

From: [Amelia Rose Khan](#)
To: [Budget Committee](#)
Subject: Toronto350 comments for 2023.BU2.1 on Jan 2023 Budget Committee
Date: January 20, 2023 2:55:29 PM
Attachments: [Toronto350 Written Deputation.pdf](#)

To the Budget Clerk:

Please add Toronto350's comments to the agenda for the January 2023 Budget Committee meeting on item 2023.BU2.1, 2023 Capital and Operating Budgets

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments are attached to this email.

Sincerely,

"Amelia Rose" Khan | [Toronto350.org](https://toronto350.org)
Pronouns: **they/them**



Dear Budget Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a written deputation concerning the 2023 Budget. My name is Amelia Rose and I'm sending this letter on behalf of Toronto350, an volunteer-led local activist group focused on climate action, climate justice and Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty, loosely affiliated with other 350.org groups around the world.

We are deeply concerned that the proposed budget contains cuts of 1% to the Environment and Climate department and a 0.4% cut to Employment and Social Services while increasing the police budget by 48.3 million.

Toronto needs to be aware and extremely alarmed not only by the deadly effects of climate change but by the financial costs that such severe climate events pose. Despite voting in favour of plans to fight climate change and reach net zero emissions by 2040, this budget does not match the scale of funding required. In order to meet the city's Net Zero goal, an average of over \$8B per year will need to be invested¹.

These next few years are crucial for action. We are providing the following recommendations for the City to take immediate action:

1. **Do not cut the budgets of the Environment and Climate Department or the Employment and Social Services Department.** The proposed increases to the police budget must be redirected and used to invest in much-needed social services, public transportation, housing and climate adaptation and mitigation.
2. **Funding must be redirected away from highways and projects that will put more cars on the road.** The 10-year capital cost to maintain the Gardiner Expressway is \$2.2 billion which makes up 44% of the total capital spend. Yet, the highway only carries about 7% of commuters in and out of downtown. This will put more cars on the road and will not contribute to progress towards reaching net-zero². Instead, this money must be used to fund social services and public transportation that are consistent with the climate emergency, as discussed below.
3. **To make progress towards net-zero the city must allocate funding to meet its own plan to install 100 km of protected bike lanes by 2024**, which the city is currently not on pace to meet.
4. **The city should move towards free public transit and cancel the proposed fare hike.** The budget includes an increased transit fare (10 cents a ride) to fund inadequate service. However, the proposed, 9% decrease in service in 2023 than before the pandemic will lead to more crowded vehicles and longer waits for buses, streetcars, and



subway trains. Increased fares consistently lead to lower ridership, which is counter to climate solutions.

5. More funding must go towards creating affordable housing options that model climate-friendly construction methods:

- a. The budget outlines an increase of \$1 million to expand the Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) program. But, far more is needed to address the city's affordable housing and homelessness beyond the capacity of the EPIC program. In 2018, over 20,500 formal applications for eviction were filed. This will increase as growing numbers of families and individuals are struggling to get by³.
- b. 60% of the city's emissions come from buildings⁴. Therefore, more funding must be directed to scaling up building retrofits more quickly. This must also be done with tenants in mind, to ensure they don't face higher rents and or evictions as a result.

Additional revenue is badly needed to address chronic underfunding of vital programs. We support the proposal for new revenue tools to be considered, including increased property taxes, including residential, multi-residential, commercial, and industrial property taxes.

However, more money will be required. To meet this demand, we support the call from [TTCRiders](#) and [TEA](#) proposing that the City further examine implementing a tax on commercial parking lots such as those at large malls in order to fund transit and climate initiatives⁵.

We also support a luxury home tax, such as ACORN's proposal for a mansion tax which calls for the Municipal Land Transfer Tax to be increased from 2.5% to 3.5% for expensive homes⁶. Finally, we call on Council to urge the federal and provincial governments to institute a progressive wealth tax and return a portion of it to municipalities.

We urge the Committee to use a climate justice lens on all their budgetary decisions. Toronto needs to take immediate bold and drastic action because this next decade is critical in keeping the world a habitable place for both current and future generations.

Thank you,

Toronto350

Sources:

1. <https://www.torontoenvironment.org/teas-key-takeaways-from-the-2023-city-budget>
2. https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2020/02/10/how-the-gardiner-expressway-hogs-the-road-during-budget-talks.html

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3. <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Forced-Out-Evictions-Race-and-Poverty-in-Toronto-.pdf>
4. https://www.torontoenvironment.org/teas_key_takeaways_from_the_2023_city_budget
5. <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/advocates-call-for-commercial-parking-levy-to-help-pay-for-ttc-1.6232392>
6. https://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/new_revenues_needed