

**From:** [Jin Huh](#)  
**To:** [councilmeeting](#); [Budget Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Joint Statement on City Budget - for City Council Meeting  
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**Attachments:** [Joint Statement on the Toronto City Budget 2022.pdf](#)

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Hi,

Please find, attached, a joint statement I am sending on behalf of 59 organizations, to be shared with the Mayor and City Councillors for the Council meeting tomorrow.

Thank you,

**JIN HUH** (she/her)

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## **Mayor John Tory and City Councillors,**

We, 59 organizations working across multiple sectors and with many communities in Toronto, urge you to consider our urgent call to improve the 2022 City budget and all future budget processes.

Crisis has become the norm in our city. On top of a pandemic, Toronto's residents are grappling with multiple and intersecting crises — unaffordable housing; a homelessness crisis that is taking lives; an opioid crisis that is taking lives; a climate emergency; and racial, colonial, and gender-based violence and injustice. Toronto's longstanding challenges in childcare, transit, and community services are now urgent.

These intersecting crises are impacting us all, and especially those most marginalized and excluded — people with disabilities; low-income residents; Indigenous peoples; Black and other racialized communities; immigrants, including those with precarious status; workers with precarious employment; women and gender-diverse residents; and those living in under-resourced neighbourhoods across the city.

Of the many things missing from the budget, the most glaring is a sense of urgency and a commitment by the City to do everything within its powers to build the Toronto we need and deserve.

Communities across our city are calling for urgent action. Yet the City's 2022 budget does not reflect the sheer scale of this urgency. Nor does it create a viable pathway out of this emergency to put us on the road to building back better.

Instead, this budget continues to limit revenues despite growing and urgent needs; it includes increased funding for police, delayed action and underfunding for critical programs and services, and slow movement on Council-endorsed strategies and frameworks.

The City of Toronto has demonstrated an ability to move fast to respond to a crisis. We've seen it in the work of public health to expand vaccine access across the city, working in collaboration with resident leaders, community groups, community agencies, health institutions, and other partners. We need the City to move with — and advocate with other orders of government to push for — a similar urgency on the multiple other crises affecting communities.

### **We call on the City of Toronto to:**

- 1. invest immediately in urgently needed programs and services;**
- 2. amp up intergovernmental relations and advocacy using the power of communities;**
- 3. strengthen accountability, transparency, and democratic participation; and**
- 4. reimagine the City budget for a better Toronto.**

## 1. Invest Immediately in Urgently Needed Programs and Services

Now more than ever it is time for Council to take a human rights and intersectional equity approach to budgeting in order to address the crises before us and support those most vulnerable and impacted by inequities.

- Address the **homelessness crisis** in both the short term and long term, including by immediately incorporating 2,250 permanent, non-congregate shelter beds in the shelter system, increasing capacity of the COVID recovery program by at least 200 beds, preparing adequately for the heat waves expected this summer and extreme cold next winter, and meeting the other [demands put forth by the Shelter and Housing Justice Network](#) (SHJN) for investment in the collapsed shelter system.
- Invest further in **homelessness prevention** initiatives, including Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC), the Rent Bank program, and other supports for tenants at risk of losing their housing.
- Provide **protection for tenants** by meeting the [demands of Toronto ACORN](#), including increasing the RentSafeTO program budget by \$5.2 million to hire an additional 100 bylaw officers to enforce rental housing standards.
- Protect **existing affordable housing** by doubling the investment in the Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition (MURA) program.
- Fund the **Housing Commissioner** this year. This role is critical to combatting housing discrimination, advancing the human right to housing, and ensuring the City meets the housing obligations it has committed to. For a third budget now the role is unfunded, and motions to accelerate and resource it in the previous two years have been rejected.
- Expand **overdose prevention, education, training, and response** programs and implement the recommendations of the [Toronto Shelter-Hotel Overdose Preparedness Assessment Project](#), as demanded by SHJN.
- Accelerate implementation and fully fund Phase 3 of the **Poverty Reduction Strategy's Fair Pass** program this year and meet the other [demands of TTC Riders](#).
- Rapidly enhance **public transit infrastructure** and increase service frequency, reliability, and distribution of routes throughout the city at the scale needed to achieve Toronto's climate targets, including the 2030 target of 75% of school/work trips under 5km completed by walking, cycling, or taking transit.
- Increase investment this year in the **community crisis response** pilots by advancing additional pilots with additional partners to address community responses to homelessness, gender-based violence, and youth violence prevention (each respective area requires unique approaches, system changes, and solutions), as outlined in the [Rethinking Community Safety](#) report.
- Increase funding for more **homeless drop-ins, youth lounges, and more recreation and community centres**, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods, and fund the additional \$500,000 needed to fully **eliminate overdue library fines**.
- Invest further in, protect, and centre **essential services frontline workers**, including increasing funding for street outreach workers and youth outreach workers across the city.

- Rapidly scale up funding for **greening buildings** through programs that directly contribute to increasing the number of **safe and affordable housing units**, including HELP, Hi-RIS, MURA, and TCHC retrofits; these programs enable hundreds of home retrofits per year but must be scaled to enable hundreds of thousands per year.
- Ensure that community organizations can maintain critical community services by providing an inflationary increase to the **Community Partnership and Investment Program** at the same rate that City divisions receive.

Investing at the levels needed to address the crises before us requires using the full power of the revenue tools currently available and those we must advocate with other orders of government to attain — which brings us to our next recommendation.

## **2. Amp up Intergovernmental Relations and Advocacy Using the Power of Communities**

We have not fully realized the power of this city when communicating and advocating with other orders of government about additional funding, shared responsibilities over programs impacting Toronto residents, or (re)negotiating City of Toronto powers to bring in new or additional revenue tools.

We call on the City of Toronto to work with residents, communities, and local organizations openly and transparently to jointly strategize and advocate with the other orders of government for greater investment and better outcomes for Toronto residents. City Council has an opportunity to engage community organizations and residents on a variety of issues such as shelter and housing, climate change, healthcare, childcare, seniors, long-term care and aging in place, and public transit.

In the housing realm, for example, the lack of investment from the Federal government and the absence of a *real* national housing program make it difficult for the City to meet its duty of care to address the large numbers of Toronto residents being evicted and/or at risk of homelessness. The Federal government’s failings also paved the way for Toronto’s shelter crisis — as SHJN puts it, “The feds caused this problem and should hear from us” with demands for social housing and an emergency rent supplement program for unhoused people. As well, the Province’s lack of real rent control actively produces homelessness; the housing secretariat budget notes state that the Province needs to contribute \$7.6 billion for the implementation of the HousingTO 2020–2030 plan, and so far its commitments amount to \$600,000.

As another example, the City needs to bring the federal and provincial governments to the table to fully fund the City’s climate plans or Toronto will fail to meet its climate goals. Toronto’s Net Zero Strategy needs an estimated total investment of \$145 billion by the City, other levels of government, businesses, and residents to reach net zero emissions by 2040. But the City’s 2022 budget contains only a fraction of that, with just \$1.5 billion of projects for 2022 identified as having climate and resilience “components.”

Working with communities will not only strengthen the City’s advocacy work with other orders of government but also lead to a better, more democratic City budget and process.

### **3. Strengthen Accountability, Transparency, and Democratic Participation**

Improvements are needed to ensure the budget process is accessible, transparent, democratic, participatory, and equitable, and that residents and community groups and organizations have the time to effectively engage with the budget, not only at budget time but also throughout the year. Currently the timeline from draft budget release to public deputations to the Budget Committee to the final Council vote is too short. Communities do not have enough time to effectively respond and engage with the budget. Briefing notes and other budget materials are often inaccessible or do not tell the whole story. To hold the City accountable residents and community groups must be able to assess whether City plans are on track and adequately funded, yet they do not have a process to request more information. Most importantly, when the draft budget is launched decisions have already essentially been made. The public’s role is severely confined by, and only comes at the end of, this limited process.

The budget deeply impacts the everyday, material lives of Toronto residents. Given what is at stake, it is crucial for residents to meaningfully engage in the budget process. Yet voices from many communities — particularly the voices of residents who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, low-income, living with disabilities, unhoused and at risk of being unhoused, and immigrants and refugees — are not being heard at decision-making tables. This can only be addressed through significant measures to deepen the democratic process, including establishing distinct processes to consult Indigenous rights holders, proactively enabling participation by equity-deserving communities, and embedding a strong intersectional gender equity analysis in budget development.

To most effectively and democratically decide how *public* funds are raised and allocated, we call on the City to:

- **Determine budget needs before setting the tax-supported budget.**
  - Identify the revenue needed to address current urgent and critical needs across our city (rather than budgeting to actuals and confirmed sources of revenue).
  - Informed by the goals and needs of the city, set the tax rate, and expedite options for additional revenue streams to help fill the funding gap (rather than perpetually defer/delay this work).
- **Align budget documents with plans, strategies, and commitments for transparency.**
  - Release briefing notes at the beginning of the budget process detailing the extent to which the budget advances City strategies and key commitments, describing not only the work progressing but also unfunded and under-funded programs and delays.
- **Implement a renewed and improved equity responsive budgeting process.**

- o Strengthen the inclusion of community voices to inform equity analyses and budget decisions, including through engaging a formalized community advisory group before budget launch (this did not take place in 2022).
- o Expand the equity analysis of the budget beyond the new and enhanced programs and apply a strong intersectional gender equity approach (the 2022 budget focused only on new/enhanced, and this was limited in scope).
- **Meaningfully assess the impacts of budget decisions on Indigenous communities and groups across all divisions.**
  - o Uphold the City’s commitments and obligations to Indigenous rights holders and provide a fulsome report on the City’s overall contribution to Indigenous communities and whether its contribution is meeting City-approved plans, strategies, and commitments. Ensure that this report is accessible and present it to, and fully engage with, Indigenous groups.
- **Allow residents and communities to shape the budget from the planning stage to the final vote at Council.**
  - o Resource budget engagement — for example, provide funds for community organizations with meaningful resident relationships to run resident information and budget 101 sessions and issue-specific town halls to feed into budget development.
  - o Make budget documents widely available, community friendly, and accessible, including using plain language, ensuring compatibility with screen readers, and covering all divisions and issues.
  - o Proactively remove barriers and increase participation in formal City budget processes — for example, ensure every ward has at least one budget town hall and make deputing easier with more sign-up options and reduced waiting times.

#### **4. Reimagine the City Budget for a Better Toronto**

**Mayor Tory and City Councillors, our city is at a crossroads.** Amid multiple and intersecting crises, if you continue to take a “business as usual” approach you will preside over a rapid decline in the wellbeing and quality of life of Toronto residents. Instead, we urge you to show bold and brave leadership and set Toronto on a different course.

Communities and residents — including the thousands who made submissions to Toronto’s Office of Recovery and Rebuild and who spoke up during this budget process — have shared with you on many occasions a strong vision of what is possible and needed for a better Toronto.

We urge you to collaborate with residents, communities, and local organizations to bring this vision to life. You have the opportunity to learn and build from the deep knowledge, experiences, and resourcefulness of community members, groups, and networks to fulfill the City’s existing commitments and develop new strategies to meet evolving community priorities and needs.

In turn, we expect you as elected officials to do everything within your power to find the resources that our city and communities need to thrive. We need deep investment by the City and other levels of government to mend or replace the broken systems that perpetuate inequity and injustice and to build a city where all residents can live good lives and reach their full potential. This change needs to happen, and be funded, at the pace and scale called for by communities — not in increments punctuated by election cycles.

It is time for you, our City Council, to lead by example and use your powers to institute the necessary measures to grow Toronto’s revenue base, including increasing tax rates to reasonable levels compared to other Canadian municipalities and instituting new, sustainable, and fair revenue tools. Furthermore, we call on you to adopt a bolder negotiating position to secure critical investments from other levels of government to meet our urgent needs and protect Toronto’s future. To harness the power of community advocacy, you must stand up for Toronto — and people will come with you.

Toronto can be a global leader in building a city that is healthy, liveable, equitable, just, and zero carbon, but this journey must begin with living up to your commitments. Budget 2022 is your opportunity to start building a better Toronto for all residents, now and in the future.

Thank you.

*Sincerely,*

Abigail Doris	Toronto Community for Better Child Care
Afroza Begum	South Asian Community Support Canada
Amelia Rose Khan	Toronto350
Andria Babbington	Toronto & York Region Labour Council
Anne Gloger	Centre for Connected Communities
Axelle Janczur	Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services
Bahar Shadpour	Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Bianca Wylie	Tech Reset Canada
Bill Sinclair	The Neighbourhood Group
Bob Rose	Shelter Housing Justice Network
Brandon Haynes	Toronto Public Library Workers Union - Local 4948
Carolyn Egan, Tam Goossen	Good Jobs for All Coalition
Christie McQuarrie	West Scarborough Community Legal Services
David Meyers	GTA Disability Coalition
Debbie Douglas	Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Douglas Kwan	Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
DT Cochrane	Canadians for Tax Fairness
Emmay Mah	Toronto Environmental Alliance
Feroza Mohammed	Local Champions Network

Hailee Morrison	Warden Woods Community Centre
Herman Ellis Jr.	Scadding Court Community Centre
Heather McGregor	YWCA Toronto
Jin Huh	Social Planning Toronto
Janet Maher	Toronto Seniors' Forum
Joanne McKiernan	Volunteer Toronto
John Campey	Ralph Thornton Community Centre
John Ryerson	Faith in the City
John Stapleton	Open Policy
Joyce Hall	Just Earth
Kim Fraser	Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre
Kumsa Baker	Toronto Community Benefits Network
Lee Soda	Agincourt Community Services Association
Linda Curley	Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre
Lyn Adamson	ClimateFast
Marcie Ponte	Working Women Community Centre
Maureen Fair	West Neighbourhood House
Michal Hay	Progress Toronto
Mel Cederbaum	Toronto Workmen's Circle-Arbeiter Ring
Mercedes Sharpe Zayas	Parkdale People's Economy
Nasima Akter	Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services
Patricia Jacobs	University Settlement
Patricia Mueller	Homes First
Rasul Khaknazarov	Reach for Change
	Right to Housing Toronto
Rob Field	Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations
Rob Howarth	Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Sean Meagher	ConveneToronto
Shakhlo Sharipova	Thornccliffe Park Autism Support Network
Shalini Konanur	South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario
Sharon Simpson	Labour Community Services
Shelagh Pizey-Allen	TTCriders
Shelley Zuckerman	North York Community House
Susan Bender	Toronto Drop-In Network
Thevya Balendran	Scarborough Civic Action Network
Tim Maxwell	Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services
	Toronto ACORN -
	Alejandra Ruiz Vargas, East York ACORN
	Bob Murphy, Weston ACORN
	Marva Burnett, Scarborough ACORN
	Peter D'Gama, Etobicoke ACORN
	Rama` Fayaz, Downtown ACORN
Victor Willis	PARC
Viji Pal	E-Heroes Group
Wendy Porch	Centre for Independent Living in Toronto