artists to a total of \$170,547 through their short-term relief funding program. Elephant Artist Relief also received a grant of \$30,000 to distribute through their individual artist relief funds.
- CAD also surveyed larger arts organizations to understand the current needs and provided \$950,000 in funding based on survey results.

#### ***Ottawa, ON***

- Ottawa's Emergency Community Support Fund and the Rapid Response Fund provided nearly \$2 million in support to a variety of groups impacted by the pandemic including arts groups like Dandelion Dance, Ottawa Art Gallery, Multicultural Arts for Schools and Communities (ECSF), and others.
- Arts Network Ottawa created a webinar and tip sheet of strategies, tools and web platforms for artists wanting to share their work with audiences at a physical distance.
- The 2020 Ottawa Music Development Fund (OMDF) funding is specifically focused on addressing COVID-19. In partnership with the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa International Music Conference (OIMC) spearheaded the Ottawa Music Development COVID-19 Relief Fund, with \$25,000 to go toward projects as part of Ottawa's efforts to assist with the 'restart' efforts for the local music industry.

## U.S. Cities

### ***New York City, NY***

- The city government provides listings of available resources to New York City's (NYC) artists and culture sector workers on the city's website.
- The New York Community Trust created the NYC COVID-19 Response and Impact Fund to aid non-profit service providers, including arts and culture organizations. The Trust raised \$110 million from 1,300 donors. It distributed nearly \$73 million in grants and \$37 million in no-interest loans through the Non Profit Finance Fund to NYC-based non-profits.
- The New York Foundation of the Arts (state-wide) provides information on various grants that are available to artists and culture organizations. Most programs are on hold while additional funds are sought from donors but have waitlists for when funding becomes available.

### ***Boston, MA***

- The Boston Artist Relief Fund run by the city and the Boston Center for the Arts receives donations and provides \$500 per artist for cancelled events, with priority focus on low-income artists. The fund has provided over \$280,000 to 515 artists.
- On July 7, the City of Boston announced a \$1 million Arts and Culture COVID-19 Fund for non-profit organizations that have been impacted by COVID-19, including arts and culture. This includes costs for finding new safe spaces for performances and rehearsals, adapting existing facilities to comply with public health standards, developing new capacities in streaming and virtual engagement, addressing issues of equitable access on digital programs, retraining staff, and other costs associated with physically distanced program delivery.
- The City of Boston is taking this opportunity to renovate City Hall outdoor public space to allow for future festivals and gatherings of up to 25,000 people, including public art.
- Drive In theatres, outdoor gardens, zoos, reserves and public installations reopened May 25 (Phase 1), with arts and entertainment forthcoming in Phase 3, and concerts/clubs in Phase 4.

### ***Washington, DC***

- Cultural businesses were eligible to apply for funding under the city's \$25 million Small Business Recovery Microgrants Program, which provided an average grant of approximately \$6,000 to 7,038 businesses.

- Events DC, Washington DC's official convention and sports authority, launched its programs for the \$5 million undocumented workers relief fund through the DC Cares Program and the \$10 million Cultural Institutions Grant Program in June. The program is aimed at those excluded from federal stimulus efforts and are experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Chicago, IL***

- The City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) partnered with the state and the broader philanthropic community on the Arts for Illinois Relief Fund. Since April 1, it has awarded \$5,088,000 in \$1,500 grants to 1,460 individual artists and \$6,000 to \$30,000 grants to 233 organizations around the state. The fund is administered by existing grant service organizations.
- The city created a self-certification process, Be Safe Chicago, for reopening. This includes industry guidelines for film and television production, museums, performance venues, and movie theaters.
- A full list of additional local and national emergency supports for artists is listed on the main page of DCASE website including Blues Musicians Emergency Relief Fund, Book Industry Charitable Foundation assistance to booksellers and comic retailers, Queer Writers of Colour Emergency Fund, etc.





**Seattle, WA**

- The City of Seattle is supporting artist relief through city-led programs and by investing in private philanthropic initiatives.
- Seattle Arts Stabilization Fund for Organizations (city-led): The City of Seattle has invested \$1 million in this fund, which is meant to support arts and cultural organizations that have been impacted by the moratorium on events and public gatherings. Funds will be distributed through the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture's grant programs.
- The Seattle Relief Fund for Individual Artists and Creative Workers is aimed at helping those in the greater Seattle arts community who have been financially impacted by cancellations due to COVID-19, with priority given to BIPOC artists, transgender and non-binary artists, and disabled artists. Donations have been accepted through a successful GoFundMe campaign and the City of Seattle has contributed \$50,000.
- Additional, smaller private initiatives are being promoted through the city website.

**Los Angeles, CA**

- LA Arts COVID-19 Relief Fund is a \$10 million fund to support Los Angeles-based non-profit museums and visual arts organizations. The fund is administered by the California Community Foundation (CCF) and provides both emergency operating support and recovery grants to eligible small and mid-sized organizations in Los Angeles County. The fund aims to have an efficient and expedited review process so that recipient organizations receive funds in a timely fashion.
- The City of Los Angeles' Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), the Durfee Foundation, and community partners have joined forces for three iterations of the COVID-19 Arts Emergency Fund aimed at providing relief to the spectrum of Los Angeles-based artists.
- The Music Fund of Los Angeles established an Emergency Relief Fund for American Federation of Musicians Local 47 members who have lost revenue due to work stoppages resulting from the COVID-19 emergency.
- The L.A. Art Workers Relief Fund is an emergency response to the sudden, widespread economic fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to raise at least \$250,000 through a GoFundMe campaign in order to distribute \$1,000 grants to as many art workers across L.A. County as possible.
- The Mission Asset Fund, in partnership with the Snap Foundation, established the LA Young Creatives Fund to offer financial support to members of the creative economy whose work has been impacted by the pandemic. LA County residents who work in creative fields are eligible to receive a \$500 grant to help cover any pressing financial needs.
- LA Dance Emergency Fund provides grants of up to \$500 to help support the LA dance community during the public health emergency. Dancers/companies must be residents of Greater Los Angeles.
- Women's Center for Creative Work (WCCW) re-worked its 2020 Emergency Health Grant for Artists to better respond to needs arising from COVID-19. WCCW devised a short-form application and rolling weekly deadline for \$1,000 grants.
- The Foundation for Contemporary Arts created a temporary fund to meet the needs of experimental artists who have been impacted by the economic fallout from postponed or canceled performances and exhibitions. The Foundation disbursed one-time \$1,500 grants to artists who had performances or exhibitions canceled or postponed because of the pandemic.
- The Relief Fund for L.A. County Visual Artists supports the region's visual artists struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Center for Cultural Innovation administered the Fund.

## International Cities

### **Melbourne, Australia**

- The City of Melbourne allocated \$2.5 million to local artists and creatives to invest in new works and digital presentation of works and performances.
- Sustaining Creative Workers delivers quick-response funding to professional independent creative practitioners, sole traders, freelancers, collectives and micro-organisations and businesses whose work and livelihoods have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus. The program provides up to \$5,000 for individuals, sole traders and freelancers and up to \$10,000 for collectives, micro-organisations and businesses.

### **Sydney, Australia**

- Sydney created several relief grants that artists and cultural businesses were eligible for:
  - Up to \$2.25 million in Creative Fellowships to fund new projects
  - Up to \$1 million in Cultural Sector Resilience Grants to provide lost income relief for not-for-profits and sole traders
  - Quick Response Grants, which provide up to \$2,000 for emergency support for projects including cultural projects
- Sydney's recovery plan contains eight commitments to support cultural recovery, including:
  - Directing existing grant support to sustain cultural organisations and local creatives;
  - Advocating to federal and state governments for targeted support for culture and no net loss of cultural space; and
  - Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices.

### **Milan, Italy**

- The Italian government's Ministry of Culture provided €20 million in funding for an emergency fund.
- Museums reopened starting May 18, many with free entrance, reduced hours, and measuring body temperature on entry.
- From May 12 to 25, the citizens of the Municipality of Milan were invited to fill in an online questionnaire that was prepared to collect information and listen to the needs and perceptions of people.

- 'Art Bonus' program promotes cultural patronage and financial support for the relaunching of cultural sites. The state promotes donations for the protection of cultural heritage, the development of culture and the revitalization of tourism through substantial tax deductions. The program exists for many northern Italian municipalities, not only Milan.
- La Scala has reopened for four performances in July, limiting to 600 people in the 2,000-person theatre.

### **Seoul, South Korea**

- Performance Revival Project is providing 11.5 billion KRW (~\$13 million CAD) to approximately 500 culture groups to support performance production costs.
- Funding 10 teams of artists up to 50 million KRW (~\$56,000 CAD) to support streamed performances from Seoul's largest cultural complex.

### **Singapore**

- A \$55 million Arts and Culture Resilience Package (ACRP) was announced in April 2020, to provide support and opportunities for arts organisations and artists, and help them develop longer-term capabilities for the post COVID-19 recovery. The program was recently extended to July 31. Programs include:
  - Capability Development Scheme for the Arts (CDSA): Launched in mid-March, the CDSA is aimed at supporting skills upgrading across various disciplines including art making, digitalisation, entrepreneurship and audience development. To date, nearly 320 training opportunities have been supported, benefiting over 120 arts organisations and arts Self-Employed Persons (SEPs).
  - Digital Presentation Grant for the Arts (DPG): To augment digitalisation efforts and to support efforts by artists and arts organisations to present their work in digital form or via digital mediums during this COVID-19 period, the DPG was launched in mid-April. To-date, it has supported more than 160 projects by the arts community and SEPs, creating over 1,800 job/gig opportunities.
  - National Arts Council (NAC)-Commissioned Works and Partnerships: NAC has also actively commissioned projects through its own festival platforms, as well as through partnerships with organisations such as Singapore Press Holdings and Hear65. Through the Digitalisation Fund for Commission and Partnerships, NAC targets to create over 1,000 more job opportunities, largely for the SEPs.



# 13 | Theme: Inspire Toronto

Inspire Toronto is an initiative of the City, that includes developing a plan for public-facing events, to animate Toronto as it reopens, by strengthening civic pride and engagement. This initiative will drive economic and cultural development through creativity with the intent to inspire.

As Toronto reopens, travel, tourism and local public interactions will have changed significantly. There is an opportunity to welcome Torontonians back to their reopening city in ways that can strengthen the bonds between them and also drive cultural and economic development across the entire city. A campaign to promote and inspire Torontonians to re-engage with their neighbours, neighbourhoods and the broader city should reach and engage residents, businesses and communities in every part of Toronto.

Following consultations, jurisdictional reviews and considering health guidelines, City staff have developed the framework for Inspire Toronto. Inspire Toronto will:

- apply an equity lens in every aspect;
- Include and benefit businesses, artists and residents across Toronto;
- Comply with municipal and provincial health protocols;
- facilitate economic development, promote culture, and create joy; and
- respect the losses experienced by Torontonians and the significant impact of COVID-19 on communities in the city.

Tourism, corporate and community partners as well as residents from across the city will be critical to the reach and success of this initiative. The initiative will work with partners from diverse and creative communities to develop a cohesive, fresh and powerful approach to restoring and renewing the city.

Events are intended to help Torontonians feel joy again or stimulate economic activity, with some initiatives focused on accomplishing both objectives.

The timing for Inspire Toronto will be guided by public health advice, assessment of progress in the COVID-19 response, and will align with municipal and provincial directions as Toronto moves through Stage 3 in Phase II. It is anticipated that Inspire Toronto will launch after Labour Day, if health data is positive. If the health data signals that delaying would be appropriate, programs currently being developed can also be adapted or pushed further into the fall if required.

The estimated budget for Inspire Toronto in 2020 is \$1.325 million financed through existing resources, sponsorships and partnerships. The existing resources largely come from budget allocations for initiatives that were cancelled due to COVID-19. Outreach is underway to secure partnerships and sponsorships.

## Examples of Inspire Toronto Activations

Inspire Toronto is a combination of activations, both City-produced, and those produced by community partners. All will share the objectives of stimulating economic and cultural activity by welcoming Torontonians back to their City with creativity and hope.

While programs are still being developed, the following activations are being considered:

1. **LocalTO** – a hyper-local focused tourism program to promote exploring Toronto. A passport will be developed that highlights local cultural experiences, restaurants and small businesses, and that encourages exploration both locally and across the city.
  - **StrollTO** – will motivate residents to actively discover the unexplored shops, stops, places and spaces within their local main streets. StrollTO will include live music and other cultural opportunities.
  - **Dine With Your Neighbour (DWYN)** – will be neighbourhood-specific events where neighbours are invited to dine together, 'al fresco'. These events could involve local restaurants, delivery or take-out, along with cultural activations.



- **Indigenous and Newcomer Community Gathering -** Indigenous and Newcomer community members will be invited to register for this meal through the Native Child and Family Services and the Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership in order to provide a 'Dine With Your Neighbour (DWYN)' experience for those facing food and/or housing insecurity.

- 2. BigArtTO -** will be a City-wide temporary public art campaign to encourage residents to come out and engage with art. This campaign could include walking routes with restaurants, local shops, etc.
- 3. HistoricTO -** will give Torontonians a peek at the city's past through the access of local history, heritage, and land-based learnings at Toronto History Museums.
- 4. DineOutTO -** is an expanded and inclusive city-wide program created to support the local restaurant industry in economic recovery.

Inspire Toronto is developing more potential activations, and will leverage some existing, COVID-19-adapted, City-produced events such as Nuit Blanche, to advance this initiative.

## Implementation

An Inspire Toronto Working Group has been established to engage partners from the tourism, corporate, equity-seeking and creative communities that will inform, support, contribute to and collaborate with City staff on a cohesive, fresh and powerful program.

### The Working Group will:

- Support Inspire Toronto by providing advice, information, creating connections, promoting it to their stakeholders;
- Develop a narrative and identity that can be applied to appropriate initiatives generated by member organizations. The identity could be extended to initiatives by non-member organizations when appropriate; and
- Act as ambassadors for Inspire Toronto by working with other stakeholders across the City.

### Members of the Inspire Toronto Working Group include:

- The Mayor's Office, Rise Edutainment, Destination Toronto, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Indigenous Tourism Ontario, TABIA, and Civic Action.
- Inspire Toronto will be supported by City staff with expertise in operations and logistics, marketing and communications.

## Inspire Toronto Narrative and Visual Identity

Through the City's Economic Development and Culture Division (EDC), Cossette has been retained to work with the Inspire Toronto Working Group and staff to develop a visual identity, narrative and campaign. This 'umbrella brand' will be used to create a sense of cohesion for all programs included within this initiative, although individual programs will retain their own name and identity. This brand can be used for City-produced and third-party events. It will be launched when the program is announced.

**Community spaces, parks, and public spaces are hugely important - gathering indoors is unsafe due to risk of COVID transmission so we need more access to outdoor public spaces for exercise, recreation, experiencing nature, connecting with others, holding performances and events - to keep our City's culture alive and its residents mentally/physically healthy.**

Comment from Consultation

A group of cyclists riding on a city street. In the foreground, two cyclists are prominent: one in a blue jersey and another in a dark blue jersey. They are followed by several other cyclists further down the road. The background shows a typical urban setting with trees and buildings.

# 14

## Appendix: Mayor's Economic Support & Recovery Task Force: Summary

Very soon after the start of the pandemic, in March and April 2020, the Mayor's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force was convened and 20 virtual roundtable discussions were held with more than 200 stakeholders from a wide variety of business and community groups. Participants were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses and sectors and were encouraged to propose short- and medium-term interventions to support Toronto's economy.

As part of the Task Force's work, several City councillors led stakeholder engagement sessions on focused themes, including small business, social services and housing, workers and labour, climate action, cultural communities, and children and youth.

A summary of what was heard through the roundtable discussions and the recommendations from the Council Member Led Engagements are provided in this section. Additional details from the Task Force and roundtables will be posted to the City of Toronto's Open Data website at [www.toronto.ca/open](http://www.toronto.ca/open).

### Roundtable Discussions

Summary of what the Mayor heard:

- An urgent focus by government and the private sector is needed to support people hardest hit by job loss and business closures.
- Government and the private sector need to be flexible and lenient wherever possible to keep the economy in operation.
- Larger institutions and big businesses are looking at ways to adjust operations and provide community support. Institutions and businesses will be under financial strain if the negative economic effects of the pandemic continue over the long-term.
- People working in essential services want to continue working, although they have concerns about safety, hygiene and sick leave programs. More support is needed for community social services.
- Even within this economic crisis there are opportunities for businesses to grow and experiment in the short-term (for example, in technology and manufacturing) and for the labour force to train online.

- A need for coordinated, clear communication from business, government and labour. A commitment from stakeholders to work together and with government.
- A need for strong messages of support from the Mayor about Toronto's future and a plan for economic recovery.

### Council Member Led Engagements

#### 1. Social Services & Housing - Councillor Ana Bailão

##### **Mandate:**

This group connected with social agencies to ensure that they are being included in the city's emergency management operations and advocate for the resources they need to help seniors and vulnerable people through an extended COVID-19 crisis. It looked at medium-term issues these groups are facing and made recommendations to strengthen the social agencies during and after this crisis. This group also connected with residential landlords and non-profit housing providers in order to ensure tenants remain housed throughout the crisis and avoid eviction afterwards.

##### **Recommendations:**

##### **Social Services:**

- Address the immediate and long-term cash flow and funding needs of the sector. Increase funding flexibility and collaborate to increase the capacity of the sector to innovate and respond effectively to changing community needs.
- Guide recovery with a strong equity lens, recognizing that certain communities are more affected by the impacts of COVID-19. Use data to inform targeted policy, program, and funding decisions to ensure inclusive recovery for all.
- Ensure the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-led agencies in recovery planning. Recognize the complex needs of Indigenous communities in targeted funding, programs, and supports.
- Partner with the sector to leverage local resident engagement and grassroots leadership to ensure inclusive recovery.

- Work with the not-for-profit sector to generate options for the public purchase of Toronto residential and commercial properties to maintain and increase affordable housing and shared community and not-for-profit access to space.
- With a renewed appreciation for the essential services provided by the sector, embed decent work principles and standards in recovery efforts to create a new care economy.
- Invest in the technology needs of not-for-profit agencies and vulnerable communities to reduce the digital divide and enhance service provision and access.

## **Housing:**

- Provide emergency funding for cities and community agencies, including further expansion of funding under the Federal Reaching Home program and the Ontario government community homelessness prevention initiative (chpi) program.
- Provide urgent renter assistance. Urgent supports through the following time-limited measures:
  - Federally or provincially led temporary rental assistance support
  - Expand and enhance rent bank programs
  - Establish an emergency housing benefit (for people who don't qualify for CERB)
  - Extend rent arrears eviction moratorium post-covid (for arrears incurred during the pandemic by tenants who were in good standing pre-COVID-19)
- Expedite and expand delivery of the Canada Housing Benefit
- Accelerate and expand funding for new affordable homes under the National Housing Strategy
- Establish dedicated funding for a modular rental housing program
- Fund acquisitions and renovations/conversions. Consider right of first refusal authority/ approach for strategic acquisitions
- Provide operating funding to create supportive housing
- Increase investments in permanent affordable housing, including:
  - Create affordable housing opportunities for Indigenous Peoples by Indigenous Peoples;
  - Housing retrofit programs
- Increase supply of rental housing through other policy and financial tools

## 2. Cultural and Arts Communities - Councillors Cynthia Lai and Gary Crawford

### **Mandate:**

This working group looked at culturally specific organizations and the economic needs of diverse communities across the city. This group connected with specific cultural groups to ensure their unique needs are being reported to the Task Force. This group also liaised with the arts and music community to ensure their needs, as well, are being responded to and communicated to the Task Force.

### **Recommendations:**

- Support culture sector business continuity and key institutions
  - The City should work with the federal and provincial governments during this unprecedented time to safeguard the city's culture sector infrastructure and business continuity throughout COVID-19. This includes support to key cultural institutions, creative businesses, arts and heritage organizations, and festivals and events.
- Significantly expand the culture sector's digital infrastructure and adaptation
  - Advocate to the federal government for major investments in digital infrastructure as stimulus spending.
  - City should seek specific investments to strengthen e-commerce capabilities and data analytics, support efforts to modernize intellectual property protections, and facilitate improved connections between Toronto's growing tech sector and the cultural sector.
- Maintain and advance a generation's worth of equity gains that are at risk and support vulnerable workers
  - City should work with the federal and provincial governments to support organizations trusted in diverse communities to help Torontonians facing systemic economic exclusion, expand career pathways for diverse creatives and support the continuity and development of new anchor institutions in diverse communities.
- Leverage culture to build strong neighbourhoods in a multi-centred city
  - City is encouraged to accelerate cultural investment outside the core, to support the development of neighbourhood vitality across the city, and to use cultural assets, space and events to catalyze small businesses and reconnect citizens from diverse communities to each other.



- Provide cultural and language specific information for residents and business owners for communities in which English is not the main language.
- Support small businesses to recover through streamlined approvals/processes, offering marketing support through 'Liscious' programs, BusinessTO support and assistance with moving to online business.
- Explore financial supports for small businesses including: vacant commercial property tax and commercial/industrial tax relief.

## 3. Small Business BIAs - Councillor Brad Bradford

### **Mandate:**

The Small Business and BIA group stayed in communication with BIAs across the city and those businesses not included within BIA areas in order to recommend advocacy to other levels of government for helpful relief packages for the sector and medium/long-term supports to retain and strengthen main street businesses.

### **Recommendations:**

- Reforming the commercial tax system to get main street healthy again and address long-standing property tax challenges for small-businesses by:
  - Creating a comprehensive and long-term rate capping strategy to manage the volatile impacts of MPAC tax assessments on small businesses.
  - Creating additional city tax bands for commercial properties
  - Analysing the feasibility of a vacant storefront tax
- Creating a "ready for re-entry plan" to kick start main streets in preparation for when they open, with measures including:
  - Launching a series of advertising and awareness campaigns for local business and creating a coordinated plan of city-wide local shopping and dining events.

- Delivering physical changes to public space on main streets;
- Leveraging infrastructure funding to ensure projects that have the ability to contribute to strong retail conditions, such as 'complete streets', are expedited; and
- Supporting local business with the transition to online retail and e-commerce through Digital Main Street, public art initiatives, and BusinessTO Support Centre.
- Completing a "small business-first review" to improve City process and reduce barriers for local entrepreneurs, non-profits, and social enterprises including:
  - Putting City services and applications into online portals ready to serve the next generation of entrepreneurs in our city;
  - Updating zoning and Toronto Building processes and requirements to support small businesses and social enterprises;
  - Reviewing business licensing fees and submission requirements with a lens to streamline process and remove unnecessary barriers; and
  - Expanding Digital Main Streets by advocating for provincial dollars for grants.
- Advocate to the provincial government for better commercial tenancy rules for small businesses in Ontario including:
  - In the short term, ensuring a rent-rebate program is rolled-out, in partnership with the federal government, immediately. And, halting small business evictions for April and May rent, at a minimum;
  - In the medium term, making changes to business interruption insurance policy regulations and regulations on insurance premiums to minimize financial burdens on small businesses; and
  - In the long term, reforming the Commercial Tenancies Act to create a better balance between the rights of small businesses, and commercial landlords.



## 4. Workers and Labour - Councillor Mike Layton

### **Mandate:**

This working group focused on the immediate needs of workers and opportunities to strengthen the labour force post crisis. The primary function of this group was to communicate with labour stakeholders the decisions the city is contemplating and to hear their feedback. Connecting with relevant stakeholders to ensure the City is aware of short and long-term measures to support city workers, as well as the sustainability of the City was key. Collaborating on the need to engage other levels of government and build community support for the city's short, medium and long term response was also important.

### **Recommendations:**

- Stabilize the care sector and protect the health, safety, and rights of workers
  - Apply the Fair Wage Policy to care workers who work in a facility in Toronto.
  - Use City procurement to support local supply chains and manufacturing, and to ensure employment and equity standards.
  - Restructure the shelter system to ensure client and staff safety, with a focus on accelerating affordable and supportive housing.
  - Call upon provincial and federal governments to dramatically restructure long-term care homes and implement industry employment standards that support a full-time workforce, with living wages and adequate staff to patient ratios.
- Improve supports and benefits for workers and their families
  - Advocate to the federal government to apply lessons learned from CERB to increase EI benefit levels and ensure income supports are available throughout the long recovery phase.
  - Call upon provincial government to protect workers through minimum wage of \$15 per hour and seven paid sick days.
  - Work with the sectors hardest hit by layoffs – tourism & hospitality, film, arts & culture, transportation and retail – to secure their recovery as soon as possible.
- Ensure the recovery achieves climate goals and builds resiliency and equity (aligned with Resilience and Climate Change recommendations)
  - Identify City projects that achieve climate, resilience and equity goals and can be rapidly scaled and accelerated in preparation to access funding from other levels of government

- Ensure the City uses disaggregated race-based and sociodemographic data to make data-informed decisions in the recovery period, to understand the disparities in how COVID-19 is impacting communities and to inform plans for recovery that benefit communities facing inequities.

## 5. Upper Education and Industry - Councillor Jennifer McKelvie

### **Mandate:**

This working group connected with the universities and colleges to address their needs and look for opportunities where they could support the city. This group focused on the industries that are deemed essential and whose work is continuing during the pandemic; specifically, goods movements and manufacturing. These are businesses that deliver and create the essential needs we need to continue to provide to our residents. An important function was to communicate outwardly to Industry stakeholders the decisions the city is contemplating and to hear their feedback. This helped ensure the City did everything it could to ensure universities and colleges can function safely and efficiently.

### **Recommendations:**

- Expedite planning and building processes through all phases for academic institutions, to avoid cost overruns of existing projects and build necessary infrastructure for economic recovery.
- Advocate to the provincial and federal governments for funding for accessible and affordable Wi-Fi to create resilient communities.
- City of Toronto should expand supports for students through alternative summer job and experiential (co-op/training) opportunities, food security initiatives, and supports for international students.
- Develop partnerships between higher education institutions and the City of Toronto to support local businesses and organizations:
  - Leverage faculty expertise and student placements to develop small business supports, training, and transition to online services; and
  - Form faculty working group to develop methods to support small businesses and arts and culture organisations.
- Develop new research partnerships around reopening, economic recovery, and resilience using memorandums of understanding.

## 6. Recovery and Restart - Councillors Stephen Holyday and Paula Fletcher

### **Mandate:**

This working group focused on planning for the recovery and restart of City operations following the crisis. This group worked with City staff, divisions and the Task Force on comprehensive planning for a post-COVID climate ensuring the City can get back on its feet as soon as possible, and explored ways in which we can emerge stronger than before.

## 7. Business and Community Contributions - Councillors Michael Thompson and Michael Colle

### **Mandate:**

With the support of the Toronto Office of Partnerships, this working group helped raise awareness of philanthropic needs and worked with business and community leaders interested in contributing funds or goods and services to help alleviate the COVID-19 crisis. Engagement with potential donors is critical, as well as communication with the rest of Council to create awareness of needs. This group consulted with and reported to the overall task force on the creation of a City-led fundraising campaign targeted to the areas of greatest need, which will evolve as the City shifts from response to recovery.

### **Recommendations:**

- Review City's IT infrastructure to ensure integrated and streamlined processes, cost effectiveness and customer service.
- Streamline Toronto's customer interface to reduce regulatory burden, simplify transactions and improve response times:
  - Establish interdisciplinary unit reporting to City Manager to provide one-stop review of major development applications; and
  - Create resident and business accessible digital portal for all permits, services and licenses.
- Complete a comprehensive bylaw review to ensure simplification, modernization and reduce redundancies.
- Establish new guidelines to control the rights of Councillors to delay or interfere with developments to protect constituent interests and ensure a fair and expeditious process for development applicants.

- Encourage resident and business input on economic revitalization ideas through a digital 'hotline'.
- Leverage BIA and restaurant networks to develop customizable marketing support templates and provide meals to vulnerable and food insecure communities.

## 8. Children and Youth - Councillor Shelley Carroll

### **Mandate:**

This group connected with programs and services that serve youth to coordinate their efforts in helping the social, mental and physical health of young people post-crisis. Determining the most effective ways for the City to help children and youth post-COVID was the main deliverable of this group. Councillor Carroll stayed in close contact with service delivery and advocate organizations to report to the entire Task Force on the status of the sector and their needs.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to invest resources to increase recreation service capacity or programs in high demand areas, ensuring they remain affordable and/or free for low-income and vulnerable residents.
- Help agencies and businesses that provide recreation and services to children and youth by establishing a Health and Safety Support Fund or secure additional funding in the City's granting streams to implement the COVID-19 related health and safety requirements including staff training, personal protective equipment, screening and space reconfigurations.
- Work with key partners in planning re-opening and recovery of early years and child care sector, including the Government of Ontario, Toronto Public Health, and other partners
- Provide labour market intelligence and work with the Youth Employment Partnership Table to develop new large-scale youth recruitment approaches such as virtual job fairs to address the health risks of large gatherings and to rebuild the capacity of the youth employment sector.
- Invest in existing community based intermediaries that can provide virtual training, leverage investments, and provide services in local communities.



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## Section 11:

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