

January 22, 2025

**TORONTO YOUTH CABINET (TYC), TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (TDSB) AND
TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (TCDSB) JOINT STATEMENT
ADVOCATING FOR A STRONGER YOUTH-FRIENDLY CITY BUDGET**

To: Her Worship Olivia Chow, Mayor of Toronto, and Toronto City Council,

This year's Toronto budget offers another unique opportunity to invest in a hopeful future for our city's youth, building upon the meaningful strides achieved last year.

On January 25, 2024, we shared a joint statement with the City. Following our collective advocacy, we appreciate the City's commitment to Toronto's young people by approving critical investments. These included the establishment of three new youth hubs in priority neighbourhoods, increased funding for youth violence prevention grants, inflationary adjustments to the Student Nutrition Program, and additional support for community recreation workers and youth-focused programming. These actions were a direct response to the pressing concerns we raised and represented essential steps in addressing the growing challenges of youth unemployment, food insecurity, and violence.

As we embark on a new year, a time defined by renewal and hope, we seek an opportunity to build on this momentum by further prioritizing investments that improve the socio-economic conditions of Toronto's youth, creating meaningful change in their lives today.

With escalating youth unemployment and increasing violence, the demand for robust programs and community support, particularly in underserved areas such as Scarborough and north Etobicoke, has never been more critical. Our city's young people deserve to live and grow in communities with a bounty of opportunity rather than overwhelming poverty and violence.

On behalf of the Toronto Youth Cabinet and the approximately 325,000 students of the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, we respectfully call for additional investment in the following areas:

1. **Establish a Toronto Office of Youth Engagement and Develop a Youth Strategy:**
\$580,000 to establish an Office of Youth Engagement and create a city-wide Youth Strategy, including staffing costs for a Manager and two Community Development Officers, as well as \$100,000 for community consultations, promotion, and reporting.

It has been over a decade since the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES), and during that time, socio-economic conditions for youth have continued to deteriorate. A renewed and focused strategy is urgently needed to address young people's unique challenges.

2. **Broaden Youth Employment Opportunities:**
17.5 million towards enhancing city-funded youth employment initiatives with a focus on creating year-round job opportunities and a robust Toronto Youth Employment Program. These programs should provide mentorship, skill development, and pathways to meaningful and gainful employment. We are seeking investments in these youth employment initiatives:
 - \$6 million for TCHC's YouthWorx program to employ 550 youth.
 - \$4 million for other TCHC-operated youth employment initiatives
 - \$5 million to expand youth employment across city agencies, boards, and corporations

- \$5 million for community organizations and youth-serving agencies to hire Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving youth, youth experiencing homelessness, youth most vulnerable to involvement in serious violence and crime and young entrepreneurs.

This investment is projected to employ over 4,500 youth.

- 3. Expand Youth Spaces and Youth Hubs:**
\$3 million for the creation of 12 Enhanced Youth Spaces and 3 Youth Hubs to ensure every Neighbourhood Improvement Area and priority neighborhood has a dedicated space that fosters safety, belonging, and opportunity for young people.
- 4. Increase Violence Prevention Funding:**
\$1.5 million investment in the Identify 'N Impact Grant Program to expand its reach and impact, addressing youth violence prevention and supporting over 55 grassroots youth-led initiatives.
- 5. Support Transitional Housing for Youth:**
\$10.17 million investment to increase funding for additional youth shelter beds and transitional/permanent housing solutions for youth experiencing homelessness.
- 6. Support Year-Round for Community-Led After-School Programming:**
\$8 million investment in sustainable, community-led after-school programming for youth aged 11-18 to provide inclusive spaces that address the root causes of poverty and violence.
- 7. Expand Community Healing Project (CHP):**
\$1.55 million for the Community Healing Project to operate in 20 communities, CHP addresses the root causes of gang involvement and increases protections for youth exposed to violence.
- 8. Enhance Student Nutrition Programs:**
\$3.9 million investment to tackle youth food insecurity and expand access to nutritious meals essential for learning and development through Toronto's Student Nutrition Programs

The investments outlined above total \$46.2 million. This comprehensive ask reflects the scale of the challenges faced by Toronto's youth and the critical importance of these evidence-based solutions. We believe this investment is not just a financial commitment but an essential step toward creating a city where every young person can thrive, responding to their challenges with compassion, solidarity, and a shared vision for a brighter, more equitable future.

We reinforce our commitment to greater integration of capacity-building efforts between the City and other stakeholders to monitor trends and effectively address instances of youth violence. Additionally, we remain dedicated to strengthening partnerships to identify gaps and allocate resources where they are most needed. While deeply grateful for last year's progress, we encourage Toronto City Council to expand on these efforts to ensure lasting change.

We stand ready to work collaboratively and remain committed to building a city where all young people have the resources and opportunities to realize their full potential.

Stephen Mensah

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Markus de Domenico

Executive Director, TYC

Chair, TDSB

Chair, TCDSB

CC: Paul Johnson, City Manager. Stephen Conforti, Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer