



Seniors for Climate Action Now! Toronto

January 20, 2026

To: City of Toronto Budget Committee, by email to buc@toronto.ca

Re: BU12.1 - 2026 Capital and Operating Budgets

Please accept this submission from the Toronto Chapter of Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!) with our comments on the draft 2026 City of Toronto budget that is before the Budget Committee this month.

SCAN! is a volunteer organization of seniors compelled to urgent action to mitigate the climate emergency, to protect the land we live on so we can pass on a beautiful, healthy place for future generations. We are Canadian seniors with chapters and members across the country. SCAN! Toronto, the local chapter, has members in every ward in the city.

Our main concern in the City's budget is adequate funding for climate action that would bring us to net zero greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 2040. TransformTO's program to reduce GHGs and support the adaptation to climate change is on the right track but will not reach its goal unless the City, as well as others, take more serious and bolder measures beginning now. Toronto residents, both housed and unhoused, have suffered from excessive heat and flooding, as well as poor air quality from wildfire smoke. Addressing the climate crisis will make the city more liveable for all in the long run AND more affordable, even in the short term.

We want to express our support to the Mayor and the Budget Committee for maintaining priorities and services in this year's proposed budget.

In particular, we are pleased to see a fare freeze on the TTC for the 3rd year in a row and the beginning of the fare cap later this year, as well as modest increases in service. We are pleased to see Wheel Trans expanding to meet demand. A fast, efficient and affordable public transit system is an important investment in reducing GHGs. In addition to reducing the number of private vehicles on the road, it supports equity by increasing accessibility to services and amenities for low-income residents.

SCAN! supports helping low-income tenants to adapt to the changing climate. During the 2021 heat dome in BC over 80% of the people who died were seniors - in their own homes. That said, people who are unhoused require at the very least cooling centres with adequate opening hours and, of course, decent, affordable housing. Making heat pumps free for low-income households would provide cooling at the same time as mitigating climate change. We encourage the City to explore the latest technologies for cooling apartments without contributing more to GHGs.

We also agree with:

- tree planting to increase the City's canopy which assists with cooling;
- the continuation of community climate grants, with the particular focus on youth and the Black community;
- no cuts to programs that encourage building owners to reduce emissions;
- the increase to the Environment, Climate and Forestry (ECF) Division budget, though it is very small; and
- other programs that strengthen our community, such as increases for mental health workers and 911 staff and increased library hours

However, SCAN! Toronto stands with other progressive organizations to call for a reduction in the police budget. We have a revenue problem; and the police budget eats up too much of the overall budget. Increased hiring would not be needed if the efficiencies recommended by the Ontario Auditor in 2023 were implemented.

The wealth tax is a positive beginning in seeking other revenue sources. We encourage the Budget Committee to urge City staff and Council to examine other revenue sources that will also have the effect of mitigating pollution and GHGs.

Last December, SCAN! Toronto made submissions to the Environment and Infrastructure Committee meeting on the issues of what needs to be done to regulate building emissions and encouraging renewable power generation within the City in order to be able to close the gas-powered electricity plant in the Portlands. Renewable generation will go a long way to making the City more affordable. The planned new nuclear plants are the most expensive way to deliver power to meet increasing demand in the City and the slowest to come on line. We acknowledge that the City is limited in what it can do to hasten the closure of the Portlands Energy Centre and reduce reliance on expensive nuclear energy. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to establish programs to educate the public on the economic advantages of renewable wind and solar energy.

To keep life affordable, City Hall should also consider regulating electricity and water use by big data centres. Each one uses as much electricity and water as a small city. Data centres are being built by the largest, richest companies in the world. Those companies have the money and the technology to "bring your own new electricity generation" (as

Google says), generating renewable power for their own use and they could recycle water they use to reduce their demand on public water infrastructure and supply. Following the EU's example, Toronto can take the lead on this front in Canada.

Despite the lack of support from the provincial and federal governments for retrofitting, providing heat pumps and other similar programs, the City can:

- establish a maximum heat by-law as soon as possible;
- maintain building emissions performance standards;
- establish a runoff tax on large commercial parking lots; and
- seek to charge Enbridge for access to city infrastructure, as other Canadian cities do

We know that the City can provide leadership but cannot end climate change by itself, and we urge the provincial and federal governments to step up and provide significantly greater funding in areas of shared responsibility.

We believe it would be a worthwhile investment for the City to increase its communications on the climate change reduction programs that it undertakes and the ways in which residents can contribute.

We urge all Councillors to keep their eyes on the climate crisis – on reducing and protecting people from climate change in the short and long term. Toronto will be more affordable and more liveable if we have renewable energy, excellent affordable or free transit and fewer GHG emissions from buildings.

We look forward to seeing the draft maximum heat bylaw later this year and a plan for strengthening building emissions performance standards.

There is no time to waste in addressing the climate crisis.

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Shelly Gordon

For Seniors for Climate Action Now! Toronto Chapter