
2025 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Equity Impacts in the 2025 Staff Prepared Budget

Issue/Background:

Equity Responsive Budgeting (ERB) at the City of Toronto embeds equity¹ impact analyses within the annual budget process. The purpose of this briefing note is to:

- Provide an overview of ERB.
- Outline the ERB process for City and Agency staff.
- Provide context on the state of equity in Toronto at the time the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget was being developed.
- Highlight any potential positive and negative impacts associated with changes to the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget (please refer to Attachment A).
- Highlight additional efforts City Divisions and Agencies are taking to advance equity and reconciliation and drive continuous improvement through the 2025 Staff Prepared Base Operating Budget.
- Highlight opportunities for organizational improvement in equity and reconciliation work.

Through the ERB process, staff review and report on how the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget, which includes service level changes, revenue changes, reductions, investments, and base budget spending impacts on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities² in Toronto.

For each proposal in the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget, staff assess whether it has positive, negative, or no equity impacts on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities, including any intersectional impacts.

1. Equity Responsive Budgeting at the City of Toronto

¹ Equity is understanding, acknowledging, and removing barriers that prevent the participation of any individual or group, making fair treatment, access, opportunity, advancement and outcomes possible for all individuals.

² Equity-deserving communities refers to communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of institutional and societal barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination.

ERB is a key piece of the City's equity and reconciliation infrastructure and commitments. The implementation of ERB is a collaborative process between the People and Equity Division (P&E), the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division (SDFA), and the Financial Planning Division (FPD). All City Divisions and Agencies are required to undertake an equity impact analysis on service changes and new and enhanced investments and identify up to two Equity Leads to support this process.

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget was prepared in the context of a challenging fiscal environment with the objective of maintaining the same levels of services for Toronto residents. Where adjustments were identified, the City aimed to limit and minimize impacts on residents, particularly for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. Where possible, the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget sought to strengthen delivery of services to Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities, based on the understanding that increased pressures can be disproportionately placed on these communities during times of economic constraint.

2. Modifications to the 2025 Process

In preparation for the 2025 budget submission, key components of the ERB process have been refreshed to better equip City leadership and divisional ERB contributors to complete analyses with a critical equity lens that is specific to Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. Changes to the ERB process included a redesigned qualitative ERB worksheet with more prescriptive questions that encouraged staff to use a systemic lens to demonstrate how investments are working towards the City's equity and reconciliation goals in a measurable way. Additionally, targeted Equity Lens training sessions were redesigned with the aim of building the capacity of divisional ERB contributors to use the tool as a part of their overall equity analysis.

3. Equity Impacts of the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget

State of Equity in Toronto

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget focuses on ensuring that the City can maintain essential services while minimizing negative impacts the budget proposals could have on residents. The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes 67 proposals with positive equity impacts. A full list of budget proposals with equity impacts can be found at Attachment A. This includes investments in areas such as emergency services, transit and accessibility, housing and shelters, and infrastructure, and supports for youth.

Summary of Equity Impacts in the Operating Budget (service and revenue changes, and new and enhanced services)

Below is a summary of investments with positive equity impacts.

Investments in Keeping People Safe and Providing Community Services

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes:

- A new investment of \$0.8 million for the Downtown East Action Plan to coordinate the City of Toronto and community partners to address intersectional challenges such as poverty, homelessness, community safety and wellbeing, mental health and experiences of addiction, including substance use in this area, amidst its resilient social network and vibrant economic activities. In 2025, this investment will provide funding for actions such as the creation of a grant program to support community-based organizations providing essential supports to marginalized individuals and those experiencing crisis in the Downtown East. The Action Plan has high positive equity impact on Indigenous peoples and Black residents, and other equity-deserving community members, including racialized residents, women and gender diverse people, seniors, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, youth, newcomers, those with low-income levels, and those living with disabilities, among others.
- An investment of \$3.4 million for Toronto Paramedic Services to recruit 102 new permanent staff of which 95 are frontline paramedics to address an average of 4% increase per year of emergency calls, and a significant increase of 12% at the 90th percentile from 2019-2023 for in-hospital wait times, and a \$2.9 million investment to hire 52 new operations firefighters for Toronto Fire Services. These added investments will help improve response times and meet the increasing demand for emergency services, including for seniors and low-income communities.
- A \$5.0 million investment, led through the City Manager's Office, to enable effective, targeted investments to prevent youth violence in Toronto.
- An investment of \$10.5 million in 2025 to support the City's Vision Zero Road Safety Plan outlined in [2024.IE18.1](#) by providing additional resources to Transportation Services to expand the Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) program through an additional 75 enforcement cameras across the city to create a safer city for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists to access schools, employment, and city services. Equity-based prioritization has been a focus for the expansion of the Administrative Penalty System (APS), as there can be differential impacts for road users who are from low-income communities, school children, youth, newcomers, women, and people with disabilities.
- A \$2.5 million request from the Federal government to continue and deepen youth violence prevention programs once the federal funding for these Building Safer Communities Fund initiatives end on March 31, 2025. Subject to funding availability, the programs will support equity-deserving communities and their

families towards violence prevention, enhancing life stabilization supports, and case management.

- A \$0.3 million investment for Indigenous Youth Fellowships employment program, for young people 18 and 29 years old, through the Diverse Youth Fellowship Program to increase Indigenous representation in City Council Member' Offices and building skills and outcomes of Indigenous participants.

Investments in Making Life Affordable and Building Affordable Housing and Shelters

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes:

- New investments totaling \$4.6 million in Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) to expand frontline operations and oversight in the Encampment Office from 5 days per week to 7 days per week at large-scale locations, enhance the Street to Homes TTC program allowing for additional weekend coverage and advancing its services to other TTC locations such as buses and street cars, increase daytime winter warming drop-in service hours, fund a new specialized program for long-term service users with complex needs such as extensive histories of violence and service restrictions, strengthen data and technology management, and fund a Service User Advisory Group to provide input of system level policy change.
- A further \$1.3 million investment to expand the Parks, Forestry & Recreation services of encampment maintenance in City parks. This investment will enhance efforts to keep public parks and any encampments within them clean and safe for park-users and encampment residents by removing unwanted waste, hazards and sharp objects.
- An investment of \$0.6 million gross to implement a new Municipal Non-Resident Speculation Tax as approved by City Council in early 2024 with intent to discourage foreign buyers with speculative motives from purchasing residential property in Toronto, effective January 1, 2025, and thus, to safeguard and enhance the availability of residential housing supply and maintain a level of affordability for Torontonians.
- A \$3.6 million investment to support renters and enhance affordable housing initiatives, including: the Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) - Interim Rent Relief Pilot (IRPP) program to support between 130 and 170 households with an interim rent relief benefit for an average of 6 months; the Rent Bank to support an additional 300 households avoiding eviction; the Toronto Tenant Support Program (TTSP) to increase the program's capacity and outreach to tenants in need of legal supports and information services; recruiting three additional staff on the Development Team in the Housing Secretariat, to support the delivery of increasing affordable Rent-Geared-to-Income and supportive housing units and enable more responsive and proactive support for Indigenous

and non-profit organizations; and improving service delivery and addressing urgent repairs at Toronto Community Housing Corporation and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation.

Investments in City Culture and Access to City Spaces

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes:

- A \$5.0 million investment to enhance access to community spaces and services offered at Toronto Public Libraries. These investments will allow for an increase in open hours, focusing on branches serving Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving people, an expansion of the youth hub to three additional branches and digital innovation hub to one additional branch respectively to provide youth a safe space to study and access advanced equipment and professional software, the implementation of financial empowerment services at two additional branches, and an expansion of the social services team to provide essential mental health and crisis supports directly to community. These free services and spaces are critical for community members who otherwise face barriers to access information, knowledge, social services, indoor free safe spaces, and digital infrastructure.
- A \$3.2 million investment to increase access to City parks and recreation spaces. The additional funding will allow for an extension of the operational seasons and operating hours at 10 wading pools and outdoor pools and supervised swimming beaches to provide community members a viable way to stay cool during warmer weather, and the restoration of local gathering spaces including recreational facilities and beautification of City parks to provide safe, welcoming, well maintained community spaces.
- A \$4.3 million investment for enhanced cleaning at recreational facilities improving cleanliness and customer satisfaction at recreation facilities at the City and funding to establish a pilot to implementation plan to prioritize local community registration at select Free Centers. Reducing local registration barriers to participation in programming by local residents should help increase registration.
- A \$0.4 million investment to enhance the City's public education program, community engagement and to create an additional meeting management team. This initiative will enable the City and elected officials to proactively engage and educate communities in the ways they can participate in local government decision-making on issues that affect them and increase communities access to government spaces and information. This initiative will also enable the City and elected officials to better recognize and acknowledge days of observance that are important to the City's diverse communities and

create a culture that better encompasses all residents and increase their sense of inclusion.

- A \$2.0 million investment to support the Toronto Arts Council (TAC), as reflected in Culture Connects: An Action Plan for Culture in Toronto (2025-2035). The additional funding will allow TAC to increase investment in strategic programs supporting Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities such as Black Arts program, the Indigenous Arts program, the newcomer and refugee artist engagement program, and to increase access to the arts outside the downtown core.

Investments in Getting Toronto Moving

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes:

- An \$8.7 million investment for 126 positions to enhance preventative measures, improve service reliability and improve Transit Control response times to incidents and traffic congestion. Two additional positions will be funded to build resiliency to manage risks and embrace new technologies to enable the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) to provide high-quality services.
- A \$6.5 million investment to fund 135 positions will work to improve midday, evening and weekend service citywide across all modes of transportation, and providing more comfort on board for TTC riders.

For more information, please refer directly to the Toronto Transit Commission 2025 Budget Note.

Qualitative Summary of Equity Impacts of the 2025 Operating Base Budget and Progress made during 2024

Overview

This section provides insights into the various equity and reconciliation services, programs, and policies that are being undertaken through the City's 2025 budget. The examples highlighted seek to demonstrate samples of work underway across the City and their equity impacts.

The Toronto Public Service continues to find solutions to address inequities while executing several City equity and reconciliation strategies and plans. Progressing this work while working within existing resources, should be commended, however it's important to note that resources and investments will be required to addressing the increasing inequities facing Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities long-term.

The following themes have been identified as some key areas the City is able to drive equity and reconciliation in with existing operating base budget and capital budget funds.

Highlights

Addressing Affordable Housing and Shelter Needs

Last year, affordable housing and shelters was the number one City service desired for additional investments in the pre-budget public consultations. The demand for affordable housing options and shelters and shelter beds remains a major need for the community this year. There are over 12,000 people in Toronto who are homeless on any given night, Toronto shelters operate at a 98 percent occupancy every night, and roughly 90 thousand people are on the subsidized housing waitlist³. Additionally, 40.5% of Toronto's renter households are spending 30% or more of income on their shelter costs⁴. The City has been and continues to invest resources to address these growing issues.

Progress made during 2024

- Toronto Shelter and Support Services (TSSS) updated the Toronto shelter standards with additional standards specific to confronting anti-Black racism. TSSS also received Council approval for the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy (HSCIS) that incorporates equity and reconciliation into infrastructure planning and development and received Council approval for the City Encampment Approach and Strategy, which is grounded in human rights.
- The Housing Secretariat (HS) increased the supply of rent-geared-to-income, affordable rental, and rent-controlled market homes, including homes for Indigenous peoples and homes for women and gender-diverse people, among other equity-deserving groups. In collaboration with the Confronting anti-Black Racism Unit in S DFA, HS also began developing a Black Housing Framework on responsive housing solutions. HS also launched a Housing Rights Advisory Committee to advance the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.
- Toronto Building, alongside divisional partners, developed the Rental Renovation License By-Law, which was recently adopted by City Council, to address 'renovictions', which disproportionately impacts racialized and low-income tenants.

³ [Homelessness in Toronto - Facts and Statistics - Fred Victor](#)

⁴ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/t004b-eng.htm>

- Revenue Services provided millions of dollars in property tax relief through the Property Tax Relief Program. Between 2015 and 2023, the program has provided over \$35.0 million in property tax relief. The Vacant Home Tax program is another policy tool used to preserve housing and discourage property owners from leaving their homes vacant. Revenue generated from this tax program is directly invested into affordable housing initiatives.

New initiatives planned for 2025

- Toronto Shelter and Support Services will be seeking intergovernmental support to implement the newly adopted HSCIS focusing resources on supporting the safety and well-being of people living in encampments, and guiding staff to have a clear, transparent, and coordinated process in their support delivery.
- The Municipal Licensing and Standards Division will continue to enforce the Multi-Tenant Housing Bylaw with the goal of ensuring safe, legal, and affordable housing options are available for those groups more likely to experience precarious and/or substandard housing conditions.
- The City Planning Division's Committee of Adjustment is undertaking an end-to-end Service Delivery Review which aims to achieve faster approvals for applicants, cost-effective service delivery, consistent, predictable process/hearings, flexible operations, and a better experience for applicants, public, staff, and elected officials.
- The City Planning and Development Review divisions are undertaking a joint initiative to improve public consultation processes, which will positively impact Indigenous, black and equity-deserving communities who are often not engaged in the planning process.
- Revenue Services Division is proposing to implement the municipal non-resident speculation tax to discourage international buyers from purchasing property in Toronto to keep housing supply for residents.

City strategies and action plans being advanced

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget aims to strategically address anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, systemic poverty, and transphobia in the housing and shelters area by advancing the following City Strategies and Action Plans:

- *HousingTO 2020-2030* Action Plan.
- *Reconciliation Action Plan* (Action 9: Address Racism, Action 10: Promote Prosperity, Action 12: Implement the Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Action 13: Support

Indigenous Health and Well-Being, Action 14: Increase Access to Affordable Housing, and 15: Support Indigenous Placekeeping).

- *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* (Recommendation 10: Improve shelter and housing conditions to better support Black Torontonians).
- *Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Recommendation 3: Increase the supply of affordable housing).
- *Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Youth* (Action 29: Increase the supply of gender-affirming affordable and supportive housing for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary youth).

Accessible Indigenous and Community Engagement and Partnerships

Toronto residents are keenly aware of the needs of their communities as well as the barriers they face to achieving those needs. Conducting accessible and inclusive engagement activities is one keyway of leveraging the vast body of knowledge that is held within the community in a meaningful and respectful way and ensuring community-responsive services. The City has been and will continue to invest resources in this important work.

Progress made during 2024

- Indigenous Affairs Office engaged with City divisions to begin reconciliation audits to ensure that amongst other requirements, City divisions are:
 - actively building relationships with Indigenous communities and undertaking continual learning
 - undertaking continual learning and
 - involving Indigenous voices in decision-making processes, particularly on matters affecting Indigenous communities in Toronto.
- Toronto Emergency Management Division distributed “Get Emergency Ready” preparedness guides translated into the City’s top 10 home languages and French and actively participated in community events. In 2024, they distributed over 1,300 pamphlets and engaged with over 1,000 community members.
- Toronto Fire Services conducted 289 presentations to seniors with 15,713 participants to improve fire safety awareness and preparedness.
- Corporate Real Estate Management Division completed the construction of the Spirit Garden. The garden is designed to bridge cross-cultural dialogue through teaching, learning, sharing, and healing for Indigenous communities and all who visit. It responds in part to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 82. The Spirit Garden project was led by Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre in partnership with the City of Toronto.

- The Toronto Zoo established the Toronto Zoo Indigenous Advisory Circle to provide advice and guidance on Indigenous programs and services.
- Social Development, Finance and Administration consulted extensively, with over 5,000 respondents primarily from Black communities, to inform the 10-Year Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. This updated Plan will come before Council in 2025 and will build off the work done in 2024 to ensure progressive and meaningful actions, recommendations, and outcomes for Black communities in Toronto.
- The City Manager's Office led the 2025 Pre-Budget Public Consultation which was open to all residents in October 2024. The goal of the consultation was to gather feedback from residents on which budget areas were most important to them. In total, 1,094 people participated in City-led and community-led in-person and virtual meetings. The City engaged the services of external vendors and partners to provide support to public meetings and directed outreach to Black, Indigenous and equity-deserving communities. An online survey was also open October 1 – 31, 2024 where residents could provide their feedback on budget areas and actions that the City can take. A total of 12,001 people responded to the online survey.
- The City Planning division has completed the hiring of an Indigenous Engagement Coordinator which will have a positive equity and reconciliation impact on Indigenous communities.
- In 2024, City Council adopted a new Chapter One to the Official Plan. The new Chapter One focuses on advancing reconciliation and acknowledges the importance of engaging Black communities in decision making. City Planning has committed to expanding its focus on Black communities through successive Official Plan chapters, setting a vision for the City to 2051, and adopting principles for a successful and inclusive Toronto. Chapter One now serves as a statement of values against which the divisions can assess everything that they do from everyday administrative practices to recommendations to Council, to new initiatives, to future amendments to the Plan.
- Toronto Public Library offered year-round Indigenous-led programming for all ages, supported a new Anishinaabemowin language collection and developed Smudging Guidelines to support all library branches in facilitating smudging requests in library locations.

New initiatives planned for 2025

- In 2024, Purchasing and Materials Management Division began the co-development of a First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Policy. The goal for 2024 was to build relationships and to foster connections with Indigenous

businesses, agencies and partners. 2025 will be a year of engagement, and national engagement with Indigenous businesses, agencies and partners is being planned. A First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Advisory Circle (Procurement Circle) was developed in 2024, comprised of 13 First Nations, Inuit and Métis members. The Procurement Circle's purpose is to provide guidance, feedback and support with decision-making as required by the City of Toronto in the development of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Procurement Policy. The Procurement Circle will guide 2025 engagement.

- The City Clerk's Office aims to enhance civic engagement through the City's public education program. This office is also working to expand the diversity of the skilled applicant pool and continue to review and refresh outreach strategies and tactics as part of its 2024-2025 "Shape Your City" outreach campaign to promote public appointment opportunities particularly to Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving audiences.
- Toronto Shelter and Support Services will launch a city-wide public engagement on the Homelessness Services Capital Infrastructure Strategy to build public understanding of the scale of challenges faced by the City in developing shelters, to strengthen the City's implementation of the current plan and towards future shelter capital planning. The strategy also recommends engaging Black clients, staff, and service providers in infrastructure planning to ensure future processes and projects respond to the distinct needs of Black clients in the shelter system.
- Parks and Recreation will continue to advance an Indigenous Placekeeping program by engaging Indigenous communities in the design of parks, trails, and facilities, and supporting Indigenous access to park land for cultural practices.

City strategies and action plans being advanced

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budgets recommends new community engagement initiatives which aim to address anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and ableism by advancing the following City Strategies and Action Plans.:

- *Meeting in the Middle Strategy* and Action Plan.
- *Reconciliation Action Plan*
- *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* (Recommendation 19: Increase opportunities for Black Torontonians to participate in City decision-making, 20: Make City spaces more accessible and welcoming to Black Torontonians, and 15: Support Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto).
- *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Recommendation 4: Increase service access and availability, and 5: Improve access to high-quality programs for children and youth).

- *Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans, and Non-Binary Youth (Action 3: Create and resource leadership opportunities for Two-Spirit and Indigenous trans and non-binary youth).*

Access to Business Opportunities, Employment & Training

Toronto employs a large percentage of the Canadian population. Despite Toronto's employment rate increasing over the past year, its unemployment rate continues to increase annually (currently at 8.2 percent) and is above the national average⁵. For some communities, the unemployment rate is especially concerning. The unemployment rate for Black youth in Canada reached 24.4 percent in May 2024, more than double the rate for non-racialized youth⁶. The City has been and continues to invest resources to address these growing issues.

Progress made during 2024

- Toronto Employment and Social Services Division's largest financial investment in 2024 was directed towards programming for Black residents, specifically designed to support Ontario Works clients, providing culturally responsive services and supports. They also ensure at minimum one Innovative Case Management pilot specific for Black communities continues to be implemented annually.
- The Engineering and Construction Services (ECS) Division finalized their multi-year Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan that addresses systemic barriers through key intervention areas, including Learning and Development, Staff Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships. ECS advanced this work by hosting the Employment Empowerment Expo which connected over 100 Black and Indigenous job seekers with information on technical and professional career opportunities and insight, ensuring continued progress toward equitable opportunities. ECS also continued offering career opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities through the Ready, Willing and Able program, onboarding four new participants in 2024.
- Transportation Services Division's StreetART Toronto program continued to offer employment and mentorship for Indigenous artists, mentors and mentees through public art projects.
- Court Services participated in the Youth Career Development Program as well as the Essential Skills Program (in partnership with Miziwe Biik and the People and Equity Division) and hired two trainees for short-term placements.

⁵ [Ontario, October 2024 - Job market snapshot - Job Bank](#)

⁶ [The state of youth employment in Canada — LMIC-CIMT](#)

- The City Clerk's Office continues to work closely with Social Development Finance and Administration to partner with Urban Alliance on Race Relations to deliver the Diversity Youth Fellowship Program (DYFP) which includes cohorts for Muslim, Black, newcomer and Tamil/Chinese/Filipino youth. DYFP is a leadership and career development program for youth from equity-deserving communities to gain hands-on experience working with Toronto's elected officials at City Hall. In 2024, this program serves approximately 30 youths.
- The Office of the Chief Information and Security Officer remained committed to integrating a diversity and inclusion lens throughout the recruitment and hiring process. This commitment is demonstrated by the fact that 73 percent of the division's staff identify as part of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.
- Fleet Services Division launched an apprenticeship program that prioritized applicants from equity deserving communities, including women, two-spirit, trans, non-binary, Indigenous and Black individuals. Staff engaged with community organizations to encourage applications for the apprenticeship program, which upon completion and obtaining the required certification, leads directly into a full-time position within the division for the five apprentices currently in the program. Additionally, Fleet Services worked in partnership with local school boards to establish a co-op program to provide nine high school students with exposure to the skilled trades, and worked with Centennial College to provide short-term placements for seven students in the Automotive Modified Apprenticeship Program.

New initiatives planned for 2025

- The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be generating new business, employment, and training opportunities for Torontonians, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, Black communities, youth, and newcomers due to an increase in social procurement and facility requirements and new jobs being created for the tournament.
- The Parks and Recreation Division's youth leadership / employment readiness training program will help youth from Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities by developing increased employment skills which prepare youth to apply for part-time staff positions with Parks and Recreation.
- Purchasing and Materials Management Division completed a review of the Social Procurement Program in 2024. From 2017-2023, the City awarded almost \$103 million of contracts to certified Indigenous, Black and diverse suppliers. In addition, 78 projects have included workforce development requirements, collectively creating 100 new jobs within professional, administrative and technical fields and providing 194 subcontracting opportunities to certified Indigenous, Black and diverse suppliers. In 2025, Purchasing and Materials Management Division will action next steps resulting from the program review,

including expanding the Social Procurement Supplier List, and engage business and community on the results of the review to identify additional policy and program enhancements.

- Toronto Paramedic Services hired more than 60 paramedics in 2024 and will continue using a comprehensive staffing analysis and hiring strategies in 2025 to enhance services for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving patients, including those who are 65 years and older.
- Environment and Climate Division will be increasing funding for Indigenous Climate Action Grants as the value of eligible project applications greatly exceeds the amount of funding available, demonstrating that additional funding is needed to support more Indigenous-led projects. They will also be developing and implementing a Black-led climate action program.
- Fleet Services Division will be expanding its apprenticeship program. Staff will continue to attend community events, such as those focused on women in trades and the Black and Indigenous job fair and events, to raise awareness of this program and encourage applications. Fleet Services will also focus on expanding its partnerships with local school boards and will work internally to partner with divisions that employ trades people to allow for rotations within the City to provide further exposure to a diversity of skilled trades.
- Technology Services Division will be launching a co-op program for university students to provide early career opportunities for students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programs.
- Multiple City divisions (Economic Development and Culture, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Employment and Social Services, and City Planning) will advance the development of the City's Inclusive Economic Development (IED) Framework. Following the Council adoption of the definition and guiding principles of Inclusive Economic Development, the IED Framework will be co-developed with a Working Table composed of partner stakeholders and will encompass programs and initiatives targeted to directly benefit Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. The framework will also include initiatives that consider specific sectoral perspectives.

City strategies and action plans being advanced

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget recommends initiatives aim to address anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, poverty and ableism in the City's business, employment and training areas by advancing the following City Strategies and Action Plans:

- *Reconciliation Action Plan* (Action 20: Improve Indigenous Economic Development, 21: Decolonizing Honoraria Practices, 22: Enhance Indigenous

Recruitment and Retention within Toronto Public Service, 6: Improve Relationships with Indigenous Organizations, and 26: Enhance Communication between Indigenous Communities and City Divisions).

- *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* (Recommendation 11: Increase employment and training opportunities for Black Torontonians at the City of Toronto, 1: Increase access to high quality programs for Black children and youth, 13: Improve access to high-quality training and employment programs for Black youth) and 15: Support Black-owned businesses to better compete and thrive in Toronto).
- *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Recommendation 10: Improve the quality of and access to income supports, 11: Create employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates, and 12: Improve the quality of jobs).

Improving Service Access and Delivery

As financial constraints and inequities increase, so does the demand for City services, including crisis response. With this increased demand, it has become more important to use existing resources to make improvements to service delivery methods and increase access to City services for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving community members.

Progress made in 2024

- In July 2024, Toronto Community Crisis Services (TCCS) was expanded citywide, six months ahead of schedule. TCCS is a community-based approach to responding to a person in crisis that focuses on health, prevention, and well-being. It builds off the work of the City's Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and is a part of SafeTO: Toronto's Ten-Year Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. Both plans speak of the disproportionate impacts that policing has on Black, Indigenous, and equity-deserving populations, as substantiated by Toronto Police data. TCCS has contributed to the reduction of person in crisis calls to the Toronto Police by 4.5% (in 2023).
- In Senior Services and Long-Term Care Division, 716 staff received in-person training focused on building knowledge to confront anti-Black racism and 728 staff received in-person training on the Learning and Leading with Pride Tool Kit to ensure staff provide the best care possible to 2SLGBTQI+ and Black seniors in City-run long-term care (LTC) homes. Additionally, training took place in several LTCs to help staff implement the CareTO plan.
- Toronto Water Division's Water Relief Program continued to be available to low-income senior residents and persons living with disabilities in the city. City Council amended the eligibility criteria for the rebate for low-income seniors and

low-income disabled persons to increase the maximum household income for an eligible person from \$55,000 to \$57,112, and for each calendar year after 2024.

- Transportation Services Division adopted a new vision for major snow events, where snow will be removed in a way that prioritizes the residents who face the most barriers and this division completed an equity impact evaluation of the Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) program. This evaluation examined inequitable spatial patterns in camera locations, ticketing rates by location, and how ticketing varied by road context.
- Environment and Climate Division, in collaboration with the Fleet Services Division and the Corporate Real Estate Management Division, continued to lead the City's TransformTO Net Zero Strategy to accelerate carbon emission reductions in pursuit of net zero emissions by 2040. Climate change does not impact all people equally, with the first and most significant impacts being experienced by Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.
- Technology Services Division improved digital connectivity, with the establishment of 45 new free public Wi-Fi sites, 6 of which include common areas in Toronto Community Housing buildings. Locations were selected and prioritized based on equity-first criteria and to reduce the digital divide, which refers to the gap between those that have access to affordable internet access and the skills to use modern information and communication technology and those who do not.
- Toronto Public Library expanded Monday to Saturday hours in eight branches and Sunday hours to eight additional branches making 67 of TPL's 100 branches now open on Sunday. Youth Hub service expanded to four additional branches for a total of 28 branches offering the service. TPL's Financial Empowerment service located in two branches unlocked over \$3.0 million in benefit entitlements for low-income Torontonians. TPL's Social Service Team initiative in partnership with Gerstein Crisis Centre provided over 3,500 crisis interventions in 2024 and group wellness and addictions recovery programs at 4 branches reached over 5,480 participants. TPL began providing free menstrual products in all TPL washrooms as a system-wide Period Equity initiative.

New initiatives planned for 2025

- Toronto Employment and Social Services is applying an anti-Black racism lens to their internal policies, programs and initiatives, as well as ensuring anti-Black racism training is completed by staff. TESS is also developing resources to educate staff to conduct gender-based analyses.
- The Toronto Public Library will continue to expand their open hours across all locations.

- Exhibition Place has proposed a Community Activation Partnership; a framework to collaborate with local community agencies to develop community programming and activation. This will positively impact Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups by activating Exhibition Place through art and cultural exhibits. There will be a special emphasis on partnering with artists from Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups.
- Toronto Archives will initiate the development of a Local Indigenous History Research Guide to support researchers in locating and identifying relevant materials, furthering access to the Truth (in Truth and Reconciliation).
- Accounting Services Division will be addressing accessibility improvements with the Annual Financial Report. For example, some design elements in past Reports have not been fully compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, potentially excluding individuals with disabilities.
- Customer Experience Division will continue to engage with residents and businesses, including Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups to enhance and improve accessibility and equity for omnichannel complaints processes.
- Technology Services Division will continue to advance activities that improve digital connectivity for equity deserving communities by establishing an additional 23 sites with free public Wi-Fi, 14 of which include common areas within Toronto Community Housing buildings.

City strategies and action plans being advanced

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget recommends new initiatives which aim to address anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, transphobia, and ableism in the City's services by advancing the following City Strategies and Action Plans:

- *Reconciliation Action Plan*
- *Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* (Recommendation 1: Increase access to high-quality programs for Black children and youth, and 2: Meet the specific needs and aspirations of Black queer and trans youth).
- *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (Recommendation 10: Improve the quality of and access to income supports, 11: Create employment opportunities for low-income groups with high unemployment rates, and 12: Improve the quality of jobs).
- *Access Plan for Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Youth* (Action 16, 17, 20, and 21 to achieve reduced barriers to access for Two-Spirit, Trans and non-binary youth across a range of City of Toronto service and program areas).

Additional Investments

Toronto Police Service

The 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget includes initiatives from the Toronto Police Service (TPS) to prevent the degradation of current service levels. These initiatives include additional resources in emergency response service delivery, investigative areas, the Community Partnerships and Engagement Unit's Downtown Community Outreach Response and Engagement Team, and the Neighborhood Community Officers program. The TPS notes that this allocation in investigative areas, particularly to the Hate Crime Unit, means Black, racialized groups, women, Indigenous groups, immigrants, refugees and undocumented individuals, 2SLGBTQ+ residents, and Muslim and Jewish communities may be positively impacted, especially as the Service works to address and get ahead of the rising trends in hate crimes. A hate motivated crime not only victimizes the individual, it also victimizes the entire group the person belongs to, resulting in the increased isolation, stress, and vulnerability of that particular group. Currently, the City is experiencing a 42% increase in reported hate crimes, with geo-political events believed to be one of the contributing factors.

While there may be some positive impacts identified in the recommended changes in the 2025 Staff Prepared Operating Budget for certain communities, TPS acknowledges that the findings from Phase 2 of the Race Based Data Collection Strategy suggest the addition of more officers tending to emergency response may also have a negative impact for some equity-deserving groups, particularly Indigenous, Black, and other Racialized people. Specifically, it was found that Indigenous women, Black youth, and older Latino people were over-represented in arrests relative to their presence in enforcement actions. Despite Use of Force incidents steadily declining over the last five years with 2023 having the lowest rate in the last five years, the Service acknowledges the systemic racial discrimination and disparities found in previous reports and is responding with an action plan and will continue the Race-Based Data Collection Strategy work to explore and uncover the patterns to be revealed in future releases.

Opportunities

The City has made progress to address barriers experienced by Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving residents, however many challenges remain. Opportunities therefore exist, inclusive of and beyond ERB, to better leverage resources, policies, and processes to positively impact communities and to support evidence-based decision-making, both at budget and throughout the year. This includes:

Increasing Measurement of Service Impacts

There are further opportunities to gather and use sociodemographic data in accordance with the City's Data for Equity Strategy to identify gaps and barriers in all aspects of the City's work – including its services, programs, policies,

processes, and communications. Increasing efforts to monitor and evaluate City programs, services, policies and processes can generate more effective and responsive offerings for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities and foster a more inclusive city.

These activities will support transparency and accountability by providing data and insight to decision-makers in budget requests going forward.

Improving Collaboration and Strategic Alignments

Opportunities exist to further maximize impacts of budget resources by creating conditions for collaboration. Developing City Strategies that align with key community and organizational strategies can help to drive progress towards a shared equity and reconciliation vision and amplify their respective impacts.

Promoting an environment of information sharing within the City can assist to identifying opportunities to streamline impactful services and programs to help maximize the impact of budget resources. Additionally, intentional alignment between services and programs with the City's equity and reconciliation strategies will improve outcomes for residents, as these strategies are directly informed by the impacted communities' expressed needs.

Amplifying Community Experiences

Building on successes with community engagement efforts, the City can continue to utilize existing and new feedback from communities. Amplifying community inputs is particularly important to engaging Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities who have historically not been consulted by government, across services and programs to inform decision-making at all levels of the organization.

By further embedding these experiences and knowledge across all Divisions and corporate initiatives, the City can make decisions that better address the needs, interests and barriers of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.

Enhancing Toronto Public Service Capacity

There are currently several efforts being made by City Divisions and Agencies to build the equity and reconciliation capacity of the Toronto Public Service to better understand and respond to the needs of the Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. Learning is an ongoing activity as community needs continue to emerge and evolve. As a result, opportunities will remain to build the organization's understanding of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving contexts.

Continuing to develop and deliver new trainings and learning opportunities for the Toronto Public Service can further strengthen and develop the City's capacity and knowledge, leading to more inclusive culture and better understanding of the

differential impacts that services have on Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.

Next Steps

Though the City continues making strides towards its commitments to equity and reconciliation in 2025 and beyond, we have work to do with and for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities. The City will remain attuned to community experiences and continue exploring new ways to address existing and emerging inequities. The City will also continue to build organizational capacity to conduct quality equity analyses throughout the year and leverage those generated insights to inform decision-making, and drive better outcomes for Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving communities.

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