

Community Voices Pave the Road to Recovery

In partnership with the City of Toronto, Social Planning Toronto supported community-led consultations on how we should recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic. This report summarizes the voices of over 1,457 people from Indigenous, equity-seeking groups, and/or vulnerable populations.





Personal Impact of COVID-19

70% said they felt sad, anxious, overwhelmed, or lonely

42% said they lost employment or income

Changes in Services Needed

 24% accessed income supports before the pandemic but 47% identified this as an urgent priority for the next 0-6 months

 15% accessed affordable housing before the pandemic but 36% identified this as an urgent priority

 22% accessed mental health supports before the pandemic but 38% identified this as an urgent priority

How to Approach Recovery

Investment in services, programs, and communities

Improving equity so Toronto becomes a more liveable city for all its residents

Bottom-up model of engagement with those who have lived expertise

Intergovernmental collaboration between all three levels government

1. HOUSING

- Halt evictions and develop an eviction prevention plan for the long term
- Apply and expand rent control
- Provide rent relief and ban late fees for nonpayment of rent
- Expand the supply of deeply affordable, transitional housing and shelters, with the goal of ending homelessness
- De-commodify housing; prioritize housing for people, not for investor profits
- Introduce more "missing middle" housing, review zoning to allow for more housing types
- Develop more affordable, accessible, and supportive housing for seniors and people with disabilities
- Increase supply of subsidized and co-operative housing
- Review/revise definition of affordable housing to be based on income level

2. EMPLOYMENT

- Offer more programs, support and entry-level positions for youth and recent graduates
- Provide more decent work opportunities for skilled immigrants, newcomers, and other equity-seeking groups
- Increase access to work opportunities through job banks and resources in multiple languages
- Increase minimum wage to account for the high cost of living in Toronto
- Provide second career opportunities for those looking to re-enter the workforce

3. MENTAL HEALTH

- Provide more funding to expand mental health services and reduce waiting lists
- Increase information, outreach, and publicity for mental health programs
- Increase recreational, fitness, and outdoor opportunities as a key component to supporting positive mental health and wellbeing
- Use a community-driven approach to service delivery that is culturally relevant and sensitive
- Change how police intervene in mental health crises

4. INCOME SUPPORTS

- Enhance existing programs to a liveable benefit that increases annually with inflation
- Expand coverage of income support programs so that everyone can access them
- Implement a universal basic income program
- Simplify and streamline the process for applying for and receiving income supports

Enhancing the participation and inclusion of Indigenous, equity-seeking groups, and vulnerable populations in the City's decision-making processes is key to building a better city for everyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide residents consistent, ongoing involvement and direct access to City Councillors and City Hall
- Always use social media and online platforms in conjunction with other forms of consultations to ensure a variety of options
- Hold consultations in partnership with resident leaders, grassroots groups, and community organizations who have strong connections in the community
- Offer civic and political education, including updates on current, relevant issues being debated and training to support civic participation
- Provide accessibility supports including the use of plain language, translation/interpretation services, ASL interpretation, and technical and access assistance. To facilitate participation, consultations should also offer honorariums, transit support, childcare, and food
- Increase the number and diversity of City Councillors and staff
- Listen to, acknowledge, and trust people's life stories and ideas, and then show action
- Undertake more surveys like this one, allowing less privileged residents to have a say in our city's decision-making

TAKE ACTION AND SHARE YOUR VOICE



Deputation Webinar: Learn to influence the City's recovery and rebuild process

Friday, October 16, 2020, 1-3pm. RSVP to: maria-saroja@socialplanningtoronto.org

Depute at the October 21 Executive Committee Meeting/Make a Written Submission

- Contact Cathrine Regan to get on the deputation list. Email exc@toronto.ca/call 416-392-4666
- Specify that you want to speak to agenda item EX17.1 - "Towards Recovery and Building a Renewed Toronto"

Other ways to take action: Write to your Councillor and the Mayor to tell them what you want to see in our city's recovery. Or organize an action with a community group, coalition, or network!

Access the complete "Community Voices Pave the Road to Recovery" report at socialplanningtoronto.org