



**Toronto Youth Cabinet**  
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## **Re: EX17.1 Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto**

Hello Executive Committee Members,

The Toronto Youth Cabinet is appreciative of the work done by the TORR team to put together this report. We are also thankful to have been a part of the process in various capacities, especially during the Roundtables held by Councillor Carroll for Children and Youth. As the city's official youth advisory body, we believe that it is important for young people to be embedded in the development of key directives such as this one.

As we all know, this is a critical time for the city to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic stronger than where we were before. The pandemic has exposed many of the issues that our city has been facing for years. It has also continued to exacerbate the inequities between the "haves" and "have nots" in the city. We have seen young people struggle to cope with virtual learning, and still to this day some children and youth do not have access to technology to keep up with their classmates. We have seen crowding on key bus corridors that serve people from vulnerable communities who have no other choice but to take transit to get to school or work. We have also seen folks threatened with evictions and a lack of support to keep them away from homelessness. These are all symptoms of the fragilities we knew were there; COVID-19 just accelerated their effect.

This report has many suggestions from the community to make the city better. In considering this report, it is important that you also understand that it will require bold action to invest in the city and strengthen these communities for long term sustainability. For years, we have not seen attention towards how the City spends its money the way we experienced this summer in response to community relations to police. While the discussion for re-allocating resources away from the police and instead directly to communities came more into the light, it is something that we've had in the discourse for a long time. Now, with increased budget pressures, there is no better time to take courageous steps to funding initiatives that Council has already approved, such as Immediate Steps to Address Gun Violence and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

This report highlights that the City has many needs, some of which are being met and many of which are not. It is important that as we consider measures to recover, these measures are adequately funded. This may require cooperation with other levels of government, but it will also require leadership from the City to ensure we are doing everything we can to support



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residents and youth. We were expecting the Long Term Financial Plan, which may have a completely different context than what was originally planned, but now is the time to take the steps to build a structure to city-building efforts in Toronto.

Meeting the commitments of this Plan, addressing the City's projected 2021 budget opening pressure of \$1.5B and the growing backlog of capital projects including state-of-good repair needs cannot be achieved through traditional methods. These needs cannot be met entirely through efficiencies and reallocation. New tools are needed. An ambitious commitment from Council would entail not only recognizing these issues but placing the City on a path to funding these priorities. That must include assessing new revenue tools already permitted such as a Commercial Parking Levy and Vacant Homes Tax.

Finally, the upper levels of government must also be part of the solution. That means sharing the responsibility of essential but expensive services the City provides such as public transit and affordable housing. Given the City's limited taxing authority it is simply not reasonable for the municipal government to fund these items on their own. Finally, the upper levels of government must grant the City additional powers. Toronto is not the same as every other municipality in Ontario and Canada- The City of Toronto Act acknowledges this, but it needs to be taken to the next level. The City needs a broader base of revenue tools and greater authority to make decisions on its own.

Sincerely,

Michael Manu, Executive Director