

Send by email: buc@toronto.ca

January 16, 2026

Toronto Budget Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W., 10th floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Councillors of the Budget Committee

We at ETT are writing to you to urge you to invest in policies and actions to improve indoor air quality in Toronto's buildings.

Many of Toronto's public schools and older buildings do not have adequate ventilation and lack air conditioning. Without good ventilation, harmful air pollution from within and from without can concentrate indoors. Our teachers and students are being severely impacted by the effects of climate change, with poor air quality days and heat advisory days becoming more frequent and intense with each passing year. The lack of ventilation isn't just an issue during the warmer months; it's also an issue during colder weather, when people are sheltering indoors, creating the perfect conditions for the spread of airborne diseases, such as the massive surge in influenza cases that began in December 2025.

We are aware of the City of Toronto's IAQ policy for its offices.¹ However, there is no broadly protective IAQ policy for all of Toronto's buildings.

In September 2025, Health Canada issued new guidance for IAQ professionals.² The Health Canada document may be used by policy makers to develop an IAQ policy that, if implemented, would ensure better ventilation and improved IAQ. In particular, the Health Canada guidance states that carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels over 800 ppm are associated with increased reports of health symptoms, and that CO₂ levels may be used as an indicator of ventilation.

We support Clean Indoor Air Toronto's petition to the Board of Health to direct Toronto Public Health to adopt the new Health Canada IAQ guidance. Updating public health planning to align with this latest guidance will greatly help to protect the health of the school community.



We, at ETT, also urge the Budget Committee to support Clean Indoor Air Toronto's proposals for investment, which include:

1. A city-wide Indoor air quality (IAQ) policy and bylaw that follows the latest recommendations from Health Canada, the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), concerning reducing airborne disease transmission and fine particulate (PM2.5) air pollution.^{2,3,4}
2. A program to accelerate indoor air quality improvement in Toronto's buildings, including incentives for HVAC upgrades/retrofits that meet the standards laid out in the City's IAQ policy.
3. An IAQ monitoring system that captures CO2 and PM2.5 levels for municipal buildings and public schools, and displays this data on a public website.⁵

Upgrading HVAC systems in schools to increase ventilation rate in order to bring indoor CO2 levels below 800 ppm while school is in session would quickly translate into improved learning outcomes, fewer sick days, and significantly improved physical and mental health for students and staff.⁶ In addition to protecting our teachers and students from airborne diseases, this would also help to greatly reduce exposure to air pollution, including wildfire smoke, along with harmful pollution commonly found in urban environments.

Although our public schools are within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, we see the possibility for collaboration between the Government of Ontario and the City of Toronto, particularly as the goal of improving IAQ aligns with the City of Toronto's goal of reducing emissions with its TransformTO program⁷, and increasing our resilience to the effects of climate change and related air pollution. Improving IAQ in our schools will also increase accessibility to those with chronic health conditions who cannot risk exposure to poor air quality.

We urge the Budget Committee to invest in the health of Toronto by investing in policies and actions that will clean the air within our buildings, and especially in our schools and educational facilities. By doing so, the City of Toronto can reduce barriers and inequities that prevent our teachers and students from achieving their fullest potential, while helping to support their health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Helen Victoros
President
Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Nigel Barriffe
Vice President
Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Chadwick Gordon
Secretary-Treasurer
Elementary Teachers of Toronto