

JTMUN 2024



Toronto City Council

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Equity Disclaimers

Throughout this committee, delegates will be engaging in complex debates and discussions covering a wide array of topics. As UTMUN seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the implications of real-world issues, the content of our committees may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter for the purposes of academia and accuracy. We ask that delegates be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position in an equitable manner, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

This Background Guide and Toronto City Council presents topics that may be distressing to some Delegates, including but not limited to the following: people experiencing homelessness, COVID-19, immigration, systemic discrimination. Great care will be taken by staff in handling any/all of these topics should they arise.

Please be careful with regards to how you discuss people experiencing homelessness and immigrants, to ensure that you are not proposing ideas that treat others as lesser than. Especially with regards to resolutions, be mindful of any references to historical atrocities and of ensuring that resolutions are not used to further disenfranchise people. UTMUN recognizes the sensitivity associated with many of our topics, and we encourage you to be aware of and set healthy boundaries that work for you. This may include: refraining from reading certain parts of the background guide, preparing yourself before reading this background guide, doing some self-care or seeking support after reading the background guide, or anything that can help make you feel more comfortable. We ask that all Delegates remain considerate of the boundaries that other Delegates set.

UTMUN expects that all discussions amongst delegates will remain productive and respectful of one another. If you have any equity concerns or need assistance in setting boundaries or navigating sensitive subject matter or have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or our Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at equity@utmun.org. We want you to feel safe and comfortable at UTMUN!

If you wish to switch committees after having read the content warnings for this committee, please do the following:

1. Fill out the UTMUN 2024 Committee Switch Request Form: [Committee Switch Request Form](#)

If you have any equity concerns, equity-based questions, or delegate conflicts, please do any of the following:

1. Email equity@utmun.org to reach Harvi Karatha or email deputy.equity@utmun.org to reach Iva Zivaljevic or reach out to me at karissa.cruz@mail.utoronto.ca or karissa.toria@gmail.com.
2. Fill out the (Anonymous if preferred) UTMUN Equity Contact Form: [UTMUN Equity Contact Form](#)
3. Notify/Ask any staff member to connect you to Harvi Karatha or [Iva Zivaljevic](#)

Model United Nations at U of T Code of Conduct

The below code of conduct applies to all attendees of UTMUN 2024 for the entire duration of the conference, and any conference-related activities (including but not limited to committee sessions, conference socials, committee breaks, and the opening and closing ceremonies).

1. Harassment and bullying in any form will not be tolerated, the nature of which includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, age, mental and physical disabilities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression,
 - a. Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, insulting and/or degrading language or remarks; threats and intimidation; and intentional (direct or indirect) discrimination and/or marginalization of a group and/or individual;
 - i. The above prohibition on harassment, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour extends to any and all behaviour as well as written and verbal communication during the conference, including notes, conversation both during and outside committees, and general demeanour at all conference events;
 - ii. UTMUN reserves the right to determine what constitutes bullying and/or inappropriate behaviour toward any individual and/or group;
 - b. Attendees must not engage in any behaviour that constitutes physical violence or the threat of violence against any groups and/or individuals, including sexual violence and harassment, such as, but not limited to,
 - i. Unwelcome suggestive or indecent comments about one's appearance;
 - ii. Nonconsensual sexual contact and/or behaviour between any individuals and/or groups of individuals;
 - iii. Sexual contact or behaviour between delegates and staff members is strictly forbidden;
2. UTMUN expects all attendees to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times during the conference. Specific expectations, include, but are not limited to,
 - a. Attendees must, if able, contribute to the general provision of an inclusive conference and refrain from acting in a manner that restricts other attendees' capacity to learn and thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment;
 - b. Attendees must adhere to the dress code, which is Western business attire;
 - i. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the attendees' ability to adhere to the previous sub-clause;
 - ii. Attendees are encouraged to contact Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at equity@utmun.org with questions or concerns about the dress code or conference accessibility;

- c. Attendees must refrain from the use of cultural appropriation to represent their character and/or country, including the use of cultural dress, false accent, and any behaviour that perpetuates a national or personal stereotype;
- d. Delegates must not use music, audio recordings, graphics, or any other media at any time unless approved and requested to be shared by the Dais and/or the Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha at equity@utmun.org;
- e. Attendees must abide by instructions and/or orders given by conference staff, members;
 - i. Attendees are exempt from this above sub-clause only if the instructions and/or orders given are unreasonable or inappropriate;

3. Delegates, staff, and all other conference participants are expected to abide by Ontario and Canadian laws and Toronto by-laws, as well as rules and regulations specific to the University of Toronto. This includes, but is not limited to,

- a. Attendees, regardless of their age, are strictly prohibited from being under the influence and/or engaging in the consumption of illicit substances, such as alcohol or illicit substances for the duration of the conference;
- b. Attendees are prohibited from smoking (cigarettes or e-cigarettes, including vapes) on University of Toronto property;
- c. Attendees must refrain from engaging in vandalism and the intentional and/or reckless destruction of any public or private property, including conference spaces, venues, furniture, resources, equipment, and university buildings;
 - i. Neither UTMUN nor any representatives of UTMUN is responsible for damage inflicted by attendees to property on or off University of Toronto campus;
 - ii. Individuals will be held responsible for any damages.

4. The Secretariat reserves the right to impose restrictions on delegates and/or attendees for not adhering to/violating any of the above stipulations. Disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to,

- a. Suspension from committee, in its entirety or for a specific period of time;
- b. Removal from the conference and/or conference venue(s);
- c. Disqualification from awards;
- d. Disqualification from participation in future conference-related events.

5. UTMUN reserves the right to the final interpretation of this document.

For further clarification on UTMUN's policies regarding equity or conduct, please see this [form](#). For any questions/concerns, or any equity violations that any attendee(s) would like to raise, please contact UTMUN's Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at equity@utmun.org or fill out this anonymous Equity Contact Form: <https://forms.gle/Psc5Luxp22T3c9Zz8>.

A Letter From Your Director:

Dear delegates,

We're so glad you're here! Welcome to the Specialized Committee on the Toronto City Council (a.k.a. TCC)! Over the course of the committee, we will delve into debate over how we can bring about change to the very city in which we stand — Toronto. We will discuss the infamous housing crisis that proceeds to take over our city, as well as formulate solutions to propel Toronto towards climate goals under the NetZero Strategy for 2030. This is your chance to make the changes that you want to see in your city — making a better future for generations that succeed us. As city councillors and leaders, your job is to cater to the people's welfare whilst setting achievable goals for the city, in both an equitable and efficient manner.

My name is Karissa Cruz and I will be your committee director! I am currently in my first year, planning to do a double-major in Political Science and Philosophy, with a minor in Public Law. I've done Model UN for almost three years now and I've loved it ever since. It's helped me grow as an individual, find my passion for political reform and meet incredible people from all over! This is my first year as part of the Dais at UTMUN and first year as a committee Chair - I am so excited to share this new experience with all of you.

Along your journey, you will be joined by an incredibly talented Dais who will guide you to success in your debate, and (hopefully) make your experience at UTMUN as fun and memorable as possible. Alongside myself as your Director, you will be joined by our Vice Director, Victoria Pergola, a second year student studying Bioinformatics and Computational Biology. Model UN has been a great passion of hers since joining her high school's chapter five years ago. From being a delegate at UTMUN to joining the Dais here last year, Model UN has provided the opportunity for her to grow as an individual and make valuable connections with peers. Most of all she looks forward to sharing her passion with all of you delegates by making this committee both engaging and rewarding for each of you. I'd also like to take a moment to introduce your Moderator, Arthur Negrila. Arthur is a second-year student studying Political Science and is incredibly excited to be working with you!

Without further ado, let's delve into the Toronto City Council! Have fun, and we'll see you soon at UTMUN 2024!

Sincerely,

Karissa Cruz

Director, Toronto City Council

TCC@utmun.org

Introduction to TCC:

Founded in 1834, the Toronto City Council has been the existing municipal government of Toronto, Ontario.¹ Composed of twenty-five city councillors and one mayor, the council makes executive decisions to pass legislation, sets the annual budget for the city, makes appointments to city boards/agencies, and sets the overall direction of decisions for the citizens of Toronto.² The committees that the executive council reports on are strategic policy and priorities, governance policy and structure, financial planning and budgeting, fiscal policy (revenue and tax policies), intergovernmental and international relations, council operation, and human resources and labour relations. The other committees that report to the council include Community Development & Recreation, Economic Development, Government Management, Licensing & Standards, Parks & Environment, Planning & Growth Management, Public Works & Infrastructure, Audit Committee, Board of Health, Civic Appointments Committee, and the Striking Committee.³ The Toronto City Council is further divided into four community councils - Etobicoke and York, North York, Scarborough, and Toronto and East York.⁴

As of August 10, 2023, the current Toronto City Council consists of the following executive committee: Mayor Olivia Chow; Deputy Mayors Jennifer McKelvie, Amber Morley, and Mike Colle; Chair Coun. Gord Perks of the Planning and Housing Committee and Coun. Brad Bradford as Vice Chair; Designate Coun. Vincent Crisanti on the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation; Chair Coun. Jamaal Myers of the TTC and Vice Chair Coun. Josh Matlow; Councillors Jon Burnside, Amber Morley and Lily Cheng on the Toronto Police Services Board; Chair Coun. Shelley Carroll of the Budget Committee; Chair Coun. Alejandro Bravo of the Economic and Community Development Committee; Vice Chair Coun. Shelley Carroll; Chair Coun. Chris Moise of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism and the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committees; Speaker Frances Nunziata and Deputy Speaker Coun. Paula Fletcher.⁵

¹ James Maurice Stockford Careless, "Toronto | the Canadian Encyclopedia," Thecanadianencyclopedia.ca, March 17, 2013, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/toronto>.

² City of Toronto, "About Your Local Government," City of Toronto, August 22, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/council/my-local-government-its-for-me/about-your-local-government/>.

³ "Wikiwand - Toronto City Council," Wikiwand, accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Toronto_City_Council.

⁴ "Community Council Area Profiles," City of Toronto, November 14, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/community-council-area-profiles/>.

⁵ "Item - 2023.ST2.1," toronto.ca, August 10, 2023, <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.ST2.1>.

Back in 1834 when the council first began, Toronto was split up into five wards – each being named after a Christian Saint.⁶ The ward system that succeeded it was only used from 1871 to 1891. Some popular names that were once used as wards are St. Andrew’s (surrounded by boundaries on Dufferin, King, Queen and Yonge streets), St. Lawrence’s (surrounded by boundaries on Queen, Yonge, Lakefront and McGee streets), and St. Patrick’s (surrounded by boundaries on Blood, Bathurst, Queen and College streets).⁷ After June 1891, the number of wards decreased to six; each known by a number rather than a saint.⁸ Three new wards were added in the north, east and west of the city as new areas were incorporated.⁹ In 1953, a higher level of municipal government called Metro Toronto was introduced, and the alderman with the most votes of the two elected councillors from each ward became a member of the level of council.¹⁰ Since 1988, Toronto has been divided into 16 wards.¹¹

During this conference, you as city councillors, local government leaders, and key decision-makers within the profit and non-profit sector will work towards finding solutions to mitigate the housing crisis that the city continues to descend further and further into as time goes by. The committee will consider contributing factors to the crisis, including (but not limited to) rental policies, housing taxes, population growth and the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. Through debate and discussion within these topics and more, delegates in the TCC will take an analytical approach towards implementing and enhancing potential solutions within the HousingTO Action Plan for 2020-2030.

The second topic for debate is Toronto’s Climate Goals, with a focus on the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. You will investigate potential and existing solutions pertaining to key aspects of achieving such climate goals. Such aspects include green buildings and energy, green transit, waste management and sustainability. As members of the city council and leaders within a variety of sectors, you will work towards furthering and creating new initiatives to push Toronto in the right direction with regards to its target net emissions. This background guide will help you in gauging a better understanding of past actions and active solutions to emphasize the dire need for development within the city’s climate goals.

That being said, welcome to this Specialized Committee guide on everything you need to know about Toronto’s housing and climate action plans!

⁶ Chris Bateman, “A Guide to Recognizing Toronto’s Five Saints,” Spacing Toronto, September 17, 2014, <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2014/09/17/guide-recognizing-toronto-saints/>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Toronto City Council,” Wikipedia, August 15, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_City_Council#:~:text=In%20June%201891%2C%20the%20city.

⁹ Chris Bateman, “A Guide to Recognizing Toronto’s Five Saints,” Spacing Toronto, September 17, 2014, <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2014/09/17/guide-recognizing-toronto-saints/>.

¹⁰ James B. Milner, “The Metropolitan Toronto Plan,” University of Pennsylvania Law Review 105, no. 4 (February 1957): 570, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3310370>.

¹¹ “Toronto City Council,” Wikipedia, July 27, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_City_Council.

Abbreviations:

United Way Greater Toronto

An organization that works towards fighting local poverty by supporting those impacted by it and the neighbourhoods in which they reside. They have built a network of 280 community agencies within the GTA.

UHN

University Health Network

COHB

Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit

MPAC

Municipal Property Assessment Corporation

EMT

Emergency Medical Technician

Zones - R, RD, RS, RT and RM

Residential, residential-detached, residential semi-detached, residential townhouse, and residential multiple.

PI

Population proportion

Land Trusts

Non-profit organizations that own and manage land, sometimes waters.

GHG

Greenhouse Gas

TTC

Toronto Transit Commission

LRT

Light-rail transit

RNG

Renewable Natural Gas

Topic A: The Housing Crisis

Vibrant, multicultural, exhilarating; these are words anyone outside the city might use to describe the ever-so dynamic Toronto. Often described as ‘the place to be’ for Canadians, Toronto has upheld its reputation for being a powerful city when it comes to seeking unlimited opportunity. However, with great opportunity comes great cost. In addition to the positive reputation of the city, Toronto has also upheld its reputation for being the most expensive throughout the nation. With over 1.25 million homes¹² and a population of well over 2 million people,¹³ it’s no shock that Toronto is a popular city to live in.

Overpopulated and unaffordable are words that a Torontonians might use to describe their city. Given the current housing crisis that the city is facing due to the constant rising cost of living, interest rates and rent prices, it’s safe to say that it’s becoming increasingly impossible to experience the joys of living in what was once a relatively affordable city. In this topic, delegates are to explore and discuss the issues present in Toronto housing through the discussion of housing projects, rental policies, taxes, COVID-19 and the economy, and development in the HousingTO action plan. ‘Questions to Consider’ are found under the topic to guide delegates’ research and argument framework for debate.

Housing Projects and Rental Policies

Toronto is facing two housing crises - one where rising rents have made it increasingly unaffordable for middle-income earners to live in the city, and a second where there is a lack of affordable and supportive housing for those with low incomes or those experiencing family, physical, mental health and addiction struggles. With the city’s ever-growing population, the implementation of new housing projects and flexible rental policies is detrimental to accommodate the masses.¹⁴

Past Actions

Laneway Housing

Toronto approved laneway houses citywide in 2019, though few have been built to date.¹⁵ When the Toronto City Council passed Mr. Tory’s 2023 Housing Action Plan, more density across the city became regulated - in addition to other initiatives included in the HousingTO Action Plan.¹⁶

¹² “CITY of TORONTO HOUSING DATA BOOK,” 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/94f2-CityPlanningHousingSecretariatDataBookMarch2023.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Matti Siemiatycki, “Attachment 2 Perspective on the Rental Housing Roundtable,” 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-234818.pdf>.

¹⁵ “Staff Report for Action -Final Report -Changing Lanes: The City of Toronto’s Review of Laneway Suites -Monitoring Report and Zoning Amendments REPORT for ACTION Changing Lanes: The City of Toronto’s Review of Laneway Suites -Monitoring Program and Zoning By- Law Amendments-Final Report,” 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-173157.pdf>.

¹⁶ “Toronto’s Housing Affordability Crisis Poses Threat to City’s Future,” The Globe and Mail, June 19, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-torontos-housing-affordability-crisis-poses-threat-to-citys-future/#:~:text=There%20has%20been%20evidence%20in>.

Updating the Definitions of Affordable Housing

As of November 2021, the Toronto City Council adopted the Official Plan Amendment 558 - Updating the Definitions of Affordable Rental and Ownership Housing.¹⁷ This amendment serves as a change to the definitions of affordable rental housing and affordable rents, affordable ownership housing, and mid-range rents in Section 3.2.1 in the Plan.¹⁸ As part of the HousingTO Action Plan, the amendment mentions the active development of affordable housing based on income. Affordable rent could, as of 2021, be defined as:

“Housing where the total monthly shelter cost (gross monthly rent, inclusive of utilities for heat, hydro, hot water and water) is at or below the lesser of one times the average City of Toronto rent, by dwelling unit type, as reported annually by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), or 30% of the before-tax monthly income of renter households in the City of Toronto as follows: studio units: one-person households at or below the 50th percentile income; one-bedroom units: one-person households at or below the 60th percentile income; two-bedroom units: two-person households at or below the 60th percentile income; three-bedroom units: three-person households at or below the 60th percentile income.”¹⁹

With regards to affordable ownership, affordability can be defined as:

“Housing where the purchase price (which for new units is inclusive of Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) payable by the purchaser) is at or below an amount where the total monthly shelter cost (mortgage principal and interest – based on a 25-year amortisation, 10 percent down payment and the mortgage rate for a conventional 5-year mortgage as reported by the Bank of Canada in January of the applicable year, and a mortgage insurance premium – plus property taxes calculated on a monthly basis based on the purchase price, and standard condominium fees) is affordable, based on paying no more than 30% of before-tax monthly income, to all households in the City of Toronto as follows: studio units: households at or below the 30th percentile income; one-bedroom units: households at or below the 40th percentile income; two-bedroom units: households at or below the 50th percentile income; three-bedroom units: households at or below the 60th percentile income.”²⁰

¹⁷ “Updating the Definitions of Affordable Housing,” City of Toronto, March 23, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/definitions-of-affordable-housing/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Introducing an Inclusionary Zoning Policy

As of November 12, 2021, in hopes of developing more affordable housing units, the City of Toronto adopted an inclusionary zoning policy that forces new residential developments to include affordable housing units.²¹ The combination of the development’s original pricing with affordable housing units creates mixed-income housing, becoming a more accommodating development for all tenants and workers of different incomes.²² New developments are currently being incited in the By-law, and its development is being gradually phased in.²³

Housing Projects

1430 Gerrard St. E.

To help decrease the number of people actively experiencing homelessness in Toronto as it continues to grow, the City of Toronto renovated a portion of the property at 1430 Gerrard St. E. using WoodGreen as the housing operator in order to turn it into a permanent supportive housing.²⁴ They are dedicated to single women and children who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.²⁵ It consists of 23 affordable homes - with 2-bedroom units and 3-bedroom units, a child minding and programming space in addition to offices and other support services.²⁶

222 Spadina Ave.

The City of Toronto, with the help of Homes First Society as the housing operator, acquired three floors of what used to be the Super 8 Hotel at 222 Spadina Ave. to make homes and support services for those experiencing or are at risk of homelessness.²⁷ The space contains 84 self-contained supportive homes with 24/7 on-site supports for the health and well-being of residents.²⁸ The space is dedicated to women, Indigenous residents, seniors, those with disabilities and those experiencing/at risk of homelessness.²⁹ It has a studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments with basic amenities.³⁰

²¹ “Inclusionary Zoning Policy,” City of Toronto, May 21, 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies/initiatives/inclusionary-zoning-policy/>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “1430 Gerrard St. East,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, June 8, 2022), <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/1430-gerrard/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “222 Spadina Ave.,” City of Toronto, April 15, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/222-spadina-ave/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

292-296 Parliament St.

In collaboration with St. Jude Community Homes as a housing operator. The City purchased the building located at 292-296 Parliament St. - consisting of 24 affordable rental homes and accessible support for health and well-being.³¹ It is dedicated to women, Indigenous residents, seniors, people with disabilities and those experiencing/at risk of homelessness. It consists of one and two-bedroom apartments, as well as other basic amenities.³²

389 Church St.

Personally opened by Toronto’s previous mayor, John Tory, 389 Church St. is an affordable and permanent supportive rental housing building with the operation of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) Toronto that contains 120 apartments for women, creating a safe and supporting community for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, gender diverse people, youth, and seniors who have experienced/are at risk of experiencing homelessness.³³

540 Cedarvale Ave.

This three-storey modular housing building houses 59 studio apartments, self-contained with a twin bed and private kitchen and bathroom.³⁴ It includes basic amenities and is meant for those exiting homelessness. The project was completed in 2022.³⁵

877 Yonge St.

In 2022, The City of Toronto purchased the building at 877 Yonge St. to provide homes for 244 people – dedicated to women, Indigenous residents, seniors, those with disabilities and those experiencing/at risk of homelessness.³⁶ It contains basic amenities and access to support services.³⁷

1080 Queen St. E.

The affordable community housing contains 152 units that are rent-g geared-to-income, as well as 18 market rent units and 9 supportive mental illness units.³⁸

³¹ “292-296 Parliament St.,” City of Toronto, June 14, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/292-parliament/>.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Church Street,” www.ywcatoronto.org, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.ywcatoronto.org/ourprograms/shelterandhousing/permanenthousing/church-street>.

³⁴ “540 Cedarvale Ave. (East York),” City of Toronto, April 15, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/trenton-and-cedarvale-ave/>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “877 Yonge St.,” City of Toronto, April 15, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/877-yonge/>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Toronto’s Housing Affordability Crisis Poses Threat to City’s Future,” *The Globe and Mail*, June 19, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-torontos-housing-affordability-crisis-poses-threat-to-citys-future/#:~:text=There%20has%20been%20evidence%20in>.

Present Situation and Action

Lack of Rent Control

As rent control was ended by the Liberal government in 2018, the Progressive Conservative government amended the law - making new buildings built after 2018 exempted from rent control.³⁹ Landlords are currently allowed to raise rents by 2.5 percent - a large increase from the previous year when they were only allowed to increase by 1.2 percent.⁴⁰ Furthermore, landlords are allowed to raise the rent above the limit when a tenant moves out and another moves in.⁴¹ Controversy actively surrounds this law, especially during the city's current housing crisis and lack of "real rent control" according to the TCC's current mayor, Olivia Chow.⁴² Chow's plan to expand rent control for new buildings, in retrospect, would save renters from the inflating cost of housing. However, in the long term, economic evidence⁴³ shows that "everyone would suffer"⁴⁴ - especially first-time homebuyers.⁴⁵ Renters of the future will inadvertently face the repercussions of the new policy, according to the Globe and Mail.⁴⁶ "Fixed prices tend to cause shortages, whether it's in bread or apartments. In an ordinary, working marketplace, high prices spur producers to make more of the desired commodity. Higher supply eases the upward pressure on prices. A regulated market with controlled prices stifles this process of self-correction."⁴⁷

Rent Supplements

On April 1, 2020, the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit was launched under the 2017 National Housing Strategy's Bilateral Agreement or Canada Housing Benefit between both the provincial and federal governments.⁴⁸ Shared between the two levels of government, the funding is delivered by Ontario.⁴⁹ Rent supplement applications were opened to low-income renters seeking supplements to afford housing across the province.⁵⁰ The benefit is meant for individuals and families with incomes below \$20,000 and \$35,000 respectively, who are paying 30 percent or more of their income on rent.⁵¹ On December 12, 2022, the federal government opened Rent supplements and created 1,000 new ones to help people secure permanent housing.⁵² These supplements will support those seeking low to moderate-income households with "a portable housing benefit to help with rental costs in the private housing market."⁵³ This is known as the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB).⁵⁴ The benefit is tied to the household and can be used to help pay rent anywhere in Ontario.⁵⁵

³⁹ "TVO Today | Current Affairs Journalism, Documentaries and Podcasts," www.tvo.org, n.d., <https://www.tvo.org/article/the-future-of-rent-control-in-ontario>.

⁴⁰ "Ontario Caps 2024 Rent Increases at 2.5 per Cent; Does Not Apply to Newer Units," CBC, June 30, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-2024-rent-increase-cap-1.6894097>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Here's How Mayor Elect Olivia Chow Plans to 'Fix' Housing," storeys.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://storeys.com/olivia-chow-toronto-mayor-housing/>.

⁴³ Rebecca Diamond, "What Does Economic Evidence Tell Us about the Effects of Rent Control?," Brookings, October 18, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-does-economic-evidence-tell-us-about-the-effects-of-rent-control/>.

⁴⁴ "UBC Study Shows Rent Control Promotes Housing Affordability | UBC Sauder School of Business," www.sauder.ubc.ca, n.d., <https://www.sauder.ubc.ca/news/insights/ubc-study-shows-rent-control-promotes-housing-affordability>.

⁴⁵ "BLOG: Renters Remain the Big Losers in 'Rent Control' Cities," Fraser Institute, September 4, 2019, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/blogs/renters-remain-the-big-losers-in-rent-control-cities#:~:text=Housing%20will%20like%20%20>.

⁴⁶ "Globe Editorial: Canada Needs to Make Renting More Attractive to Tenants - and to Landlords," The Globe and Mail, May 17, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorial/article-canada-needs-to-make-renting-more-attractive-to-tenants-and-to/>.

⁴⁷ "Why More Rent Control Isn't Going to Fix Toronto's Housing Affordability Problem," The Globe and Mail, May 5, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/toronto/article-why-more-rent-control-isnt-going-to-fix-torontos-housing-affordability#:~:text=Numerous%20studies%20and%20decades%20of>.

⁴⁸ "Initiatives Led by Provinces and Territories | CMHC," www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/nhs/federal-provincial-territorial-housing-agreements>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Department of Finance Canada, "Making Housing More Affordable: One-Time Top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit Program," www.canada.ca, September 13, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2022/09/making-housing-more-affordable-one-time-top-up-to-the-canada-housing-benefit-program.html>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Community and Social Services, "Rent Supplement Program," ottawa.ca, October 21, 2022, <https://ottawa.ca/en/family-and-social-services/housing/subsidized-housing/rent-supplement-program#:~:text=Rent%20Supplement%20Program%20for%20tenants>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Housing Projects

1120 Ossington Ave.

Led by St. Claire’s Multifaith Housing Society, 26 new units of supportive housing are in progress in a new modular building.⁵⁶ Here, affordable homes will be provided for those experiencing homelessness or are at risk.⁵⁷

150 Dunn Ave.

Modular supportive housing at 150 Dunn Ave. is a partnership with the City of Toronto, UHN Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine, UWGT and community partners.⁵⁸ This is a four-storey modular building that is anticipated to house 51 individuals with a focus on seniors, Indigenous Peoples and racialized peoples.⁵⁹

150 Eighth St.

The 6-storey affordable rental building, designed by Chamberlain Architect Services Limited, is in progress of construction as part of the Federal Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI).⁶⁰

215 Wellesley St. E.

The proposed 8-storey mixed-use affordable rental building will be built in Toronto’s Cabbagetown.⁶¹ The building was designed by the CMV Group Architects for R-Hauz Services Inc.⁶²

39 Dundalk Dr.

This modular housing building will provide homes for approximately 57 people - specifically those experiencing/at risk of homelessness, women, Indigenous residents, seniors, those with disabilities, and more.⁶³

Future Plans

As of July 12, 2023, Toronto’s Mayor, Olivia Chow, has created a plan that aims to support renters in incorporating their voice at city hall through the implementation of a Renters Action Committee where they will work in collaboration with the council to institute real rent control for all units, renewing City policies and programs related to renters, and developing a Bylaw to leverage the City’s authorities to deter renovations.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ “1120 Ossington Avenue – St Clare’s,” accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.stclares.ca/property/1120-ossington/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “150 Dunn Ave.,” City of Toronto, June 3, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/150-dunn-ave/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “150 Eighth | Urban Toronto,” urbantoronto.ca, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/150-eighth.35485>.

⁶¹ “Fast Development Approvals for Toronto-East York at Toronto Council | Urban Toronto,” urbantoronto.ca, accessed September 19, 2023, <https://urbantoronto.ca/news/2022/07/fast-development-approvals-toronto-east-york-toronto-council.48725#:~:text=The%208%2Dstorey%2C%2048%2D>.

⁶² “215 Wellesley East | Urban Toronto,” urbantoronto.ca, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/215-wellesley-east.47467>.

⁶³ “39 Dundalk Drive – Formerly 7 Glamorgan Avenue,” City of Toronto, May 12, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/affordable-housing-developments/map-of-affordable-housing-locations/39-dundalk-drive-formerly-7-glamorgan-ave/>.

⁶⁴ May Warren Housing Reporter, “Your Constituents Are Asking for Help.’ Mayor Olivia Chow Outlines Plan to Build an Additional 25,000 Rental Homes,” Toronto Star, August 24, 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/your-constituents-are-asking-for-help-mayor-olivia-chow-outlines-plan-to-build-an-additional/article_2f33de32-b3fe-5913-937d-80eea0353427.html.

With hopes of expanding the reach to triple its initial support, Chow's new annual goal for the Eviction Prevention Framework is to support over 3,000 individuals annually.⁶⁵ To do so, she and her executive committee will invest \$12 Million to further support the program in supporting those facing eviction to avoid homelessness through opportunities for case management, mediation with landlords, assistance in securing income support and much more.⁶⁶ The elected committee will strengthen RentSafeTO by allocating a portion of the investment into additional staff (by-law enforcement officers, contractors and other staff) as well as resources to delve into investigations and case-by-case improvements of potentially unsafe conditions to enforce stricter standards on landlords, holding them accountable for their actions.⁶⁷ Chow's committee also intends to further support renters by dedicating a portion of the budget towards enhancing the Toronto Tenant Support Program to battle evictions and illegal rent price increases.⁶⁸ This increased funding intends to support tenants as their cost of rent rises to unaffordable prices with hopes to protect tenants from being at risk of losing a home.⁶⁹

Chow's committee further intends to support renters by doubling the budget of the Toronto Rent Bank to support 5,500 people annually; providing more opportunities to tenants to be eligible for assistance in grants to cover the cost of rent.⁷⁰ In terms of preventative action to support renters, Olivia Chow and her executive team along with the rest of the council will work towards creating a Secure Affordable Homes Fund in order to help tenants purchase housing units for an affordable cost.⁷¹ The funds will go towards non-profits (such as land trusts).⁷² Each year, the council will invest \$100 million, securing thousands of homes across the city at an affordable cost - removing their postings from the private market and instead giving them to non-profits, community land trusts and organizations that provide housing to members of the Indigenous community.⁷³ This fund will work in favour of the city, as it ensures that affordable housing is not lost amidst the rising costs we see in the majority of our houses throughout the city.⁷⁴ Moreover, the council intends to secure the right to first refusal so that they are legally entitled to purchase affordable buildings for the people before listing them for sale at market price at an overwhelming price.⁷⁵

Similar to Montreal, the TCC will take action to ensure affordable rent by developing an Anti-Renovictions Bylaw to take proactive initiative and avoid renovations.⁷⁶ The council's final plan to support the fair treatment of renters and address homelessness is to create 1,000 new rent supplements to help citizens secure housing, make a new fund for services (for community agencies and front-line workers) to use at their own discretion in hopes of receiving financial aid to improve their respective situations, and lastly, to open more 24.7 respite spaces so that those in need can have a place to seek shelter.⁷⁷

⁶⁵ "Rent Bank and EPIC Programs - Update REPORT for ACTION Toronto Rent Bank and Eviction Prevention in the Community Programs - Update," 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ce/lbgrd/backgroundfile-158769.pdf>.

⁶⁶ "Actions to Protect Residential Rental Tenancies REPORT for ACTION Actions to Promote the Protection of Residential Rental Tenancies - Update," 2020, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/rh/lbgrd/backgroundfile-15658>.

⁶⁷ "RentSafeTO for Building Owners," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, January 22, 2018), <https://www.toronto.ca/community/people/housing/shelter/rental-housing-tenant-information/rental-housing-standards/apartment-building-standards/rentsafeto-for-building-owners/>.

⁶⁸ "Toronto Tenant Support Program (Formerly Known as the Tenant Defence Fund)," City of Toronto, May 13, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/employment-social-support/housing-support/financial-support-for-renters/toronto-tenant-support-program-formerly-known-as-the-tenant-defence-fund/>.

⁶⁹ "Chow Calls on Feds for More Funding as Applications Reopen for Rental Supplements," CBC, August 21, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/colib-rental-supplement-toronto-chow-1.6942443>.

⁷⁰ "Here's How Mayor Elect Olivia Chow Plans to 'Fix' Housing," storeys.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://storeys.com/olivia-chow-toronto-mayor-housing/>.

⁷¹ "Olivia Chow Will Create \$100M Fund to Prevent Renovictions," storeys.com, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://storeys.com/olivia-chow-100m-secure-affordable-homes-fund-renovictions/>.

⁷² "Here's How Mayor Elect Olivia Chow Plans to 'Fix' Housing," storeys.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://storeys.com/olivia-chow-toronto-mayor-housing/>.

⁷³ "City of Toronto Delivers Final Phase of Tenants First Plan by Transferring 760 Homes to Community Land Trusts," City of Toronto, December 2, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-delivers-final-phase-of-tenants-first-plan-by-transferring-760-homes-to-community-land-trusts/>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Chow Sets out 'First Step' in Affordable Housing Plan, Ups Target by 25,000 Homes - Toronto | Globalnews.ca," Global News, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://globalnews.ca/news/9916712/toronto-budget-priorities-taxes-chow/>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Addressing Toronto's Homelessness Crisis Is Urgent Task of the City's next Mayor," The Globe and Mail, June 9, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-addressing-torontos-homelessness-crisis-is-urgent-task-of-the-city/>.

The Chow government not only has plans of taking preventative measures to mitigate the impacts of the housing crisis, but plans of kick-starting new projects to take early action in creating new opportunities for living affordably in the city.⁷⁸ Over the course of the next 8 years, the new Toronto City Council plans to build 25,000 new rental homes throughout the city.⁷⁹ The City of Toronto will be given legal permission to build 25,000 rent-controlled homes on land owned by the city, creating affordable opportunities for living.⁸⁰ A minimum of 7,500 of those units will be deemed affordable, while 2,500 will be priced based on income or “rent-g geared-to-income”.⁸¹ This works in collaboration with housing programs working towards similar goals (such as Housing Now).⁸² This program’s goal is to build 40,000 homes through the private and non-profit sectors. Moreover, the City Homes Plan aligns with the City’s new initiative to approve four-storey, four-unit multiplexes to accommodate more tenants.⁸³ In total, the combination of the Toronto City Council’s City Homes Plan, housing programs throughout the city and the City’s new initiative to accommodate more tenants in larger multiplexes are in the works. These initiatives will hopefully result in positive change for the City’s tenants and prospective homebuyers.

Housing Taxes

Property Taxes

Buying a new property in Toronto is no easy feat. With struggles ranging from increasing demand and an insufficient supply of houses, to saving enough money to afford the cost of simply closing the deal - it appears that the smallest of a homebuyer’s problems is likely the enormous amount of debt that they’ll be in after finally making the purchase.⁸⁴ To determine your property tax bill, “the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation calculates the phased-in property assessment value for the current year.”⁸⁵ This value is then multiplied by the City Tax Rate(s) approved by the Council, which includes the City Building Fund Levy, and the Education Tax Rate set by the Government of Ontario; this calculation process determines the total amount of property tax you are required to pay.⁸⁶ The property taxes fund various public safety services, including salaries and supplies for firefighters, police officers, EMTs and other essential workers.⁸⁷ Property taxes cover expenses related to legal payouts in cases that involve misconduct, personal injury lawsuits and other matters.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ “Mayor Chow: 12 Visionary Voices Offer Tips to Fulfill Your Quest for 25,000 Rental Homes in Toronto,” renx.ca, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://renx.ca/mayor-chow-12-visionary-voices-fulfill-quest-25000-additional-rental-homes-toronto-part-i>.

⁷⁹ “Toronto’s New Housing Chair Talks Affordability,” storeys.com, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://storeys.com/toronto-gord-perks-housing-chair/>.

⁸⁰ “If Developers Won’t Build Affordable Housing, Toronto Has To,” storeys.com, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://storeys.com/toronto-must-build-affordable-housing/#:~:text=Toronto>.

⁸¹ The Canadian Press, “New Toronto Mayor Lays out First Steps in Affordable Housing Plan - BNN Bloomberg,” BNN, August 24, 2023, <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/chow-sets-out-first-step-in-affordable-housing-plan-ups-target-by-25-000-homes-1.1963230#:~:text=The%20motion%20proposes%20revised%20housing>.

⁸² “Chow Sets out ‘First Step’ in Affordable Housing Plan, Ups Target by 25,000 Homes - Constructconnect.com,” Daily Commercial News, August 25, 2023, <https://canada.constructconnect.com/?p=322677>.

⁸³ “City of Toronto Awards \$21.5 Million in Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition Program Funding to Secure 121 Affordable Rental Homes,” City of Toronto, August 16, 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-awards-21-5-million-in-multi-unit-residential-acquisition-program-funding-to-secure-121-affordable-rental-homes/>.

⁸⁴ Jordon Scrinko, “5 Factors Contributing to Toronto’s Housing Crisis in 2019,” Precondo (Precondo, June 21, 2019), <https://precondo.ca/toronto-housing-crisis/>.

⁸⁵ “Property Assessment & Appeals,” City of Toronto, November 16, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/property-taxes-utilities/property-tax/property-assessment-and-appeals/>.

⁸⁶ “Property Tax Rates & Fees,” City of Toronto, November 16, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/property-taxes-utilities/property-tax/property-tax-rates-and-fees/#:~:text=Your%20property%20tax%20bill%20is%20calculated%20by%20multiplying%20the%20current>.

⁸⁷ “City of Toronto 2023 Budget Protects Frontline Services and Invests in Housing, Community Safety, Transit, Parks and Emergency Services,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, February 16, 2023), <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-2023-budget-protects-frontline-services-and-invests-in-housing-community-safety-transit-parks-and-emergency-services/>.

⁸⁸ “What Do Property Taxes Pay For? | Where Do My Taxes Go? | Guaranteed Rate,” www.rate.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.rate.com/resources/where-do-my-property-taxes-go#:~:text=Property%20taxes%20help%20finance%20the>.

Amidst the housing crisis that our city is facing due to a lack of houses and a whopping demand for them, Torontonians are not only faced with the struggle of finding a home - but affording the aforementioned taxes that come with it. The spending plan for 2023 consists of increasing property taxes to their highest rate since amalgamation.⁸⁹ The average homeowner will be faced with an additional fee of \$233 as a result of the inflationary 5.5 per cent residential property tax rate increase.⁹⁰ The reasoning behind the increase is because of the new City of Toronto Budget for 2023 - \$8 million in additional spending was allocated for several causes including increasing:

- The number of seniors and people with disabilities eligible for Property Tax, Water & Solid Waste Relief and Rebate Programs;⁹¹
- Mental health outreach workers on the TTC;⁹²
- Funding for the Community Partnership and Investment Program to offset inflation;⁹³
- Support to the Malvern Family Resource Centre for youth hubs in Danzig and Empringham;⁹⁴
- The number of 24/7 Warming Centres;⁹⁵
- Additional rent relief for those in need;⁹⁶
- Investment in the Scarborough Business Association to boost economic recovery;⁹⁷
- Funding for SafeTO in Etobicoke and North York;⁹⁸
- Cultural, social and economic opportunities for youth, in consultation with the Toronto Arts Council;⁹⁹
- Investment in The 519 Community Centre;¹⁰⁰
- Investment in the 5N2 Food for All soup kitchen;¹⁰¹ and
- In the scale of the Home Energy Loan Program.¹⁰²

⁸⁹ Jordon Scrinko, “5 Factors Contributing to Toronto’s Housing Crisis in 2019,” Precondo (Precondo, June 21, 2019), <https://precondo.ca/toronto-housing-crisis/>.

⁹⁰ “Toronto’s Property Tax to Increase by 5.5 per Cent, Biggest Hike since Amalgamation,” Toronto, January 10, 2023, <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/toronto-s-property-tax-to-increase-by-5-5-per-cent-biggest-hike-since-amalgamation-1.6224290#:~:text=Toronto>.

⁹¹ “City of Toronto 2023 Budget Protects Frontline Services and Invests in Housing, Community Safety, Transit, Parks and Emergency Services,” City of Toronto, February 15, 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-2023-budget-protects-frontline-services-and-invests-in-housing-community-safety-transit-parks-and-emergency-services/#:~:text=To%20meet%20these%20significant%20budget>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Development Charges - incl. in taxes

Aside from the property tax rate of increase for 2023, levies in addition to other taxes have seen an even greater increase for the year of 2023. According to a report by the Altus Group on the Residential Construction Council of Ontario, development charge levies something called ‘community benefit charges’ and HST in addition to other taxes to the city.¹⁰³ This adds approximately 22-27% onto the cost of a condo’s sale price.¹⁰⁴ Development charges have increased exponentially over the last decade - and although the new charges as of late will be phased in over a two-year period to continually support community development with the plethora of housing projects being introduced, where half of the increase amount will be implemented on May 1, 2023 and the rest in 2024.¹⁰⁵ The rising development charges to build more homes in support of the Housing Action Plan instead benefits existing homeowners at the expense of new homeowners.¹⁰⁶ “That is an exercise in decision making that’s making it very hard for young people like myself, new immigrants, and those who are left out of the housing bonanza that’s occurred over the last decade from being really able to start their lives in the city,”¹⁰⁷ says Eric Lombardi, an affordable housing advocate with More Neighbours Toronto.¹⁰⁸ The controversy surrounding the cost of housing taxes due to rising development charges can further be described by RESCON President Richard Lyall, “A new buyer comes along for a \$1 million home and they saved up their \$200,000 down payment and it goes towards paying off most of the taxes, fees and levies, and then they ask why people live with their parents until they’re 35. It’s not a failure to launch, it’s a failure to grow properly.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Neil Sharma, “HOUSING CRISIS: Nearly 30% of a Toronto Home’s Cost Is Tax,” April 29, 2023, <https://tnc.news/2023/04/29/toronto-home-cost-tax/#:~:text=Torontonians%20who%20think%20they>.

¹⁰⁴ Neil Sharma, “HOUSING CRISIS: Nearly 30% of a Toronto Home’s Cost Is Tax,” April 29, 2023, <https://tnc.news/2023/04/29/toronto-home-cost-tax/#:~:text=Torontonians%20who%20think%20they>.

¹⁰⁵ “Toronto City Council Votes to Raise Development Charges Nearly 50%,” storeys.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://storeys.com/toronto-raises-development-charges-fees/#:~:text=The%20new%20development%20charges%20will>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ryan Patrick Jones, “Developers, Housing Advocate Criticize Development Fee Increase amid Housing Crisis,” CBC, August 9, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-development-fee-increase-1.6544780>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Neil Sharma, “HOUSING CRISIS: Nearly 30% of a Toronto Home’s Cost Is Tax,” April 29, 2023, <https://tnc.news/2023/04/29/toronto-home-cost-tax/#:~:text=Torontonians%20who%20think%20they>.

Regressive Tax v.s Municipal Land Transfer Tax

The controversy surrounding regressive housing tax imposed by the city can be exemplified through LOOP, a housing project created by Trillium Housing.¹¹⁰ The project offered 2-3 bedroom stacked townhouse units that would sell for \$500,000 on average, a relatively affordable price in comparison to others on the market.¹¹¹ However, due to the standardized tax required for all types of housing prices, Trillium Housing was charged \$30,000 in development charges per unit - the same cost that luxury condos in the city had to pay per unit.¹¹²

Due to Toronto's Sales Tax/ Regressive Tax that has been put into place for years, lower-income homeowners are affected more than ever, as they pay a larger proportion of their income for property taxes in comparison to their higher-income counterparts – considering that all homeowners are required to pay the same percentage on property taxes.¹¹³ In hopes of shifting towards equality when it comes to paying property taxes for all homeowners and funding public transit and school nutrition programs, Toronto's new mayor, Olivia Chow, vows to boost the municipal land transfer tax on multimillion dollar homes.¹¹⁴

The tax hike would be applied to homes that cost over \$2 million and will be charged a 3% land transfer tax rather than the 2% that it stands at as of August 2023.¹¹⁵ Implementing a progressive tax rather than the previously regressive one would contribute to adding more than \$18 million to other areas of the City budget annually,¹¹⁶ and easing a budget of \$46.5 billion in budget pressures expected within the next ten years.¹¹⁷

Though the initiative is said to be an excellent idea to shift towards housing affordability in Toronto, studies¹¹⁸ conducted by the University of Toronto and C.D. Howe Institute states that the implementation of a Municipal Land Transfer Tax would consequently reduce the housing supply by 16% per year.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board claimed that increasing the already high Municipal Land Transfer Tax would discourage buyers who would like to “move up” from listing their existing properties, interrupting the “regular progression of homes through the market and further reducing supply”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁰ “To Fix the Housing Crisis, Overhaul City Taxes to Incentivize Building Affordable Units,” The Globe and Mail, June 18, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-to-fix-the-housing-crisis-overhaul-city-taxes-to-incentivize-building/>.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Boris Palameta and Ian Macredie, “Property Taxes Relative to Income,” Statistics Canada -Catalogue 14 (2005), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-001-x/10305/7796-eng.pdf?st=qQFddb-7>.

¹¹⁴ “Olivia Chow Vows to Increase Land Transfer Tax on Luxury Homes,” Toronto, September 2, 2014, <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/olivia-chow-vows-to-increase-land-transfer-tax-on-luxury-homes-1.1988059>.

¹¹⁵ “Toronto Is Exploring New Taxes and a Parking Levy to Tackle Budget Deficit,” Toronto, August 17, 2023, <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/toronto-is-exploring-new-taxes-and-a-parking-levy-to-tackle-budget-deficit-1.6523192>.

¹¹⁶ “Luxury Home Tax Could Yield \$18 Million for Toronto in 2021, If Approved,” Toronto, February 9, 2021, <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/luxury-home-tax-could-lead-18-million-for-toronto-in-2021-if-approved-1.5302602>.

¹¹⁷ Lucas Powers, “Toronto to Explore Municipal Sales Tax as Part of Plan to Tackle ‘Unprecedented Financial Crisis,’” CBC, August 17, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/report-toronto-finances-1.6938094>.

¹¹⁸ Benjamin Dachis, Bev Dahlby, and Jack Mintz, “The Economic Cost of Toronto’s Land Transfer Tax,” SSRN Electronic Journal, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4095265>.

¹¹⁹ “The Economic Cost of Toronto’s Land Transfer Tax | C.D. Howe Institute | Canada Economy News | Canadian Government Policy,” Cdhowe.org, 2022, <https://www.cdhowe.org/public-policy-research/economic-cost-toronto%E2%80%99s-land-transfer-tax>.

¹²⁰ “Changes to the Municipal Land Transfer Tax Would Increase Affordability in Toronto,” storeys.com, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://storeys.com/trreb-proposed-changes-municipal-land-transfer-tax/>.

Vacant Home Taxes

In April 2023, 2,100 Toronto properties were listed vacant (for periods of 6 months or more annually) as a result of the City’s new Vacant Homes Tax.¹²¹ Beginning in 2023, the City of Toronto decided to implement a Vacant Home Tax of 1% on homes that were left unoccupied for extended periods to help mitigate the housing crisis by encouraging homeowners and investors to rent or sell units that were not in use for more than half a year at a time.¹²² The initiative was modelled after Vancouver’s, which, “according to a report from that city, contributed to a 36 per cent reduction in the number of empty properties. Of the 1,755 vacant residential properties there in 2020, 49 per cent were converted to occupied in 2021, the report stated.”¹²³

Homeowners who reported themselves as vacant within the specified timeframe had to calculate how much based on an assessment provided by the city.¹²⁴ The new tax requires them to pay 1% of the property’s Current Value Assessment (CVA).¹²⁵ Such a tax is said to generate between \$55 million to \$66 million in gross tax revenue a year of 1% of homes in Toronto were reported to be vacant – according to Casey Brendon, the City of Toronto’s Director of Revenue Services – based on Vancouver’s annual progress since 2017.¹²⁶

The Impact of COVID-19 on Work-from-Home Technology & the Cost of Housing

In 2020, our world changed forever. Stricken by a global pandemic, citizens of our global communities were restricted to the boundaries of their home. Ranging from frontline workers in hospitals to those in offices – every person saw a massive change in their lifestyles. Flash forward to 2024, the economy too continues to recover from the damage that COVID-19 caused almost 5 years ago.

¹²¹ “Vacant Home Tax,” City of Toronto, July 19, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/property-taxes-utilities/vacant-home-tax/>.

¹²² “City of Toronto Seeks Input on Vacant Home Tax Intended to Increase Housing Supply,” CBC, October 21, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-housing-tax-1.6220319>.

¹²³ May Warren Housing Reporter, “Just 2,100 Properties Reported Empty through Toronto’s New Vacant Homes Tax,” Toronto Star, April 30, 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/just-2-100-properties-reported-empty-through-toronto-s-new-vacant-homes-tax/article_2b38ddfa-e8ee-5824-aa74-3ddf33892a7e.html.

¹²⁴ “Vacancy Tax: How to Avoid It in 2023 - Buttonwood,” April 1, 2022, <https://buttonwood.ca/what-is-speculation-tax/>.

¹²⁵ “Vacant Home Tax,” City of Toronto, July 19, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/property-taxes-utilities/vacant-home-tax/>.

¹²⁶ May Warren Housing Reporter, “Just 2,100 Properties Reported Empty through Toronto’s New Vacant Homes Tax,” Toronto Star, April 30, 2023, https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/just-2-100-properties-reported-empty-through-toronto-s-new-vacant-homes-tax/article_2b38ddfa-e8ee-5824-aa74-3ddf33892a7e.html.

With the pandemic came changes that nobody knew needed - one huge example being the accelerated shift to remote work and enhancements in the field of work-from-home technology.¹²⁷ According to a report by Forbes, the shift to remote work for a large percentage of businesses is becoming permanent:

“The Conference Board conducted two surveys among U.S. HR executives in April and in September [of 2020]. Just five percent of respondents reported that, prior to the pandemic, 40 percent or more of their employees were working primarily from home (at least 3 days per week). But by April, nearly 20 percent of respondents said they expected 40 percent or more of their employees to work primarily from home after the pandemic. By September, that number had risen to over a third of responding companies.”¹²⁸

Though these statistics apply more specifically to the United States, the sentiment remains the same - there are now three times the number of remote jobs in contrast to 2020, as the pandemic accelerated this transition.¹²⁹ As of May 2021, 5 million Canadians were working from home, accounting for roughly 20% of the Canadian workforce.¹³⁰ This is a drastic change from 2016, when only 4% of Canadians worked from home.¹³¹ The emergence and widespread adoption of work-from-home technology during the pandemic have changed the dynamics of the housing market.¹³² As more people were able to work remotely, they sought out larger homes with more space, away from crowded urban centres.¹³³ The increased demand for suburban and rural properties is raising prices to unsustainable amounts in areas - both in Toronto and across North America.¹³⁴ According to research by the National Bureau of Economic Research in the United States, remote work explains over 50% of the increase in house prices during the pandemic.¹³⁵ The same exists for homes in Toronto. As a result of the transition to working from home during the pandemic and even until today, the number of remote workers (in addition to their likelihood to be well-compensated) has resulted in many remote workers searching for more desirable housing and amenities where they will spend most of their time within the city of Toronto.¹³⁶ This shift has consequently led the cost of housing to increase due to the increased demand in the last 4 years - the supply of housing did not keep pace with the rising demand, exacerbating the affordability issue.

¹²⁷ J. Scott Marcus, “COVID-19 and the Shift to Remote Work,” Emerald Insight (Emerald Publishing Group, n.d.), <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-80262-049-820231003/full/html>.

¹²⁸ Gad Levanon, “Remote Work: The Biggest Legacy of Covid-19,” Forbes, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gadlevanon/2020/11/23/remote-work-the-biggest-legacy-of-covid-19/?sh=454441977f59>.

¹²⁹ “Church Street,” www.ywcautoronto.org, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.ywcautoronto.org/ourprograms/shelterandhousing/permanenthousing/church-street>.

¹³⁰ Olivia Bush, “Working from Home in Canada Statistics for 2022 - Made In CA,” Made In CA, September 17, 2022, <https://madeinca.ca/working-from-home-canada-statistics/>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Amy Ellen Schwartz and Susan Wachter, “COVID-19’S IMPACTS ON HOUSING MARKETS: INTRODUCTION,” Journal of Housing Economics, December 2022, 101911, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhe.2022.101911>.

¹³³ “The Impact of the Pandemic on Real Estate | McKinsey,” www.mckinsey.com, n.d., <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/empty-spaces-and-hybrid-places>.

¹³⁴ Louis Morel, “Analyzing the House Price Boom in the Suburbs of Canada’s Major Cities during the Pandemic,” www.bankofcanada.ca, June 20, 2022, <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/2022/06/staff-analytical-note-2022-7/>.

¹³⁵ “Yes, It Is Remote Workers Who Spiked Housing, Rent Costs: Study,” Yahoo News, March 21, 2023, <https://news.yahoo.com/yes-remote-workers-spiked-housing-100711066.html>.

¹³⁶ Gad Levanon, “Remote Work: The Biggest Legacy of Covid-19,” Forbes, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gadlevanon/2020/11/23/remote-work-the-biggest-legacy-of-covid-19/?sh=454441977f59>.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the importance of housing as a human right, as people must have a safe home to protect themselves. Governments and stakeholders must take concrete actions to progress the right to adequate housing and strengthen public systems' resilience. Homelessness further poses significant health risks during the pandemic, necessitating urgent solutions. While emergency responses like shelters are crucial in the short term, shifting investments towards permanent housing with appropriate support is vital for reducing chronic homelessness and offering long-term solutions.

The pandemic and the consequential policy responses in addition to workplace modifications contributed to higher inflation rates all throughout. It has eroded the purchasing power of consumers, making it less affordable for many. As of July 6th, 2023, the average home sold price in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) increased 3.1% year-over-year to \$1,182,120 for June 2023.¹³⁷ GTA home prices are now higher compared to the previous year - the first year-over-year price increase since August 2022.¹³⁸ The detached home average price increased by 5.2% year-over-year to \$1.53M, and the semi-detached home average price increased by 8.0% year-over-year to \$1.21M.¹³⁹ Furthermore, as a result of the recent increase in inflation - lending rates are at an all-time high, consequently affecting first-home buyers. Though Canada's rate of inflation peaked at a 40-year high in June 2022 at 8.1%¹⁴⁰ before dropping to 3.3% as of August 2023,¹⁴¹ the rate is still higher than what was anticipated - raising uncertainty and concern over the next rate hike over the coming year.

¹³⁷ "Toronto Housing Market: Jul. 23rd, 2021 Update | Interactive Map | Price History since 1954 - WOWA.ca," wowa.ca, n.d., <https://wowa.ca/toronto-housing-market>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ "Prime Rate Canada | Prime Rate Explained, Prime Rate Mortgages, Current Bank of Canada Prime Rate," Ratehub.ca (Ratehub.ca, 2019), <https://www.ratehub.ca/prime-rate>.

¹⁴¹ "Canada Inflation Rate and CPI - September 2022 Update | WOWA.ca," wowa.ca, n.d., <https://wowa.ca/inflation-rate-canada-cpi>.

Exponential Population Growth

It is not unknown that Toronto is one of – if not the most – popular city in Canada to live in. Ranging from major attractions like the CN Tower and the Art Gallery of Ontario to notorious film locations for movies such as Mean Girls and X-Men – Toronto has it all. The problem is that the city’s extraordinary reputation is not a secret. In fact, approximately over 7 million people know this about Toronto - hence the massive population growth since 2021.¹⁴² According to Statistics Canada’s population data for sub-provincial areas, “Toronto’s population increased by an unprecedented +138,240 people between July 1, 2021, and July 1, 2022.”¹⁴³ This exponential growth has contributed to the rise in housing prices due to an increased need for supply to meet the demand.

Because of the recently increasing rate of people moving into the city, the housing market has been greatly impacted. With few available homes to support an immensely growing population, the cost of housing is growing to control the demand. As the demand surges, the housing market has levelled off.¹⁴⁴ According to an analysis by BMO, for every one percent of population growth, housing prices increase by three. “We know that a big part of the housing market problem in Canada is the lack of sufficient supply,” said Bank of Canada deputy governor Paul Beaudry, “So having a lot of people coming in, and ... not managing to kind of build enough is certainly creating a lot of that problem.”¹⁴⁵

The increase in housing prices were especially higher in cities like Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal – supporting the price gains within the respective municipal housing markets. “This shift likely reflects the uneven distribution of the economic impacts of the pandemic, with higher-income households able to maintain their income through adapting to work from home. In contrast, those employed in lower-paid industries were less able to adapt to pandemic conditions so that, in combination with a sharp decline in new migrants to Canada, relative demand for less expensive housing types fell. Lower household spending pushed up the household savings rate to historic levels in the second and third quarters of 2020.¹⁴⁶ Combined with the expectation on the part of households that mortgage rates would remain low for the duration of the pandemic, higher savings appear to have encouraged some households to fund home purchases.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² City of Toronto, “2021 Census: Population and Dwelling Counts,” 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/92c3-City-Planning-2021-Census-Backgrounder-Population-Dwellings-Backgrounder.pdf>.

¹⁴³ “Toronto’s Record Population Increase Will Push Home Prices Higher - Constructconnect.com,” CanaData, March 13, 2023, <https://canada.constructconnect.com/canadata/forecaster/economic/2023/03/torontos-record-population-increase-will-push-home-prices-higher#:~:text=According%20to%20Statistics%20Canada>.

¹⁴⁴ Statistics Canada Government of Canada, “The Daily — to Buy or to Rent: The Housing Market Continues to Be Reshaped by Several Factors as Canadians Search for an Affordable Place to Call Home,” www150.statcan.gc.ca, September 21, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921b-eng.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ Nojoud Al Mallees, “How Population Growth Is Affecting Everything from Jobs to Housing in the Economy,” CP24, June 13, 2023, <https://www.cp24.com/news/how-population-growth-is-affecting-everything-from-jobs-to-housing-in-the-economy-1.6440174>.

¹⁴⁶ “HOUSING MARKET INFORMATION HOUSING MARKET INSIGHT CANADA’S MAJOR MARKETS DATE RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2021,” n.d., <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2021/-/media/4fb76e6f67bc49ba9b878ff352f3aa47.ashx#:~:text=%E2%80%9CHome%20sales%20and%20prices%20have>.

¹⁴⁷ “Housing Market Information,” Housing Market Insight Canada’s Major Markets, February 2021, n.d. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2021/-/media/4fb76e6f67bc49ba9b878ff352f3aa47.ashx#:~:text=%E2%80%9CHome%20sales%20and%20prices%20have>.

In 2019, laneway houses in R,RD,RS,RT and RM zones were approved to accommodate the surging population, though few have been built to date.¹⁴⁸ However, in 2021, the City Council adopted the Zoning By-law Amendment¹⁴⁹ to implement changes as a result of the Monitoring Program of Laneway suites.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore in 2021, the City of Toronto identified 140 social planning neighbourhoods for the purpose of assisting government and community agencies with local planning.¹⁵¹ The areas with the highest growth are Downtown, Midtown and south Etobicoke as well as several north-west neighbourhoods in the Downsview area.¹⁵² Mount Pleasant West #104, Church-Yonge corridor #75 and Waterfront communities-The Island #77 had the highest percentage increases in population from 2016-2021 at +32.8%, +29.8% & +29.4% respectively.¹⁵³ Ten neighbourhoods had the highest absolute population increases between 2016 and 2021 at +19,375, +9,729, +9,326 respectively.¹⁵⁴ Other areas with notable increases include Mimico, Henry Farm, Regent Park, Bay Street Corridor and others.¹⁵⁵ Being the latest statistics in population dwelling throughout the City by neighbourhood, we can predict that areas all across Toronto have seen increasingly massive population growth rates - even after the census in 2021 – due to a plethora of other factors including that Toronto is home to the largest proportion of Canada’s immigrants.¹⁵⁶ “In 2021, close to half (46.6%) of the population living in the Toronto CMA were immigrants.¹⁵⁷ Immigrants made up more than half of the residents of four municipalities in the Toronto CMA: Markham (58.6%), Richmond Hill (58.2%), Mississauga (53.2%) and Brampton (52.9%).”¹⁵⁸ Today, the 2023-2025 Immigration levels Plan further proposes the increase in permanent Canadian residents year-over-year with projected numbers of 465,000 in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025 – with Toronto being one of the main cities attracting newcomers.¹⁵⁹

¹⁴⁸ “Agenda Item History,” toronto.ca, accessed August 30, 2023, <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PH7.1>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ “Changing Lanes: Laneway Suites in Toronto,” City of Toronto, January 31, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/changing-lanes-laneway-suites-in-toronto/>.

¹⁵¹ “About Toronto Neighbourhoods,” City of Toronto, April 12, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/about-toronto-neighbourhoods/>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ City of Toronto, “2021 Census: Population and Dwelling Counts,” 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/92e3-City-Planning-2021-Census-Backgrounder-Population-Dwellings-Backgrounder.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Statistics Canada, “The Daily — Immigrants Make up the Largest Share of the Population in over 150 Years and Continue to Shape Who We Are as Canadians,” Statistics Canada, October 26, 2022, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Madeleine Cummings, “Vancouver, Toronto and Edmonton Have Highest Immigrant Retention Rates: StatsCan,” CBC, January 12, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/vancouver-toronto-edmonton-immigration-1.6311574>.

Development in the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

Until 2001, the cost of housing in Toronto wasn't a problem. Inflation-adjusted housing prices in major Canadian cities like Ottawa, Vancouver and Toronto remained stable – up until that point.¹⁶⁰ Beginning in the 21st century, housing prices have inconsistently risen to new, unattainable heights that have never been seen before.¹⁶¹ However in 2019, amidst a remarkable public and stakeholder consultation, the City of Toronto acknowledged the many issues with housing and set an agenda that takes intense action towards protecting its people through housing affordability and opportunity over the next decade.¹⁶² Thus, the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan was born. Alongside the new agenda came the revised Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity For All, a charter developed by the city that declares that “housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.”¹⁶³ The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan works in alignment with other policies developed by the City of Toronto such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Resilience Strategy, TransformTO and the Seniors Strategy. Together, all acts and policies are expected to bring forth immense change to the residents of Toronto over the next 10 years.¹⁶⁴

Details on past, current and future city council actions and requests to provincial/federal governments can be found in the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan linked in the Key Resources section of this background guide. It is highly recommended that delegates review this document as it will likely be useful in debate.

¹⁶⁰ David Macdonald, “Canada’s Housing Bubble an Accident Waiting to Happen,” 2010,

<https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2010/08/Canadas%20Housing%20Bubble.pdf>.

¹⁶¹ Michelle Cyca, “The End of Homeownership,” Macleans.ca, n.d., <https://macleans.ca/longforms/the-end-of-homeownership/>.

¹⁶² “HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan,” City of Toronto, November 21, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/housing-partners/housingto-2020-2030-action-plan/>.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Questions to Consider:

- Are the main factors driving Toronto’s housing crisis primarily driven by supply-side issues, such as limited land availability, or are demand-side factors, like population growth, more influential?
- Should the council prioritize the construction of affordable rental units or focus on increasing homeownership opportunities for citizens facing the housing crisis in Toronto? Is creating a balance between these two solutions possible?
- How can those in the real estate industry support the council in putting a stop to the Toronto housing crisis? How can their impact be minimized or regulated?
- Should the government intervene in the housing market and to what extent? Is it the government’s sole responsibility to control housing prices and affordability, or should the housing market be left to operate on its own at this point in time?
- How can Toronto balance urban development and population growth while also maintaining green spaces and overall livability?
- How can property owners be encouraged to contribute their vacant or underutilised properties to help alleviate the housing shortage?
- Should further rent control measures be implemented? If so, what should be the limitations?
- What are the social and economic impacts of the housing crisis on vulnerable populations (e.g. low-income families, seniors, and newcomers to Toronto)? How can they be supported during this time?
- How can a balance be ensured between encouraging affordable housing developments and respecting the interests of existing homeowners who may resist such projects due to concerns about property values and neighbourhood aesthetics? How can sustainable and energy-efficient housing development create a more environmentally friendly city while also tackling the housing shortage?
- Should the Toronto government explore partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, or others to create affordable housing initiatives? What are the potential benefits and risks associated?
- What can Toronto learn and take away from other cities that have faced and successfully addressed housing crises in the past?
- How can technology (e.g. innovative financing models or digital platforms connecting potential renters and homeowners) help aid the housing crisis?

Topic B: Climate Goals (TransformTO Net Zero Strategy)

“Green was the colour of the grass where I used to read at Centennial Park,”¹⁶⁵ and it is also the colour of Toronto’s strategies to achieve Net Zero by 2040. The climate goals under the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy refers to all forms of green initiatives that the City is implementing in hopes of achieving Net Zero.¹⁶⁶ This refers to the various factors that come into play when discussing the overproduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Through TransformTO, the municipal government is doing its part to achieve net zero by 2040.¹⁶⁷ Delegates will discuss the determinants of the strategy’s success, debating on topics such as buildings, energy, transportation, as well as sustainable consumption and waste. The prevalence of various case studies and past actions mentioned throughout the guide, in addition to potential/ongoing projects may prove as potential solutions to key climate issues at hand.

The city of Toronto is on its way towards a cleaner, greener, net-zero future with much progress being made towards the goals laid out by TransformTO. With regards to short-term goals, TransformTO strives to achieve its 2025 target - reducing GHG emissions by 45% compared to 1990 levels of approximately 25 million tonnes.¹⁶⁸ As of August 2023, the City of Toronto is currently on track to meet 2030 goal of 65% reduced emissions¹⁶⁹ – significant progress that can be attributed to the numerous strategies implemented through the Council’s Net Zero Strategy.

Enhancing and implementing both existing and new strategies to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040 in a timely and cost effective manner is the main priority of TransformTO. Delegates should consider reviewing and revising projects that may be ineffective within the TransformTO initiatives to meet both its short and long term goals.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor Swift, Invisible String, 2020.

¹⁶⁶ City of Toronto, “TransformTO,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, November 17, 2017), <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmentally-friendly-city-initiatives/transformto/>.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ “TransformTO Net Zero Strategy,” November 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-173758.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Buildings and Energy

Believe it or not, one of the largest contributors to the city’s overall GHG emissions is from buildings – specifically, buildings that use significant amounts of fossil fuels during construction.¹⁷⁰ In fact, about 50% of the city’s total emissions is due to the use of natural gas for heating in buildings.¹⁷¹ To diminish the harmful impact of buildings on GHG emissions, TransformTO aims to address the need for increased energy efficiency in existing buildings for 2030, shifting away from the use of natural gas and towards renewable energy sources.¹⁷²

Covering the period from 1990 to 2012, a report by Environment Canada reveals that oil and gas now account for a quarter of the country’s total greenhouse emissions, narrowly surpassing transportation.¹⁷³ The report also indicates that Canada’s overall emissions dropped slightly between 2011 and 2012, largely due to reductions in electricity and manufacturing.¹⁷⁴ Energy sector emissions, driven by crude oil and oilsands expansion, have seen a substantial 70 percent increase since 1990, outpacing the growth rate of transportation-related greenhouse gases.¹⁷⁵ Toronto is facing a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions from natural gas, with a 68% rise from 2017 to 2018, and plans to expand gas-fired electricity could lead to emissions soaring over 300%.¹⁷⁶

City Councillor Jennifer McKelvie’s motion as of 2021 urges the province to begin the phase-out of natural gas plants, as it is crucial in light of Toronto’s declaration of a climate emergency.¹⁷⁷ The motion recognizes the need for action at all levels of government. Several other municipalities in Ontario have already adopted similar resolutions, indicating a growing concern about the environmental impact of natural gas usage.¹⁷⁸ The Toronto Atmospheric Fund (TAF) emphasizes the importance of City Council’s prompt consideration and approval of this motion.¹⁷⁹ They argue that failing to phase out natural gas will hinder Toronto’s ability to meet its 2030 climate goals and the council-approved TransformTO plan, as relying on fossil gas for generating electricity will undermine efforts to combat climate change.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁰ EPA, “Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions,” United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2022, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

¹⁷¹ “TransformTO Net Zero Strategy,” November 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-173758.pdf>.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ “Oil Industry Canada’s Biggest Contributor to Greenhouse Gases,” CBC, April 12, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/oil-industry-canada-s-biggest-contributor-to-greenhouse-gases-1.2608295>.

¹⁷⁴ Government of Canada, “Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Canada.ca,” Canada.ca, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/greenhouse-gas-emissions.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Julia Langer, “Toronto Has an Embarrassing Gas Problem,” taf.ca, February 18, 2021, <https://taf.ca/toronto-has-an-embarrassing-gas-problem/>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ “Powering Ontario’s Growth | Ontario.ca,” www.ontario.ca, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/powering-ontarios-growth>.

¹⁷⁹ “RentSafeTO for Building Owners,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, January 22, 2018), <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/rental-housing-tenant-information/rental-housing-standards/apartment-building-standards/rentsafeto-for-building-owners/>.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

As outlined in TransformTO, the city aims for 50 per cent of energy within the city to come from renewable sources by 2030, completely phasing out natural gas by 2040.¹⁸¹ To achieve this, delegates should look at strategies to rapidly limit the use of natural gas while supporting the implementation of renewable and net-zero energy sources for new and existing developments within the city.¹⁸² The Toronto Green Standard v. 4 requires new buildings to eliminate the use of natural gas while the Net Zero Existing Buildings Strategy sets targets to replace conventional heating systems with more efficient alternatives.¹⁸³ This may include technologies such as solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, waste heat recovery and heat pumps.¹⁸⁴ It is important to consider a solution that is feasible for developers, and consider the aforementioned housing crisis while establishing regulations for the building of new buildings and retrofitting existing buildings.¹⁸⁵ Delegates should also look to support these strategies through a reliable carbon-free grid which will support the city with renewable electricity.

Past City Council Action

In 2022, Toronto Green Standard Version 4 raised the bar for high performing, low-emission buildings.¹⁸⁶ Toronto Green Standard Checklists have been revised to enhance environmental quality when achieving Tier 1, 2 and higher performance tiers.¹⁸⁷ Revisions have been made to promote low emissions transportation and pedestrian infrastructure to promote enhanced air quality, operational emissions reductions, renewable energy and embodied emissions in material to optimize energy efficiency and decrease GHG emissions, managing stormwater and water efficiency to promote water quality management and potable water reduction, and much more.¹⁸⁸

Waterfront Innovation Centre (Completed in 2022):

Canada's tech ecosystem has secured a highly sought-after location with the establishment of the Waterfront Innovation Centre.¹⁸⁹ Nestled on the picturesque shores of Lake Ontario and just minutes away from the bustling downtown core, this expansive office complex has been purposefully designed to cater to tech professionals and creative industries.¹⁹⁰ Anticipating the highest level of eco-friendliness, the centre is aiming for LEED Platinum certification, a prestigious distinction within the green-building rating system.¹⁹¹ Advanced features include under-floor air distribution, automation controls, and occupancy and light level sensors.¹⁹² Moreover, the centre will be equipped with ultra-high-speed broadband and will offer attractive amenities and lush surroundings.¹⁹³

¹⁸¹ "TransformTO Net Zero Strategy," November 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/fe/bgrd/backgroundfile-173758.pdf>

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ "REPORT for ACTION Toronto Green Standard Update: Advancing Net Zero Emissions in New Development," 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-235868.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Lora Shinn, "Renewable Energy: The Clean Facts," NRDC (NRDC, June 1, 2022), <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/renewable-energy-clean-facts>.

¹⁸⁵ Erin Nicole Davis, "Toronto's New Buildings Could Soon Be Required to Go Greener," storeys.com, July 2, 2021, <https://storeys.com/torontos-new-buildings-could-soon-be-required-to-go-greener/>.

¹⁸⁶ "City of Toronto Raises Green Performance Standards for New Development and Mandates Net-Zero GHG Emissions for New City-Owned Buildings," City of Toronto, May 3, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-raises-green-performance-standards-for-new-development-and-mandates-net-zero-ghg-emissions-for-new-city-owned-buildings/>.

¹⁸⁷ "Toronto Green Standard Version 4 Checklists & Templates," City of Toronto, April 26, 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/toronto-green-standard/toronto-green-standard-version-4/low-rise-residential-version-4/checklist-templates/>.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "Toronto's Waterfront Is New Destination for MaRS Innovation Hub," MaRS Discovery District, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.marsdd.com/media-centre/torontos-waterfront-is-new-destination-for-mars-innovation-hub/>.

¹⁹⁰ "WeWork, "1 University Avenue - Coworking Space in Toronto," WeWork, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.wework.com/buildings/1-university-ave-toronto>.

¹⁹¹ "TheScore Selects Toronto's Waterfront Innovation Centre as Site for New, Expansive Headquarters," [www.businesswire.com, August 19, 2021, https://www.businesswire.com/australia/2021/08/19/20210819005523/en/theScore-Selects-Toronto%E2%80%99s-Waterfront-Innovation-Centre-as-Site-for-New-Expansive-Headquarters](https://www.businesswire.com/australia/2021/08/19/20210819005523/en/theScore-Selects-Toronto%E2%80%99s-Waterfront-Innovation-Centre-as-Site-for-New-Expansive-Headquarters).

¹⁹² Yeonjin Bae et al., "Sensor Impacts on Building and HVAC Controls: A Critical Review for Building Energy Performance," *Advances in Applied Energy* 4 (November 19, 2021): 100068, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aadapen.2021.100068>.

¹⁹³ "Waterfront Innovation Centre | Waterfront Toronto," [www.waterfronttoronto.ca, accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/our-projects/waterfront-innovation-centre](https://www.waterfronttoronto.ca/our-projects/waterfront-innovation-centre).

EQ Bank Tower, high-tech offices for the east end (Completed 2022):

LEED Gold certification is the goal; EQ Bank Tower will feature energy-efficient ventilation, living walls and green terraces.¹⁹⁴ Also coming to the neighbourhood: shiny new Ontario-Line and GO-Transit stations.¹⁹⁵

The Arbour (Expected Completion 2024):

This will be Ontario’s first mass-timber, low-carbon institutional building.¹⁹⁶ Spanning 12 storeys high, The Arbour contains solar-chimney systems to harness light and air for natural ventilation, along with a slanted, solar roof.¹⁹⁷

Northeast Scarborough Community and Child Care Centre (Expected Completion 2024):

This green institution will be made of brilliant-gold, corrugated-metal facades that reflect sunlight and capture heat; metal fins for shading above floor-to-ceiling windows; and a biodiverse green roof.¹⁹⁸ In the surrounding Joyce Trimmer Park, more trees, a splash pad, a garden with a viewing deck, etc will be implemented.¹⁹⁹

East Harbour (Completion Date TBD):

Union Station 2.0 – The hub, designed by Diamond Schmitt architects, aims for LEED Platinum certification, net-zero carbon targets, and compliance with the Toronto Green Standard.²⁰⁰ Its core features mass timber, while advanced HVAC, lighting, and water systems are discreetly integrated into the walls.²⁰¹ Humber College, the namesake of Toronto’s Humber River, desired the building to foster a stronger connection to nearby parklands, recognizing the historical significance of the river in shaping the city’s growth over centuries.²⁰²

¹⁹⁴ Barry Chong | May 04 and 2021, “10 Toronto Green Buildings to Get Excited About,” MaRS Discovery District, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.marsdd.com/news/10-toronto-green-buildings-to-get-excited-about/#:~:text=EQ%20Bank%20Tower%3A%20high%2Dtech%20offices%20for%20the%20east%20end&text=LEED%20Gold%20certification%20is%20the>

¹⁹⁵ “EQ Bank Tower | Urban Toronto,” urbantoronto.ca, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/eq-bank-tower.20824>.

¹⁹⁶ “The Arbour,” Canadian Architect, April 7, 2019, <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/the-arbour/>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ “North East Scarborough Community Recreation & Child Care Centre,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, December 5, 2018), <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/new-parks-facilities/north-east-scarborough-community-and-child-care-centre/>.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

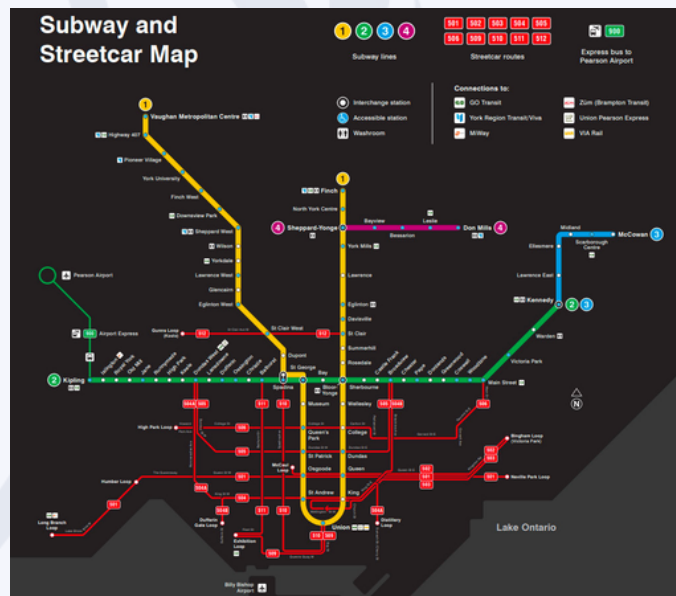
²⁰⁰ Robert Benzie, “Province Plans New Transit Hub for Ontario Line, Including a ‘Union Station to the East,’” Toronto Star, April 12, 2021, https://www.thestar.com/politics/provincial/province-plans-new-transit-hub-for-ontario-line-including-a-union-station-to-the-east/article_7fbd75fa-00de-5ba0-8220-0c5a22983e8f.html.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

Transportation

The Toronto Transit Commission – better known to Torontonians as the TTC – serves 5.5 million people in the Greater Toronto Area.²⁰³ Many rely on this network of subways, streetcars, and buses in their daily lives whether it be getting to work, school, or simply around the city in general. Helping to alleviate traffic on highways and streets within the GTA, the TTC plays a crucial part in reducing the city’s GHG emissions, and thus is a main focus for developing and improving upon infrastructure to support net-zero goals within the city.²⁰⁴ This council should look to turn the currently existing TTC infrastructure as well as new projects eco-friendly while also incentivizing increased reliance on public transit to reduce emissions. Councillors should bear in mind that increased ridership may involve modifications being made to stations to increase the TTC’s capacity.



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Ongoing TTC Projects

Here is a look at some of the ongoing TTC projects. As delegates, your goal is to make them eco-friendly and promote them such that more people are enticed to take public transit.

²⁰³ “TTC Operating Statistics 2017 - Key Facts,” www.ttc.cahttps, 2017, <https://www.ttc.ca/transparency-and-accountability/Operating-Statistics/operating-statistics--2017/key-facts>.

²⁰⁴ “Low Carbon Transportation,” City of Toronto, November 17, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/live-green-toronto/low-carbon-transportation/>.

²⁰⁵ “TTC Subway and Streetcar Map,” July 2023, https://ttc-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/Project/TTC/DevProto/Images/Home/Routes-and-Schedules/Landing-page-pdfs/TTC_SubwayStreetcarMap_2021-11.pdf?rev=b85957735f594350802c77ea983bb677.

Eglinton Crosstown LRT:



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Construction for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT has been underway since 2016.²⁰⁷ This project features 25 stations travelling 19 km Eastbound and Westbound from Mount Dennis to Kennedy along Eglinton street. Completion of this LRT will increase access to transit for residents in midtown making it 60% faster to travel across the city.²⁰⁸ With connections to line 1, GO lines, as well as 54 bus routes, this LRT will provide a solution powered by renewable energy to alleviate congestion on Eglinton and reduce GHG emissions.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ “Metrolinx - Eglinton Crosstown LRT,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/eglington-crosstown-lrt>.

²⁰⁷ “Eglinton Crosstown LRT,” Infrastructure Ontario, n.d., <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/en/what-we-do/projectssearch/eglington-crosstown-lrt/>.

²⁰⁸ “Metrolinx - Eglinton Crosstown LRT,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/eglington-crosstown-lrt>.

²⁰⁹ “Metrolinx - New Green Energy Facility Powering up the Eglinton Crosstown LRT,” www.metrolinx.com, July 30, 2019, <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/news/new-green-energy-facility-powering-up-the-eglington-crosstown-lrt>.

Ontario Line:



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Construction on the Ontario Line – a 15.6 km subway line stretching from Ontario Place to the Science Centre – has been underway since March of 2022.²¹¹ This project is expected to introduce 15 new stations featuring over 40 connections including to subway lines 1 and 2, three GO transit rails and the Eglinton LRT.²¹² The Ontario line aims to cut travel times throughout the city as well as alleviate crowding throughout the existing transit system with quicker and more frequent service from end to end.²¹³ Once complete, the Ontario line will improve access to transit for residents throughout the city, increasing ridership with an expected 388 000 daily boardings reducing cars in rush hour by approximately 28 000 cars.²¹⁴ Additionally, this aims to cut the city’s GHG emissions by using completely electric trains to operate.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ “Metrolinx - Ontario Line,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/ontario-line>.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² “Ontario’s Priority Transit Projects in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region,” ontario.ca, n.d., <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-priority-transit-projects-greater-golden-horseshoe-region>.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Jordan Fleguel, “This Is What the Driverless Trains on the Ontario Line Will Look Like,” Toronto, March 14, 2023, <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/this-is-what-the-driverless-trains-on-the-ontario-line-will-look-like-1.6313445>.

Line 2 Scarborough Subway Extension:



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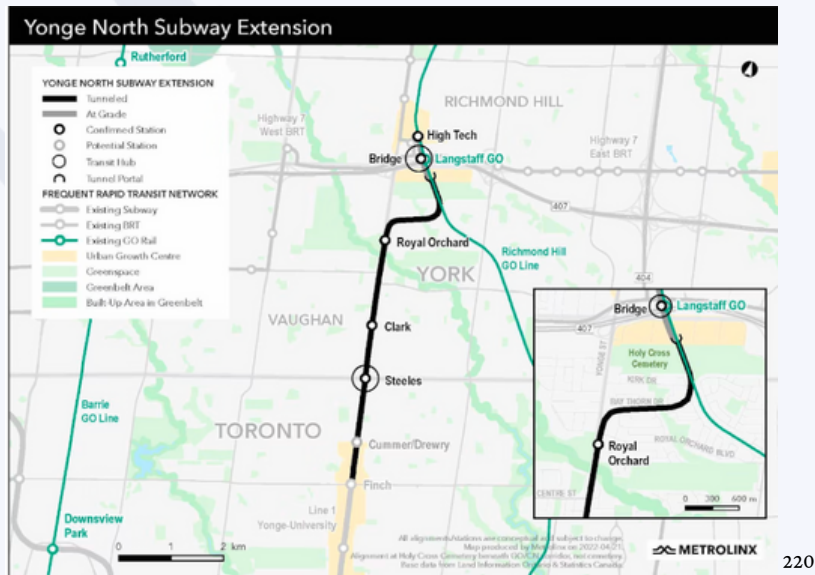
The Scarborough Line 2 extension which began construction in January 2023 aims to extend the Line 2 subway about another 8 km into Scarborough.²¹⁷ This will add three new stations, effectively replacing the Scarborough RT and helping to reduce travel times.²¹⁸ This project is expected to increase ridership by 52 000 daily boardings and reduce GHG emissions by 10 000 tonnes yearly.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ “Scarborough Subway Extension,” Infrastructure Ontario, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/en/what-we-do/projectssearch/scarborough-subway-extension--stations-rail-and-systems/#:~:text=The%20Scarborough%20Subway%20Extension%20is>.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Line 1 Yonge North Subway Extension:



The Yonge North Line 1 extension is currently in planning to extend subway service north about 8 km from Finch to High Tech.²²¹ This will include 5 new stations with connections to buses and Go trains in Vaughan, Markham, and Richmond Hill.²²² This extension is expected to service more than 94 100 daily boardings and decrease GHG emissions by more than 4 800 tonnes yearly.²²³

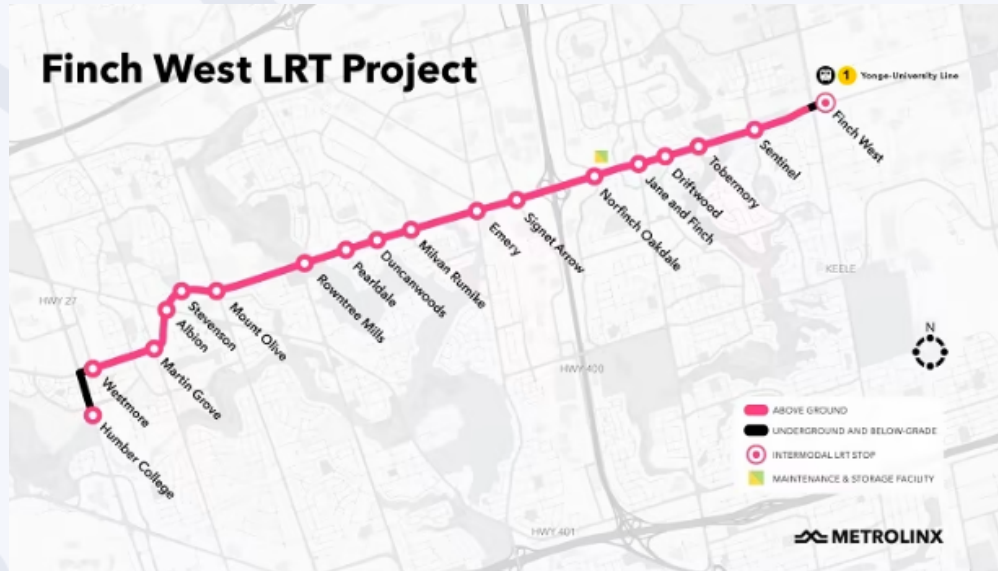
²²⁰ “Metrolinx - Yonge North Subway Extension,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/yonge-north-subway-extension>.

²²¹ “Metrolinx - Yonge North Subway Extension,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/yonge-north-subway-extension>.

²²² “Metrolinx - Yonge North Subway Extension,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/yonge-north-subway-extension>.

²²³ Ibid.

Finch West LRT:



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The Finch West LRT is planned to create 18 new stations along 10.4km running from Finch West to Humber College, featuring connections to other TTC lines as well as Peel and York Region transit.²²⁵ Similar to the Eglinton LRT, this project aims to reduce travel times and alleviate traffic as a solution powered by renewable energy.²²⁶

²²⁴ “Metrolinx - Finch West LRT,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/finch-west-lrt>.

²²⁵ “Finch West Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project Overview,” accessed September 5, 2023, <https://transit.toronto.ca/archives/reports/Finch-West-LRT-FAQs-Revised-June9.pdf>.

²²⁶ “Metrolinx - Finch West LRT,” www.metrolinx.com, n.d., <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/finch-west-lrt>.

Green Buses

Another significant ongoing project is transitioning all TTC buses to be electric in order to achieve net zero by 2040.²²⁷ The TTC's strategy addressing this issue is the Green Bus Technology Plan which has been underway since 2017.²²⁸ Currently this program is ahead of schedule and on budget as approximately 240 eBuses have been procured.²²⁹

Additionally, the city is working to implement the Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan to support the transition of 20 percent of the City fleet to zero-emission by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030.²³⁰ This also includes vehicles such as police, fire, and paramedic services.²³¹ Starting in 2022, for any light duty vehicle being purchased by the City, the City will select only the electric version of this vehicle where operationally feasible.²³²

Supporting Electric Vehicles in the City

To further reduce GHG emissions in Toronto's streets, the city works to facilitate and encourage residents using electric vehicles.²³³ The Electric Vehicle Strategy aims for 80 percent of registered personal vehicles to be electric by 2040.²³⁴ In order to accomplish this it is important to ensure that sufficient electric vehicle charging stations are made accessible throughout the city.²³⁵ Thus, in 2022 over 100 charging stations were installed in Green P parking lots, with the eventual goal of installing over 650 charging stations throughout the city.²³⁶

²²⁷ "Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan 2023 Update," 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/8f83-Sustainable-City-of-Toronto-Fleets-Plan.pdf>.

²²⁸ "TTC Adds 336 New Hybrid-Electric Buses to Its Fleet," www.ttc.cahttps, accessed September 20, 2023, <https://www.ttc.ca/news/2023/April/TTC-adds-336-new-hybrid-electric-buses-to-its-fleet#:~:text=The%20TTC%20Green%20Bus%20Technology>.

²²⁹ "For Action Green Bus and Wheel-Trans Green Bus Program Update," 2022, <https://ttc-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/Project/TTC/DevProto/Documents/Home/Public-Meetings/Board/2022/July-14/Green-Bus-and-WT-Green-Bus-Program-Update-July-8--FINAL1.pdf?rev=44b73b91e16746a2aecdeb43db16cf6b&hash=B4231CF49BCA7260C52FD6B649CBD699>.

²³⁰ "TORONTO REPORT for ACTION the Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan (2023 Update and Status Report)," 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ic/bgrd/backgroundfile-235806.pdf>.

²³¹ "SUSTAINABLE CITY of TORONTO FLEETS PLAN 2 0 2 3 U P D a T E," n.d., <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/8f83-Sustainable-City-of-Toronto-Fleets-Plan.pdf>.

²³² "Sustainable City of Toronto Fleets Plan 2023 Update," 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/8f83-Sustainable-City-of-Toronto-Fleets-Plan.pdf>.

²³³ City of Toronto, "Transform TO," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, November 17, 2017), <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmentally-friendly-city-initiatives/transformto/>.

²³⁴ "City of Toronto Electric Vehicle Strategy," 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8c46-City-of-Toronto-Electric-Vehicle-Strategy.pdf>.

²³⁵ City of Toronto, "Electric Vehicles," City of Toronto, November 17, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmentally-friendly-city-initiatives/reports-plans-policies-research/electric-vehicles/>.

²³⁶ "Towards Net Zero Emissions by 2040 Transform TO," 2022, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/97d7-TransformTO-Net-Zero-Strategy-2022-Update.pdf>.

Cycling Network Plan

In 2016 the city approved the 10 year Cycling Network Plan which focuses on improving Toronto’s infrastructure for cycling routes.²³⁷ From 2019-2021, 65 km of bike lanes were installed throughout the city as well as an additional 47 km of enhancements to existing cycling routes.²³⁸ The current 2022-2024 stage of this plan includes projects improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists as well as installing another 10km of new bikeways.²³⁹

Sustainable Consumption and Waste

No man is an island. John Donne’s famous book turned inspirational quote teaches us that without one another, we can’t survive. When it comes to protecting our environment, the sentiment remains the same. Without the stewardship and support of global citizens in reversing the effects of climate change, the likelihood of our world’s survivorship is low—if not hopeless.²⁴⁰ As citizens of the City of Toronto, it is our job to make our own changes to the way we exist as a community. Whether it be following policies implemented by the government in getting rid of plastic straws or simply recycling biodegradable materials, what we do matters! In this subtopic, delegates will get a brief overview of certain actions that the Toronto City Council has implemented with regards to the promotion of sustainable consumption and waste, as well as actions that are soon going to be enacted with hopes of achieving Net Zero Carbon Emissions for 2020-2030.

²³⁷ “Cycling Network Plan,” City of Toronto, November 17, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/cycling-in-toronto/cycling-pedestrian-projects/cycling-network-plan/>.

²³⁸ Teana Graziani, “City of Toronto Announces 2022 to 2024 Cycling Network Expansions | UrbanToronto,” urbantoronto.ca, March 23, 2022, <https://urbantoronto.ca/news/2022/03/city-toronto-announces-2022-2024-cycling-network-expansions.47525>.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ “Climate Emergency: An Open Letter to Concerned Global Citizens,” LifeGate, January 7, 2019, <https://www.lifegate.com/open-letter-climate-navdanya>.

Waste-to-energy (WTE) Facilities in Canada

The invention of waste-to-energy facilities in Canada might arguably be one of the most incredible things to exist in decreasing carbon emissions. In Canada, six of these facilities exist - the newest one in all of North America being built in the Durham-York region, close to the Greater Toronto Area.²⁴¹ Fueled by waste alone, the newest facility prides itself in producing 17.4 megawatts of electricity 24/7 - enough to power 12,000 homes for a year, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 146,000 tons of CO₂ - equivalent to taking 28,000 passenger vehicles off the road for one year.²⁴² Its superiority has inspired the City of Toronto to take on its own project in collaboration with Enbridge at the Dufferin Organics Processing Facility.²⁴³ This collaboration has allowed for an expected production of “more than five million cubic metres of RNG, which would be enough to fuel 132 garbage trucks– 90 per cent of the city’s fleet – or heat more than 2,000 homes”.²⁴⁴ Previous mayor, John Tory, stated in 2018, during his term, that this project will help the City achieve its longer-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Covanta, “Durham York | Covanta,” www.covanta.com, n.d., <https://www.covanta.com/where-we-are/our-facilities/durham-york>.

²⁴² “Durham York | Covanta,” www.covanta.com, n.d., <https://www.covanta.com/where-we-are/our-facilities/durham-york>.

²⁴³ “City of Toronto to Start Producing Renewable Natural Gas from Green Bin Organic Waste,” City of Toronto (City of Toronto, July 20, 2021), <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-to-start-producing-renewable-natural-gas-from-green-bin-organic-waste/>.

²⁴⁴ Maria Church, “Toronto to Build City’s First Waste-To-Energy Facility,” *Canadian Biomass Magazine*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.canadianbiomassmagazine.ca/toronto-to-build-citys-first-waste-to-energy-facility-6962/#:~:text=July%2025%2C%202018%20%2D%20The%20City.>

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

Single-Use & Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy + Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations

For Stage 1 of the Single-Use & Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy, the City of Toronto introduced the Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy-Stage 1 report to implement actions that reduce single-use and takeaway items in June of 2021.²⁴⁶ The first stage includes the implementation of an “ask-first/by-request” approach for bags, straws and eating utensils, in addition to the acceptance of reusable takeout containers/cups.²⁴⁷ In 2022, the City became ready to move into Stage 2 of the strategy by recommending mandatory policies that will restrict single-use and takeaway items through measures that may include fees, requiring the acceptance of reusable items and “ask-first/by-request”.²⁴⁸ Some items that many businesses have already eliminated include single-use accessory disposable food items, single-use beverage cups, single-use shopping bags, foam cups and takeout containers, plastic/plastic-lined takeout containers labelled as compostable/biodegradable and black plastic takeout containers.²⁴⁹

To further diminish the usage of single-use plastic materials, the Government of Canada initiated Single-use Plastic Prohibition Regulations that legally prohibit the manufacture, import and export of six single-use plastic manufactured items.²⁵⁰ Through this regulation, the following items have been banned from production and sale in Canada (with certain exceptions that can be found in the Key Resources section): single-use plastic checkout bags, single-use plastic cutlery, single-use plastic flexible straws, single-use plastic food service ware, single-use plastic ring carriers, single-use plastic stir sticks, and single-use plastic straws.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ City of Toronto, “Reducing Single-Use & Takeaway Items,” City of Toronto, September 19, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/long-term-waste-strategy/reducing-single-use-takeaway-items/>.

²⁴⁷ “Item - 2021.IE22.6,” toronto.ca, July 8, 2021, <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2021.IE22.6>.

²⁴⁸ “Reducing Single-Use & Takeaway Items,” City of Toronto, September 19, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/long-term-waste-strategy/reducing-single-use-takeaway-items/#:~:text=The%20City%20of%20Toronto%20is>.

²⁴⁹ “Reducing Single-Use Program,” Toronto, January 11, 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/long-term-waste-strategy/reducing-single-use-takeaway-items/reducing-single-use-program/>.

²⁵⁰ “Single-Use Plastics Prohibition Regulations: SOR/2022-138,” www.gazette.gc.ca, June 22, 2022, <https://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2022/2022-06-22/html/sor-dors138-eng.html>.

²⁵¹ Legislative Services Branch, “Consolidated Federal Laws of Canada, Single-Use Plastics Prohibition Regulations,” laws-lois.justice.gc.ca, December 20, 2022, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2022-138/page-1.html>.

Small Businesses Going Green

Small businesses scattered throughout the GTA have taken huge steps towards going green – from locally sourcing products to making biodegradable packaging, these Toronto entrepreneurs have it covered.²⁵² Some businesses to include the Unboxed Market (Toronto’s 1st zero waste grocery store), Kotn (everyday clothing pieces made only from sustainable Egyptian cotton), Steam Whistle Brewery (beer-makers that use renewable power and employ waste diversion programs), and Original Genes (customizes used garments with hand-painted designs).²⁵³ There are so many businesses going green, and companies across the GTA are following suit in their example.

Love Food Hate Waste Campaign

The Toronto City Council partnered with the National Zero Waste Council and other cities throughout the country (such as Vancouver, Montreal, Winnipeg), in addition to major food retailers like Walmart in hopes of reducing food waste on a national level.²⁵⁴ They’ve formulated a campaign to create a strategy that targets information, education and outreach regarding the benefits of food waste reduction.

²⁵² Richard Warnica, “Genuine Tea Says Its Packaging Won’t End up in Landfills — but Most of It Does. How Its Frustrated Effort to Go Green Reveals a Broken System,” Toronto Star, May 20, 2022, https://www.thestar.com/business/genuine-tea-says-its-packaging-won-t-end-up-in-landfills-but-most-of-it/article_4ad39d98-0911-5a0d-a6b2-96622c94b699.html.

²⁵³ “9 Eco-Friendly Toronto Businesses You Can Support Right Now | Curated,” dailyhive.com, July 16, 2020, <https://dailyhive.com/toronto/mini-electric-eco-friendly-toronto-businesses>.

²⁵⁴ “NZWC - Collaborations,” www.nzwc.ca, accessed September 20, 2023, <http://www.nzwc.ca/about/partnership-programs/Pages/default.aspx>.

Actions within the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy

As of 2023, the Toronto City Council has enacted the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy and is actively making progress in their actions for implementation in 2022-2025.²⁵⁶ The City is working at both Dufferin and Disco Road organics processing facilities to produce renewable natural gas from Green Bin Organic Waste.²⁵⁷ This RNG will blend with natural gas purchased by the City from the Natural Gas Purchasing Program in order to create a nice blend of low-carbon fuels to power vehicles and City-owned facilities.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the City is actively reviewing potential biogas and landfill gas opportunities for upgrade at other City Waste facilities (Green Lane and Keele Valley landfills + an incoming third organics processing facility).²⁵⁹ The five sites will come together to produce sufficient gas to meet the natural gas needs annually that the City is working hard to achieve.²⁶⁰

Plans for the Future

Looking towards the future, the goals of the Toronto City Council specific to Transform TO is to produce and utilize 1.5 million Gigajoules of energy from biogas alone.²⁶¹ Biogas single handedly reduced 107,700 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually through its WTE and RNG production.²⁶² By definition, a circular economy is a model of production and consumption that maintains its resources for as long as possible to reduce waste and human impact on the environment.²⁶³ Focusing on product longevity, renewability, reuse, and repair, the implementation of such policies in Toronto that promote a circular economy opens up a new perspective that reevaluates resource consumption and material efficiency for their impacts on climate change and the environment.²⁶⁴ All in all, the implementation of aggressive conservation and efficiency policies in the transition to creating a more circular economy thus far has and is continuing to make the phasing out of natural gas in Toronto an attainable yet cost-effective goal.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁶ City of Toronto, "TransformTO," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, November 17, 2017), <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmentally-friendly-city-initiatives/transformto/>.

²⁵⁷ "Turning Waste into Renewable Natural Gas," City of Toronto, July 20, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/recycling-organics-garbage/solid-waste-facilities/renewable-natural-gas/>.

²⁵⁸ "Landfill Gas to Renewable Natural Gas Project and Future Potential Renewable Energy Opportunities at the Green Lane Landfill REPORT for ACTION Landfill Gas to Renewable Natural Gas Project and Future Potential Renewable Energy Opportunities at the Green Lane Landfill," 2023, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-236724.pdf>.

²⁵⁹ "City of Toronto to Start Producing Natural Gas from Green Bin Organic Waste | Knowledge Hub | Circle Lab," knowledge-hub.circle-lab.com, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://knowledge-hub.circle-lab.com/article/8853>.

²⁶⁰ "TransformTO Net Zero Strategy," November 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-173758.pdf>.

²⁶¹ Connie Vitello, "Toronto to Produce Renewable Energy from Green Bin Organics," The Environment Journal, August 4, 2021, <https://environmentjournal.ca/toronto-to-produce-renewable-energy-from-green-bin-organics/>.

²⁶² "Creating Renewable Natural Gas from Green Bin Waste," City of Toronto, July 20, 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/news/creating-renewable-natural-gas-from-green-bin-waste/>.

²⁶³ European Parliament, "Circular Economy: Definition, Importance and Benefits | News | European Parliament," www.europarl.europa.eu, February 12, 2015, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits#:~:text=The%20circular%20economy%20is%20a>.

²⁶⁴ "TransformTO Net Zero Strategy," November 2021, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ie/bgrd/backgroundfile-173758.pdf>.

²⁶⁵ Julia Langer, "Toronto Has an Embarrassing Gas Problem," taf.ca, February 18, 2021, <https://taf.ca/toronto-has-an-embarrassing-gas-problem/>.

Questions to Consider:

- Should the ClimateTO prioritize reducing greenhouse gas emissions from either transportation or industrial sectors? Why? Is it possible to create a balance between the two, and if so, how?
- What are some consequences of pushing for aggressive climate policies on small businesses and low-income communities in Toronto? How can this be mitigated?
- Should the city consider making stricter regulations and penalties for those who choose not to comply with climate initiatives? Or should the city focus on voluntary action to incentivize environmental participation?
- Is the current timeline and target set by the Toronto Climate Action Plan sufficient to address the urgency of the climate crisis, or should more ambitious goals be established? Should technology and innovation be utilised more to accelerate progress in achieving its climate goals?
- How should the council encourage the private sector to invest in renewable energy and green infrastructure as part of the Climate Action Plan?
- How can Toronto ensure that climate action initiatives are inclusive and address social justice issues (e.g. environmental racism and unequal distribution of resources)?
- What are the potential challenges and benefits of collaborating with neighbouring municipalities and regional governments within/around the GTA in developing a coordinated approach to climate action?
- How can the council gain widespread support from both stakeholders and the city in accelerating within ClimateTO's plan of action?

Key Resources:

Topic 1: The Housing Crisis

- Development in the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan
 - HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

Topic 2: Climate Goals

- TransformTO Net Zero Strategy
- Sustainable Consumption and Waste
 - Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy Stage 1
 - Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations

Tips for Research, Writing Position Papers, and the Conference:

1. Read the background guide!

- While we unanimously agree it can be an intimidating document, it is ultimately a resource that helps you and gets you started. The more you relate your work to the background guide, the more on track you will be to making productive working papers and speeches!

2. Use credible sources when researching and cite your sources!

- We will be checking! Credible sources include scholarly articles, peer-reviewed papers, anecdotal work, UN/TCC documents and resolutions, legal frameworks and legislations, etc. Do not feel limited by what you can and cannot research, but ensure that they are trustworthy and accurate! If you're not sure, email us and ask!

3. Position papers should be no more than two pages.

- Be concise when outlining your country's position.

4. Adhere to your character's policy in your position paper and in debate.

- You are representing a unique character with their own priorities, whether it be a councillor, nonprofit organization, or provincial representative. The more you stay true to your character and the desires of those they represent, the more productive and healthy debate will follow. As such, be careful who you form blocs with – they might disagree and that is okay!

5. Always keep equity in mind!

- We are dealing with some sensitive topics, so please be mindful of how you approach your country's political stance, even if it is relatively controversial. UTMUN strives to ensure the comfort of all Delegates, and you play a large part in that!

6. Engagement is key!!

- Model UN is only exciting when you talk, pass notes, form blocs, participate in writing bills, debate, etc. As intriguing as the topics may be, we still rely on you to make the conference lively, don't let us down!

7. Trust your dais.

- We are experienced and heavily trained Model UN staff. If there is anything we can do, during the conference or otherwise, please let us know! If you are new to Model UN, please reach out to us and let us know how we can improve your UTMUN experience.

Do not hesitate to seek clarification! Please feel free to reach out to tcc@utmun.org with any questions about these tips, the background guide content, or anything else relating to the conference :)

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