



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION KIT DISCUSSION GUIDE

The City of Toronto is working hard to deliver world class services, build more affordable housing and get our city moving.

The 2024 budget made much needed investments to improve public transit, fix our roads, extend library hours and open pools and park washrooms earlier than ever, while also tackling a \$1.8 billion shortfall.

Despite this progress, the City still faces financial challenges in 2025 and must make important budget decisions. We need your input to make a budget that delivers on your needs, while building a strong financial future for our city.

We want to hear from you about:

- What is most important to you for the 2025 budget.
- Your thoughts on federal and provincial funding to support the City.
- How you can help Toronto achieve its long-term financial goals.

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Thank you for your participation!
Learn more at www.toronto.ca/budget

Ways to Share Your Input

Provide your feedback online

- Answer a short anonymous survey to share what matters to you in the City's 2025 Budget. <https://cotsurvey.chkmt.com/BudgetTO>

Participate in public sessions in-person or online

- Meet Councillor Shelley Carroll (Don Valley North) the Chair of the Budget Committee, other Members of City Council and senior City staff.
- Ask questions and learn about this year's Budget process.
- Share your ideas and hear the ideas of other Torontonians in breakout discussions.
- Participate in interactive activities.
- Visit toronto.ca/budget for the schedule and to register.

Host your own conversations

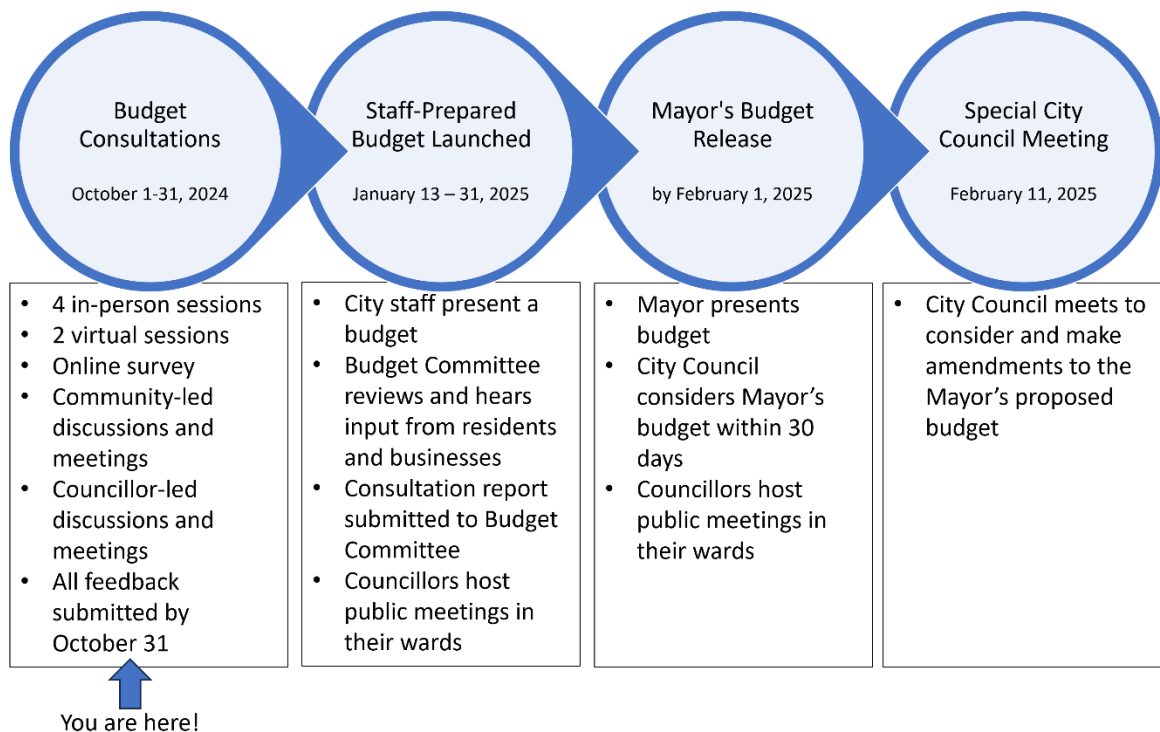
- Meet with your neighbours or add a budget conversation to your next community group or organization's meeting.
- Use this guide to support your discussions and ask participants to submit their feedback online.

Stay informed and involved

- Bookmark www.toronto.ca/budget
- Follow the City of Toronto on X at www.x.com/cityoftoronto, on Instagram at www.instagram.com/cityofto or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cityofto.

What's Happening?

- **Mayor Chow** is working with the federal and provincial governments to secure agreements and funding to keep Toronto's finances stable for the future.
- **City and agency staff** are preparing the budget that will be presented in January to the Budget Committee and available for public review.
- **This consultation runs from October 1 to 31** and your input will be provided to the Budget Committee.
- The **Budget Committee**, chaired by Councillor Shelley Carroll (Don Valley North), meets in **January** to review the budget, hear more from the public, and finalize their budget recommendations. You can participate in January too, visit toronto.ca/budget.
- By **February 1**, the Mayor will present her Budget. The 2025 Budget Committee members are:
 - Councillor Shelley Carroll, Chair (Don Valley North),
 - Councillor Gord Perks, Vice-Chair (Parkdale-High Park)
 - Deputy Mayor Jennifer McKelvie (Scarborough-Rouge Park)
 - Deputy Mayor Amber Morley (Etobicoke-Lakeshore)
 - Councillor Lily Cheng (Willowdale)
 - Councillor Chris Moise (Toronto Centre)
- On **February 11**, a Special Meeting of Council will be held to consider and make amendments to the Mayor's Budget.



To find out who your Councillor is call 311 or visit www.toronto.ca/members-of-council.

Background Information

Toronto faces unique financial challenges, as Canada's largest city.

The City tackled a \$1.8 billion operating budget pressure in 2024 while protecting and maintaining services. We continued to manage our finances and debt responsibly and made progress on important projects. As well, by creating a multi-year approach to address challenges and by securing a [New Deal with the Province of Ontario](#), our goal is to handle future financial challenges.

However, our challenges are too great to be solved in one year. While we continue to work with the federal and provincial governments to find a fair way to fund the City of Toronto and implement the City's Long-Term Financial Plan, the City will still face financial difficulties in 2025.

Current challenges:

- Rising inflation
- Increased interest rates
- Supply chain disruptions, specialized labour shortages, competitive labour market
- Obligations associated with transit expansion
- Growing demand for services

Despite being responsible for more than 60% of the services and infrastructure that residents rely on each day, the City only receives 9% of all the tax dollars you pay to all governments (including federal, provincial and city governments).

The City, federal and provincial governments [work together](#) but have different responsibilities. A large percentage (25%) of the City's property tax funding goes towards federal and provincial responsibilities, including housing, social services and health services.

- **Municipal: City of Toronto**
The City of Toronto is responsible for water treatment, parks, libraries, garbage collection, public transit, land use planning, traffic signals, police, paramedics, fire services, Toronto Community Crisis Services, sewers, storm water management, shelters, childcare, recreation centres and more. Powers are defined by the City of Toronto Act, 2006.
- **Provincial: Government of Ontario**
The Government of Ontario is responsible for: health, education, energy, human rights, natural resources, environment, social services, driver and vehicle licensing and more. Powers are defined by the Constitution Act, 1867.
- **Federal: Government of Canada**
The Government of Canada is responsible for: national defence and Canadian Armed Forces, postal service, banking, employment, citizenship and immigration, census, foreign affairs and international trade, agriculture and more. Powers defined by the Constitution Act, 1867.

Resources

- www.toronto.ca/budget – introductory information as well as detailed budget documents, notes, reports and presentations for every City service
- www.toronto.ca/council – for current information on City Council and Committees meetings including the Budget Committee
- www.toronto.ca/intergovernmental-affairs - for information on key agreements, programs and relationships between the City of Toronto and other levels of government
- www.toronto.ca/subscribe - to receive email notices about the City including Council and committees

Budget Terms

Balancing the Budget: The City is required by provincial law to balance its operating and capital budget each year – which means that the money spent must be equal to the money raised.

- To **balance** the budget, the City can either increase its taxes and fees and/or change or reduce the cost or amount of services provided.

Surpluses and Deficits:

- When the City spends less or raises more money than it thought it would during a year, it might end up with a **surplus**. 75% of operating budget surpluses must go to the Capital Budget for infrastructure projects and 25% to top-up reserves.
- The City is not allowed to have a **deficit**. In other words, the City has never spent more than its revenues.

Operating Budget: The Operating Budget covers day-to-day spending on services such as recreation programs, parks maintenance, public health, roads, transit, police and other emergency services. Approximately 31% of the Operating Budget comes from property taxes, the rest from provincial grants and subsidies, user fees, reserves, and other income such as income from investments.

Capital Budget: The Capital Budget pays for the City's assets that it owns and manages, such as infrastructure, transit, roads, bridges, parks and public buildings including libraries, community centres and fire stations. The 10-year Capital Budget and Plan is updated and presented each year as part of the budget process. The Capital Budget is primarily funded from reserves, development charges, other governments and through borrowing. Ontario municipalities may issue long-term debt **only for capital** and not operating expenses.

Cost-shared Services: Several City services are paid for through agreements between the City and other governments. For example, shelters, daycare, emergency medical services, public health and income support programs are funded by both the City and the Province of Ontario.

Gross and Net: The **Gross** budget is the total cost of running all city programs and services. It's the large number that includes everything and the big overall cost to keep everything running. The **Net** budget is the amount the City still needs to pay for after it gets help from other funding sources, such as subsidies for cost-shared services and program fees. The **Net** budget is the part of the budget that comes from property taxes.

Rate-supported Programs: The City also has three rate supported programs funded almost entirely by **user fees**: Solid Waste Management, the Toronto Parking Authority and Toronto Water. User fees, based on rate models, pay for all or some of the services and the infrastructure to deliver them. For example, water fees are based on how much water you use, and households pay different fees depending on the size of garbage bins they have.

Reserves and reserve funds: Funds set aside by City Council to save over time to pay for big projects, protect against market changes, or handle unexpected costs. These reserve funds can be used for general needs or specific purposes, depending on what Council decides.

Toronto's Actions for Long-Term Financial Sustainability

The City of Toronto has taken important steps to ensure it has enough money to support key services. One major change is the move to a multi-year budgeting approach, which helps the City make better decisions over several years and better manage priorities.

Toronto has also secured a [New Deal with the Province](#) and is working closely with both the federal and provincial governments to improve how the City is funded. Additionally, the City continues to explore options from the updated Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP), which outlines opportunities to improve the City's long-term financial situation. This includes cutting back on unnecessary spending, prioritizing key capital projects, considering selling or leasing city assets, finding new ways to raise money, and seeking more funding from other levels of government.

The City has taken actions that have already saved money and will continue to save more in the future. During the 2024 budget process, \$620 million in savings was identified. The City is committed to looking for more ways to save and use money better. By doing this, Toronto is working towards a strong and stable financial future, ensuring it can continue to grow and provide for its residents for years to come.

Find out more at www.toronto.ca/long-term-financial-plan.

Questions

The consultation asks the same questions whether you choose to participate online, at a public meeting, or if you are hosting your own discussions. Below is the full list of questions for review, participants are invited to respond anonymously [online](#).

Question 1

During last year's budget consultations, people highlighted funding for affordable housing and shelter services, community safety and transit services as their top priorities.

The 2024 budget then delivered millions in funding for new rent-controlled homes and empowering renters while funding the Scarborough busway, TTC service improvements, and improvements to emergency services (fire, paramedics, police and the [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#)).

In 2025, I think the City should increase the budget for the following services:

(Select top three choices and rank in order of importance to you. 1 is the most important.)

- Animal services (such as animal shelters and adoption)
- Arts, culture, entertainment, and attractions
- Building affordable housing and shelters
- Childcare services
- Employment and social services (such as distributing Ontario Works, training and skills development programs)
- Enforcement of bylaws and licensing (such as tenant protection, noise and property standards)
- Environmental and climate action programs (such as flood protection, building energy and tree canopy)
- Fire services
- Improved school nutrition programs, so kids can get a good meal, and take the pressure off busy parents.
- Improving traffic
- Libraries
- Long-term care homes and services for seniors
- Maintaining roads, bike lanes and sidewalks
- Management and maintenance of community housing
- Paramedics
- Parks and recreation
- Police services
- Promoting and supporting Toronto businesses
- Public Health (such as food safety and healthy baby programs)
- TTC and Wheel-Trans
- Violence prevention and programs for youth
- Other, please specify: ___

Question 2

During last year's budget consultations, people identified areas to decrease or move funding. The City identified \$620 million in savings and efficiencies in the 2024 budget.

In 2025, I think the City should decrease the budget for the following services:

(Select top three choices and rank in order of importance to you. 1 is the most important.)

- Animal services (such as animal shelters and adoption)
- Arts, culture, entertainment, and attractions
- Building affordable housing and shelters
- Childcare services
- Employment and social services (such as distributing Ontario Works, training and skills development programs)
- Enforcement of bylaws and licensing (such as tenant protection, noise and property standards)
- Environmental and climate action programs (such as flood protection, building energy and tree canopy)
- Fire services
- Improved school nutrition programs, so kids can get a good meal, and take the pressure off busy parents.
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- Promoting and supporting Toronto businesses
- Public Health (such as food safety and healthy baby programs)
- TTC and Wheel-Trans
- Violence prevention and programs for youth
- Other, please specify: __

Despite being responsible for more than 60% of the services and infrastructure that residents rely on each day, the City only receives 9% of all the tax dollars you pay to all governments (including federal, provincial and city governments).

Last year, Torontonians agreed that the federal and provincial governments need to do more to support Canada’s largest city.

Question 3

The City of Toronto pays for many services that are the provincial government’s responsibility including housing, emergency shelters and transit. The cost of these provincial services puts a large burden on the City’s finances.

Should the provincial government pay for all the services in Toronto they are responsible for in 2025 and beyond?

(select one)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided/Don’t Know
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 4

The City of Toronto continues to pay for services that are within the federal government’s responsibilities. These services include housing, transit and refugee settlement. The cost of these federal services puts a large burden on the City’s finances.

Should the federal government pay for all the services in Toronto they are responsible for in 2025 and beyond?

(select one)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided/Don’t Know
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Question 5

Which of the below do you think that the provincial and/or federal government should provide greater support for in Toronto?

(select all that apply)

	<u>Provincial Government</u>	<u>Federal Government</u>
Funding TTC construction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding the running of the TTC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Emergency services (police, paramedics, fire, Toronto Community Crisis Service)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flood protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintaining roads and buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing, shelters and refugee support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allowing a Municipal Sales Tax for goods and services purchased in Toronto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing a portion of the existing Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) with Toronto	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Allowing a progressive property tax, where more expensive properties are taxed at a higher rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify: __	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 6

What actions would you take with your neighbours to engage the provincial/federal government to get what you want?

(select all that apply)

- Meet and speak with my local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) and Member of Parliament (MP)
- Ask friends to also contact their MPP and MP.
- Participate in the provincial budget consultations
- Participate in the federal budget consultations
- Sign a petition to the provincial and federal governments
- Other, please specify: __

Question 7

What is the most important action the City needs to take to make Toronto affordable, livable and equitable for all?

The online survey also includes optional demographic questions. Complete the survey here: <https://cotsurvey.chkmkt.com/BudgetTO>

Tips for Hosting Your Own Discussion

Use these tips to help host discussions in your community.

Tips for Hosting a Discussion

- Set a time, place and objective.
- Determine who you would like to participate in the meeting and what you would like to discuss.
- Review this Discussion Guide, including the backgrounder and questions. You can discuss all the questions, only those that interest you, or split your group into smaller groups and divide up the sections among them.
- Determine if you will meet in-person, online or in a hybrid format. If online or hybrid, decide which platform you will use.
- Contact your neighbours, members of your organization or community to see what time and meeting format works best for them.
- Consider hosting more than one session to accommodate shifts, childcare, or other commitments.
- Give invitees enough notice to increase the chances that people can participate.
- Ask invited participants to confirm if they will attend. If you have a larger group, consider dividing your meeting into smaller groups or host multiple meetings to work through the questions in sections.
- Ensure participants have any background material or have access to any materials you will reference during the meeting.
- Set an agenda and share with participants before the meeting.

For Online or Hybrid Discussions – Practice Using the Technology

- Ensure you feel comfortable using the online tool you plan to use.
- Consider asking a volunteer to run the technology while you host the discussion.
- Hold a practice session a day or two ahead of time to work out any problems.
- Test both the audio and video connections.

Hosting

The meeting host is responsible for:

- Starting and ending the meeting
- Facilitating the meeting - keeping the meeting flowing, following the agenda and providing an opportunity for as many participants as possible to contribute (see facilitation tips below).
- Directing participants to submit their feedback using the [online survey](#). The survey is anonymous.
- The host does not need to be an expert on the subject being discussed, but they should familiarize themselves with the content, the agenda and questions in advance.

Facilitation tips

- Ask everyone to introduce themselves and share one or two words on why they chose to attend, if time permits.

- Start by describing the agenda or process you have chosen for the discussion and ask if there are any questions.
- Start or end by doing a go-around that lets everyone share a first or final thought, if time permits.
- Keep the conversation focused, remind people of the discussion questions if they get off track.
- Draw quiet participants into the conversation by asking if they have thoughts they want to add, while giving them the option to pass. Ask people who are speaking a lot to let others who haven't spoken yet contribute.
- Suggest that people provide comments or feedback through alternative means, such as chat functions or in emails to the host during the meeting.
- Repeat what you hear and ask for clarity when needed.
- Keep things moving and on time – watch the clock!
- Don't allow intimidation or disrespectful language. Participants should be respectful of others' opinions, but if someone says something disrespectful, remind the group that the discussion should be welcoming and inclusive.
- In virtual meetings it's sometimes hard to know who wants to speak when everyone is muted or everyone is talking at once. With cameras on, you can ask people to raise their hand, or hold up a sign asking to speak. Some online meeting platforms have a built-in hand raising function or allow participants to privately chat with a moderator. For smaller groups, you might consider calling each person out by name at least once to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak.

Designate other roles

In addition to the host, you may consider having a:

- **Note taker:** Takes notes during the meeting, reports back to participants during and/or after the meeting. If you break into smaller groups for discussion, try to have a note taker in every group. Some virtual meeting software includes built-in note taking – utilize this tool if available.
- **Technical support person:** Helps with technical troubleshooting. Ensure that the contact information for the technical support is available for participants in case there are issues during the meeting.

Decide how you will organize the discussion

- There are two main elements of this discussion:
 - 1) Reviewing the background information on the budget in this guide (pages 4 to 6)
 - 2) Reviewing the questions from the online survey (pages 7 to 10)
- You may want to ask participants to complete the online survey during your meeting or afterwards.
- If you have a larger group (9 or more people) consider dividing into smaller break-out groups to work through the questions in sections, leaving time to 'report back' to each other about what was discussed.

Provide Background Materials

- Provide an electronic version of this Discussion Guide for your participants. Suggest attendees read the guide thoroughly prior to the meeting.

Host Your Discussion

- You don't need to work toward consensus or agreement on any of the questions as participants will be submitting their own feedback through the survey.
- The key part of this discussion is to ensure that people have an understanding of the upcoming City budget and know how they can provide their input.
- You may provide prompting questions on the background materials to help participants start to think about what feedback they want to provide in the survey.

Sharing Feedback

- Summarize your group's discussion and share back with participants.
- Ask participants to submit their feedback individually and anonymously via the [online survey](#)

Closing the Meeting

- Thank all participants for their contributions to the discussion.
- Remind participants to provide their answers to the online survey if they haven't in the meeting. The survey is anonymous.
 - Online survey link: <https://cotsurvey.chkmkt.com/BudgetTO>
- City will be collecting all input until October 31, 2024.
- All input will be summarized and presented to the Mayor, members of City Council and the public.